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Welcome



PlayStation 4. Just say it. Roll those words around your mouth [spit that gum out first], and taste that next-generation goodness. It's very real, very close, and we've already got a dozen confirmed games to look forward to once our excited little paws get to grip that gorgeous new DualShock. Starting on page 58 we've got all the information you need on the hardware, the tech, the games – the future, basically. Head on over now, I won't be offended.



But PS3 is still fighting fit, as our terrifying hands-on with The Last Of Us proves. Once we'd stopped shaking one thing was clear: king of the console Naughty Dog is on to another winner here. Factor in the hugely ambitious Destiny, Halo developer Bungie's first foray into the happy world of PlayStation (not to mention GTA V, Grid 2, and much more) and there's plenty of life in that disc tray yet.

Also, you may have noticed that your usual host for this page is sadly absent. Unfortunately Ben was so excited by the PS4 reveal that he actually exploded. But fret not, we'll have him rebuilt in time for next issue.

Joel Gregory

Deputy editor

joel.gregory@futurenet.com

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NEXT-GEN STARTS NOW

The tech, the controller, the games. Welcome to PS4.

Save **23%**
Off every issue – see page 80.

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First hands-on with Naughty Dog's post-apocalyptic adventure – and it's *really* scary.



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How Bungie is arriving on PlayStation with one of the most ambitious games in history.

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Who we are...

Ben Wilson Editor

Fled the office at the start of deadline week to have a baby. No, he's not calling it PS4. Or Orbis. Maybe Kaz.

Game of the moment
Urban Trial Freestyle
PS4 reveal fave
inFamous: Second Son

Joel Gregory Deputy editor

Thrust into the big chair by Ben's paternity leave. First mandate: caramel protein shakes for all.

Game of the moment
Tomb Raider
PS4 reveal fave
Deep Down

Phil Iwaniuk Staff writer

Up 'til 4am penning our web coverage of the PS4 reveal. Disgustingly, his hair was still perfect the next day.

Game of the moment
The Walking Dead
PS4 reveal fave
Deep Down

Helen Woodey Contributing operations editor

Biggest PS4 wish: a sequel to Guitar Hero Metallica. Or Buzz Jr: Jungle Party 2.

Game of the moment
Lego Star Wars II
PS4 reveal fave
Driveclub



Leon Hurley Associate editor

Returned from PS4's reveal in NY with American donuts... purchased from the Krispy Kreme opposite the office.

Game of the moment
Crysis 3
PS4 reveal fave
Watch Dogs

Dave Meikleham Acting news editor

Young man spent week in local YMCA after being evicted from his flat. Did get himself clean, didn't have many good meals.

Game of the moment
God Of War: Ascension
PS4 reveal fave
Watch Dogs

Emma Davies Production editor

Now the office's most devoted Taylor Swift fan. Fitting given that most days she causes only trouble, trouble, trouble.

Game of the moment
Ni No Kuni
PS4 reveal fave
The Witness

Nathan Ditum Contributor

Ventured to LA to see The Last Of Us. Read his feature on page 72, then check out the videos he made on Access TV episode 69.

Game of the moment
Urban Trial Freestyle
PS4 reveal fave
Watch Dogs



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PlayStation[®]

Official Magazine - UK

On your disc



Who's ready for a semi-tenuous dose of '80s cartoon theme tune magic? With a certain Sly sneaking on to PS3, it's time to... "Run with us, we've got everything you need! Run with us, we are free!"

Come with us, I see passion in your eyes, run with us!" God, that felt good. Our second favourite raccoon (there's no beating Bert), your disc this month allows you to scamper, sleuth and steal with the beautifully animated Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time. We've also got acrobatic demon-slaying in the fantastic DmC and cuddly cornering thrills with LBP Karting.

Dave Meikleham



Switch on your PS3, find the Game icon on the XMB bar and then select 'OPSM - UK Blu-ray Demo 2013/82.'



Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time

We awarded Sly a well-deserved 8/10 last month, and now you can try this glorious throwback to PS2-style platformers for yourself. He might like to dip in your bins, but we still have a soft spot for our raccoon.

This month's exclusive highlights...



DmC

One of the best hack 'n' slashers on PS3, boasting deliriously stylish combat and those gorgeous trademark Ninja Theory colours.



LittleBigPlanet Karting

The material man proves a damn decent wheelman, as you'll see in this adorable karter.



FIFA 13

Cheer up, fusball fans. Even if you've been dumped out of the FA Cup in humiliating fashion, this will cure those footy frowns.



Lego The Lord Of The Rings

What is this new devility? Why, 'tis some yellow Lego blocks easily out-acting Orlando Bloom.



What if my disc doesn't work?

If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to Disc Returns, OPM, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.com.

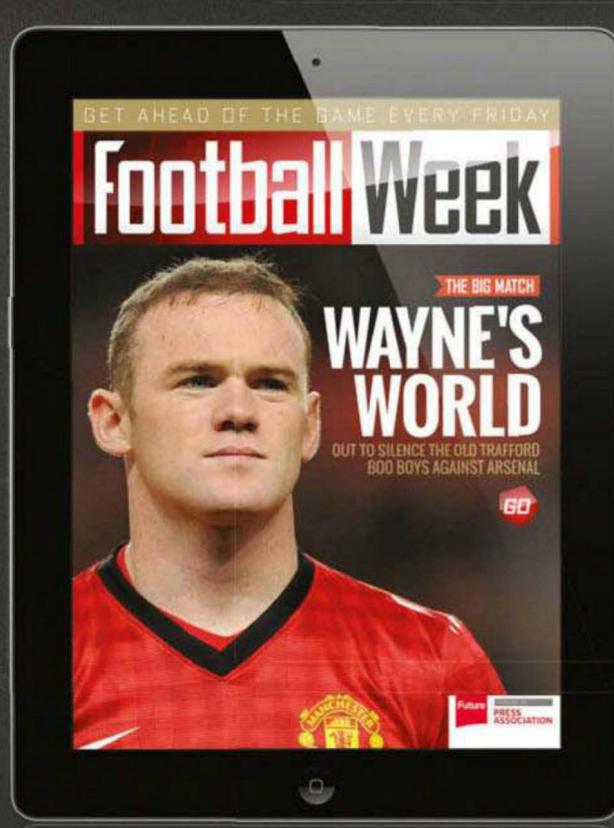
Also on the disc this month **Playable** NBA 2K13, F1 Race Stars, Birds Of Steel, WRC 3: FIA World Rally Championship, Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII, F1 2012, Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes, PES 2013, Sonic Generations, SSX.

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about...

Action man

The new Disney game taking on Skylanders.

► **Page 14**



Sob story

Crysis 3's prospects for a silver-screen Prophet.

► **Page 19**

UF-no

How Colonial Marines lost the plot.

► **Page 22**



Dog gone

Exclusive chat with Naughty Dog co-founder.

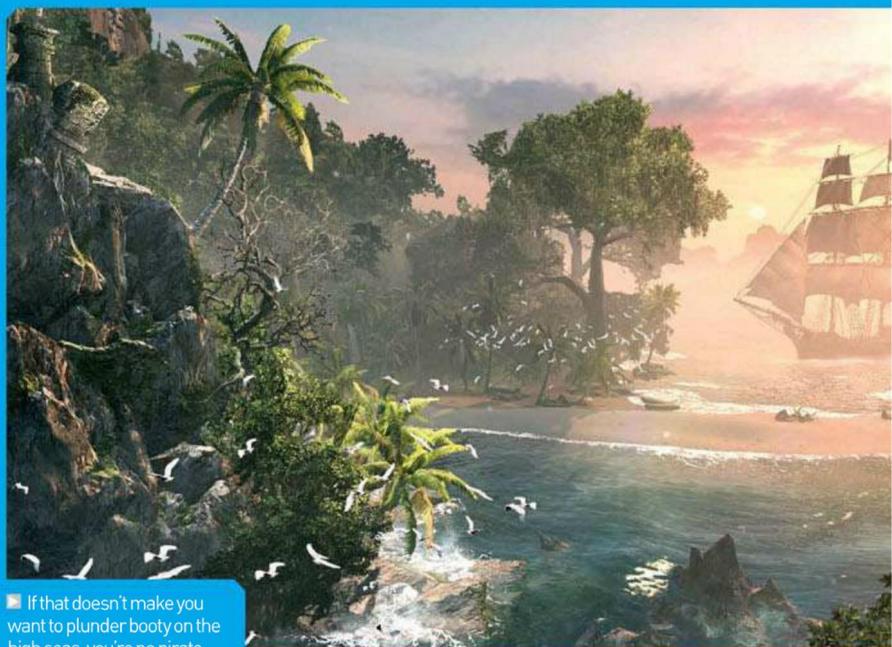
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Drip feed

How Ni No Kuni became a rare item.

► **Page 26**



If that doesn't make you want to plunder booty on the high seas, you're no pirate.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



1 Pirates! In An Adventure With Assassins

Creed instalment number IV hoists up a Black Flag as it sails forth into exotic waters



What was the most disappointing thing about Connor's (not so) Revolutionary adventure? Aside from his extremely slappable face, obviously. Some would suggest it was the fact you could spend hours faffing around in trade menus on the Homestead, only to have nothing to spend the money on. Frankly, we could sit here frowny-faced, naming ways in which Assassin's Creed III wasn't as great as we wanted it to be all day – but we're thinking of one particular reason. You couldn't just walk on to a boat.

If you were overcome with the urge to embed grapeshot in the broadside of a galleon (and we've all been there) you had to talk to a man with a book, choose from a mission menu, and after a fade to black and a loading screen, you appeared on the water.

Land and sea never joined up, making those excellent battles feel bolted on. During the presentation of Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag, these moments are referred to as "teases". Black Flag, Ubisoft says, will be seamless.

Seamless. It's a word that's repeated frequently during the presentation, so you know it's top of the message checklist. You'll board your ship directly, and take the wheel. And if, towards the end of a battle, you want to board an enemy ship, you can seamlessly run onboard. And if you want to climb up the crow's nest and take a seamless tinkle into a storm, the only thing stopping you is the lack of a 'tinkle' button.

Little Spanish fleet

Our new hero is Edward Kenway. We've rewound the timeline a few

decades to 1715. This is when all the most romanticised pirates were active. The most cartoonised of them all, Blackbeard, speaks of Kenway in reverential tones. Ben Hornigold recruited him from the docks in Bristol. Other famous tales will also be retold, such as the marooning of committed pirate Charles Vane, and the wreck of the Spanish Armada that triggered the gold rush. All with the fantasy map of Assassins vs Templars overlaid, naturally.

Edward is the grandfather of Connor, and the father of Haytham – that guy you were surprised to find yourself controlling for the first third of Assassin's Creed III. Half Welsh, half English, Edward's a likeable dreamer with a fierce love of the booze. After's Connor's over-earnest and occasionally frustrating





The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

idealism, it'll be a relief to play someone who's capable of japes. After all, this is the era when pirate crews such as those of the aforementioned Hornigold would get drunk, throw their hats into the sea, then raid a ship the next day to get some new ones. Yeah, they were vicious killers. But fair play – that's some quality hat-based banter.

With one failed marriage tucked under his belt, Edward Kenway decides to finally make good on one of his dreams – to work as a privateer for the British Army. His timing is pretty lousy. After six prosperous months of wartime privateering, the 1713 Treaty Of Utrecht lays a thick, profit-killing peace across the sea. That leaves thousands of restless, well-armed men left to stew idle in a billion gallons of brine. Basically, it's a recipe for pirate soup. That's the setting for Black Flag – with a freshly established Republic Of Pirates.

The setting has drifted south, to the seas and islands around Cuba. This is a chance to bring in the most varied set of locations yet. By the end of ACIII, we were sick of climbing up the same boxy Boston church tower to sync up our map. This time, you'll be exploring Mayan ruins weaved into jungle terrains. Fishing villages, plantations, forts, and three major towns, spread across three countries: Havana, Kingston, and the Bahaman capital of Nassau.

Large and in charge

Being on the sea is no longer a side-quest – it's bound up with your exploration and progress. This means the naval combat has been fleshed out a bit. The example given is the



Charger – a fast boat that'll try to cripple your ship by ramming it. If a Charger takes you by surprise, you could be in trouble. Luckily, Edward has a Spyglass – an object that, by the magic of Assassin's intuition, lets him assess the threat level of ships on the horizon, and assess the cargo that might be plundered from it.

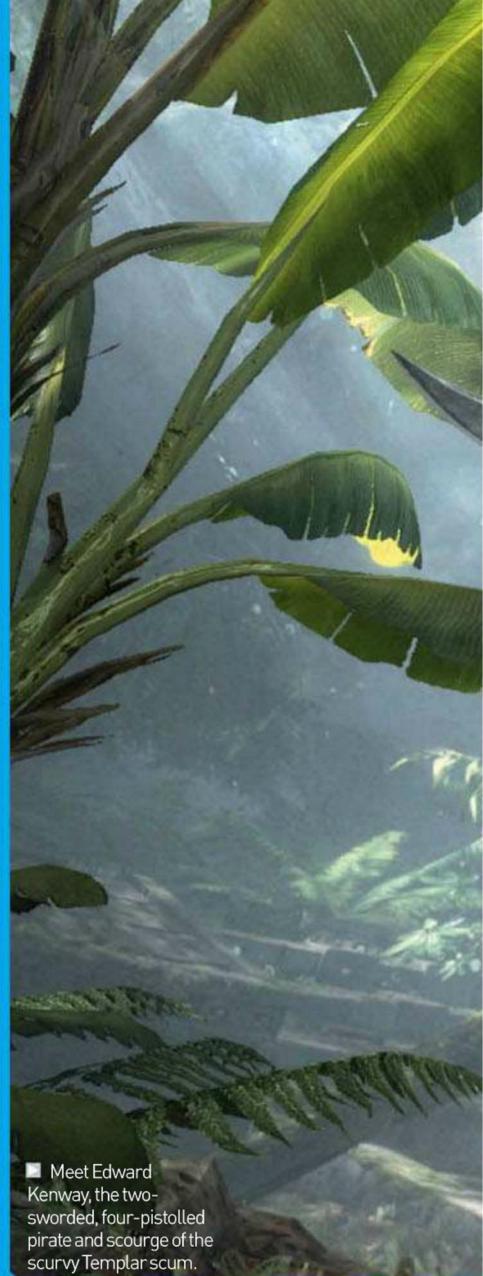
Kenway's progress through the world is bound up in his ship, the Jackdaw. A problem that Ubisoft felt keenly in all five previous PS3 outings was that of how to get across a satisfying sense of character progression. You could get better armour and a longer sword, but you were still roughly the same guy at the end of the game as you were at the beginning. Your ship, however, will transform as you upgrade it.

Buy a harpoon and you can extend your hunting to the open seas, offing whales as they swim alongside you. Buy a diving bell – a device that traps air and drags it underwater with you – and you'll be able to drop anchor and search shipwrecks for treasure. Deck yourself out with extra ordnance and you'll be able to deal with more hostile areas, opening up new



Dev talk

"There's always been one rule for an Assassin's Creed game to get a new number – it needs a new hero, a new setting, and substantial new gameplay. Black Flag has all of those things." **Jean Guesdon**, Creative director, Ubisoft Montreal



Meet Edward Kenway, the two-sworded, four-pistoled pirate and scourge of the scurvy Templar scum.

sections of the map. It sounds like it could be the series' most organically expanding world yet.

Fans of the series will probably be thinking, 'Hoy up a minute. If Desmond was using the Animus to trace his own DNA, and [SPOILER] Desmond's emphatically out of the picture, how come we're still involved with the Kenways?' The answer lies in a shake-up to the modern-day element of Black Flag. It takes place



Here's to a more upgradeable boat, more enemy types, and deeper naval combat.



With action spread over three new countries, expect more environmental variety.

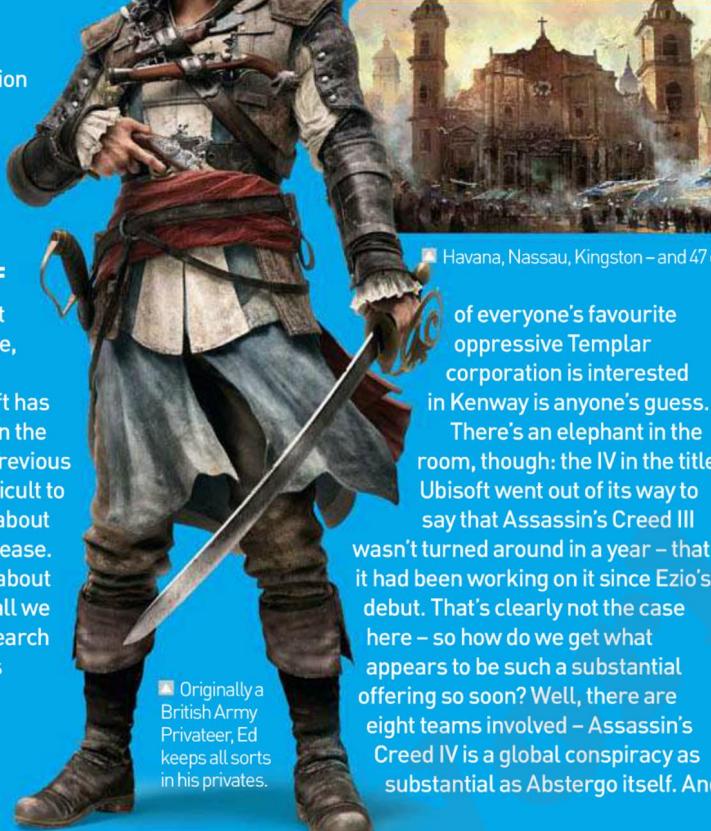


013

in much more comfortable surroundings, and with an unexpected hero. The location is Abstergo Entertainment, the fictional company behind the series' multiplayer element, and the star is... well, it's you.

Research thy self

How will that work? Could it be a first-person experience, or more of an Animus management game? Ubisoft has a habit of keeping schtum on the real-world stuff. Over the previous games, it was famously difficult to get anyone to say anything about Desmond's story before release. It's being equally secretive about Abstergo Entertainment – all we know is that you have a research grant and your own Animus machine, and your job is to explore the life of Edward Kenway. Why the Entertainment branch



■ Originally a British Army Privateer, Ed keeps all sorts in his privates.

of everyone's favourite oppressive Templar corporation is interested in Kenway is anyone's guess. There's an elephant in the room, though: the IV in the title. Ubisoft went out of its way to say that Assassin's Creed III wasn't turned around in a year – that it had been working on it since Ezio's debut. That's clearly not the case here – so how do we get what appears to be such a substantial offering so soon? Well, there are eight teams involved – Assassin's Creed IV is a global conspiracy as substantial as Abstergo itself. And

those "teases" that were mentioned had the convenient side-effect of bringing much of the development of Black Flag forward into ACIII.

We're at a very early stage here – we've not played the game, and we haven't seen the touted seamlessness in action. But if Ubisoft follows through on its promise, this is a new Assassin's Creed with a likeable hero, an economy that's fully bound up with your character's progression, and set among the most genuinely interesting and morally ambiguous characters in history.

For the latest news on Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag visit officialplaystationmagazine.co.uk.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Skylanders!

Tale of the tape

- Skylanders:

Swap Force

Number of toys

56
(16 Swap Force, 16 Core, 16 Series 3, eight Light-core).

Multiplayer

Local
two-player shared screen.

Modes Campaign co-op and player vs player modes.

Best shot

Mix and match Swap Force figures offer over 250 character combinations.

Achilles heel New Portal peripheral required - last year's won't work.



Disney Infinity!

Tale of the tape

- Disney Infinity

Number of toys

40
(17 figures, three play sets, 20 power discs).

Multiplayer

Local
two-player split-screen, four-player online.

Modes

Playset campaigns and Toy Box creation mode.

Best shot

Cross-franchise game creation in Toy Box mode.

Achilles heel Foil power disc packs will mean lots of doubles.

2

Skylanders vs Disney Infinity

Spyro and Sulley square off in an epic toy tussle

Thanks to Spyro, it's officially fine(ish) to play with toys in your 20s. So, as we triumphantly break out our vintage, box-fresh Thundercats Thundertank, we should probably reflect on the huge success Skylanders has achieved since launching in 2011. The purple dragon's spin-off toy-based series really ain't just for the little 'uns, amassing impressive sales among many older PS3 players. But now, Buzz Lightyear and co are trying to muscle in on the cutesy lizard's territory with Disney Infinity.

First, though, let's briefly run through how Skylanders works. The basic premise involves collecting a series of toy figures that you use to access virtual characters. Place these figurines on the USB Portal peripheral and they

appear in the game. The Portal also saves your character development, upgrades and experience points back to the toy itself instantly and wirelessly.

Land, ho!

Skylanders' success on PS3 comes not only from families, but core gamers who appreciate its RPG-esque mechanics. Each figure has 15 levels of stat progression along with a branching selection of attack upgrades that are purchased with in-game currency. Because this is saved on the toy rather than the console, you can use it to access your character on multiple consoles.

Somewhat aptly for a game that involves bizarre-looking beasts whacking the stuffing out of each other, Skylanders has become a monster hit for Activision. 2011's

Spyro's Adventure and last year's Giants have earned the megaton publisher over \$500 million. This monopoly may soon end, though, because Skylanders is about to face some serious competition. Enter The House Of Mouse looking for an almighty smackdown.

When we first see Disney Infinity at a recent event, the cutesy caper seems like a near carbon copy of Skylanders. Look a little closer,



Aww, Skylanders has the cutest bullets in all of games. Just look at those little shooty hands.

■ PlayStation's longest-serving dragon fronted the debut Skylanders game, Spyro's Adventure, back in 2011.





■ CGI and an ancient Disneyland ride combine when Pixar meets Pirates.

"Buzz Lightyear and co are muscling in on the lizard's territory."

though, and the two actually weigh in very differently. Yes, Infinity uses similarly sized toy figures along with a familiar-looking USB device for getting them into the game. Yet it's here Disney can really leverage its ever-expanding roster of characters and movies to draw in a wider audience. Let's be honest, Mickey has more mass-market appeal than a helium-throated dragon who hit his heyday when the Spice Girls were bagging Xmas number ones.

Thanks to the impressive roster – spanning everything from Pirates Of The Caribbean to The Incredibles – Infinity is more modular as a game. When you play set-pieces on its portal, you're granted access to campaigns for a specific franchise. It means only characters from that franchise can be used in a specific adventure (so no Captain Jack popping up on Mr Incredible's Nomanisan Island). Thankfully, Infinity looks to rectify this shortcoming with its expansive Toy Box mode, in which you can bring together characters from different franchises (a first for Disney) as well as create your own games. This

expands on Avalanche Software's Creation mode from its Toy Story 3 game, and is even fully featured enough to feel a bit like LBP.

No swapsies

Ready for a ruck, Activision announced Skylanders: Swap Force soon after the Infinity reveal, with a new dev brought in at ringside. Vicarious Visions, who supported original developer Toys For Bob on Skylanders' engine, takes centre stage in what seems likely to be a tag-team approach to the series' development – think Treyarch and Infinity Ward taking the COD reins.

Swap Force ups the RPG ante with 16 new characters that offer mix and match torsos. The toys separate at the waist and snap together with magnets, allowing an impressive 256 possible combinations. Place them on the Portal and they spawn into the game. So what started out as a children's novelty here comes of age as a seamless way to change your party's abilities to match each chapter of the campaign. Also, twisty toys!

Infinity isn't going down without throwing a few hooks in Swap Force's

direction, though. The game itself is more varied, with each campaign offering unique mechanics. Monsters Inc's university has you patrolling a virtual campus with a full day-night cycle, while the Pirates Of The Caribbean playset offers fully customisable galleons to pilot on a procedural ocean. Add to this its four-player online mode and two-player split-screen (in both campaign and Toy Box) and Infinity has a left-right combo that Skylanders can't answer with its offline-only multiplayer.

With neither game yet landing a KO blow, this scrap is set to go the distance. Skylanders may be the champ, but Infinity has the reach of Disney Interactive and its generation-spanning films and toys to draw on. Whichever comes out on top, we get the perfect excuse to play with plastic monsters – making us the real winners.

Are you a grown-up Skylanders fan? Confess all at opm@futurenet.com.



3

Lombax to the future

Insomniac boss talks Ratchet and revisiting Tools Of Destruction



Pooch pals

Even though Insomniac has now gone multi-format, the developer will always share a special relationship with Sony and its various studios. None more so than Naughty Dog, with the two companies once working next door to each other in LA. "We will always be friends," says Price of the Uncharted developer. "It's something that's probably unique in the industry, because normally developers are fairly insular and keep to themselves. We're still very close today, especially philosophically. I'm really looking forward to The Last Of Us."

It's been a tough couple of years for PlayStation's furry space-rodent. After 2009's wonderful *A Crack In Time*, Ratchet and robot buddy Clank courted co-op (*All 4 One*) and... eh, tower defence (*QForce*). Despite the mixed reactions, it's clear Insomniac Games CEO Ted Price is still proud as boozy party punch of his little Lombax as we sit down to chat about the past, present and future of the intergalactic odd couple.

Money in the Clank

"Our goal was to come up with games that were smaller in scope and to try new things," says Price on the last two *Ratchet & Clank* efforts. "Frankly, we wanted to learn from the fans' reactions about where we could take the games, so we came up with a fresh approach to the *Ratchet* series." Even though reception to the pair's space detours has been lukewarm, Price doesn't regret the franchise's

new directions: "I'm really proud of what we've accomplished with them."

Insomniac's old-school level design, gleefully daft characters and absurd sci-fi weaponry are a throwback to a bygone era of games. Although the studio masterminded 2011's distinctly chilling, wonderfully atmospheric *Resistance 3*, Ratchet's breezy mechanics owe much to the PS2 age. While the hairy mechanic and his dinky droid mate's adventures were massive hits on Sony's recently discontinued console, success wasn't always easy to come by. Especially when it came to the third title, *Up Your Arsenal* – mon dieu, Mr Wenger!

"*Ratchet 3* was a particularly big challenge for us," explains Price. "We decided to take what we had created and make one of the first multiplayer platforming

games... on a platform that didn't have networking built in. A lot of people had to buy [network] adaptors to play." The game went on to nab considerable critical back-patting, yet Price remained nervous throughout. "Right until the very end it was terrifying. I remember thinking it was going to be a disaster."

We can't let Mr Insomniac go without grilling him on what lies ahead for our platforming pals, either – specifically if we'll see a return to the more ambitious, frenetic fare of PS3 debut *Tools Of Destruction*. "Maybe that's what we'll do," teases Price. Cross all your fingers.

For the video version of our interview with Ted Price, go to officialplaystationmagazine.co.uk.

After their last two games misfired, let's hope R&C return to form soon.



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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

4

PES planning a next-gen giant-killing

New engine and underdog focus leads PS4 title push



On-the-go goals

"The concern is that [fewer] people will play games on the TV," admits Kei Masuda, "so we're trying to make it possible to edit players on your phone, or pick your formation. When you turn on the game, you can instantly start playing. One of our aims is for PES to fit our users' lifestyles." Konami is investigating new editing tools and "a better environment" for players to share their editing data, too.

"Our ultimate goal is to let you win with the team you love," says PES creative producer Kei Masuda. "If we can make a giant-killing possible, it's a huge difference to FIFA." Konami hopes to change the way you play and think about football games, inspired by results such as Celtic's heroic 2-1 Champions League victory over Barcelona – and, in turn, perform a giant-killing of its own.

Currently, FIFA and PES prioritise power, pace and star players, forcing you to pick elite teams. Konami aims to create a more realistic experience, using untapped factors including home crowds, mental strength and advanced tactics. Make a crunching last-ditch tackle, say, and it'll motivate

your team – resulting in more aggressive off-the-ball runs or crisper passing. Effects will be regionalised: UK crowds relish up-and-at-'em physical contact, while Brazilian fans might go wild for a nutmeg.

Konami learnt from the harsh transition from PS2 to PS3. "Our biggest struggles were with online play," says Masuda. "As we moved to PS3, EA changed its engine, but ours was based on the PS2 game. We only brushed up on animation and some of the AI features." Konami has responded by setting up a new UK studio dedicated to areas such as presentation, translation and commentary. It's also made a key signing – the Fox Engine technology

that powers Metal Gear Solid: Ground Zeroes. PES uses a modified version, with all-new physics and visuals.

PES' fresh focus is 'ball-centric' control, using a concept called (and stay with us here) 'barycentre' physics. You control your player's body and balance, even off the ball. For example, you can feint to the right before taking a pass, and sweep the ball into space with the outside of your left foot to shoot. Players' control radius is three times wider than in PES 2013, enabling precise manual touches. Early wireframe animations show a player taking a lofted ball with the outside of his boot, and swivelling 180° while juggling the ball in the air – all under your direct control.

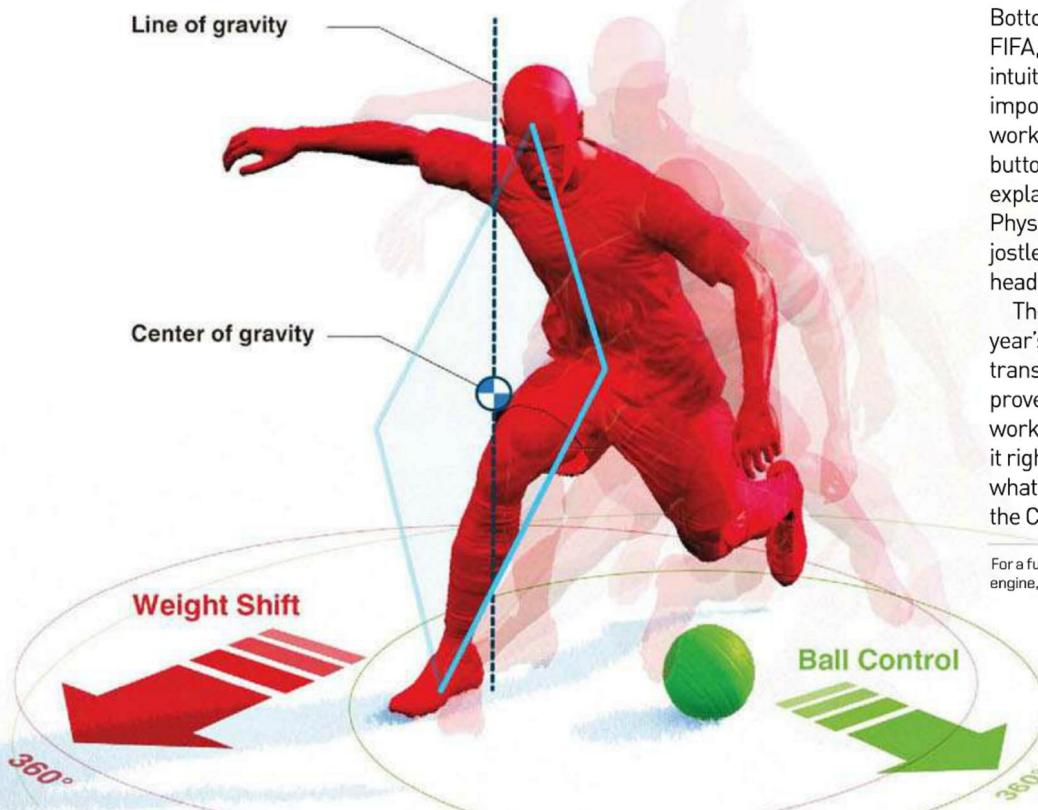
Keep it simple

Bottom line: it looks more fluid than FIFA, and complex skills employ intuitive right-stick sweeps. "It's more important to understand how the trick works in real life, rather than the buttons required to emulate it," explains PES team leader Jon Murphy. Physicality is improved, so players can jostle off the ball for position for headers or tug at opponents' shirts.

The new engine will debut in this year's PS3 PES, and allow a seamless transition to PS4. PES has a lot to prove – and many features are clearly works in progress – but if Konami gets it right this might do for the underdog what oil did for the nouveau riche of the Champions League.

For a full look at the reinvention of PES and its new engine, grab issue #252 of our sister mag Edge, out now.

A player's 360° movement extends to vertical space, enabling unique control of, say, shin high passes.



5

Prophet shoots for the silver screen

Crytek director of creative development on the prospect of Crysis storming its way into cinemas



Well-suited role

Delta Force officer Laurence 'Prophet' Barnes has had a pretty rubbish 30 years in the Crysis universe. Is he dead? Isn't he dead? Will he ever get a slightly less crotch-crushing version of the Nanosuit? From humble cameo to star attraction, the supersoldier has been on quite the journey, and now he's ready to speak his mind, as Crytek's Rasmus Hoejengaard (above) explains. "The fact that he talks now connects you very differently. It helps that James Meredith [who plays Prophet] has a very cool voice."

Hitman. Lara Croft. Max Payne. Some of PlayStation's biggest icons have graced the multiplex in recent years, with each game-inspired film being... um, utter pap. Still, just because we'd rather watch *The Hottie And The Nottie* 17 consecutive times than endure Marky Mark's slo-mo misery doesn't mean *Crysis 3*'s Prophet can't take Tinsel Town by storm. And thanks to the sci-fi shooter's recent, distinctly cinematic web series, seeing Nanosuit murder on a 60-foot IMAX screen could soon be a reality.

"It just made sense to do this project and involve some film people," explains Crytek's director of creative development Rasmus Hoejengaard while we talk about *The 7 Wonders Of Crysis*. The series of online shorts was directed by The Book Of Eli helmer Albert Hughes, with each mini-movie made up from *Crysis 3*

gameplay footage. Having already made films about Jack the Ripper (2001's winningly creepy *From Hell*) and the bleak, Bible-bashing Denzel flick, *Hoejengaard* believes Hughes could easily take on the similarly moody Prophet. "We're all fans of Hughes in general," he says. "Both his cinematics and storytelling are very good, and he was open to trying out this venture and doing an entirely virtual film, which is new to him."

Plotting up

Working with Hughes seems to have given Hoejengaard a taste for cinema success when we ask about the prospect of a *Crysis* film. "That would be very interesting to do," he teases. "We have a powerful toolset, and the cross-pollination between films and games is happening more and more. Film people are very interested in

games, and games people have always been interested in films."

Thanks to the series' patchwork storylines, there's lots of space to weave a big-screen narrative. A film could easily explore where Prophet went after being kidnapped in the first game, or perhaps what those pesky ET Ceph types have been doing on Earth for thousands of years.

With the incredibly purdy tech voodoo provided by CryEngine 3, the gap between film CG and game graphics is quickly being closed, as Hoejengaard notes: "Technologically, things are moving closer and closer, so obviously that's very interesting to us." If he ever makes it to a cinema near you, pray Prophet is better at peddling popcorn than Rockstar's miserable rozzer.

Crysis 3 is out now. Head to p. 112 for the definitive verdict on Prophet's Predator-aping adventure.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Step one Get the wiring right and source some LEDs for the eyes.



Step two Give the body more shape and form using plaster of Paris and card ridges.



Step three Paint your beast and add details to make your Colossus instantly recognisable.



Step four Sit back and admire your handiwork. It was worth your sanity, right? RIGHT?



6 Crafting a Colossus

PS3 fan makes amazing Team Ico-inspired hard drive



Trico treat

Not content with sculpting his Colossus/HDD, Russell has also just made an ace Last Guardian-themed speaker stand from baking clay. "I am right there along with everyone else, patient and hopeful, listening for any good news on its development," he says on the uncertainty around the game. "I do hope someone sees this and realises fans are still waiting."

Your average hard drive is roughly as interesting to look at as slowly drying paint that has patterns of asparagus on it, so may the demon lord Dormin bless (or at least not curse and possess) Loren Russell. The Alaska-based gamer decided to spruce up his PS3's external HDD by transforming it into an incredibly detailed, sad-eyed giant. We'll take 16.

"I came up with the idea when I saw my spare hard drive sitting next to my PS3. I figured that if it was just going to sit there, it might as well be something worth looking at," says Russell. "I decided on Shadow Of The Colossus because it's one of my favourite games. I played it to death when it first came out on PS2 and

when I was debating on the case mod design I started playing the recent HD version. After that, there was no other choice." Hello one colossal, data-storing companion.

Pel in a cell

Based on the twelfth Colossi (known as Pelagia, The Great Sea Monster to his fellow murdered mates) from Team Ico's haunting masterpiece, the drive was an appropriately huge labour of love. "The most challenging aspect was actually finding the proper wiring connector for the LED eyes," Russell admits. "Most hard drives (this one being a simple 2.5-inch USB-powered drive) have an indicator LED that lets you know if it is on and

reading. I wanted to change that single light into the two LED eyes."

After struggling to find a solution for over a month, a quick bit of impromptu destruction put the final touches on Russell's plaster of Paris Colossus. "One day I was fed up and just tore off the LED housing connector and soldered the two LEDs I had to the connector pins on the hard drive and voila! It took about two to three more days after that to finally finish the project." Next up for the enterprising artist was a Last Guardian speaker stand (see 'Trico treat'). At least one Trico will get finished... even if it is made of clay.

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Trouble aboard the Sulaco

How Aliens: Colonial Marines went from iconic spin-off in the making to critical flop



Fangs for nothing
Signs were promising when, in March 2008, our then-staff writer Rachel Weber went to see Aliens: Colonial Marines for issue #17, describing it as "the game we've been staying frosty for" since the film's release 22 years previously. #17 remains the biggest-selling issue of OPM in its current form, suggesting you too were excited by the prospect of the legendary franchise finally getting the game it deserved. Five years on, it's fair to say Gearbox's ET-blaster failed to live up to expectations.

"This is a labour of love." Those were the words Gearbox's Randy Pitchford used to reassure Xenomorph obsessives last April, when he leapt in front of dozens of journalists at a major press event and admitted he'd spent most of his career nicking ideas from the Alien films. It was a statement meant to convince those in attendance that the studio was up to making a game worthy of the movie's most famous monster.

If only we'd known the six-year build-up – Gearbox announced it was working on an Aliens game in December 2006 – would be akin to sitting in the dentist's waiting room for half a decade, then getting all your molars sucked out by a Facehugger. Despite flying in journoes from all over the world, no single-player code was available to play at the event. It was an ominous sign that one of PS3's most wanted games – issue #17 of OPM, with the game on the cover, remains our biggest-selling ever – would never be able to match the hype.

Sure enough, a month later a post appeared on the forums of Texas A&M University sports fansite Texags, claiming to be from an ex-employee of Gearsoft. Responding to some excitement over a preview, he wrote: "I wouldn't get your hopes up too high for Colonial Marines... The development of that game has been a total trainwreck. Gearbox isn't even making the game, except for the multiplayer. Primary development was outsourced to Timegate Studios, which has a less than stellar past."

The comment barely registered at the time, but then in January of this year review code started arriving with journalists, and it was clear the game would not match Aliens fanatics' lofty expectations. For a start, it seemed to lack many of the graphical effects of an earlier demo. Real-time lighting

was missing, smoke and particle effects were gone, and texture detail was down. Something was rotten on LV-426. What had happened?

Group effort

In early February, Pitchford spoke to IGN about how several studios – Timegate, Demiurge Studios and Nerve Software – had helped with development. According to him, Timegate worked on "probably about 20-25% of the total time". But then the Texags comment resurfaced, just as reviews started to come in. Was this the reality? Sega senior producer Matthew J Powers told Playnews, "Absolutely not, the game has been developed by Gearbox Software.

44. The next day, a post appeared on the forums of news aggregation service Reddit, purportedly from another disgruntled ex-member of the dev team. They claimed Gearbox's work on the game had repeatedly stalled due to other projects, notably Borderlands 2 and Duke Nukem Forever. Finally, facing an immovable deadline from Sega, it outsourced much of the campaign to Timegate.

"Timegate managed to scrape together 85% of the campaign, but once Borderlands 2 shipped and Gearbox turned its attention to [Aliens], it became pretty apparent that what had been made was in a pretty horrid state," the post explained. "Campaign didn't make

"Gearbox courted the fanbase of this beloved franchise."

Other studios [like Timegate] helped Gearbox on... single and multiplayer."

But that's not what Timegate appeared to be saying. On 12 February, a moderator on the developer's forum wrote: "Messaged a few people in TG and found out [it] basically had a hand in *everything*. It is responsible for the weapons, the characters, some of the story, a fair amount of the aliens. And I don't mean conceptualisation, it did the actual work of making said weapons and so on. Some had the estimate that 50% [of the] campaign is its work."

Then the reviews started coming in – most negative, many laden with acid blood-fuelled disappointment – and its Metacritic score at press time was

much sense, the boss fights weren't implemented, PS3 was way over memory, etc. Gearbox was pretty unhappy with TG's work, and some of the campaign maps were just completely redesigned from scratch."

PC gaming site Rock Paper Shotgun then contacted another former Timegate employee – and the anonymous source presented a now-familiar message: "Timegate definitely played a much bigger role in the development of Aliens than either Gearbox or Sega is letting on. Aliens: Colonial Marines is essentially Timegate's game. From my understanding, almost all of Timegate has been working on it for a few years, and it's not a small studio."

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A narrative was emerging. Gearbox, under pressure from its publisher and with other projects on its slate, ditched the lion's share of the single-player to Timegate. And what of Timegate - a studio based in Sugar Land, Texas, previously best known for the okay Section 8 and a couple of forgettable FEAR add-ons? Did it take on more than it could handle?

Texas strangers

Reviews of the company on the website Glassdoor, a sort of TripAdvisor for potential employees, are almost universally poor, with ex-employees criticising the extended crunch times and ineffective management. "It's sometimes hard to believe it actually gets any work done with all the producer BS that goes on," claims one review.

Neither Sega nor Timegate has

made any official comment, so all of this remains speculation. But as development costs rise and pressure heightens, outsourcing has become a key part of development – few in the industry would be surprised that great chunks of a triple-A game could be farmed out to other studios. But outsourcing brings with it problems, including quality control. Whatever the case, Colonial Marines was not the game many players had hoped for. Compromises were made, corners cut. Websites have posted videos comparing demo footage to the final game, taking a warm, critical bubble bath in the inconsistencies.

Still, question marks do hang over the sheer force of the backlash. Aliens is a beloved franchise, and writers have had six years to obsess over this latest game translation. Gearbox itself courted that fanbase,

promising a true sequel to James Cameron's movie, prodding at the simmering resentment many still feel over the latter films. It was a hornets' nest of expectation and hubris – and in an era where critical consensus is often built over Twitter, the merest hint of disappointment always had a chance of growing into a scandal.

There is, however, a final ironic sting in this Xeno's stabby tail. Despite the reviews, the game has sold extremely well, becoming the biggest UK release of the year in its first week. While it was rabid fan expectation that contributed to the gruelling critical reception, it could well be the element that saves this title from commercial failure. There could still be money in this for Sega. It's not game over, man.

See our review of Aliens: Colonial Marines – we scored it 6/10 – at officialplaystationmagazine.co.uk.

8

The other Naughty Dog

Co-founder of the Uncharted studio chats next-gen, The Last Of Us, and how he'd fix Crash Bandicoot

Party crasher

Before Gavin worked at Naughty Dog for close to 20 years, he grew up in northern Virginia and had a huge passion for games from the time he was a nipper. "I was the right age to catch the first big wave of gaming in the late '70s and early '80s," he says. "I played all of the arcade classics as they came out and eagerly pestered my dad for an Atari 2600. This was a time when there was a tremendous amount of experimentation and creativity going on in the medium."

Meet the badly behaved pooch that left the doghouse. Without Andrew Gavin, there's a chance Nathan Drake, Sully, Joel and Ellie would never have found a startlingly pretty home on PS3. Even though he left Naughty Dog just before the ultra-talented studio made the first Uncharted, Gavin was instrumental in getting the company off the ground, co-founding the Santa Monica-based developer in 1986 with Jason Rubin. We recently caught up with him for an exclusive chat, where

he talked saving a certain cartoon bandicoot, his love of writing novels and what he thinks Naughty Dog is capable of on next-gen.

OPM How did you go about setting up Naughty Dog with Jason Rubin?

Andrew Gavin At the age of 12, I met Jason in class (we were both bored and loved games). Seeing as I was a great programmer and Jason a great artist, an instant partnership was formed. We sold our first title professionally in 1985, at 15. Our company, first called Jam Software, was renamed Naughty Dog by 1989. We made six games before the original Crash Bandicoot.

OPM Crash Bandicoot seems to have lost his marsupial magic over the years. Do you think his games can be revitalised?

AG Crash needs a total reboot. There's an opportunity to reset the

OPM What do you make of Crash today? Are you sad that he's gone from PlayStation icon to yesterday's mascot?

AG I don't pay much attention to recent Crash games. For me, he's like the hot high-school girlfriend who put on 50 pounds. I just can't look. His post-Naughty Dog games fall down not only in being too goofy, but in gameplay and balance. We tried very hard to make every level evenly paced, addictive and engaging. Crash was about being frantic, but at the same time relatively free of frustration – although some of the levels in the original were too hard.

OPM What was it about PS1 and Sony that made you feel it was the perfect partner?

AG In 1994, Sony didn't have a mascot character. So we set about creating one on the theory that maybe we might be able to slide into that opening. I'm still surprised it worked.

"Crash was goofy – but it wasn't dumb."

history, and go back to his creation story and the original conflict with Cortex. In that context, you could reprise classic Crash 1 and 2's settings and villains. It would make sense to use a more modern, free-roaming style. I would concentrate on Looney Tunes-esque animation and really addictive action. That's what we did with the original Crash, and there's no reason it couldn't be done today. Given the current Crash games, people forget that he was once cool. Our Crash had a certain whimsical edge to him. Sure, it was goofy – but it wasn't dumb.

Ultimately, the relationship with Sony was a really great partnership. Sony is a quality-driven company, and we were a quality-driven studio. We believed in mass-market pulp that through sheer quality rose above its commercial pulp sentiment. This jived well with Sony's culture, which was driven by high-quality products with the broadest appeal.

OPM What do you think of Uncharted and The Last Of Us?

AG Uncharted is in every way a Naughty Dog series. It follows from, and improves upon, the things we



The creator of PlayStation's first mascot. Not a bad legacy, Mr Gavin.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



■ Gavin worked on all three of PS2's Jak games, from the cartoon cheer of the original, to the apocalyptic racing of the darker Jak 3.



CRASH BANDICOOT

■ Crash, Cortex and co's early appeal saw them branch out to the excellent Crash Team Racing.



NAUGHTY DOG



■ Ah, the jaunty jig of a mid-'90s platforming mascot. Crash's appeal hasn't exactly endured, but his 1996 debut is still a charming retro adventure.



025



were working on with Crash and Jak And Daxter – it takes them to the next level. For a long time, Naughty Dog games have been about integrating narrative and gameplay. We wanted to draw people into the world and give them a rich story without detracting from a game's most important quality: fun. Uncharted took this to the next level with storytelling that's better than a lot of movies, while retaining intense playability. I'm also really excited for The Last of Us, as apocalypses and teen girls who fight are two of my favourite things (in fiction).

OPM What do you think Naughty Dog is capable of on next-gen hardware?

AG I think the studio will just keep taking it to the next level. Uncharted 3 and The Last Of Us already look so good it's hard to imagine where there is to go. I expect not only will things look even more real, but the machines will have the power to include more enemies on-screen.

OPM You've started writing novels. What's that like?

AG As a serial creator it was interesting how similar writing a

■ Dexter may be deeply annoying, but his breakout PSP platformer remains one of the best games to appear on Sony's first handheld.

novel was to making a game. They're both very iterative and detail-oriented. My latest novel, Untimed, is about a boy named Charlie, who falls through holes in time. It's very much in the same broad, fun spirit that characterised Naughty Dog games. Creating the world was very similar to what you do with a game. I had to balance the pros and cons of time travel for my heroes. Novels are about character and dramatic tension, but the fundamental creative process is similar.

For more information on Untimed and the rest of Gavin's novels, visit untimed-novel.com.



■ Turns out saving a fantasy kingdom with nowt but a kid and a tiny fairy is easier than getting your hands on a copy of *Ni No Kuni*.

9

Ni no copies

Level-5's JRPG tops the charts despite stock shortages



Making magic

Think the normal version of Level-5's charming caper is hard to get hold of? Hah. Try getting your mitts on the Wizard's Edition, which includes a full version of the Wizard's Companion book and a plush Mr Drippy. A glitch saw Namco's site take far more preorders than it could fulfil, resulting in many gamers cancelling said orders when the news broke. Reddit user PrimeJunt was so miffed at missing out on the special edition, he... built his own version of the book (above). A lot of effort – but it looks darn purdy, mind.

So much for our worrying that none of you would buy it. Yep, during issue #80's *Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch* review we fretted that it might be ignored and left to straddle shop shelves. How wrong we were. If anything, *too* many of you wisely snapped up the gorgeous adventure – making the anime masterpiece harder to pick up than a porcupine slathered in WD-40 as it sold out across the UK throughout February.

Oliver and company

The PS3 exclusive immediately got off to the strongest of sales starts. Helped by stellar reviews, Oliver and Mr Drippy racked up a smash-and-grab win against *Messi*, with *Ni No Kuni* overtaking *FIFA* to top the all-format charts for the week ending 2 February. Such was the demand for the cutesy JRPG, publisher Namco Bandai had to issue a press release to address the stock shortages in the face of huge demand. "We are pleased to confirm that limited stock of *Ni No Kuni* will be made available to

purchase from leading retailers across the UK later this week," read a statement from the company early last month.

Trying to buy the game during its first few weeks on sale conjured up battle-scarred memories of tussling with Christmas shoppers attempting to nab a Furby in the late '90s. As confirmed by production editor Emma's Drippy-less woes (see below), *Ni No Kuni* was unavailable everywhere from Game and Amazon to major supermarkets. Hell, it was easier picking up *Black Ops II* on release day. It seems Namco Bandai was itself surprised by the game's

success, clearly not allocating enough stock to satisfy early demand.

Whether you were lucky enough to get hold of *Ni No Kuni* on day one or had to wait a few agonising weeks to be serenaded by a Welsh fairy, the game's success is something to cherish. In a market constantly clogged with military shooters and diluted threequels, it's all kinds of encouraging to see PS3 players' good taste propel a wonderful, leftfield JRPG to the software sales summit. Lets just hope Namco makes a few more discs if Oliver gets a sequel.

For more screens, stories and our review of *Ni No Kuni*, head to officialplaystationmagazine.co.uk.



Material girl

"I spent over a fortnight after *Ni No Kuni*'s release trying to track it down, but no shop or online retailer could provide me with Welsh-accented JRPG cuteness. I tried both Bristol branches of Game, plus the one in Bath, and three supermarkets. I even shamelessly phoned my mum and got her to look in her local supermarket. Three weeks on, I finally tracked it down on Amazon Marketplace just before payday. It left me broke, but who needs dinner when you've got Drippy?" **Emma Davies**, Production editor

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10 Will the delay do GTA V a favour?

Our scribes brawl over the Los Santos sandbox's September push

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Yes
Explains patient open-world frolicker,
Joel Gregory

The spring release date plastered across the final screens of its trailer always looked ambitious. Sure, Rockstar's revamped LA pretender seems sparkling and shiny on the surface. But no one's actually played GTA V yet – and you don't go from a couple of trailers to boxes hitting shelves in a few short months with a game this size.

Rather than crying into your bloodstained baseball bats over the fact that we're still months away from the return of the biggest sandbox around, though, there are plenty of reasons to rev your Banshee engines with glee. For one, this year is already top-loaded with quality: Tomb

Raider, God Of War: Ascension, The Last Of Us – these are all arriving in spring, while autumn was looking like a barren, inhospitable wasteland for the committed gamer. No more.

Wait and CJ

More importantly, the extra months will allow Rockstar to do two things. Firstly, the studio will be able to properly realise one of the biggest environments in sandbox history, adding in the detail and nuance the genre often forgoes. We're talking about one of the most high-profile game releases ever – do you want it done quick, or do you want it done right? And secondly, that September release date means we'll be a lot nearer to PS4's release window. Grand Theft Auto V in super-mega HD with special enhanced doohickeys? That has to be worth waiting for.

Staying patient in the wait for Los Santos shenanigans? Text GTA YES to 87474.



No
Whines Rockstar worshipper,
Dave Meikleham

WAAA! Me want new Gwand Thweft Autwo now! Eager man-baby no wike extwa six-month wait for megatwon twiple-A game. Hush now, inner infant Meiks. Yes, being plonked in the world's most sarky, sociopathic waiting room until 17 September is going to be fun like having Franklin's mutt Chop sic your, er, man area... actually, I'm struggling to think of a 'but'. I reeeeaaaally want GTA V in May.

Rockstar the boat

So while I should don my top hat of reason (the one that says 'think how much more stable the framerate will be during those bank jobs'), I'd rather have my bonce freeze while I complain

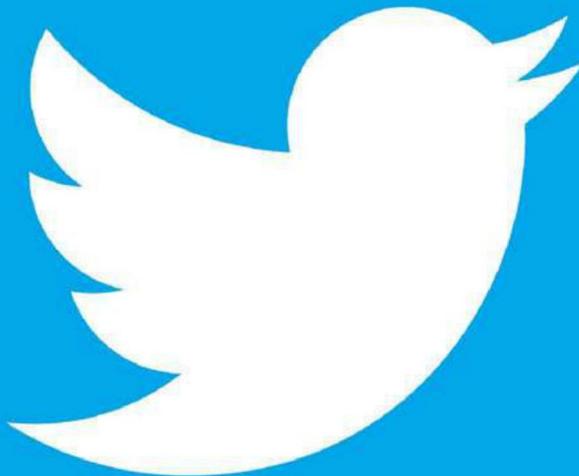
about the delay. Sales-wise, it can do nothing but harm the game. GTA may still be a cultural phenomenon among older PS3 players, but the series has been out in the car-jacking wilderness for five years. Last time a Rockstar North masterpiece conquered the charts it didn't have to compete for shelf space with sales juggernauts such as Black Ops or post-Ezio Assassin's Creed.

Assuming there are actually any high street shops left to sell the amoral open-worlder this autumn, putting it up against a COD or Battlefield will only damage its sales. From a critical standpoint the extra polish will do GTA V the power of good. Yet from a business one, where it'll likely be competing with MW4 and FIFA 14, the outlook ain't so rosy. Screw a Liberty City minute: I don't want to wait another Los Santos second.

Filled with frowny-faced rage due to delayed sandbox syndrome? Text GTA NO to 87474.

OPM all hours!

Follow our tweets



Want to keep in touch with Official PlayStation 24/7? Follow the team on Twitter now for news, gossip, comps and the chance to connect to thousands of other PS3 gamers.



@OPM_UK

Killzone Shadow Fall looks – and I'm trying to put this as scientifically as I can – friggin' sensational.
Official PlayStation Magazine UK



@BenjiWilson

I once interviewed Yoshinori Ono while he changed into a Chun Li outfit in a car park. Pretty incredible.
Ben Wilson, editor



@leonHurley

Of all the odd choices in Dead Space 3, the oddest has to be Phil Collins in the ads.
Leon Hurley, associate editor (online)



@j0el_G

After first-timing the Four Kings I am now – *sigh* – having a problem with Ceaseless Discharge.
Joel Gregory, deputy editor



@emcetera

I don't need many words for this morning – 'ugh' and 'ouch' pretty much cover it.
Emma Davies, production editor



@milfcoppock

The office @Loopermovie debate continues, or maybe it's already happened. I'm not quite sure.
Milford Coppock, managing art editor



@CaptNorth

Instead of tax on junk food and fizzy drinks, why don't we just make fruit and gyms cheaper?
Andrew Leung, deputy art editor



@NathanDitum

Turn on football, see Dembélé smash ball in goal, win. I wish all football was this straightforward.
Nathan Ditum, contributing writer

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - UK

Agenda

PlayStation
news, views,
happenings
and people...

Space thing

If you're already thinking, 'Wait one Necromorph-dismembering minute, that's not meant to be Isaac!' then you get to wear your geek badge proudly for the rest of the day. This recreation of Drew Struzan's iconic *The Thing* poster is by digital artist Ron Guyatt and was commissioned by EA for a *Dead Space* art show that's just finished in Paris. Since Mr Clarke's snowy escapades were influenced by John Carpenter's iconic scare-fest, it's a perfect pairing of the two creature features. "To recreate the poster I had to essentially reverse engineer Struzan's work," Guyatt tells us. "Doing that gave me a new appreciation and connection with the original poster. It's such a unique thing to have an art show that's going along with a game release, and I feel honoured to be a part of its launch."

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10 questions for...

Yara Khoury

Dead Space 3 producer on internships and Final Fantasy admiration



Developer profile

Yara Khoury

Associate producer, Visceral Games

Location San Francisco, CA

Years in industry 4

Twitter @YaraTwit

History Khoury began her career as an assistant product manager at EA France, popping briefly to Ubisoft in 2009 before returning to EA to work on the production of Dead Space 2 and 3.



1 What game from the past has had the biggest effect on the way you make games today?

I don't think there's just one game. I take inspiration from lots of different types of games – Japanese animation like Final Fantasy, for example, and RPGs such as Skyrim. Of course I play Resident Evil, and I can't forget Silent Hill. It's really hard for me to play that game, actually [laughs]. I try to play a lot of games that fall under the category of our genre, because as producers we have to understand what makes other games work and what players like about them. I try to figure out what is interesting in other types of games. Dead Space 3 was originally a survival horror game, but it has evolved into something much more than that. [There are] things that kind of pertain to the RPG genre, such as weapon crafting. We absolutely got our inspiration from those kinds of games.

2 We've had motion control, 3D, cameras... what do you think will be the next big innovation for games?

I think what we saw at CES 2013 – something that makes the screen much bigger and increases the immersion. Virtual reality is a big thing today, and I think people like something that makes them feel like they're in there. That is going to be a really interesting branch of the gaming industry, where people feel like they're actually experiencing things and want to put all their emotions into the game.

3 What have been the high and low points of your career so far?

A high point has definitely been

working on Dead Space 3. I'm a pretty young person and I've been working in the industry for about three-and-a-half years, so for me to be able to put Dead Space on my list of games is pretty huge. Low point? I've been pretty lucky: I've been able to work at EA and Ubisoft. I'd say the low points are when you're having to think, 'How am I going to find a job?' – it's so hard to get a job in this industry, because there are so many people that work within it. There are moments when you think, 'What do I have that is so special it makes a company like EA hire me?' It's those moments when you think [about] if you can actually make games your career.

4 What matters more - review scores or sales?

The Dead Space team is all about making quality games. We're all very passionate gamers and dedicate a lot of effort to crafting experiences that stand out and we hope gamers enjoy. That's what we're about and I think it reflects in our games.

5 If you had to make one golden rule of game design, what would it be?

Don't make a game for yourself, make it for your players. For example, when you look at puzzles you have created, you always think, 'Oh, this is going to be too easy.' But then you go into consumer testing and sometimes people have no idea what they're supposed to do.

6 If you were to sign a star developer from any team, who would it be and why?

I'd probably like to work with Hironobu Sakaguchi. The guy has made it possible

RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers



It may not be immediately obvious, but the Final Fantasy series has influenced our Necro adventures.

for us to play games such as Final Fantasy, and I also really like the story behind it. When his company was about to go down, he was like, "This is the game I've always wanted to do – I'm going to do it." Despite whatever the hell



Khoury has been on two outings with Isaac, working as a producer on Dead Space 2 and 3.

what you like about them, to actually making your own game or partaking in projects and software development. Something that shows you are able to [complete] a project and bring it to an end is very important.

"We absolutely took inspiration from RPGs."

happened, he wanted to see it come to life. I like that.

7 If you weren't a games developer, what would you be doing instead?

It would be either sustainable development – I had some offers [from] banks that have side-activities [offering] that kind of thing – or something else in creation.

8 What's your top tip for someone who wants to pursue a career in the games industry?

Personally, I had a more business-oriented education and I always believed what would make me break in would be my experiences in the industry. So I always tried my hardest to get internships. Internships are my number-one tip to anyone – just go and knock on doors and send your resumé. Don't just think there's no chance – always go for anything that can work. My other tip is that it's actually pretty easy today to make your own games and side-projects, which show how much passion you have for the industry. From writing a blog about games and saying

9 You've got unlimited time, an unlimited team and an unlimited budget. What game do you make?

I'd probably go for something completely crazy, something probably more RPG-orientated. I've always liked this new wave of movies such as 28 Days Later and the like. I was hoping that Ubisoft would do something like that [with] I Am Alive. When I saw [it] I thought, 'This is something I absolutely want to play.' It would have to be a huge blockbuster, though, so something similar to that.

10 What do you think it will take for games to be accepted as part of mainstream culture?

Oh my God, they are so there already. What are you talking about? [Laughs] It is actually funny, because when I tell people I work in games and they respond, "I'm not into gaming," I always ask if I can see their phone. 99% of the time I find a game on there, whether it's Tetris or Bejeweled or anything like that. This is gaming, and more and more people are playing through their mobile and Facebook.

Which gaming giants would you like to see us fire ten questions at? Email opm@futurenet.com or tweet us at [@OPM_UK](https://twitter.com/OPM_UK)

Ubisoft is claiming that Beyond Good & Evil 2 will definitely see the light of day eventually. Could it be coming to PS4?



Sony's John Hight has suggested Diablo III won't need an online connection to play on PS4.



Is there a chunk of story-based DLC for Dishonored in the offing? A trophy list suggests so...



Reports say a special Washington Edition of ACIII will launch this spring.

GT6 is slated for release on PS3, so hopefully we'll be seeing it sooner rather than later.



Leaked trophy lists hint at three upcoming DLC packs for NFS: Most Wanted.

Season one of The Walking Dead might not be over, with writer Gary Whitta teasing "a little something extra".





Jet set Raiden

Metal Gear Rising murals appear across the UK

You're on the train to work, gazing out of the window having forgotten that all-important copy of OPM and... wait, is your Metal Gear-obsessed mind playing tricks on you, or is that Raiden? Well, if you're in London, Liverpool or Leeds, you might not be going mad after all, as Konami has pulled a Banksy and painted murals of the cyborg on prominent buildings.

Creative aerosol-sprayer Endoftheline is responsible for the grand-scale graffiti and,

since the game abandons all notions of being sneaky, Raiden was placed in prime commuter viewing spots leading up to the launch of Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance. "With a game of this stature, it's fitting to have the central hero looming over key cities via these stunning works of art," says Brian Ayers, Konami UK's PR and marketing manager.

The locations were kept secret until the ink was on the walls, but Raiden can be seen on

Sclater Street in London, Aire Street in Leeds and Ropewalks Square in Liverpool. "It is an honour to be working with Konami, Japan's leading computer-game publisher and exporter of giant robots," say Endoftheline. "Metal Gear Solid inspired a generation. With great respect for Yoji Shinkawa, we will endeavour to replicate the key Raiden artwork on enormous walls across the country." Now that is an art attack.



Pro sprayer Endoftheline specialises in massive murals and has previously worked on Darksiders 2 and Soulcalibur V. We're sure even grumpy Raiden would approve of its work.

Not all can be fixed with a cup of coffee. Ross Baker wakes up in digital form.



Tie-in fighter

Jumping into Bedlam with Christopher Brookmyre

Scottish author Christopher Brookmyre is best known for his darkly comic crime novels, but he harbours a not-so-secret gaming obsession that has spilled out in his first sci-fi book, *Bedlam*. He's also working with developer Redbedlam to create a game, due out early next year.

"We got on to the idea of someone being lost inside a computer, [then] I thought about someone being inside a videogame," Brookmyre explains to us. "To me, the eureka moment was thinking, 'What if you're not the hero? What if you're one of the grunts that you normally mow down in the first level?' From there, everything just took off."

Game changer

Brookmyre's hero, Ross Baker, wakes up in the pixelated form of a cyborg soldier and ends up on a dizzying journey through a multitude of game worlds



as he quests to find his way home. From having coffee in Assassin's Creed's Jerusalem (described as the "world's biggest soft play area") to creating his own Sims-style house before travelling to a land where dragons circle the skies, Baker stumbles though the evolution of gaming from the ZX Spectrum onwards. "One of the things that I think is really exciting is the idea of escaping from one game into another," says Brookmyre. "You might initially start off with really high-end graphics and then find yourself in a '90s game, or you might find yourself in a game from a different era but you've got the weapons from the one you just left."

The novel of *Bedlam* is out now, and is packed with nods and winks to gaming culture and – unlike every tie-in we've ever trudged through – is thankfully a bold and exciting sci-fi in its own right.

OPM HOT TOPIC

What games franchise would you reboot?



Rasmus Hoejengaard
Director of creative development, Crytek

"Golden Axe. It would be interesting just [as] a creative process to take an old franchise and put it in the [modern] world."



James Nicholls
Chief games designer, Codemasters

"The one I get asked the most is probably Micro Machines. Everyone's always asking me 'when's the new [one]?' So yes, I'm sure I'd have to go with that."



Martin Turton
Co-founder, Clever Beans

"Road Blasters. It was an old Atari driving game where you could shoot other cars. It was primitive, but it was so exciting. I'd be worried a reboot wouldn't capture [that]."



Dan Sochan
Producer, United Front Games

"Genghis Khan from the late '80s. It's my favourite strategy game of all time and I think it had a lot of unique elements that I haven't seen since."

WHO SAID THAT? V.I.P. quotes

"Haven't been scared yet... #deadspac3 Isn't **Cliff Bleszinski** so brave?"



"Boyzband 'where are they now?' picture." Seems comedian **Limmy** is impressed by Bungie's outfits.

"Meanwhile, Findus unveil their new Pony SlayStation." It's not just game consoles **Peter Serafinowicz** wants to see revealed.



"I think it's gonna be more like me... running around, and the other people shooting each other and dying." **Eva Longoria** shows off her knowledge of the Black Ops II Revolution DLC.



Taking liberties

Why Joel Gregory is haunted by his inability to finish Grand Theft Auto IV

I bought Grand Theft Auto IV on release day, excitedly careening into Liberty City to mow down pedestrians, fistfight hobos and, as it turned out, go for some of history's most tedious games of bowling. But just for one day. See, I was only a month away from taking my university finals and, try as I might, I couldn't find any evidence of past Oxford philosophy papers including questions about the morality of an illegal immigrant gunning down psychopathic club owners with substance addictions. Back in your box, Mr Bellic.

Once I was 'finding my way' having returned home in the summer (read: mooching off my mother while pretending that 30 minutes a day browsing job sites on the internet was a full-time occupation) I stepped back in. As ever with a fresh burst of GTA, a joyful explosion of violence, crime and police chases ensued as I tried to get my wanted rating as high as possible and set a world record for barrel rolls in a taxi cab. But

I trudged through the game, mission by badly designed mission. I fully appreciate that nearly five years after release is hardly the ideal time to critique a videogame – and I feel like there should be some kind of anonymous meetings for people like me – but... I don't like it. There, I've said it: I do not like the most critically revered game in history.

More than that, in the light of modernity I don't think it's actually very good. The lack of mid-mission checkpoints is a sin that makes Eve's



Even fluffy dice can't make Niko's missions less irksome.

"This is my column, and I don't like GTA IV. So there."

unfortunately for Niko's climb up the criminal ladder, a short-lived World Of Warcraft addiction followed by gainful employment (booo) put paid to the Eastern European's progress.

Stealing time

However, last year I made a resolution. With GTA number five lurking on the horizon, and each new trailer filling me with Grand Theft Awe, I decided that I would complete the previous game before I was beckoned to Los Santos in the summer. With Vice City the only GTA I'd ever previously finished this would be no mean feat, but I was determined. I even deleted my previous save data so I could start afresh and fully immerse myself in proceedings.

Unfortunately that determination lasted around an hour, steadily being replaced by irritation, exasperation and eventually rage as

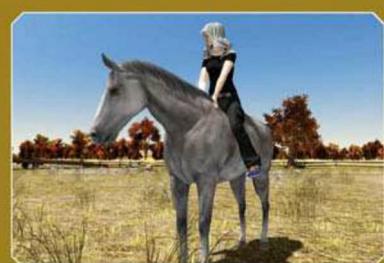
whole apple-eating thing look like a minor traffic violation, instantly stripping the joy from any task you might fail even once. The cover and targeting systems combine to make gunfights as precise and enjoyable as playing Laser Quest while having an epileptic fit. And the driving feels like trying to drag a block of plutonium around a gravel pit using a doggy leash.

I'm well aware that it's me, and that I'm badmouthing a game that, in its day, was something truly special. But I don't care. It's 2013 and this is my column, and I don't like it. So there. No amount of atmosphere or good scripting can save a game you're begrudgingly rushing through just to finish. So you know what I've done? I've given up and turned to Dark Souls. That's right, I actually find Dark Souls less frustrating than Grand Theft Auto IV. My name's Joel, and I'm a GTA-ophobe.

LETTER FROM HOME

Louise Blain finds herself saddle sore when she visits Home on the range

DDaddy didn't buy me a pony. Perhaps this is the reason that, after a trip to the equine section of Home's endless retail establishments, I am now cantering around The Prairie astride a steel-grey stallion I have named Isaac. We've been trotting through pixelated flowers, and even the 'Trespassers will be shot, survivors will be shot again' sign can't dampen our sprightly mood as we gallop around in another circle. I stop to take in the view and let Isaac have a breather. He twitches his ears but stays eerily silent as I realise there's not much left to do now we've seen the big field. I now remember why Daddy didn't buy me a pony. I never asked for one.





Fischer Audio Ceramique Headphones

The aural equivalent of the PS3 banana controller (except these actually exist), the curvy, ceramic earbuds house top-quality sound-boosting tech.

£79.95

fischeraudio.eu

Custom Batman Arkham City Converse

True heroes can customise their shoes, from the lining colour to the Arkham hero/villain assigned to each foot.

£60

converse.co.uk



Space Invaders Chess Set

Having blasted through its Kickstarter target, this uses original characters from the retro space-'em-up. Coffee table geek chic at its best.

£1TBC

nmilaser.com



Assassin's Creed Connor Belt

A touch more subtle than a wrist-mounted blade or full hooded cloak. Accessorise in killer style with this fetching leather belt.

£38.11

store.ubiworkshop.com

Mad Catz Street Fighter X Sanrio Fightstick

This 25th anniversary SF accessory means serious business. So does the colour!

£101.66

store.gameshark.com



iCade Jr Mini Arcade Cabinet

So we didn't need to strap our iPad to that arcade machine after all? This iPhone version of Ion's Bluetooth cabinet has a rotating cradle and even comes with batteries.

£16.32

thinkgeek.com



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press

Want that

Lust-have kit for PlayStation people

Mr Jones Watches Last Laugh

This smiling skull displays the time on its teeth. It's powered by your movements, so expect old boney to start frowning if you go into hibernation.

£165.08

watchismo.com



PlayStation 3 Controller

So we didn't need to strap our iPad to that arcade machine after all? This iPhone version of Ion's Bluetooth cabinet has a rotating cradle and even comes with batteries.

£16.32

thinkgeek.com

Side View

If you're looking for the W900A means you're already sailing very close to your own triple-dip recession, then you may be wondering why you'd need a 'second-screen' experience. Side View is a complementary app for your tablet that combines an interactive programme guide with extra content related to whatever you're watching on the big screen. It also gives you easy access to Facebook and Twitter so you can discuss *Real Housewives Of Des Moines* to your heart's content.

Long duct speaker

The boffinists at Sony Towers wisely recognise that there's little point in sending your eyes first class if your ears are stuck in coach B, struggling to enjoy asthmatic-kitten audio that makes Charlton Heston sound like Gabrielle Aplin. That's why they've hidden a snaking 1.2-metre long speaker duct into the rear of the W900A, enabling the kind of bowel-loosening bass that makes an involuntary 'brown-out' a badge of honour.

**Sense of Quartz**

Far from being just a meaningless bit of PR guffery, Sense Of Quartz is the design ethos of all 2013 Sony Bravia TVs including the W900A series. It's meant to evoke the clean, sharply faceted aspect of a quartz crystal. Frankly, when a TV looks this gorgeous from every angle, Sony could call the design 'Debonair Sex Pirate' for all we care.

Sony Bravia W900A LED TV

What's that? Your HDTV *doesn't* have Quantum Dots in it? Time to upgrade...

Price £TBC
presscentre.sony.eu

In a nutshell

With their four-times-more-detailed-than-1080p-Full-HD willy-waving, it's no surprise that 4K or Ultra HDTVs were the stars of this year's Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Sin City, Nevada. Problem is, while the tech is lush like a particularly fit rainforest, it currently doesn't have the infrastructure (read: stuff to watch) to warrant the eye-watering admission fee (Sony's own 84" UHD OLED megabeast will set you back around £16,000 for example). Which is why the Bravia W900A series is the real star for early adopting disciples of the order of the shiny goggle box. Thanks to some pretty amazing new science under the bonnet, it manages to take already pristine LED visuals perilously, magnificently close to OLED levels of omigodness.

What's so special?

It all comes down to Quantum Dots. The way bog-standard LED TVs are lit means that there is an unavoidable amount of light from frequencies around the one you want to see (orange with red, for example) that slips through to the screen. Not so with the W900A. It uses an array of Quantum Dots (tuned nano-crystals, science fans) that

emit a single, predetermined frequency of light when the LED shines on them. The resulting Triluminos display increases the colour range by up to 50%, which means your eyes get to take a photon bath in exquisitely subtle and natural tones, no matter what you're watching.

Tell me more

Still not satisfied? Well how about the W900A's X-Reality Pro image processor? It analyses the texture, colour, outline and contrast of every cursed frame of Alvin And The Chipmunks: Chipwrecked and sharpens each accordingly. What's more, the X-Reality Pro engine can do a real number on less-than-perfect video sources (web-optimised stuff from YouTube, say) comparing every image, pixel by pixel with its gigantic Reality Creation Database and actively substituting HD versions of matching textures where possible. Witchcraft? Possibly, but the good kind, that can upgrade shonky video to HD just like that. Oh, and as a parting shot, if you own a compatible Sony Xperia smartphone, you can simply tap it against the NFC-enabled TV remote to mirror your phone screen on the W900A in an instant. Very nice.

The facts

- Screen: 55" Triluminos LED display
- Dimensions: TBC
- Weight: TBC
- Image processor: X-Reality Pro
- Sound: S-FORCE Front Surround 3D



PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up ▼ Down ● Non mover + New entry

PS3

1	+	Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance
2	+	Crysis 3
3	●	FIFA 13
4	●	Call Of Duty: Black Ops II
5	▼	Aliens: Colonial Marines
6	▼	Dead Space 3
7	▼	Far Cry 3
8	▼	Need For Speed: Most Wanted
9	▼	Assassin's Creed III
10	▼	Hitman: Absolution

Source GfK Chart-Track (ukie.org.uk)

PS Vita

1	+	Persona 4: Golden
2	▲	Need For Speed: Most Wanted
3	●	FIFA 13
4	▲	Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified
5	▼	Virtua Tennis 4
6	▼	Assassin's Creed III: Liberation
7	▼	LittleBigPlanet
8	●	Sonic & All-Stars RT
9	▲	WRC 3
10	▼	Lego Lord Of The Rings

Source GfK Chart-Track (ukie.org.uk)

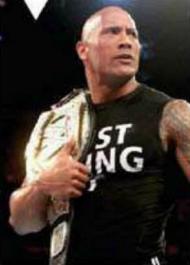
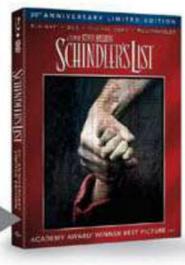
PSP

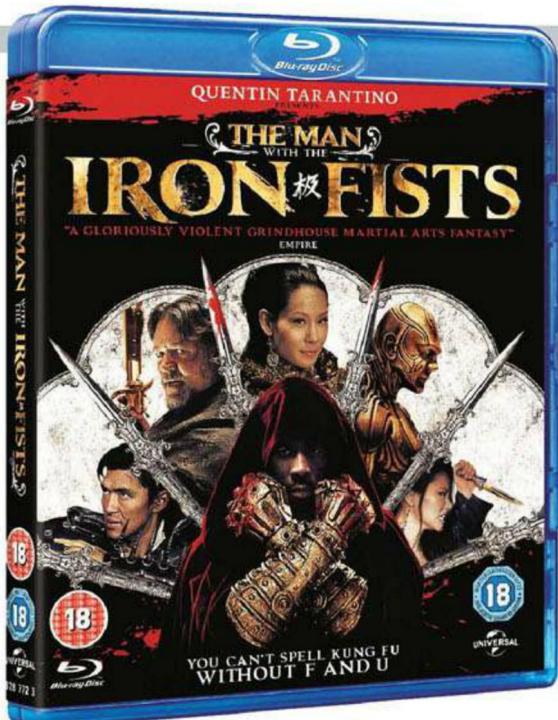
1	●	Gran Turismo
2	●	LittleBigPlanet
3	●	Motorstorm: Arctic Edge
4	●	Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier
5	▲	GTA: Vice City Stories
6	▼	Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines
7	▲	Lego Batman
8	▼	Sonic Rivals 2
9	▼	Harry Potter: HBP
10	▼	Ratchet & Clank: SM

Source GfK Chart-Track (ukie.org.uk)

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	12 MAR Bridgend's finest Welsh metallers Bullet For My Valentine scream, aim and fire at Birmingham's O2 Academy. bulletformyvalentine.com/uk		14 Dubz step X Factor judge turned solo star Tulisa supports Ne-Yo at Birmingham's LG Arena. Pleasant view, but pack earplugs. tulisaofficial.com		15 Issue 82 on sale You already know this, because you're reading it now. Send happy or sad feedback to opm@futurenet.com .	
18 Missing lips Gaming spin-off flick Silent Hill: Revelation comes to Blu-ray today. It's not just the quality that's scary. facebook.com/silenthillrevelation			21 No horses Fresh off the release of new album Graffiti On The Train, Stereophonics turn Cheltenham Racecourse into an indie-rock venue. stereophonics.com			24 Duck breaker New Mercedes man Lewis Hamilton seeks a long-overdue first Malaysian Grand Prix win at Sepang. formula1.com
25 Movie toon Check out what ground-breaking animation looked like in 1988 with the Who Framed Roger Rabbit 25th Anniversary Blu-ray. amazon.co.uk	26 Cloudy outset At long, long [long] last, Booker and Elizabeth take to the skies of Columbia – and your PS3 – in Bioshock Infinite. bioshockinfinite.com		28 	29 Fishy tale Love Finding Nemo? Of course you do. So pop down to your local goggleplex to see it in 3D for the first time ever. disney.co.uk/finding-nemo		
1 APR Win RZA cans! The Man With The Iron Fists hits Blu-ray today. For a chance to win a copy plus a pair of RZA Premium headphones, enter the comp opposite. ironfists.com	02 Baller boys Famous exhibition b-ball team Harlem Globetrotters dribble, dink and dunk their way around Manchester Arena. harlemglobetrotters.com		05 Fright club Close the curtains and prepare for scares as shooter sequel Painkiller: Hell & Damnation lands on PS3 today. paintkillergame.com	06 Nag race Chuck a tenner on Nigri's Boy, We Heart Drake or Another Horse Name We Just Made Up at the Grand National, starting 4.15pm. aintree.co.uk	07 Huge Johnson Can't smell what The Rock is cooking? [Inhalts.] Yep, it's definitely WrestleMania XXIX, live tonight on Sky Box Office. www.com	
08 Seminal cinema Schindler's List 20th Anniversary Blu-ray is out today. No punchline here: merely a demand that you buy it immediately. amazon.co.uk		10 Long songs Meat Loaf's final UK tour stops off at London's O2 Arena, and he'd do anything to persuade you to attend. Okay, maybe not that. meatloaf.net		12 Apr Issue 83 on sale. Subscribe now on page 80.		13 Show down The first FA Cup semi sees one team face another at Wembley for a place in, er, another game at Wembley. Still, you'll watch anyway. thefacup.com



1 April
The Man With
The Iron Fists is
out on Blu-ray
and DVD.

WESC
• WeAretheSuperlativeConspiracy

Punch swag

Win a pair of RZA Premium headphones!

Paddling in the nostalgic gore of '70s and '80s kung-fu classics (not with bare feet!), *The Man With The Iron Fists* is directed by – and stars – long-time friend of Tarantino, RZA, with Eli Roth on co-writing duties. The film arrives on Blu-ray and DVD on 1 April. To celebrate, we've got a pair of RZA Premium headphones – RRP £249.99 – from Wesc for one lucky winner, plus ten copies of the Blu-ray for runners-up. For a chance to win, just answer this question:

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RZA was the co-founder of which American hip-hop group?

A EPMD

B PUBLIC ENEMY

C WU-TANG CLAN

To enter, send a text with the word 'Iron' followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474. Or enter online at futurecomps.co.uk/opm82. The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date: 12/04/13.



FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM

This month we visit OPM #17

A Xenomorph graced the cover of OPM #17 with our exclusive look at *Aliens: Colonial Marines*. We said "Our favourite sci-fi film finally gets the game it deserves", before detailing the tech, enemies, and all manner of reasons why this would be a defining shooter experience. Half a decade later and there's really only one thing to say: we were wrong, and we're very, very sorry. Slaps on wrists all round.

In News we were all aflutter at the prospect of first-person free-runner *Mirror's Edge*. "It looks different, feels different and you don't even carry a gun," we squealed, happily ignoring the presence of, uh, guns in the game. We marched to opposite ends of the battlefield over whether setting *Call Of Duty 5* during WW2 was a good move, with writer Steve Williams asserting, "It's putting on its Das Boots and getting ready to stomp your face – forever." Seeing as COD has been dominating the shooter market ever since, consider us truly stomped.

We were readying the cardboard boxes in Previews for the launch of *Metal Gear Online* – "the game still feels very Metal Gear at heart," we said – and the outpouring of sadness when the servers were turned off last June suggests you all felt the same way.

Reviews saw a deity-sized 10/10 going to *God Of War: Chains Of Olympus*, which swept us up in its "moreish combat" and "elegant, bloody ballet". Faring less well, however, were *NFL Tour* (4/10) – "a game that does everything but pat the player on the head" – and *Army Of Two* (6/10). "A noisy ride along a narrow strip of damaged concrete," we said of the latter, "but so is the M1 and it's hard to get very excited about that." Quite.



FIVE MINUTE SKIVE

Games to play when the boss isn't looking.



Skywire 2
Ah, cable car – such a pleasant, relaxing way to travel. If you ignore the mechanical animals firing projectiles in order to smash up your gondola. Despite the perils, this is a colourful, addictive joy.
tinyurl.com/opmskywire



Short History Of The World
The seven wonders were definitely built through mini-games. If our school history lessons had involved this much frantic clicking, we might have taken notice.
tinyurl.com/omphisworld



The Company Of Myself
If you could create clones of yourself, would you ever truly be lonely? Yeah, we're all philosophers at heart. Give this a spin and you might just find out the answer. We did say 'might'.
tinyurl.com/opmmymself

back issues

Feed your obsession



Issue #74
September 2012

- Star Wars 1313
- Tomb Raider
- Sleeping Dogs
- Dishonored



Issue #75
October 2012

- Call Of Duty: Black Ops II
- 75 Greatest PlayStation Games
- Hitman: Absolution
- Grid 2



Issue #76
November 2012

- Assassin's Creed III
- Far Cry 3
- FIFA 13
- Borderlands 2

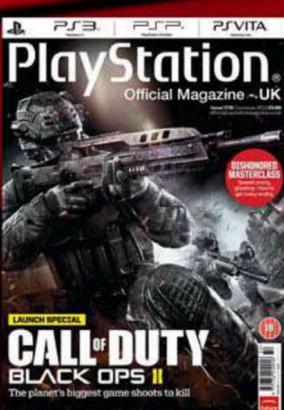


Issue #77
December 2012

- Hitman: Absolution
- Metal Gear Solid Special
- Call Of Duty: Black Ops II
- Platinum Madness

Back issues

Late to the party? There's no need to miss out...



Issue #78
Christmas 2012

- Call Of Duty: Black Ops II
- Dishonored
- Assassin's Creed III
- PS3 Guilty Pleasures



Issue #79
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- Beyond: Two Souls
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Issue #81
March 2013

- Killzone: Mercenary
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- Dead Space 3
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Preview

54**RESIDENT EVIL:
REVELATIONS**

Resi's first lady Jill returns in this HD upgrade.

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

Previews

041

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

Spring has well and truly sprung, and this month's Previews is all about the new beginnings. There's your chance to build a racing franchise from the ground up in Grid 2's revamped career mode, Michael's attempt at a clean slate away from the gangbang lifestyle in GTA V, and Resident Evil: Revelations' leap into HD from its 3DS origins. It's official: there are more new leaves being turned over here than in an errant child's naughty-step monologue.

And all that's before we've moved on to reskinned co-op shooter Fuse, rebuilt-for-console MMO Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn and new Media Molecule IP Tearaway. Not that MM has left behind the ultra-adorable stylings of sackboy, mind.

So c'mon into this month's section. All welcome, no matter what you've done in the past – we're not here to judge, after all. As long as you're here with good intentions, we're willing to let you have that clean new slate. Now enjoy.

**42****GRID 2**

We get the inside line on the all-new World Series Of Racing. Yeah, apparently that's a thing now. And guess what? Your opponents will not be driving like gentlemen.

**48****GRAND THEFT AUTO V**

An ex-criminal kingpin, a young street hustler and a redneck psychopath mean triple trouble and thrice the fun in the ultraviolent sandbox. Can we fast-forward to September now?

**50****TEARAWAY**

That endearing little envelope head has a message inside it, just for you. But could you really bring yourself to rip it open? Good heavens, you absolute monster.



Preview

The Next Big Thing Format PS3 ETA 31 May Pub Codemasters Dev Codemasters

Grid 2

△ 2 ○ Fast × Not □ Spurious

Who's the best driver in the world? Well, yes, *clearly* it's Fernando Alonso. But let's pretend the most seductive pair of eyebrows in motorsport wasn't such an obvious deity in flame-retardant overalls – how would you settle this age-old argument? There's the Race Of Champions, but with just a single weekend to rattle through everything from stock and touring cars to buggy racers, it's not quite the definitive metric of motoring mastery. Grid 2's answer? Create the World Series Of Racing.

"This quest to find the ultimate racing driver is the inspiration for Grid 2," explains chief game designer James Nicholls. "We've taken this concept and just exploded it." The idea is this: a privately wealthy petrolhead named Patrick Callahan wants to create the definitive automotive spectacle. American muscle cars

tearing up the streets at one event, European supercars burning rubber on historic tracks the next, Asian drifters getting loose on some exotic tarmac later still. But this isn't going to happen overnight. Callahan needs a young, raw talent to be the poster boy for the sport, attract teams, sponsors and grow the franchise. And that promising driver is... Kate Winslet. Alright, we're pulling your leg. It's you. You're the face of the WSR, and as your renown grows, so does the sport.

Recruitment drive

Newly signed by Callahan, the Bernie Ecclestone of this burgeoning new organisation (but less like a mummified Paul McCartney), your objective for the first season is about

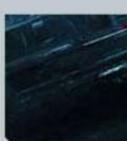
calling in contacts and convincing American teams to join the travelling circus... by beating their asses on the track. Similarly to Grid's first season, you're operating out of a base that looks as much a professional race team's HQ as it does a background set in a Ke\$ha music vid about partying in dilapidated garages. The untamed American RWDs you race in and against are the perfect showcase for the game's new, "built from the ground up" handling model that the guys at Codies are calling Truefeel... but don't hold that against them. The twitchy muscle cars are an ideal introduction, because Truefeel is

Dev talk



"The handling team have done an incredible job. You can really appreciate the difference between front and rear-wheel drive. With a front-engine car, you can feel it's nice and smooth, whereas something rear-wheel drive is more snappy."

Toby Evan-Jones,
Associate producer,
Codemasters



Quick pitch

Poster boy

You're the face of the World Series Of Racing in this arcade-meets-sim racer's career mode.

Ego boost

Everything Codies has learned from the Dirt and F1 games has been fed back into the Ego Engine to improve the game.

Anchor man

ESPN Sportscenter reports on your progress in career mode.



043

about balancing your car on a knife edge as it goes through a corner – that sweet spot between understeering and stacking it into the far barrier, and oversteering, losing the rear-end grip and winding up facing your botched braking point. It's a more challenging drive than the first game, and all the more rewarding for it. Nailing a corner melts away all memory of previous failed attempts, and the fictional city tracks are designed for you to spend the maximum amount of time on the very edge of control, packing long,

mid-speed corners and generous chicanes for you to flip your rear end around with more panache than... alright, let's just leave that simile there and say a *lot* of panache.

Bravely, Codemasters has opted to stay away from driver assists altogether, instead letting you make your mistakes, learn from them and enjoy the difference between each car's unique handling model. "We really want the player to understand how those cars drive," explains associate producer Toby Evan-Jones. "With assists, when you've got something braking for you and helping you round the corners, it slightly disconnects you and you don't truly get an appreciation for the character of the car." Of course, Codemasters is

the inventor of the ultimate assist – the Flashback. And while it's not revealing details just yet, it's fair to say the time-altering ability's evolved since its appearances in the Dirt and F1 titles.

But how subtle are the differences between one car and another in the first place? In most racers you can certainly feel the change between one type of car and another – hopping into a British lightweight after a '60s exotic for example. But at Codies, the team profile each car meticulously.

Evan-Jones reveals the process: "We start by taking a complete simulation approach. We work with the manufacturers to get the real-world specs, everything from wheelbase to weight distribution, to get as much raw data as possible. We put all of that into our physics simulation and get it set up in a physically accurate way... then we identify what the core characteristics are, and they become sacrosanct. Then we start to scale it back." We haven't spent enough ➤



Preview



time with Grid 2's full breadth of steel horses to make a call on that one yet, but it'll be interesting to see how evident that effort is in the final game.

Ladas on tour

By your second season, you've successfully pounded the American drivers into submission, and the big teams have agreed to give this whole World Series thing a try. Now it's time to get those unified-currency-sharing, exemplary-public-transport-enjoying European types along for the ride. Visually there are indications that your individual and corporate success is growing, conveyed by a left-right-combo of cut-scenes (yes, à la Toca: Race Driver) and thoroughly modern

means such as the emails you receive between races, social media updates that mention you or the event, and comments on the WSR site.

The big news in terms of presentation is a partnership with ESPN Sportscenter. Following on from games such as Fight Night Champion that combine actual presenters sitting in studios talking about fictional events as if they're rolling news, Grid 2 enlists anchor Kevin Connors and sports journo Tony Moody to provide some feedback from the outside world as to how you and the World Series are doing. But you haven't made it yet: you might have a slightly cosier garage and a couple of hashtag mentions, but there's a long road ahead. Races in

Team Eliminación is an early rival on the European circuit.

Europe are sparsely attended, and populated by vaguely affordable cars such as Alfa Romeo Giuliettas and a fantastically boxy '80s-era BMW E30 M3. It's in just such an event that we get our hands around the steering wheel and drive us some Grid 2, career mode style.

Heading to the streets of Barcelona, we enter an elimination race against a team called Eliminación that specialises in this event type in the aforementioned Beamer – hinting that team rivalries such as Ravenwest in the first game are still a part of Grid 2's makeup. Immediately, the changes to Grid's handling model hit us – we chuck it into the first 90° left-hander expecting a light, forgiving journey. That journey ends with a sad face, some shattered bodywork, and a comprehensive understanding of how

Influences Grid 2's killer components



Race Of Champions

The only place you can see rally legends, F1 heroes and NASCAR left-turn specialists duking it out in a single event. Provided the inspiration for Grid 2's World Series Of Racing central narrative.



US sports coverage

Excited men with odder vocal inflections than Christopher Walken hollering endless statistics – now that's how you make a sports game sexy. There's 'real' ESPN coverage in the career mode.



Social media

Toca: Race Driver had a loveably cheesy soap opera. Grid 2 reflects the, ahem, 'glory' of the modern era by conveying its story via the media of emails, text messages, tweets and [gulp] internet comments. Bring it on, trolls.



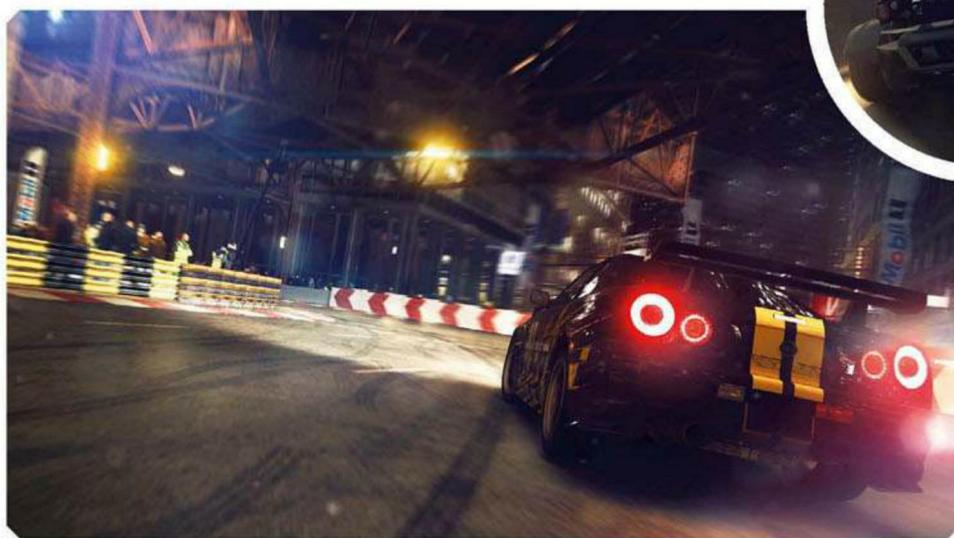
Muscle cars need to be carefully danced around corners to keep the back end in check.



▲ These are about as close to actual Formula 1 cars as Grid 2's World Series Of Racing gets.



Part of your Euro tour involves hitting the Red Bull Ring in lightweights like the Ariel Atom.



elimination racing works (if you're in last place when the timer runs dry, that's it). Within a handful of retries, though, we're up to speed, enjoying the drive more than ever, and being quite literally struck by how smart – and aggressive – the AI is being.

than its two-and-a-bit years. Like GT5 and unlike really hardcore sims such as Shift 2: Unleashed, nudging the car in front as you both enter a corner doesn't mean throwing your race away. You can't quite use the opposition as moving crash barriers,

Flashbacks are still on hand to soothe borked cornering attempts.

pieces gets stuck to our windscreen, obscuring the lion's share of our view.

Desperately we try to wiggle it free, just about dislodging it before the next corner. Fantastic stuff. Track design wears Dirt Showdown's heritage on its sleeve, too, incorporating the trick of two paths that lead to one smashy chokepoint into the Barcelona track. And that's not the only display of previous games' heritage in Grid 2, Evan-Jones explains: "All the improvements we make for the games we produce get fed back into the Ego Engine. With the Dirt franchise, we made a lot of physics improvements in terms of the suspension systems... it's very important how the forces travel through the tyres, so [we got] the physics read-rate much higher. In the F1 franchise, we made improvements to the aerodynamic tech, rubber degradation and wear."

The game's finale – a union of American, European and Asian racers with their distinct styles battling across sponsor-filled, packed-out racetracks – is no surprise. It's less of a revolution and more a rationalisation for the journey you've been going on in Codemasters' career modes since Grid. It's the same rags-to-riches story, but told with real conviction and attention to narrative. This, together with a meaty, challenging handling model, cements our belief that Grid 2 could be the best racer of this gen. Who's the best driver in the world? Come 31 May: you – that's who.

"We're quite literally struck by how aggressive the AI drivers are."

As a group, their driving style is somewhere between a pack of human online racers (minus the geniuses who love to park on the finish line because hilarity!) and a pack of retired boxers with long-standing head injuries and low tolerance levels. They weave about in the braking zone of each corner and jostle for the racing line on straights, making GT5's lobotomised procession of priceless supercars look even older

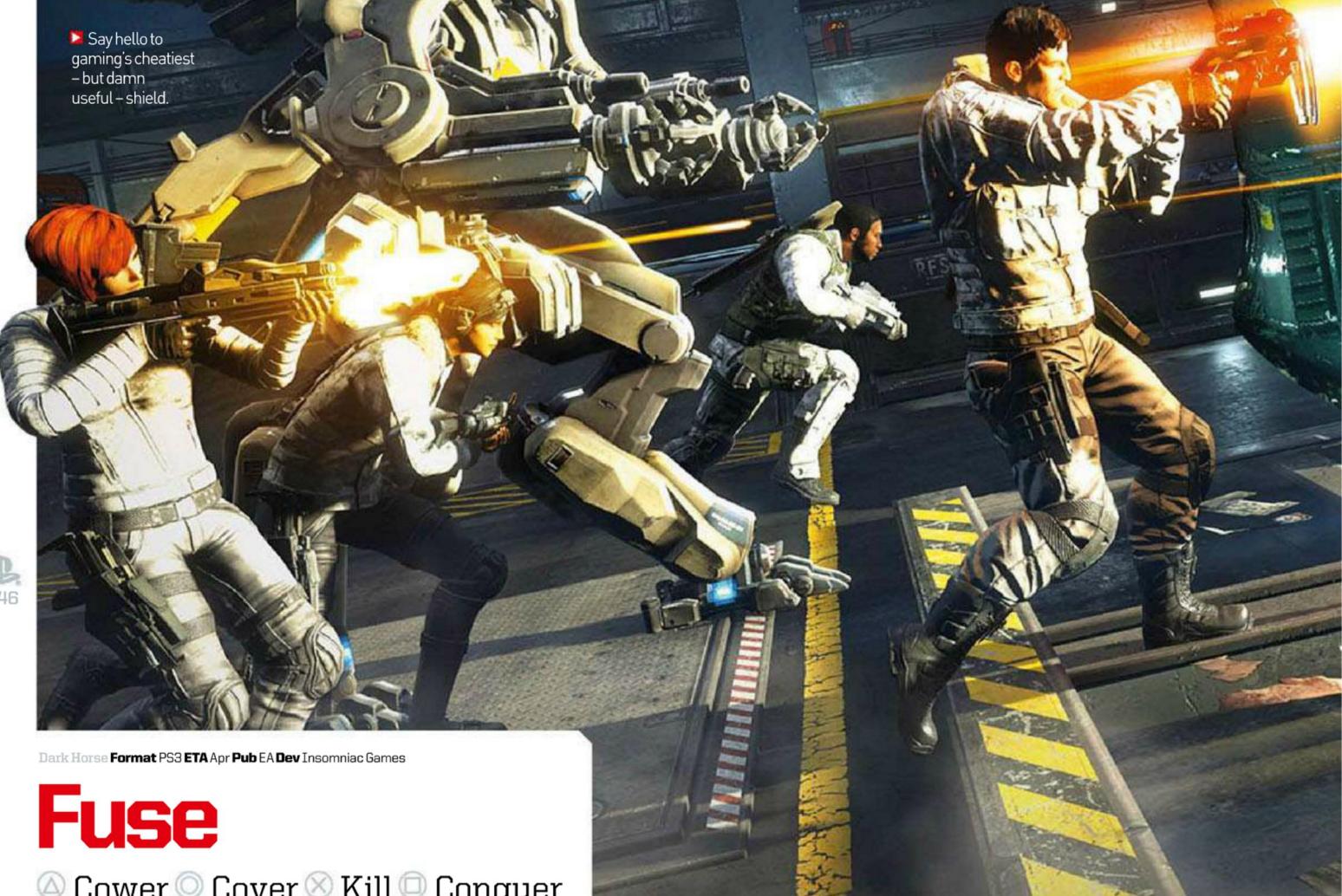
though – there's enough of a natural time penalty for making contact to incentivise clean racing.

Still, there's one very good reason to race dirty – Grid 2 looks at its best when something goes wrong. Ahead of us on one of the straights around Barcelona, one car is nudged into a barrier and spews a miasma of tyre smoke and carbon fibre we do our best to navigate. But one of the larger



Preview

► Say hello to
gaming's cheatiest
– but damn
useful – shield.



Dark Horse Format PS3 ETA Apr Pub EA Dev Insomniac Games

Fuse

Ⓐ Cower ⓒ Cover ⓔ Kill ⓕ Conquer

Look, we can't *all* play the Drake-looking dude with the cheaty physics-distorting shield, okay? With a more serious look and recently revamped cover art, the artist formerly known as Overstrike has clearly had Gok Wan help it squeeze into that hip-hugging military clobber. But while Fuse has gone through big changes, the core co-op (and bickering over who gets to be who) that's so intrinsic to the makeup of this four-player shooter remains untouched.

"I think every creative endeavour is a process of evolution," explains Insomniac CEO Ted Price. "Every IP we've built, be it Ratchet & Clank or

Resistance, has gone through major changes. The ones we went through with Fuse were very public, but they were driven by our desire to have the sort of weapons we know players demand of Insomniac titles."

And what big weapons you have, Mr Fuse. We got the chance to go trigger-on with the game's exceptional arsenal recently in a palatial campaign level set in India. Whether sniping targets with the Arcshot crossbow or ripping UFO-riders apart at the molecular level using the Shattergun, Fuse's killing tools are distinctly memorable.

Playing with another person and two surprisingly adept bots, the strategic

benefits of the game's character-swapping mechanics quickly show their kitty-winning hand. Switching between your merc alien-bashers is seamless, and the strength of the AI means you can let your bot buddies flank enemies from cover. Swapping into their boots keeps combat balanced on an ever-evolving knife edge.

There are a few concerns ahead of the April release, mind. The presence of Borderlands-esque enemy health bars rob the game of the immediacy of crisply dispatching foes with one-hit headshots. The aim may be a touch wonky, then – but Fuse still deserves to be locked squarely in your sights.





Quick pitch

Struck out

It's a co-op cover shooter that taps into the imaginative weaponry of the Ratchet games.

Wave goodbye

Fuse's wave-based Echelon mode is brutally tough and really needs to be tackled with pals.

Tool up

The game's combat system is bolstered by upgrade trees powered by collectible Fuse Points.



Virtual choppers should learn there's just no beating a turret.

Could Be A Contender

Until Dawn



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

A cabin in the woods full of booze and teens with poor decision-making is terrorised by an unseen psychopath.

The reality

It's a PS Move-driven adventure with tongue-in-cheek teen horror sensibilities that wants to be Heavy Rain.

The hook

At points, you see the world through the eyes of the killer - à la young Michael Myers in Halloween.

The inspiration

Datura, Silent Hill, every scary movie an adolescent ever got felt up to in the back row of an Odeon.

The chances

Depends on the Move implementation, really - with solid control, it'll be scarier than a sleepover with Chucky.

Format PS3 ETA Summer
Pub Sony Dev Supermassive Games



On The Box Judged by their covers



Splinter Cell: Blacklist

With saving the world no longer posing enough of a challenge, Sam Fisher now takes on his toughest stealth mission yet: leapfrogging baddies without being noticed.

Format PS3 ETA 23 Aug Pub Ubisoft



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14

Bobby Jones has travelled 80 years into the future, only to find his beloved driver replaced with a pink lightsaber. Help him track down his prize club.

Format PS3 ETA 28 Mar Pub EA Sport



Injustice: Gods Among Us

After being spurned from the initial five-man draft, Bats and Superman fight to see who gets to replace Green Lantern in the Joker's version of Mount Rushmore.

Format PS3 ETA 19 Apr Pub Warner Bros



Preview



Sometimes you need
a bar barge that says "the
police aren't my friends"

Quick pitch

Five alive

A four-month wait hopefully won't stop GTA V from becoming PS3's definitive open-worlder.

Sideshow job

When the game's trio of criminals aren't on missions they'll go about their day jobs.

Heavy Payne

A list of potential GTA vehicles was recently found in the game code for Max Payne 3.

Classic Series Format PS3 ETA 17 Sep Pub Take Two Dev Rockstar Games

Grand Theft Auto V

Deal With The Delay

Look, we'll get through this together, okay? You can stop crying now. The new release date of 17 September seems like several millennia away, true. But those extra few months of polishing will hopefully ensure Rockstar North's Los Santos sandbox will rival Red Dead Redemption as PS3's best open-world game. In fact, after you're done here why not head to p.27 where our scribes

argue over whether the delay will help or hinder GTA V?

While Rockstar maintains the game has been pushed back simply to ensure players get the best experience possible, that hasn't done much to quash excited internet tittle-tattle. Many people now believe GTA V has been postponed to accommodate a release for next-gen machines. Reacting to angry Newswire

comments, the publisher posted a response to try to soothe delay fury while also batting away PS4 rumours. "To those of you saying or seeing various conspiracy theories about there being some other ulterior motive for this delay, rest assured that they're all nonsense – literally the only reason we've delayed the release is because we want the game to be as good as it needs to be." That's us told, then.

Still, we wouldn't rule out the possibility of seeing GTA V on PS4 eventually. With 8GB of system memory, the console could easily cope with ambient detail that could make the PS3 version splutter. And if we do get a next-gen version, we're certain Trevor's stubble will be at least 47% more lifelike.



Notice Franklin giving the bird on the left. We're hoping GTA V will have its own 'flip off' button.

Can't wait?
Play these



Red Dead Redemption
(PS3, Take Two)
Arguably PS's finest game... after Uncharted 3. Its atmospheric world perfectly captures the spirit of the Wild West.



Sleeping Dogs
(PS3, Square Enix)
Wei Shen's Hong Kong sandbox is a little rough around the edges, but it boasts brilliant combat and some ace missions.



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MOST FUN
YOU CAN
HAVE WITH
YOUR HANDS
WITHOUT
GOING
BLIND

games
radar.



Preview

Quick pitch

Blank canvas

A Vita-only adventure with a penchant for paper, designed to maximise the handheld's controls.

Not one iota

You don't play as the on-screen avatar, but with them – adapting the environment to help them.

Cut & paste

User-created content will take a turn for the real with Media Molecule talking 'physical trophies'.



Original Concept Format PS Vita ETA Summer Pub Sony Dev Media Molecule

Tearaway

Ⓐ Stick Ⓡ Twist Ⓣ Or Ⓤ Fold

Holy origami, Sony's new Vita treasure is charming. Anyone with a propensity for stop-motion cuteness and folklore staples reimagined in sugar paper will be sold on the adventure-puzzler's concept alone: you and wee Iota battling through a papercraft world using every bit of the Vita's tappy, strokey, tilty capability.

But before you sprinkle the last glitter on that thank-you macaroni picture and mail it off to Media Molecule, we should point out that there's meaning behind all the pretty folds, and the strong whiff of a sackful of great ideas from the LittleBigPlanet dev. Making its first excursion on to Vita, the studio's keen to play with expectations and get a bit meta. Want an example? Designer Rex Crowle talks us through the very first moments in Tearaway: "Our game starts when you turn on the Vita and you just see the live feed on the screen, and you're moving it around wondering what's going on and waiting for the

game to start. And then you notice a tiny pinprick, in the tissue of lies that we have built around us that says 'this is what reality is.'"

Weighty tome

No need to bust out the Plato, though – you're not left to ponder for too long: "You see this tiny bit of light start streaming in. You realise that this is some kind of portal, and as you're tugging on it, and touching it with your fingers, it's slowly opening more. And you see a little envelope, a message. The envelope is just out of your grasp, and it just falls out of your fingers and gets sucked back into this world that you've just had a little glimpse of."

If an unheard-of developer was telling us this, the alarm bells would be ringing so hard the videogame police would be on the scene in minutes, patting them down. But when Media Molecule puts forth such an avant-garde opening, you know it has the creative vision to actually bloody pull it off. Just like you know it will



■ Atoi, the female counterpart to hero Iota, gives players another character companion. Her name is Iota reversed.

make a game about origami appeal to a larger audience than just Neil Buchanan and serial killers.

Not only is Tearaway playing with the idea of what a games console really is (a magic portal, in this instance), it's also establishing you and Iota as two totally separate characters who need to work together – all in the opening seconds. A concentration of interesting concepts such as that is mighty rare. Tearaway's paper obsession might be a touch esoteric, but the studio's proven expertise with the create-'em-up genre is bound to give it an even wider appeal than erotic vampire fiction.

Caught in action Exploring Tearaway's mystical, adorable kingdom



Iota and Atoi might only be little scraps, but they're big enough to deform the environment as the intrepid pair venture forth to deliver a message to the big, bad outside world.



► Gender locks on several races have been lifted, meaning you can now play as a sexy man-cat thing.

Classic Series Format PS3 ETA Summer Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

Final Fantasy XIV

A Realm Reborn

Ⓐ Of ⓒ Moogles ⓒ And ⓒ Men

We're not being all dramatic when we say there's nothing like A Realm Reborn on PS3. And, after years in development Hades, it looks like we're ready to roll with our first proper MMO (no offence, DC Universe Online).

Basic controls work as you'd expect, but the surprise is how well Square has adapted the hotbar – a row of icons mapped to 12 keyboard symbols, enabling quick access to attacks, emotes and actions. By holding down either trigger, the face buttons and D-pad become hotbar commands. Better yet, you can customise bars and cycle them simply by tapping ⏹.

So far, so MMO – but what about the environment? Well, this feels more like

Final Fantasy than FFXIII. There's an open world to explore, with medieval towns and steampunk architecture. Producer and director Naoki Yoshida says fan service is a key aim, and as such there are summons from the entire FF series in Chocobo mounts, Moogle postmen, rideable Magitek armour... there's even the promise of FFVII's theme park Gold Saucer.

What worries us is that the game launches just a few months away from PS4, leaving little time to build a community. However, Yoshida-san has said he intends to support FFXIV for the next ten years, so a PS4 upgrade could well be on the cards. Closed beta testing on PS3 has already begun, and we can't wait to get a taste of it.



► Spot the man wearing FFIII's Dark Knight armour? FFXIV is full of iconic series artefacts.

Dev talk



"I'm not saying there's not a possibility we'll be on the next generation of console, but for now, I want to keep my promise of a PS3 launch. But because we already have a high-spec PC version of FFXIV: A Realm Reborn, it would be easier to make a PS4 version."

Naoki Yoshida
Producer, Square Enix

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ PS4 means war

It's real. It's coming. And it's bringing the kind of tech and games that make us feel warm and fuzzy inside. See p.58 for all your info.



▲ Zero sum games

PS Plus gets more essential by the month – March gives you Mass Effect 3, Joe Danger 2 and the MGS HD Collection all for the grand total of *nothing*.



▲ Treasure stunt

That Drake never ceases his charm offensive: Uncharted 3's online offering is now free-to-play up to level 15. The love affair continues...

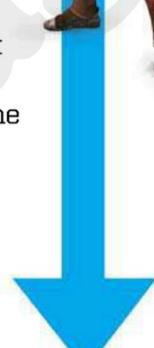
▼ Multi story

Dead Space, Tomb Raider, God Of War – the lack of accommodation for testing online play pre-release goes on. We'll keep bringing you verdicts ASAP.



▼ Bye bye birdie?

Hopes were high that the PlayStation Meeting would see the re-emergence of The Last Guardian, but it was not to be. Still, there's always E3...



▼ Now and Ken

Despite being announced in June 2011, Ken Levine has revealed that Bioshock on Vita is still not in development. Little Big Daddies will have to wait.



Preview

This is going to be one noogie the dungeon's matron can't fix.

Original Concept Format PS3 ETA 26 Apr Pub Capcom Dev Capcom

Dragon's Dogma Dark Arisen

Ⓐ Even ⓒ More ⓔ Hardcore ⓕ Pawn

It's always nice to have a legitimate excuse to dive back into an absorbing RPG like Dragon's Dogma. Snow day? Get that disc in the drive. DLC pack released? Load it up. Full moon? Ah, go on then. Dark Arisen is right up there with a doctor's note or a conveniently burned-down workplace on the list of excuses: an expandalone pack for the inventive (if a bit unpolished) RPG with a new area called Bitterblack Isle that offers up "a brand-new storyline, equipment and enemies," according to producer Minae Matsukawa.

Don't worry about being a level-100 Grand Badass to access the new stuff, though: "After starting a new game, it would take around an hour to get there," reassures Matsukawa. "With more character customisation and all previous DLC included, you really won't get a better reason to dive into Dragon's Dogma if you haven't already."



▣ Jude Mathis, doing his very best impersonation of a kick-ass FPS hero.

PS3 Exclusive Format PS3 ETA Summer Pub Namco Bandai Dev Namco Tales Studio

Tales Of Xillia

Ⓐ Cast ⓒ Block ⓔ Attack ⓕ Counter

Like vending machines, tentacle-based titillation and enormous economic downturn, the Tales series is a big deal in Japan. It's been running since 1995, spanning 14 games, but just six of those have made it to the UK so far.

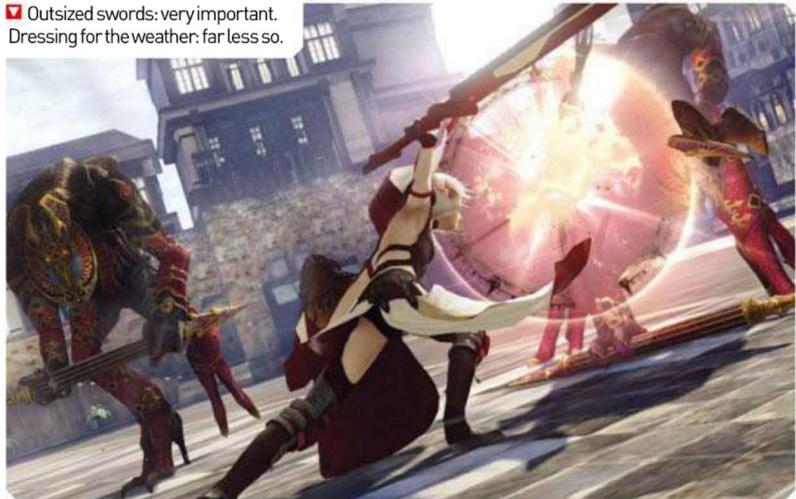
But with Namco's own Ni No Kuni releasing to great acclaim, there's something of a resurgence brewing for Eastern role-playing. Tales Of Xillia looks to exploit that with a true

third-person perspective and 3D engine – just don't expect the Ghibli trimmings. The story of medical student Jude and spirit-summoner Milla teaming up to investigate the disappearance of everyone's souls isn't quite going to hook you like Ollie's adventure in all its finery, and combat looks muddled by too many on-screen characters – but anyone after more mana-tastic action should look to Xillia for their next fix.





Outsized swords: very important.
Dressing for the weather: far less so.



Classic Series Format PS3 ETA Autumn Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

Lightning Returns Final Fantasy XIII

Back To The Future

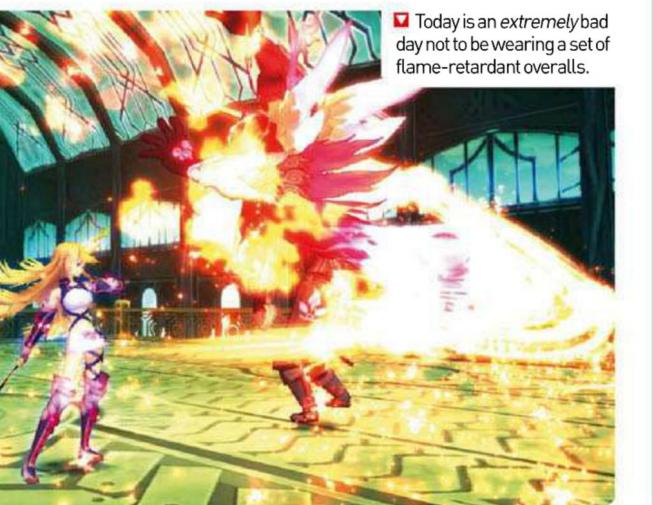
World-driven' is one of those buzzwords you resign yourself to hearing whenever a smartphone ad airs on TV, along with a machine-gun tirade of words such as 'connectosity', so it's only natural to engage the BS-guards when it's uttered (they look like earmuffs with profanities crayoned on them, since you ask). We're telling you to disengage them for Lightning's sake here, though – because in the case of this trilogy-closing Final Fantasy the term actually means something.

Downtown

Game director Motomu Toriyama and his team at Square Enix are trying to create something new for the storied

series in the form of a living, breathing city. Grand conurbations are nothing new visually – a Tokyo cabbie could get lost in FFVIII's Esthar – but your interactions within the city walls didn't reflect that size. Not until the central city in Lightning Returns, anyway. Here, citizens appear to live their lives independently of you, running shops in a 24-hour cycle. Square promises the most "points of interest" in an FF city, like, ever.

Elsewhere in the metropolis, past protagonist Noel Kreiss has taken news of the world's impending doom rather badly, and with a darkened heart is now after Lightning's blood. Looks like he'll be one of the first subjects to test the new 'all the ATBs' combat system on.



Today is an extremely bad day not to be wearing a set of flame-retardant overalls.

Behold, the Nova Chrysalia equivalent of the Justin Bieber fringe.





Preview



Quick pitch

High seas horror

It's classic Resi fare recalling the good old days of slow-moving zombies. On a boat.

Shera-what now?

New characters boast reliably bad Resi dialogue, like Jessica Sherawat's reply to a cry for help: "Me and my sweet ass are on the way!"

Freshly Raid

Raid is a survival mode that can be played alone or in co-op.

Meet the Oozes. They don't want to be friends.

Improved For PSS Format PSN download ETA 24 May Pub Capcom Dev Capcom



Resident Evil Revelations

Ⓐ Handheld ⓒ Scares ⓔ In ⓕ HD

Rarely do portable games come to console, so the fact Capcom has deemed Resident Evil: Revelations worthy of bringing to PS3 speaks volumes. When it was released last year it was instantly welcomed as the best game on 3DS, and one of the best Resi games ever – but horror only really comes to life in HD.

A prequel, Revelations stalks the space between Resis 4 and 5. Retreating from the bloated excess of the most recent game's three campaigns and six playable characters, here you're primarily one: Jill Valentine. It's definite fan service, with nostalgic nods throughout.

Revelations is mostly set in the lurching confines of claustrophobic ocean liner the SS Queen Zenobia, its tight corridors and oppressive atmosphere a 'Hold me, Mother!' throwback to where it all started. In essence, it's a floating version of the original game's Spencer Mansion. Jill and squad partner Parker Luciani take

a rescue operation there, and while they quickly find their targets – Chris 'Biceps' Redfield and new girl Jessica Sherawat – what was meant to be a routine mission soon descends into classic world-saving. [If anyone ever sends you on a 'routine mission', by the way, don't go.]

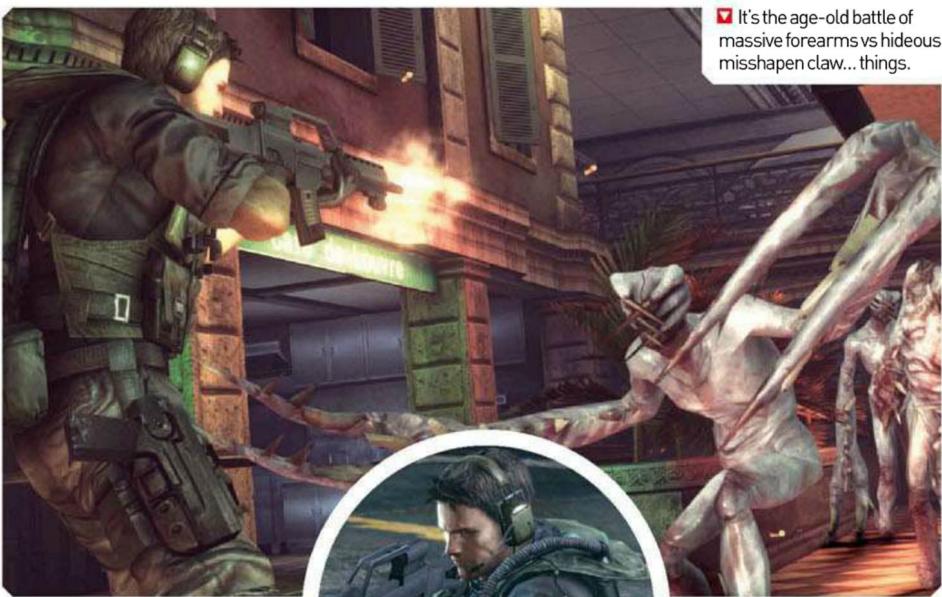
Sea hear

A story about a bioterrorist organisation called Il Veltro that threatens to dump the deadly T-Abyss Virus into the oceans, making all mackerel evil (we might have made that last bit up) is forgettable. Luckily, the setting creates its own tension. Not just a chance to demonstrate a moody bit of below-deck lighting and a churning sea above, the Queen Zenobia is perfect for deliberately paced scenes where you're scavenging weapon upgrade kits from dank cabins, using your scanner to analyse disgusting pustules in some grand ballroom,



searching the bridge for green herbs, or solving the odd puzzle.

That's not to say there's no action. Oozes form your main enemy: they're wet, pale and have forearms to rival Chris'. Given your cramped confines, they've been made deliberately slower and stupider than Resi 5's gun-wielding Majini, effectively harking back to the zombies of old – but it's a decision that truly cranks up tension. Meanwhile, flashback missions – such as to the violent siege of floating city Terragrigia – show off high-calibre set-pieces, and there's also a survival mode called Raid (one of the highlights of the 3DS version), which you can tackle with Jessica and Chris, and unlock new costumes either in single-player or two-man co-op. Made for portables, it's easy to write off Revelations as a Survivor-style spin-off. But thanks to its mix of modern action and welcome nostalgia, it's much more than that – and it's found its perfect home on PS3.



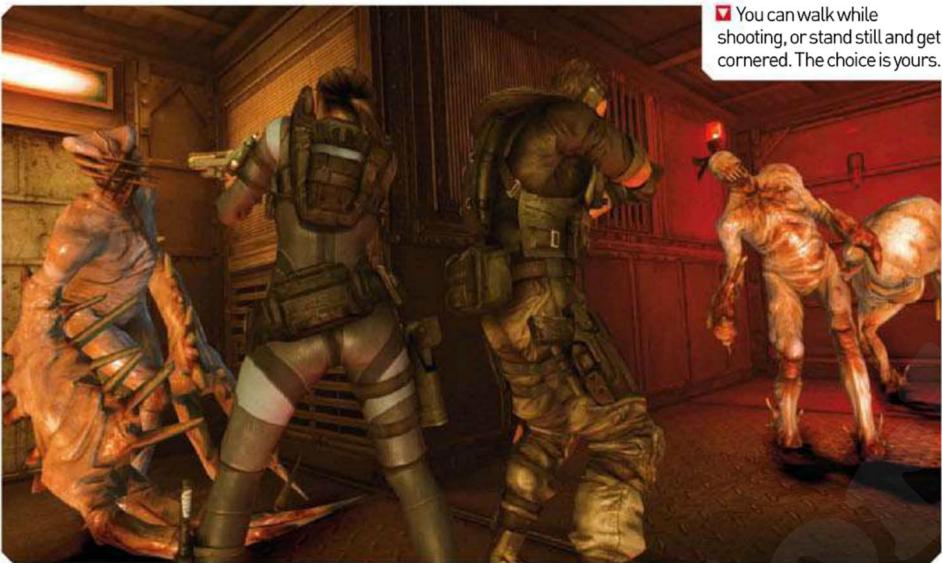
► The lighting's been beefed up thanks to PS3's power.



► With his new headphones, Chris can now go everywhere while listening to Chumbawamba.



► You can walk while shooting, or stand still and get cornered. The choice is yours.



► It's the age-old battle of massive forearms vs hideous misshapen claw... things.

Can't Wait To Play...



Industry insiders reveal their PS3 faves

Martin Turton
Co-founder, Clever Beans

Beyond: Two Souls



"It's not necessarily because I want to *play* the game, I just want to see what David Cage is doing with it. He's trying to push gaming in a new direction and I want to know whether it really wants to go there."



Tearaway

"Tearaway just looks so cute and Media Molecule has really gone all out to use the full functionality of the Vita. It's a game that couldn't work on any other format and illustrates the whole tactile nature of the platform. I really liked the modelling game that Media Molecule showed at the PlayStation 4 reveal, too!"

Deep Down



"The demo [Capcom showed] was fascinating. The fire effects were great. Sony had its fingers burned before with the Killzone 2 demo. If it was real, it was very impressive."



Preview

► The platform's small, but Guerrilla's keen to keep the action big.



PlayStation Icon Format PS Vita ETA 18 Sep Pub Sony Dev Guerrilla Games

Killzone Mercenary

Ⓐ Valour ⓒ Thrills Ⓝ Vanguard ⓔ Kills

056

Hearing that the latest instalment of a beloved series is being co-developed by the original dev and a lesser-known studio is a bit like seeing 'Quentin Tarantino Presents' on a movie poster. No need to fret in the case of Guerrilla Games teaming up with its Cambridge studio, though, because a) even if you hate shooters, you can't ignore the fact that Mercenary is a technical marvel and b) the aforementioned Cambridge studio has in fact been working on the Killzone franchise for nearly a decade, and has a BAFTA for its PSP version of LBP. As a partnership it's less Kane and Lynch, more Nate and Sully.

The British half of Guerrilla helped out substantially for Killzone 2's



► Mercenary revisits locations from the first two 'zones, and the series' PSP outing, Liberation.

multiplayer component, and you'd guess as much playing Mercenary online. Central to the experience are two new elements: the Vanguard system that deals touchscreen death on a cooldown timer in the form of air strikes and drones, and Valour Cards. The latter's an interesting spin on collecting dogtags, awarding you more points for killing higher ranked players and different classes. Noobstompers beware: you earn next to nothing smashing low-ranked try-hards, but they stand to win big if they get lucky with a knife in a tight space.

It's a pillar of Mercenary's multiplayer, explains Guerrilla Cambridge's art director, Thomas Jones: "It was around for a while. We'd been looking at the whole money aspect and how that drives through the game, in both campaign and multiplayer." Collecting a playing card with an XP attachment "seemed to fit very well with that," says Jones, allowing you to set your own objectives during each MP round. So, come September, you'll be having the most fun with cards since that Valentine's Day prank you pulled on your sister.

Quick pitch

La dolce Vita

Hail the heir to the Sony handheld shooter throne – it's Killzone as you know it, only smaller.

Mercs of the job

Cash is king in solo and online play, rewarding kills with dosh to spend on guns for more killing.

Badfellas

The titular merc protagonist is just as happy to shoot ISA as Helghast troops.

Who the hell is...

Aaron Danner?

The morals-averse mega-merc

Character history

Danner tried the life of an ISA grunt, but one tour of duty was enough to cement the 'screw that noise' credo in the young gun's mind. Like so many impossibly muscular trigger fingers, the Dannster has an intense dislike for taking orders and saluting shouty men. Soon after departing the army he was poached by Phantom Talon Corp, a private military contractor that doesn't sweat the Geneva Convention-type stuff and takes jobs for both the ISA and Helghast. Working for a pay cheque rather than world peace, Danner's just as likely to find himself sticking a combat knife in the armpit of a former comrade as a marauding Hig.

Weapons

Vanguard system

Operating on a cooldown timer, these touchscreen weapons are a literal game-changer. One tap and the screen fills with 'splosions/disintegration/robotic knives/watery Predator silhouettes.

Combat knife

Boy, Danner gets his grim on when within shivving range. Favourite spots to stab: shoulders, eyes, necks, armpits. Much like Kanye, don't let this man into his zone.

We love Aaron because...

He's a no-BS hired gun who's all about the Benjamins and doesn't live by anyone's rules but his own, dude. Not even his own.





Preview

The Latest On...

New shots, new games, new info



BioShock Infinite

Format PS3 **ETA** 26 Mar **Pub** Take Two

The true power of Elizabeth – the ‘lamb of Columbia’ – starts to become clear. With new tears, enemies and some stormy weather fronts closing in, Infinite is looking darker than ever, in both a metaphorical and literal sense.



Injustice: Gods Among Us

Format PS3 **ETA** 19 Apr **Pub** Warner Bros

Who's this emerging from the brine to join Warner's mass superhero pub brawl? Why, it's Aquaman, of course – THE COD OF WAR! Behold as his trident skewers enemies like so many tinned tuna chunks.



A Virus Named TOM

Format PSN download **ETA** Summer **Pub** Misfits Attic

Ever dreamed of being a virus rampaging through the populace of a city? You need help. For everyone else, this compulsive indie puzzler is jumping species from PC to PSN this summer. The co-op mode is sick, as the kids say.



Murdered: Soul Suspect

Format PS3 **ETA** Spring 2014 **Pub** Square Enix

Don the Deerstalker for a new murder mystery from Square with an ETA that suggests a next-gen release along with PS3. In a bizarre turn of events, it's your own murder you're solving.



Rayman Legends

Format PS3 **ETA** Sep **Pub** Ubisoft

Although originally a Wii U exclusive, Ubi has caved to fan pressure – or thought ‘what the heck are we doing?!’. Expect another luscious trawl through magical lands and pinpoint jump manoeuvres.



Remember Me

Format PS3 **ETA** May **Pub** Capcom

Some new shots of Capcom's memory-switching romp have hit the matrix, showing off the hyper-futuristic Neo-Paris setting. Is it just us or is that statue making an obscene gesture?

There's more...

20 years after its debut on ye olde Amiga, **Superfrog** is spawning an HD remake on PSN. Team 17's scrolling 2D platformer has a simple premise: raid the castle, kill the witch, snog the princess – and presumably live happily ever after.

Prepare your “That's sooo meta” reactions – **Sweet**

Fuse: At Your Side is a visual novel that puts you in control of game designer Keiji Inafune's niece as she battles an evil Count. Developed by Idea Factory in Japan, US publisher Aksys Games is localising this PSP oddity for the West. Keiji Inafune's niece! Darn it, Vita-owning

Ratchet & Clank fanatics are in for a disappointing few weeks – dev Tin Giant has delayed the handheld version of **QForce** until spring. Come on, get those massive tin hands moving! Real-time strategy PC hit **Frozen Synapse**

is attacking PS3 and Vita some time this year, boasting the descriptive subtitle **Tactics**. Offering a blend of frenzied strategic fun and cool minimalist visuals, the award-winning indie game shifted almost 500,000 copies in its original form, and LBP Vita dev Double 11 is handling development duties for the new version.

Hotline Miami

Format PS3/PS Vita **ETA** Spring **Pub** Devolver Digital

Get ready for a dose of skull-shattering ultraviolence: the PC/iOS hit is coming to PlayStation. The notorious indie splatter-em-up puts you into the crimson-caked jackboots of an unnamed killer, stamping out sleazeballs through a neon-drenched city. Conversion duties have gone to Dutch studio Abstraction, and it's a Cross-Buy purchase – so you'll bag both the Vita and PS3 versions for one price.



We're so very glad we're not the cleaners tasked with mopping up that mess.

NEXT GEN STARTS NOW

PlayStation 4 is real. With the next generation clearly in view, we've got all the details that you need to know. The specs, the games, the release date - this is your guide to the future of console gaming



It lives among us. PlayStation 4. After the longest console cycle ever, next-gen has arrived and – here's the important bit – *everything has changed*. This isn't simply about more of the same with better hair (although, seriously, PS4 hair is *to die for*) this is about Sony fundamentally remoulding the very future of gaming.

Now, be patient: the games, the tech, the numbers and so on are all things we'll get to. But a far more important detail to grasp first is just how much of a paradigm shift PS4 is. It's not just about playing games any more, it's about how you interact with them and share your experiences. It's about how you connect to the world and the people around you.

This is a future where content can be streamed to a variety of devices and platforms. This is a social machine hardwired into the connected, always-on world we live in. The games might load on the machine, but their

presence will be felt anywhere you log in, and on anything that picks up Wi-Fi.

At a basic level that could mean letting you manage inventories and loadouts on your smartphone or tablet, right up to Remote Play streaming *all* PS4 games to your PS Vita. The new social focus of the console interface means you can watch what your friends are playing live, talk to them – even take over their controller if they get stuck. Your sofa is now as big as your internet connection.

Try before you buy

This Gaikai-based streaming tech will also let you try demos instantly, or play games while they're still downloading from PSN. There's a whole other set of chips inside the machine whose only job is to take care of updates, patches, downloads and more. It's always on, always ready to play.

Another encouraging sign of just how forward-thinking Sony has been is how developer-friendly PS4 is. Sony's key message with PlayStation 4 is



feature

PlayStation 4

that to win over gamers you need the best content. And to get that you need to ensure it's as easy as possible to create it. So Sony spent five secret years in talks with devs to create *their* dream machine. Happy developers make amazing things.

Then there are the new ways to play. Most obviously, the redesigned DualShock 4 has motion sensing, touch controls, a built-in speaker and more, but there are also subtle changes: trigger shapes, stick deadzones and button sensitivity tweaks. There's less latency, meaning faster reactions in-game and a new, twin-lens HD camera called the PlayStation 4 Eye.

Greater numbers

But if you want cold, hard stats then you're looking at what Sony is calling "a supercharged PC" with an x86-64 AMD Jaguar CPU and an AMD GPU running at 1.84 teraflops (a measure of number-crunching performance, with that 'tera' meaning 'add 12 zeroes'). If a big number means nothing on its own then this should put it into perspective: the machine has 8GB of GDDR5 RAM, 16 times that of the PS3's equivalent, and on a par with £1,000+ PC graphics cards. It's a payload that doesn't just rise above most current technology – it overshadows it. For reference, rumour has it that the impressive looking Killzone: Shadow Fall was only using 1.5GB of RAM for graphics.

Killzone: Shadow Fall also spearheads an impressive line-up of games, including inFamous follow-up Second Son, Driveclub's Facebook on wheels premise, and the GTA-meets-hackers open world of Watch Dogs. Add these titles to streaming content, plus a developer focus, new controls and social presence, and PS4 is more than just a new console: it's a statement of intent and a promise for a future that starts now.

PS4 AT A GLANCE

RELEASE

Holiday 2013
(regions TBC)
12 games confirmed

DUALSHOCK 4

Improved latency,
controls and
motion sensing
Built-in speaker,
headphone jack
and front touchpad
Front-mounted light
bar both signals to
player and adds
motion-sensing
options

PLAYSTATION 4 EYE

Two 1280x800
resolution cameras
Four microphones
85° field of view

MAIN PROCESSOR

CPU x86-64 AMD
"Jaguar", eight cores
GPU 1.84 TFLOPS,
AMD next-generation
Radeon-based
graphics engine

MEMORY

GDDR5 8GB

HARD DISK DRIVE

Built-in

OPTICAL DRIVE (READ-ONLY)

Blu-ray 6xCAV
DVD 8xCAV

CONNECTIVITY

USB 3.0
Ethernet
Wi-Fi IEEE 802.11 b/g/n
Bluetooth 2.1 (EDR)
AV output HDMI
Analogue-AV out
Optical digital output



STICKING WITH TRADITION

DualShock 4 is pushing all the right buttons

With all the prototype images leaked onto the internet in the weeks before the announcement, no one was surprised by the refreshed design of the new Dual Shock – but Sony managed to keep some elements secret until the big reveal. As expected, the most noticeable addition is a large touchpad between the analogue sticks, which can track two points of contact and is clickable for extra functionality. Clearly, Sony is bringing over its thinking from Vita, making interaction more tactile and touchy-feely. In a good way.

On top, there's a row of LEDs capable of displaying three colours. When you're playing against friends on the same machine, these will

identify each participant, replacing the little red dots on the DualShock 3. These can also be used by games, for instance as a life bar indicator to show when you're low on health.

There are some interesting AV additions, too. The pad has its own speaker, meaning sound effects can come through that as well as your TV – great for, say, mission briefings, when the pad could become a sort of walkie-talkie. There's also a mic input and a headphone socket for in-game chat. Elsewhere, the **START** and **SELECT** buttons have been combined into one 'Options', erm, option.

Lead system architect Mark Cerny says Sony has worked closely with devs to enhance the feel of the joystick and trigger buttons. The



"Sony has worked with devs to enhance the triggers."

aim was a tighter sense of control over your actions, but engineers also enhanced the rumble capabilities and reduced the controller latency.

Second opinion

So, what do developers think? "The controller is beautiful – it's very solid," says Guerrilla co-founder Hermen Hulst. "We've given hours of feedback on this to get exactly what we want, with the outward curving triggers, the indentations, all those little details." Matt Southern of Evolution Studios highlights the enhanced Sixaxis controls. "In the past we've experimented with using the controller to mimic a steering wheel – with mixed results. But this does it perfectly, and that's because of weekly calls and receiving iterative prototypes. It does a fantastic job of steering a fast car."

Add in the compatibility with the refreshed Eye camera and of course the Share button, and you have a multifaceted control device, practically begging for new user interface ideas.



HEAD IN THE CLOUD

How Gaikai instantly opens up the complete PlayStation library

When Sony paid \$380m for Gaikai last year, its intention was clear: to harness the company's super-low-latency streaming platform on the next PlayStation. To make everything instant – and shareable.

For those who haven't followed this whole saga, Gaikai is a specialist in cloud-based gaming. Formed in 2008, by industry veteran Dave 'Earthworm Jim' (oh, look it up on Wikipedia) Perry, it developed a fast, reliable method of encoding video and streaming interactive content across the web. In short, the service can run a game on its mega-powerful servers and gamers never have to download it – they just play it live over the internet. Originally, Gaikai was pimping its service to various publishers, offering them the chance to provide gamers with playable demos of forthcoming titles via web browsers and Facebook windows. But then Sony came along with its 380m bucks and everything changed.

Crossed streams

What wasn't clear when the deal went through was just how integrated this would all be in the PS4 offering. It's everywhere. Gaikai's tech – and the video encoder necessary to compress game data as it speeds around the web – are built into the hardware. Gaikai will power the PS Store, enabling you to instantly play demo versions of titles. It will be behind the Share functionality, letting players take remote control of a friend's game when they get stuck. Dave Perry also suggested at the PlayStation Meeting that Gaikai technology will enhance the Remote Play concept, making



► Dave 'Gaikai' Perry is the man you'll be thanking when you're streaming Shadow Fall to your Vita in Starbucks.

for a solid, fast connection between PlayStation 4 and PS Vita.

It's also up to developers to decide how much of the Gaikai functionality they use – and it seems it won't provide major technical headaches. "There are so many different features," says Killzone: Shadow Fall game director Steven Ter Heide. "Remote play is part of that; trial runs are another part. We don't need to do anything – it's the box that delivers all that. We know the ins and outs and what the requirements are to make sure our games work, but it's the service that does it all."

Later on, there's the possibility of streaming the entire PlayStation back catalogue over the network. Universal backwards compatibility with no downloads? PS4 doesn't just want to deliver the future: it wants to give you the whole of the past, as well.

feature

PlayStation 4

► TAKING GAMING BY THE HANDHELD

How your Vita will be PS4's best friend

"PS Vita is the ultimate companion device for PlayStation 4," said Gaikai CEO Dave Perry during the PlayStation Meeting. But what did he mean? Well, let's be honest, the whole Remote Play concept remained a tantalising rarity on PS3, but Sony is determined to make it all but universal on PS4. So much so that Gaikai's tech has been built into the PS4 architecture, enabling a client/server relationship to be established with Vita. In Perry's words, this "dramatically reduces transmission times".

So utilising the latency-busting properties of Gaikai's streaming tech, most PS4 titles should be playable on Vita's screen – which means you could hit Watch Dogs in a Wi-Fi café, or simply continue your Diablo III session in your bedroom if someone waltzes into the lounge and demands that you get off the main TV because Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway is starting.

Sony is also pushing the whole idea of cross-play functionality – games that run on PS4 but also have companion apps on mobile devices, so you can fiddle with stats or team formations while on the move. Vita is evidently a key part of this, too. And obviously, there are 'second screen' possibilities. While some pundits were wide of the mark when they suggested Vita would be the default joypad for PS4, it's clear that if latency is really as low as Sony is claiming, Vita could easily act as an alternative controller, providing players with a personal display that could either give access to game info or keep you in touch with your PlayStation social network as you play.

MOTION ENGINE

Me, my PS Move, and PlayStation 4 Eye

Squeezed in subtly amid all the excitement was the news that the console will get a redesigned PS Eye camera. Featuring two wide-angle lenses, the device will be able to track body movement, as well as use the DualShock 4's light bar to distinguish between different gamers in the same space. In combination with the controller's new speaker, this means you could get characters who only talk to one player, opening up interesting asymmetric gaming opportunities.

The PlayStation 4 Eye also supports the Move controller, offering much more precise tracking for Sony's wand-like peripheral. Media Molecule showed off the potential here, with its modelling tech demo showing players drawing in 3D using the Move as a sort of paintbrush-turned-sculpting tool. Finally, the camera supports facial recognition, allowing you to sign into your account with your face – just like in sci-fi movies!



YOUR NEW WORLDWIDE LIVING ROOM

One button to Share with them all

Another rumour now confirmed, the DualShock 4's Share button could be one of the most important features of the new hardware. Through a partnership with live video site Ustream, it enables players to effectively broadcast their game to friends, so that they can spectate on the action, and also chip in with suggestions – or insults. If you're stuck on a nightmarish boss, just hit Share and hope your hack-'em-up-loving mate can provide some pointers.

Capcom hinted at the possibilities of this during its demo of fantasy brawler Deep Down. After a punishing encounter with a dragon, a message pops up on-screen stating, "SOS! SOS! I'm in over my head here..."

Okay, this was all stage-managed; the message was to Street Fighter producer Yoshinori Ono from Blanka, but you get the picture. Better still, it also looks as though viewers will be able to take control of the game and actually get you through the tricky patch. Seems like a whole new revenue stream for proficient gamers has just been opened up.

Sharing is caring

Indeed, during the PS4 announcement Gaikai CEO Dave Perry talked about developers themselves harnessing the Share community: "We're helping fuel the imagination of our developers by giving them new spectating tools. Imagine a developer using these tools to identify a gaming expert and give them director-level status so they can manipulate levels to assist you during gameplay. Developers can also insert command buttons for certain levels where friends can drop in special items such as health potions." In short, we may be looking at an era of live co-operative game design.

The function will also allow players to set up scheduled gameplay broadcasts as well as to post footage (in up to 15-minute



Street Fighter tournaments are big business now – could PS4 see them broadcast over PSN?

chunks) to social networks. Clearly Sony is appealing to the emerging generation of videogame bloggers whose YouTube channels are providing a new way to discover and assess fresh game releases. But it's also tying in with the growing notion of gaming as a spectator sport. Starcraft, Counter-Strike and Street Fighter tournaments attract millions of viewers, and Sony wants a slice of that action. Who knows, perhaps we'll see global gaming competitions, broadcast live over PSN with sponsors queueing up to advertise. Share isn't just a button: it's the centre of a whole darn business plan.



This enticing button is all that stands between you and showing off that incredible headshot.

SONY ON STAGE

A history of PlayStation announcements



PLAYSTATION 27 OCTOBER, 1993

The PlayStation story began, not with a multi-million-dollar mega-event, but with a simple press release, sent out on a Wednesday morning. Sony Corp told indifferent newspapers that it would "work toward marketing the new home-use game system domestically by the end of 1994 and overseas within 1995, priced competitively." A later announcement added detail, declaring that, "The next-generation games machine is expected to offer high-speed, simultaneous movement of characters and high-quality backgrounds together with powerful 3D computer graphics". There was no release date and, amazingly, no name - although it was known that Sony had retained the PlayStation brand from its aborted project to design a CD-ROM drive for the SNES. It wasn't until the following month that the working title PS-X or PlayStation-X was revealed.

PLAYSTATION 2 2 MARCH, 1999

Nearly six years later and with a reasonably successful console under its belt, Sony was a little bit more organised with PlayStation 2. The new machine was introduced at the excitingly titled PlayStation Meeting 99. Originally known as Next Generation PlayStation, the new machine promised a DVD player, powerful 64-bit Emotion Engine CPU and the capability to handle 20 million polygons per second. On 13 September, 900 members of the press and public were invited to a Tokyo press event where PlayStation 2 was christened and its unique design unveiled. The likes of Tekken Tag Tournament and fighting game The Bouncer were shown off as potential launch titles.

PLAYSTATION 3 16 MAY, 2005

This time round, Sony used its pre-E3 press conference in Los Angeles to officially announce PlayStation 3, after months of gossip and speculation. As well as unveiling its expensive Cell processor and Blu-ray drive, Sony also revealed the sleek new design. Famously, the company mis-stepped slightly with the original prototype controller (below). The crowds recoiled in horror and revulsion, and a revised design was on display at the following E3. As for games, the system was shown off with the likes of MGS4 and Heavenly Sword, plus a tech demo of FFVII.



PLAYSTATION 4 20 FEBRUARY, 2013

In something of a switch back to the PS2 launch model, Sony chose to officially announce PlayStation 4 at a dedicated PlayStation Meeting event - this time in New York. And once again, we got lots of technical detail and demos but no unveiling of the box itself. With over 1,000 journalists present and footage streaming live over the web, it was Sony's most intense showcase yet. This was all about the future of gaming, with a powerful architecture, new controller and fresh digital distribution concepts dominating. "A console built by gamers for gamers" was the overriding message. Now? E3 awaits...



ON THE BOX

Sony Worldwide Studios Europe SVP Michael Denny talks helping developers

OPM What are the key points you want to get across about PlayStation 4?

MD Two pillars we talked about were simplicity and immediacy. We want it so that everything is one click away. The best example of that is not just background downloading, but being able to play digital content as it's downloading.

OPM Why haven't you shown off an actual console yet?

MD There's time for that to come. The idea of [the launch] event was really to explain our philosophy, our vision for PlayStation 4. The main message is inside the box, rather than the physical look of the box. Inside the box we've [built] it in such away as to give developers the best shot, the best way possible of creating great content. Because at the end of the day that's what the differentiator will be. I think that everybody now understands that, what we're about, what we're going to do. Of course to have the nice picture of the box is a missed view, but there's still plenty of time for that later.

OPM You seemed to suggest we could be streaming games such as Killzone 4 to almost any device?

MD What we announced in terms of Remote Play was certainly for PlayStation 4 games to be played remotely via Wi-Fi access on your PS Vita. Obviously the Vita is the perfect second screen in terms of the analogue sticks and buttons. We also talked about PlayStation apps and the ability to interact with games via a smartphone and your tablet in different sorts of ways. Those may not be playing the full experience because the controls may not map that well, but certainly in a companion sense. So if it's Driveclub, you [could] view a race, set challenges, and send and receive them on a second screen.

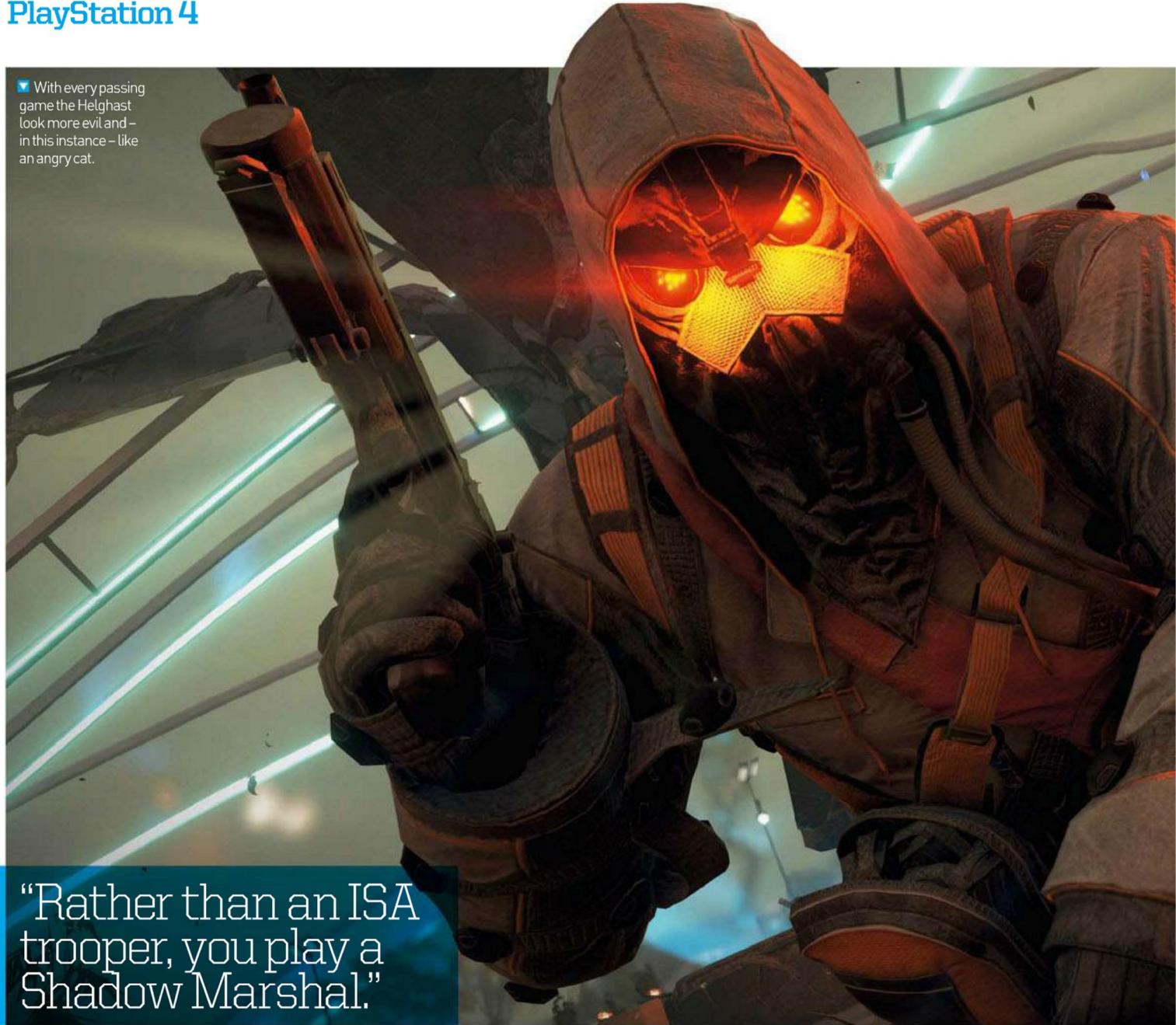
OPM You said you think the "controls may not map that well". Is playing PS4 games on other devices something you've been looking into?

MD What I'm saying is that PS Vita with its physical buttons is obviously a great replication of the PlayStation controls.

feature

PlayStation 4

► With every passing game the Helghast look more evil and – in this instance – like an angry cat.



“Rather than an ISA trooper, you play a Shadow Marshal.”



► Confirmed to launch alongside the console itself, Killzone: Shadow Fall looks set to offer up a whole new level in graphical whizzbangery for first-person shooters. Check out those

Pub Sony Dev Guerrilla Games

KILLZONE SHADOW FALL

Plummeting on to PS4 with the Helghast

Colour? In Killzone?! Pfft. Maybe when Helghan freezes over. Actually, thanks to all that absurdly advanced GPU trickery and lightning-quick unified system memory, the power of PS4 has enabled Guerrilla Games to break out the felt tips. And about time, too. For a sturdy shooter series that has always courted the brown end of the rainbow, it's hugely refreshing to see the developer's artistic ambitions fully unshackled on PlayStation 4.

"This is a story about the loss of home, the search for a new home and the lengths people will go to defend it," reveals Hermen Hulst, managing director and co-founder of Guerrilla. Taking place 30 years after Killzone 3, those despicably naughty Helghast find themselves battling for their existence in a war against Vekta, as Shadow Fall opens amid the glittering bustle of Vekta City in 2381. Hulst compares the conflict to Berlin during the Cold War. Rather than play the vanilla ISA troops of past titles, this time you control a Shadow Marshal, a special forces soldier charged with keeping the shattered peace.

In typical Guerrilla fashion, our whirlwind, real-time gameplay look



▲ Those helicopter tours of Vekta City certainly don't hang around to wait for latecomers.

at PS4's first FPS is technically astounding. Running at a native 1080p and never dipping below 30fps, the game reaches a balance between exquisite resolution detail and performance that few PS3 titles are capable of. In comparison, even the mighty Uncharted 3 only runs at 720p and isn't immune to framerate dips during more hectic gunfights. It's reassuring to see that Sony clearly intends 1080p to be the default standard for PS4.

Fall brawl

Shadow Fall's actual firefights seem to handle with the series' trademark heavy movement and slow, canned reload animations. The odd lobbed grenade reveals glimpses of far greater environmental damage on PS4, with huge chunks of falling concrete hinting your surroundings may even act as a tactical weapon. Combat is also bolstered by secondary attachments (witness the sniper scope on your machine gun). While the cover-heavy shooting seems familiar, Shadow Fall's blinding blues, lush greens and delicate, cherry-blossom pinks mean your eyes will soon be tucking into an incredible next-gen visual banquet.



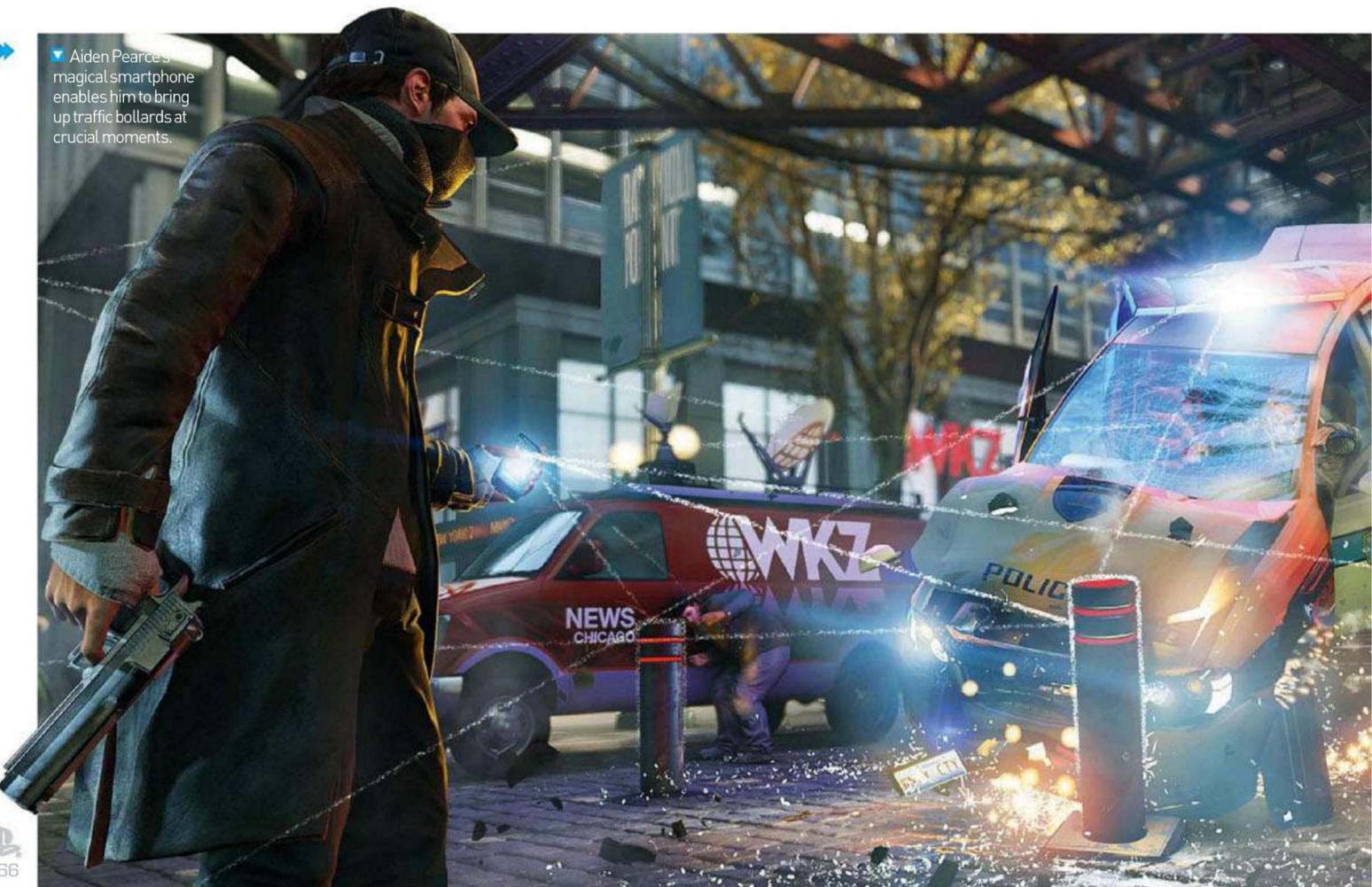
▲ The more vibrant colour palette is every bit as welcome as the technical oomph behind it.

flames licking on the right – and trust us they look even better in motion.

feature

PlayStation 4

► Aiden Pearce's magical smartphone enables him to bring up traffic bollards at crucial moments.



Pub Ubisoft Dev Ubisoft Montreal

WATCH DOGS

We're going hack to the future

Forget not, Ubisoft. There's zero danger of us not keeping a mindful vigil over your dazzling canines. Even though it was revealed at last year's E3, this open-world adventure of Big Brother surveillance and digital espionage seems to have been tailor-made with PS4's constantly connected multimedia functions in mind.

'Hacking is our weapon.' That's the tagline Watch Dogs is proudly sporting. Last June, Ubisoft Montreal hinted the title would operate in a continual online state, with other players able to jump into your game and affect your journey as hacker Aiden Pearce at any moment. Now we've seen PS4's array of network features, that 'our' part seems especially significant.

ONLY
WITH
PS4

Despite also being confirmed for a PS3 release, expect much more from next-gen Watch Dogs, in terms of both visuals and connectivity. PS4's Share button will enable players to spectate on each others' games, affecting them at key points.

Considering Sony's new console gives players the ability to watch their friends' games live via seamless streaming, and even provides the option to jump in to take control with a kind of virtual pass-the-pad, the possibilities for collaborative mischief in this futuristic Chicago appear vast.

Spy games

Now, we're as excited as anyone about the flowing next-gen lapels of Aiden's fetching jacket. But it's the idea of PS4 games truly expanding and reinvigorating co-op play that makes Watch Dogs' tantalising glimpses of a world ripe for constant manipulation really exciting. During the latest footage we've seen, it's made clear that there aren't always missions or

objectives to follow, just a reactive, emergent world to engage with.

As Pearce you're able to access the details of any civilian with an electronic device in a nearby radius. With the Windy City controlled by a supercomputer called the Central Operating System, almost anything can be cracked. You can follow a dude with a restraining order after reading his PDA and stop an attempted mugging. Short out a nearby fusebox with your phone to kibosh his escape when he scarps. Or hack into the Chicago L to stop a train so you can make a sharpish escape when the cops are called.

This is a world rich with possibilities. And thanks to PS4's unique social functions, those possibilities feel truly innovative in a way only a next-gen machine could provide.

"The game's futuristic Chicago is ripe for constant manipulation."



▲ This is likely to be one of the most detailed and organic open worlds we've ever seen on PlayStation.

Pub Sony Dev Evolution Studios

DRIVECLUB

The Evolution of racing will be televised – and tweeted

Some genres mature like a bottle of 1997 Romanée-Conti as each console generation progresses (with notes of sandbox environments and full performance capture), but racing games tend to work the other way. PS3's advent saw MotorStorm, Race Driver: Grid, Colin McRae: Dirt and Burnout Paradise all hit the asphalt within 18 months – since then, things have slowed to a drip-feed of Need For Speeds. Socially connected team racer Driveclub is exciting not just because it comes from MotorStorm creator Evolution, nor because it's the game the studio's wanted to make for ten years, but because it runs on tech capable of immersing you like never before.

Bumper package

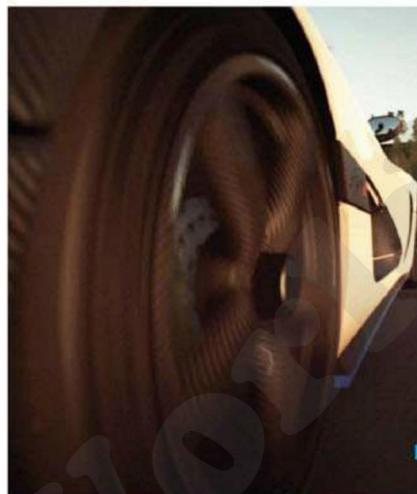
Bringing to mind Most Wanted's Autolog and the shared playgrounds of Test Drive Unlimited, Driveclub wants you to form a band of like-minded auto-nuts, enjoy its range of flash motors, take on team challenges and set gauntlets for the online community to run. This is the path racers have been furrowing for a few years now, and while Driveclub will certainly up the ante with its smartphone app, leaderboards and clan mentality, we're still more excited about the visuals. How dare we? We're objectifying these cars! Well damn it all, bleeding-edge tech trumps all in the racer market.

The Walking Dead can get away with decades-old mechanics and



▲ Car interiors are detailed like never before, with the dev going "insane" to get things right.

workmanlike visuals because it has great writing. Driving games? *All about the tech*. Would you rather someone read Ulysses to you from the passenger seat of a Kia Picanto, or go for a spin in a Koenigsegg Agera R? That's why we're not being at all shallow when we say Driveclub's visuals alone are grounds for frothy-mouthed fervour. There are more polygons, yes, but there are also directional fabric weaves that react differently to the light depending on how they're brushed. There are mind-boggling inscriptions on close-ups of brake callipers. If Evolution spent this much time sweating those insignificant details, can you imagine the stack of pizza boxes and apologetic calls to loved ones that must have gone into building the handling model? If Driveclub's engine can handle brake disc scribbles, how about its other components? Suspension modelling? Tyres? Damage? Colour us a tasteful two-tone hooked and expectant.



▲ We call this 'dead hedgehog cam'. Presumably Evolution Studios has a slightly sexier name for it.



Presumably the ability to wear a bike lock isn't a part of Delsin's suite of superpowers.

Pub Sony Dev Sucker Punch

INFAMOUS SECOND SON

Smokey new bandit shocks Cole out of the limelight

The third instalment in Sucker Punch's open-world superhero series lays it on thick with Orwellian themes of privacy, surveillance and governmental intrusion into the public's lives, man. Second Son sees the series up sticks from Empire City to Seattle, where it's been seven years since the cataclysmic events of inFamous 2 and the aftershock

is still being keenly felt. Gripped by paranoia, the government has ramped up security considerably and set up an agency called the Department Of Unified Protection – tasked with rounding up anyone who shows signs of being a 'bio-terrorist'. Enter our new hero, Delsin Rowe – a young anarchist type with the ability to control matter and transform into... smoke?

While Delsin's powers aren't as... hair-raising as Cole McGrath's ability to spit electricity, they have the potential to offer a dynamic and unique toolset, and if a sandbox game can make traversal exciting, then half the battle is already won. Open-world gameplay is perfect for PS4's Share functionality, too. The ability to grab video of Delsin's superpowers will likely make this less a game and more an interactive highlights reel.

ONLY
WITH
PS4

We're shooting for the Moon with this one, but multiplayer (which would be a series first) seems a natural fit. With numerous citizens developing superpowers in the wake of the second game, think an online city full of battling mutants.

068



Don't worry, we love a pretentious indie game just as much as you do.

Pub TBC Dev Thekla Inc

THE WITNESS

Arty observer will Blow you away

Some people will just never click with games like Braid creator Jonathan Blow's new next-gen project The Witness, because it offers no second-by-second objectives. No high scores, no headshots – just a beautiful, mysterious island to explore, with puzzles dotted around just waiting for you to stumble on them at your leisure. If that sounds like your sort of thing, stick a bookmark in that philosophy textbook and let's examine the brushstrokes of PS4's artiest proposition.

Blow originally penned The Witness for PS3, but found only next-gen was capable of delivering the island as he saw it: a colourful place with a Team Fortress 2 sheen. Again, this is primarily

about experience rather than challenge, but there are puzzle elements that pace the unfurling of the island's intrigue – maze terminals connected to wires alter your surroundings when you navigate from A to B on their screens, making a walkway here, or a beam of light there. Blow claims these mazes are not just stumbling blocks, but "lines of communication that aggregate, become more complex [and] say surprising things." It's all very nebulous at the moment, but we guess that's kind of the point.

Pub CD Projekt Red Dev CD Projekt Red

THE WITCHER 3

Stalking the Elder statesman of RPGs

The Elder Scrolls and Fallout developer Bethesda had a virtual stranglehold over open-world RPGs on PS3. Now celebrated story-led series The Witcher is making an early bid for PS4 dominance, bolstered by the "next-gen ready" Redengine 3. Dev CD Projekt Red is bullish about its chances of snatching the crown, with game director Konrad Tomaszkiewicz lambasting Skyrim for being "generic" and full of "forgettable" characters. He did concede that Bethesda is better at constructing the feel of an open-world environment, though. Hopefully The Witcher 3 will edge closer to its rival's gold standard.

Pub Capcom Dev Capcom

DEEP DOWN

Subterranean swordplay hits new visual benchmark

Ooh, well played, Capcom. The storied Japanese publisher's first PS4 offering is bang on trend – a dark fantasy RPG that shares the gritty medieval aesthetic made popular by recent cult hits Dark Souls and Dragon's Dogma. The debut trailer also strongly hints that Deep Down has drawn inspiration from Dark Souls' innovative blend of co-operative and competitive, real-time and asynchronous multiplayer types with some on-the-fly co-op and Remote Play ideas of its own. Core gameplay, from what we've seen so far, takes much from the enormous foes of Dragon's Dogma, as well as your ability to manipulate the environment to your advantage. At the end of Yoshinori Ono's demo it's a collapsing rock rather than a sword stroke that offs the dragon.

Onboard as Deep Down's producer, Ono has made a name for himself in recent years with his successful reinvigoration of the Street Fighter series. Capcom's written a behemoth of a cheque with Deep Down, so let's all hold hands and pray to the dragon lords that it can cash it.



▲ This is as striking as any confirmed PS4 game.

Pub Blizzard Entertainment Dev Blizzard Entertainment

DIABLO III

Well, they do say it's better the devil you know...

What's the big deal, you ask? Well, it's only the third-best-selling game of all time – that's all. Diablo III has sold over 12 million copies since its release on PC in May 2012, and now it's heading to PS4 thanks to a new business relationship between Blizzard and Sony. The incredibly popular loot-tastic RPG will make the leap over to console with no loss of accessibility or function, we're told. The PS4 version will feature split-screen support for up to four players – a killer feature for a game with such a central multiplayer component as Diablo.

Since it's been out on another format for the better part of a year already, Diablo III is somewhat of a known quantity – a well put-together and compelling hack 'n' slash role-player that disappoints only in its lack of innovation. Of wider importance is Blizzard's deal with Sony – suggesting the likes of Starcraft and World Of Warcraft could also be making their way to PS4. This is a huge boon to the console's prospects, as the next Xbox will likely have no equivalent to these heavy-hitting titles in its software library.



▲ Roll out the red carpet for RPG royalty.

Pub Sony Dev Sony Japan Studio

KNACK

Let's get ready to rubble

An amiable action-adventure caper with more than a touch of Pixar about it. The titular Knack is a rocky critter who, thanks to his modular composition, can shapeshift into a number of more useful forms – both larger and smaller – seemingly at will. When Knack's particles get the wind up them it's hard not to get a next-gen shiver of excitement, with production values on a par with the best animated movies. Judging by Japan Studio's past form, Knack will have



the substance to back up its style, too. The team has masterminded some of the most enrapturing, bizarre titles in PlayStation history: its recent work includes LocoRoco, Patapon and Tokyo Jungle. Knack director Mark Cerny is also the lead PS4 architect, so it's a safe bet this will make prudent use of the hardware's features. In that regard, it'll be one of the launch window games to watch if you're looking for something to show off PS4's true potential.

NEXT-GEN WATCH LIST

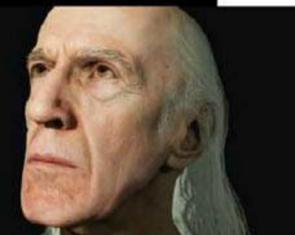
As well as **Bungie**'s forthcoming Destiny (see p.88), there's plenty more to keep your beady PS4 peepers on the lookout for. "Be excited for E3," hinted **Square Enix**'s Final Fantasy brand director Shinji Hashimoto. "We are preparing for development of a new Final Fantasy title." Okay, 'hint' might not be the right word. Can we just call this one FF XV, please? Just Cause 2 developer **Avalanche** has been outed as a third-party PS4 dev, likely brewing an open-world sandbox with as many guns as questionable Banderas impressions, with fellow Euro studios **Ninja Theory** and **IO Interactive** also notable mentions. Those *Fallout 4* rumours gain more traction now **Bethesda**'s been confirmed as a PS4 developer, too – we can't wait to see how dilapidated Boston can get with PS4's clout behind it. Troubled Texan studio **Gearbox** is also on the list – surely not even more wub-wub? *Borderlands 3* or a new IP are equally mouthwatering. In Japan, **Platinum Games** and **Konami** are both working on next-gen projects that we bet involve cyborg swordfights. Is the absence of Kojima Productions a clever technicality? Are you hiding under that Konami banner, Snake? Finally, the big one: **Ratloop** has confirmed that *Rocketbirds 2: Evolution* is already in development. You can rest easy now.

TECH DEMOS DISSECTED

Great minds think ahead, after all

DAVID CAGE'S FACE OF THE FUTURE

"We are now only limited by our own imaginations," proclaimed Quantic Dream's founder as he displayed a mournful old fella rendered in the studio's new engine boasting advanced skin and eye shaders, translucency and 3D depth of field.



▲ This real-time face might not be pretty, but it sure is impressive.

MEDIA MOLECULE'S DREAM WEAVER

The LBP studio might be pulling your leg a bit with the claim it can "record your dreams", but its Move-powered 3D sculpting-cum-puppet show is every bit as surreal. Beefier PS4 graphics make for impressive real-time high-fidelity modelling.



▲ Not excited about PS4 Media Molecule? You're dead inside.

AGNI'S PHILOSOPHY REVISITED

Square Enix's tech demo might be nearly a year old, but those particle effects, advanced lighting and lovingly rendered dog hairs are still bleeding-edge. Will this really be what the next Final Fantasy will look like? We can dream.



▲ Even Movember fails to produce facial hair effects this impressive.

feature

Metal Gear Art Studio

Partial to a doodle? Delightful. Then you'll be pleased to discover Konami has founded the Metal Gear Art Studio. Cooked up by series artist Yoji Shinkawa, the website gives fans the online equipment to create their own MGS masterpiece. Shinkawa has even been rewarding the best with prizes, while the cack-handed can simply watch talented sketchers' work being recreated in real time. Here's a selection of the best sneaky scribblings...

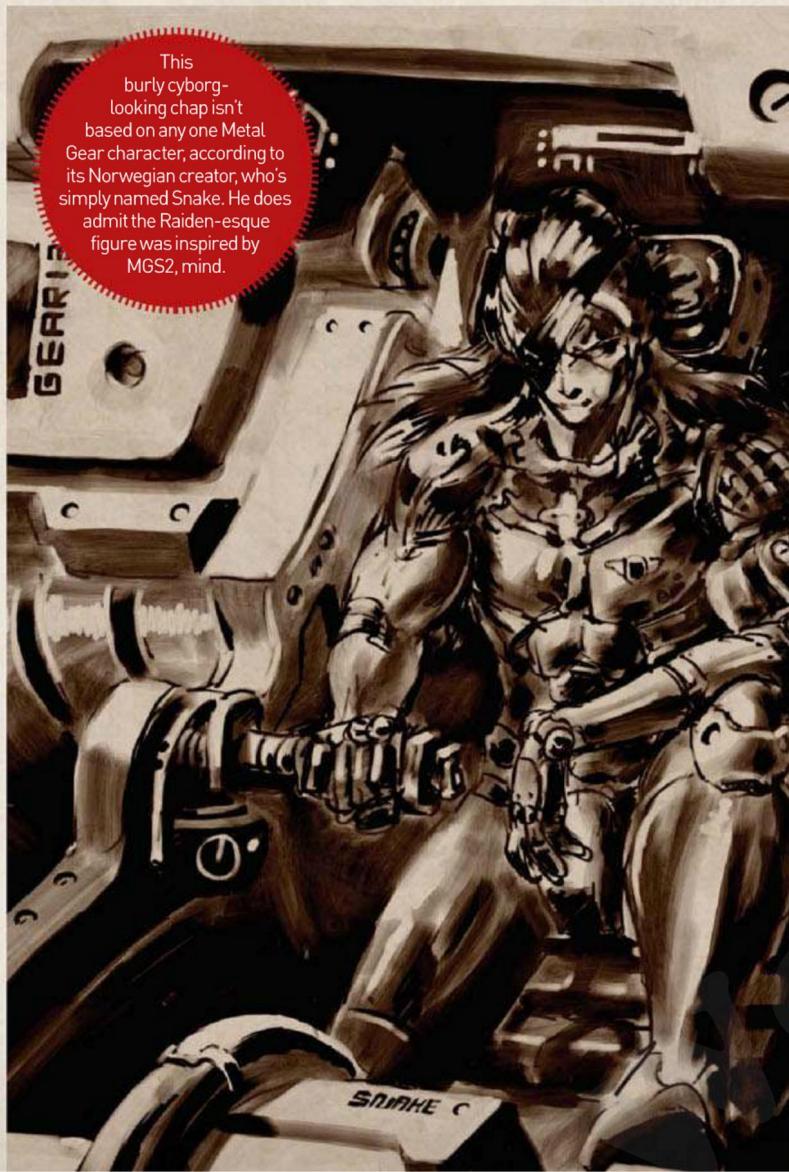
Back in 1998, Snake had a bonce like a block of cheese [Koj only had 32 bits to play with on PS1, after all]. Nurboy_075 recreates the retro charm of the gruff cardboard box-admirer in elegant, understated fashion.



SOLID SNAKE SKETCHES

Metal Gear Art Studio lets you digitally draw stealth icons





feature

The Last Of Us

THE
TERROR
OF
BEING
THE
LAST
OF
US

Nathan Ditum goes hands-on with Naughty Dog's post-pandemic drama - and finds it as shocking as it is spectacular





feature

The Last Of Us

073



Even though we can all see it coming, *The Last Of Us* is going to take everyone by surprise. It's already happened to me. Typically when expressing just how gorgeous, touching or thunderous a game is going to be, I'll open with a moment from it that exemplifies exactly the effect it had. A thrilling shoot-out. A just-so line of dialogue. A *really* pretty explosion. But I can't do that here – looking over the notes I made during a 45-minute first hands-on with *The Last Of Us*, the moment I'd pegged to open this paragraph is missing. And that's because, having made detailed observations about everything from the noise of the rain in the deserted outskirts of Boston to the children's drawings in a ruined office building, my notes end abruptly when I enter combat for the first time. The word 'hard' is written and underlined, and after that

the page is blank – forgotten in the face of intense, unexpected tension punctuated by moments of desperate panic and brutal release.

New mould

If that blank page could talk, well, it would probably do the late-night chat show circuit and tell stories about how funny my face looks when I'm really scared. But it would also emphasise that *The Last Of Us* is not the game you think it is. Everything you've heard so far has been about the emotion and the characters, about how Naughty Dog is focusing on cinematic storytelling and human drama. Sensibly wary of being pushed into a narrow horror genre slot, the studio has euphemistically labelled the game 'survival action', the downside being that this could reasonably describe *any* game in which things are moving and you're trying not to be

dead. However, what none of this has touched upon is that *The Last Of Us* is *absolutely bloody terrifying*.

It feels that way before you take so much as a step. The demo starts outside. Joel, the lean, player-controlled smuggler, is currently travelling with two companions: Ellie, his relationship with whom provides the game's emotional focus, and Tess, his business partner. This is early in their journey, which begins in one of the few remaining quarantine zones standing against the fungal infection that has brought civilisation to the ground, and they've agreed to take Ellie (their latest 'cargo') to an undisclosed location.

This place is called the Outskirts. It's not ruthlessly patrolled like the quarantine zone. It's dead-but-alive, a clash of green and grey as the slowly rotting concrete gives way to resurgent nature. It's tense – this place isn't ours anymore, and every step feels like a trespass. Minimal design emphasises the tension. There is no music, just ➤



Tess points out the wonky high-rise in which our hands-on took place. Looks nice – from the outside...



Ellie's recent visual makeover has left her looking younger and a bit more vulnerable.

DEADLY DISEASE

THE THREE STAGES OF THE CORDYCEPS INFECTION

At the core of *The Last Of Us* is the Cordyceps fungus, a real-world zombifying infection that changes the behaviour of insect hosts before killing them and transforming their bodies into spore factories to further spread the disease. The game's fictional, world-ending jumping-off point is: what would happen if the fungus moved to humans? And here's the answer...

► Stage one

Victims showing the first signs of infection are called 'Runners' – just like insects compelled to climb high branches, these people are starting to lose control to the fungus.



► Stage two

The fungus grows from the brain and emerges through the victim's eyes. Comfortingly, Naughty Dog's Neil Druckmann says, "There's still a human alive in there."



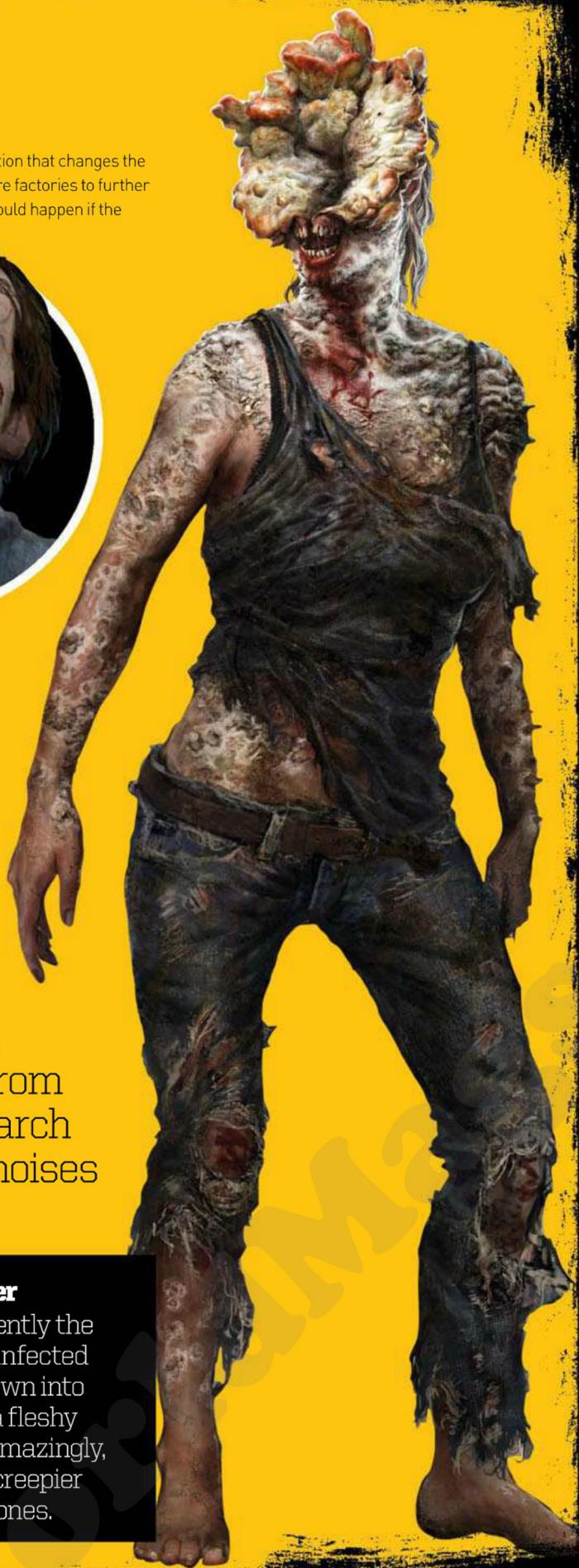
► Stage three

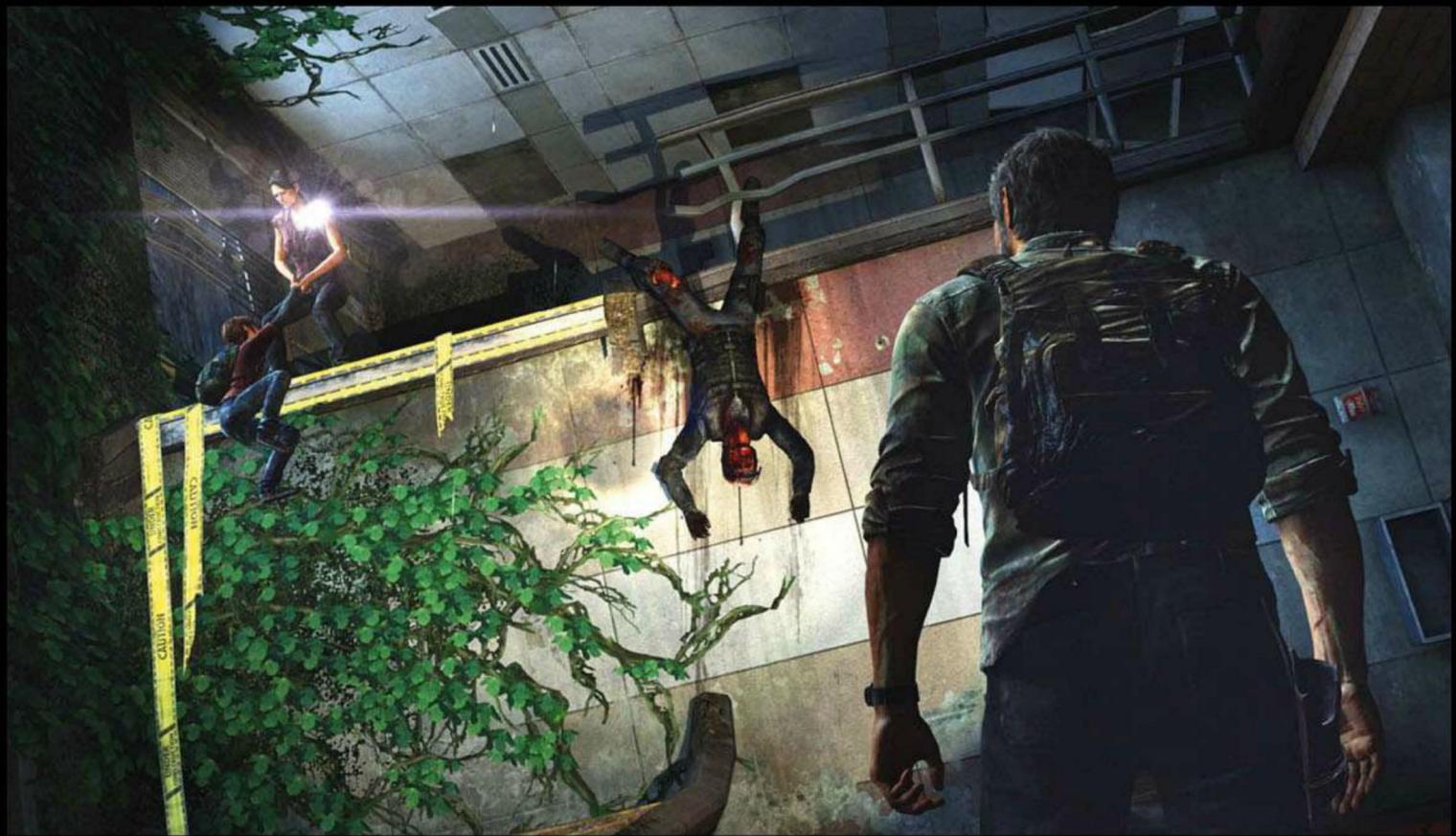
Given over entirely to the infection, warped fungal growth protrudes from the head of these 'Clickers', who search for food using unsettling guttural noises and echolocation.



► Wallflower

This is apparently the final state of infected humans – grown into the wall like a fleshy mushroom. Amazingly, they're even creepier than the live ones.





heavy rainfall and the occasional terse, murmured piece of dialogue.

When Joel first moves, the natural comparisons between Uncharted and The Last Of Us feel like they're going to stick. The games are cut from the same technological cloth (they share an engine, and game director Bruce Straley says the first prototype was built with Uncharted assets), which on a basic level gives them a similar, gritty-realistic look. As Joel strides forward, straight-backed, the camera swings behind him into a familiar, mid-low position. But then he crouches, turns, picks up a stray glass bottle, and suddenly they're very different. Joel is stiffer, more cautious. He's a survivor, not an action hero – he ducks where Drake dives to cover, scrambles where Drake acrobatically traverses.

Dead calm

The party are standing outside a building that's been torn open and has lunched into its neighbour, the result of a scorched-earth bombing policy described by creative director Neil Druckmann as an attempt to destroy the infection. ("And it worked. Almost.") As I move inside, the noise of the rain tails off, leaving a resounding, tomb-like lack of sound. In the hush, details are easy to pick out – rats scurrying around a corner, thick channels of water sluicing off iron girders. As we move through the building, every floor tilted uneasily on its side, there are telling touches everywhere. A whiteboard of sales targets passes

Tess is a capable companion who saved us in more than one gunfight.



"I feel totally unprepared for my first bit of real combat."

quiet, savage comment on the fate of our civilisation, while a desk decorated with bright children's drawings causes tugs of nostalgia for a lost world.

There are some familiar generic features, too, which are actually quite comforting amid the bare intensity. Joel finds a dead soldier, and a search of his body uncovers a note explaining how badly he needs backup (his corpse suggests *really badly*). I also scavenge for resources in the form of blades, rags and bullets, which can

be combined to upgrade and craft weapons, or create medpacks (before I encounter a single enemy, I've made a Molotov cocktail and a stick with a nail through the end. I am pleased). The Last Of Us might be particularly fraught, but it's not entirely divorced from its horror precedents such as Resident Evil and Silent Hill.

Another sign of this connection to its frightening forebears is the route through the level, which is a linear path at great pains to look like more.



■ This was our first encounter with an infected, a jump that set nerves on edge for the more strategic combat ahead.

■ Facing a mix of infected – stages one and three here – makes things more complicated tactically.



■ Ellie isn't the kind of partner who sticks stupidly by your side – she runs, hides and makes her own way through the combat.

Missing floors and collapsed stairwells leave previously compartmentalised sections of the building exposed in an Escher-esque labyrinth. One doorway is blocked by the body of an infected – its head fully exploded into a fungal monstrosity, which has grown into the wall like a rising stain. It's eerie, unpleasant and excellent – I'm not sure whether he's alive or dead until Joel prises him away from the doorframe like he's twisting a branch off a tree. While Druckmann and Straley are dismissive of convoluted plots explaining the reason for outbreaks – they prefer to concentrate on the drama those outbreaks create – it

clearly doesn't hurt to have a fresh, frightening new enemy. The infected are all of these things, and the effect is chilling – even when they're dead.

Be prepared

Of course, it therefore stands to reason that when they're alive the effect is significantly more pronounced. My first encounter with a not-dead infected is a sharp shock in the tradition of Resident Evil 2's dog through the window – a scripted lunge, dealt with via QTE. It's a teaser for my first real bit of combat, for which I still feel totally unprepared. In fact, its loose, spontaneous nature means I'm not sure I'll ever be ➤

SMALLER-SCREEN SPIN-OFF

INDIE SERIES SET TO EXPLORE THE STORY BEHIND THE INFECTION

Normally, unofficial tie-in films found on the net involve frightening cosplay and very few reasons to get excited. But What Remains, a six-part web series from Los Angeles-based Manifest Films, seems a little different. A teaser trailer and production images on display at whatremainsfilm.com show professional-quality makeup, with the infected in particular looking equal parts brilliant and terrifying. In other words, these guys aren't messing around – and short of a surprise Hollywood deal and several years of waiting, this looks like the best live-action version of The Last Of Us we'll be getting. So far it seems a pilot has been shot, but keep an eye on the web for more ahead of the game's release in June.



feature

The Last Of Us



■ Jerky shadows playing on the walls make combat even more frantic.



■ The moral complexity of player-controlled Joel gets deeper with every new bit of info we learn.

APOCALYPSE THEORY

Lead designer Ricky Cambier talks characters, noise and combat



OPM How hard has it been to design gameplay that fits with your character-driven story?

Ricky Cambier Making the systems for this game has proven to be hard, and that's exciting. It means we're exploring some new territory, and it means we're trying something a little different, something we're really interested in playing. We've got the crafting, we've got new combat, we've got Listen mode – we've got all these different things that are all going to combine to create this grounded universe that is very lethal, very dangerous.

OPM The use of sound is very effective in the game. When did you realise how important it would be to the atmosphere?

RC Sound has always been really important in Naughty Dog games. I think people are surprised by how much info they're getting through sound. But now you have a world where you have enemies that are really affected by sound, and you are as well. In this world where a single enemy can kill you, when you hear that enemy, you're scared – like, you need to move, to go and hide. And [because] these enemies, which people call Clickers, track you with echolocation, they're using sound to find you, it's integral in a way people aren't necessarily used to.

OPM The combat feels so dangerous and improvised – was it designed so players could never get comfortably good at it?

RC We want the player to make some choices. We want you to think: in a world with limited supplies, if you ran into these things, what would you really have to do in this situation, knowing that it's sneak past or die, kill or be killed? They're going to kill you, and you have someone who you care about to protect – what are you going to do?



totally ready – there's a surreal sense of slowed time as I first encounter a group of infected, as though I can't quite believe it's happening.

Everything about the design – the minimalist sound, the effort of movement, the preciousness of resources – makes you feel self-consciously alive and unsafe. Entering

After that I stop taking notes because the game demands my full attention. I go painfully slowly, using Joel's Listen mode, in which he crouches low and still, and can sense the position of enemies. It's a little like Dishonored's Dark Vision, although in contrast to Dunwall's neatly patrolling guards, the infected's erratic movements are

"Noises don't just sound deadly: they truly are."

a fight feels giddily dangerous. And so it should – I chuck a bottle in an attempt to feel out the game's stealth mechanics but misdirect the throw and am seized in seconds by frenzied infected. I hammer **B** to fend them off, but one is in close, at my neck, and with a sickening quickness Joel screams, a bright red tendon is ripped from his throat, and the screen goes black. "Hard," I write, and underline it.

harder to plan for. I pace up and down the same piece of wall until one finally seems exposed – alone, with his back to me. As I reach him there's the panic of just wanting him dead as quickly as possible so I can go back into hiding. I hold **A** to strangle, for an instant sure he's about to turn and kill me; but a split-second later the tussle is won and I'm back behind the wall – my real, sat-in-a-booth-in-LA self breathing heavily.



It's at times like these you really appreciate why running away has been designed as a valid tactic by the team.



The only time we felt safe during our entire playthrough was holding a shotgun. Shame we only had two shots...



This shot is misleading – when it gets to this stage, Joel is already dead and about to have no throat.

The urgent need to be quiet is a sign of how important sound is in *The Last Of Us*. Bare environmental noise makes everything else amplified and dangerous – furniture screeches as it's dragged along the floor, guns thump and thunder, and each melee blow lands with a thick thud. The effect isn't just atmospheric – as the infected become less human and more creatures of impulse, they rely on echolocation to find you. The noises in the game don't just sound deadly – the game is designed so they *are* deadly.

Silent fear

This becomes a core pillar of combat. The infected can't see your torchlight, but they can *hear* you if you stand up from cover. It removes the usual stand-off approach to third-person combat – as Straley says, fighting in *The Last Of Us* has "no front", and instead players can slip through groups of infected, as long as they move low and quiet. Or at least they could if they weren't me, and terrified. I can't stand the thought of getting in close without more practice.

With three enemies remaining, I throw a bottle to tempt one round the corner and select my 9mm. The aiming feels heavier than *Uncharted*, the target harder to track. I hit the shoulder and draw a furious scream, then miss, panic, fluke a headshot and put him down with another to the body.

It feels like I've thrown away a fortune in bullets (I never have a full clip during my playthrough) but more importantly the murderous boom of the gun has startled the others. I hide, then run (I later learn from Straley that the team designed running away as a "valid tactic") and switch to my Molotov cocktail, consuming a shrieking victim in flames. And then the dynamic is suddenly very different. I'm still frantic, but with just one infected remaining – ahead of me, clicking at the air – I'm desperate to seize the moment before

he locates me. In a furious rush, I sprint forwards with my spiked club and thrash at him until he stops moving.

In the post-action lull, Joel asks Ellie if she's alright. "Apart from shitting my pants, yeah." It's a funny, well-timed release, and a reminder that, while *The Last Of Us* is thrillingly scary, it's going to offer a lot more besides. The focus on performance and story promises to make it dramatic, and encounters with human enemies will offer something different to frantic scraps with the infected. "We're going to explore a range of emotion of dealing with this post-pandemic world," lead designer Ricky Cambier confirms. And if that range of experience can measure up to the intensity and quality of this fraught horror, *The Last Of Us* could be PS3's most essential exclusive yet when it lands on 14 June.



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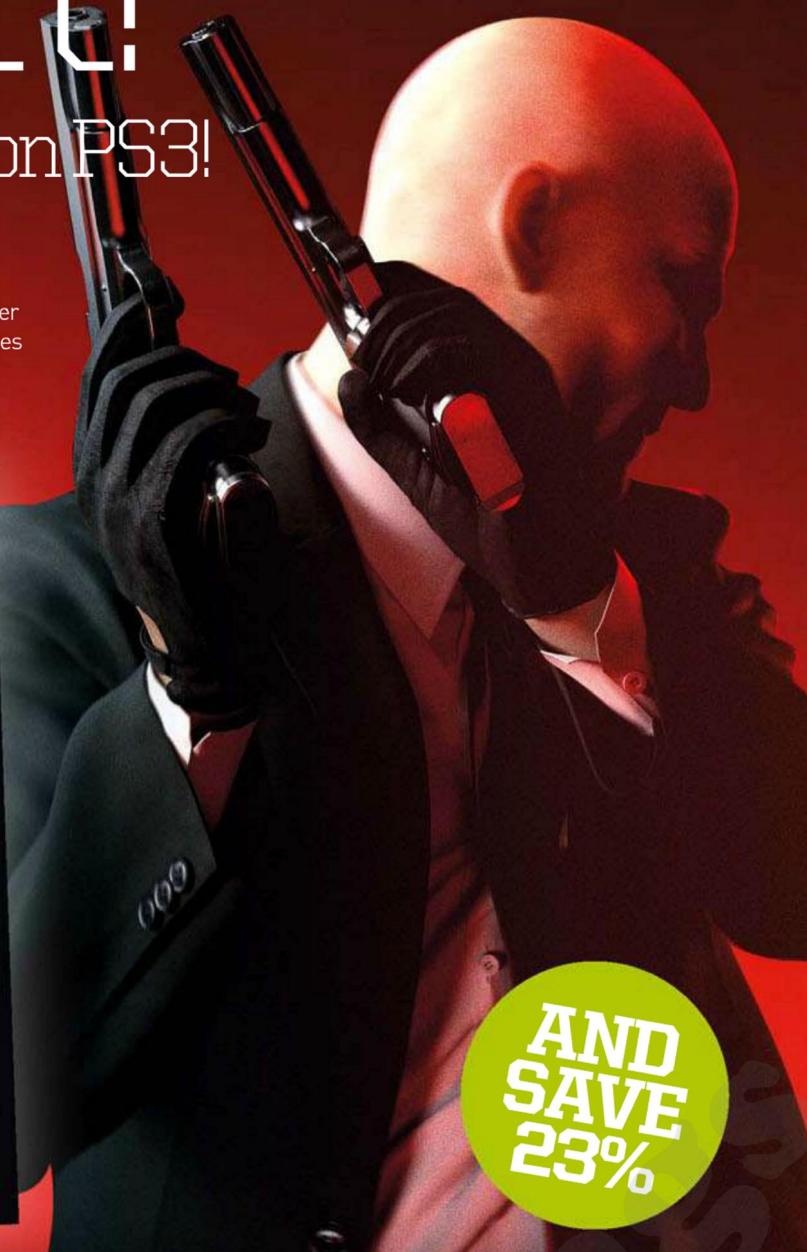
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C I T I Z E N C A G E

Quantic Dream founder and CEO David Cage talks Beyond, dodging sequels and the “revolution in meaning”

OPM With *Beyond*, you're again bringing a new IP to PS3. Long-term, how damaging is the proliferation of sequels to the industry?

David Cage This is a very complex question. It's about what your expectations are about games and the industry in general. If you think games should just be a toy to spend time [with] and get some adrenaline [from], then there is absolutely nothing wrong with sequels. Many people want more of the same, and if this is what you offer, they will gladly buy it. The result is very simple: gamers invest money in publishers having no interest in innovation. They encourage [publishers] to keep making the same game every Christmas, and everybody's happy. If you're interested in innovation and believe that games could be more than shooters, then you realise sequels kill creativity and innovation. The budgets, marketing and shelf space allocated to these games prevents other, more innovative games from existing.

I'm not against the principle of sequels – some of them are very interesting and show exciting evolutions of the original concept – but I wish more space was given to original IPs. Everybody needs to make money, but in the long term sequels kill innovation and send the wrong message to creators and audiences. I want our industry to take more risks and to give creative ideas a chance. If you give people what they expect, you are not creative; you are doing marketing. The objective of any creative person is to invent something people don't expect. Cervantes wrote something about this idea in theatre in the 17th century. I believe it is still true today.

OPM Everyone is determined to compare *Beyond: Two Souls* to *Heavy Rain*, but are you keen to distance this game from your previous one?

DC People often expect more of the same, but this is not the way we work. With each new game, we try to do something different,

come up with new ideas and surprise the player. We don't want to give people what they expect, we want to give them something they want without knowing they want it. *Beyond* is a totally different game to *Heavy Rain*. It's based on the same paradigms – a game for a mature audience based on interactive storytelling and emotion – but the implementation, style, gameplay, and experience itself will be very different.

OPM Did you make any changes to gameplay or levels shown at E3 on the back of feedback to the reveal of *Beyond*?

DC The goal at E3 was to announce the title and to introduce Ellen Page as the main character. We also wanted to show some visuals from the game to present our new engine, performance capture and where we want to set the quality bar for this title. But the announcement was very early in our development process, more than a year ➤



before release, and the game has already changed a lot since then. We spent a lot of time iterating, trying different new ideas, and we will show our fans soon how the game has changed since E3.

OPM Has all of Ellen Page's mo-cap and speech work been done now, or are you still in touch on a regular basis?

DC We finished the last sessions with Ellen last summer. I keep her posted by sending her screenshots and the latest news about the development. She's very interested in seeing how the game develops. She gave a lot of herself on set and is excited to see how scenes will come together.

OPM You've stated how central to your initial vision Page was, and that you couldn't picture another actress playing Jodie. What would have happened to Beyond if she'd declined?

DC I knew from the start there was little chance of Ellen accepting the role, so I had to prepare for all options, but she was the ideal choice and I would have been really disappointed to make this project without her. There are very few actresses capable of playing the role of a young woman like Jodie Holmes. There were so many challenges, from playing the character through 15 years of her life with the same sincerity, the insane amount of work we had to do, the very varied and intense emotions Jodie goes through... I really think that very few actresses could have done the job with the talent, charm and energy of Ellen.

OPM If you could cast anyone – dead or alive – in one of your games, who would you pick?

DC There are so many amazing actors that it's difficult to pick one... How could you choose between De Niro in Taxi Driver, Al Pacino in Scarface, or Marlon Brando in The Godfather? In the younger generation, Sean Penn and Johnny Depp are really unique. I wish I [could] convince one of these great actors to work on a game one day. I've worked with David Bowie and Ellen Page so far, so no one seems totally out of reach!

OPM Do you think too many games focus on affecting the in-game character rather than – as in Beyond – treating the player as the actor?

DC Pretending the player 'is' the character is something that never worked for me. I always had a hard time believing I was this soldier going to war just because the game was in first-person view. I am not a warrior or an elf, even if you let me customise the face of my avatar and choose my name and the colour of my clothes. I can play the role of

an elf or a soldier if you give me some context and characterisation elements, but you will never make me believe I am these characters. There's been a long tradition in games about this idea that the less you build characterisation, the more the player will identify with his character. I think that, in most cases, this is not true. Roleplay always seemed more interesting to me: tell me who I am, how I'm supposed to think. Tell me what I like, who I love, and even if it doesn't match my personal tastes, at least it creates a believable character I can get interested in. Most people have this talent for empathy, to put themselves in the shoes of someone else and feel what they feel. Films use this ability; games are no different.

OPM How hard is it to balance interaction with storytelling?

DC There are many challenges in mixing these two elements, and finding the right balance is definitely difficult. For me, the main challenge is to tell the story through

playing. This is definitely very challenging, but also exciting. I explore the path of 'contextual actions', which allows an infinite amount of interactions with a unique interface. Compared to Heavy Rain, Beyond will offer a new iteration that I think is very promising because it's better integrated and more intuitive.

OPM Do you think player choice is necessary to give a game meaning, or can linear experiences offer just as much impact?

DC Very few games have interest in meaning. Most of them are just about the challenge. The real question is: do we want games with meaning or exclusively games offering fun and a challenge? Personally, I'd like to see both. There is a significant amount of hardcore gamers out there who just want to shoot, and that's fine. The industry should continue to give them a Call Of Duty every Christmas. But the immense majority of the market has absolutely no interest in shooting

"Many people think that if the character doesn't hold a gun, it's not interactive."

interactivity rather than through cut-scenes. It is the player, through his actions, who should move the story on. I'm sometimes surprised to see first-person shooters having more and longer cut-scenes than a story-driven game such as Heavy Rain.

The main challenge games face is the fact they're based on repetitive mechanics: the main character only has access to a limited set of actions – shooting, jumping, running, crouching... It's almost impossible to tell a decent story with a hero that can only run and shoot. So the story is told through cut-scenes where the hero can talk and interact in other ways, which is the only way to make the story move on. The script also has to justify that the hero goes from level to level, faces hundreds of enemies, kills them all and finally reaches his final goal – save the world/save the princess/kill the villain. To tell a good story, games need to offer a different way of interacting that's not limited by the number of buttons on the controller. If many developers have the desire to incorporate a story into their experience, few of them are prepared to reassess the core mechanics they use, which are often exclusively based on violent actions. In order to tell a story, we need to redefine what interacting means and to invent new ways of

online for hours. They're not interested in the challenge or the competition – they want interesting, innovative, involving, thought-provoking experiences.

In a film, we can only watch the story, but in an interactive experience we can be the actor and the writer. We can change the story according to our ideas and emotions, and make the story ours. I continue to believe games can be much more impactful than films because of that. We just need to give some room to authors, people who have something to say, and not just to warriors or competitors. This is the most important revolution [the games industry] has to make. People keep talking about how hardware evolutions and how new technologies can change games. No technical evolution will be more impactful than the revolution we need to make about meaning.

OPM Could you see a future for hybrid game/films – where those who want to can actively interact, and those who don't just press play and watch FMV?

DC I guess this is in a way what we try to achieve at Quantic Dream – so yes, I definitely hope there is a future for this type of experience. There's disdain from many hardcore gamers about any attempt at

telling a story in a game, because there is always this fear it won't be interactive. Many people also consider that if the main character doesn't hold a gun, it's not really interactive. There is a future for story-driven experiences, whether you call them hybrid films or interactive movies or whatever, because this kind of experience can appeal to a wider audience. We explore this direction – trying to create stories you can interact with, with no gun and no FMV, just by letting the player tell the story through his actions.

OPM You've previously alluded to sandbox elements in Beyond. Can we expect to see sections of entirely player-directed exploration, as in The Nomad Soul?

DC Heavy Rain took place in very small environments and was much more about choices and their consequences than about exploration. Beyond has a different balance, with many large environments the player can freely explore. We tried to have the same level of quality and details in significantly larger environments, and we also tried to have exploration scenes making sense in the context of the story, rather than giving the player a radar and making him travel from one point to another.

OPM Are there any narrative threads you hinted at in the Kara demo that directly influence Beyond, or are the two completely unconnected?

DC Kara and Beyond are totally unrelated. Kara was just a short story I imagined to have an emotional journey in five minutes and to test performance capture, our new facial techniques and our new engine. I am really proud of Kara. Thanks to the great performance of actress Valorie Curry it's actually much stronger than I imagined. It's also interesting to see how it's considered by people beyond our industry who totally ignore what real-time 3D is – Kara won an award at the LA Shorts Fest, a well-established festival for short movies in Los Angeles. Beyond was a very different work in [terms] of writing. It was about a much longer story, about telling a life in ten hours, offering very different situations, different emotions – a unique, meaningful journey in the life of someone. I really enjoyed writing both, and I hope that players will like the character of Jodie Holmes as much as they liked the character of Kara.

OPM Are the increasingly realistic mo-cap techniques of games such as Beyond necessary to convey emotion to the player, or is it more a case that developers need to be creative with all of the tools possible?



Who is... David Cage

David De Gruttola started out as a professional musician penning sound for films, games and TV – he's credited on Timecop. Under the pseudonym David Cage, he went on to found Quantic Dream and perfect the 'interactive drama' genre with The Nomad Soul (1999), Fahrenheit (2005) and Heavy Rain (2010). He has won three BAFTAs.



It's the first time such a famous face has been used, but all of Cage's work – including the famous Kara tech demo – has focused on themes of life, love and loss.



DC Performance capture is another colour on the palette of creators, but it won't paint for them. If you have no talent and nothing to say as a painter, having the best colours in the world won't help you. Technology can help in creating emotion, but creating great experiences is most of all about a vision, a sensibility, about meaning and the desire to share emotions. Emotional experiences have been created on older consoles at a time where motion capture didn't even exist. As our tools become more complex and we get closer to representing believable human emotions, the importance of meaningful content becomes more and more apparent.

OPM Tell us one secret about Beyond you've never revealed publicly before...

DC There are many secrets around the project at the moment, things I wish I could talk about but can't... There's no intention to be mysterious or to hide anything, it's just we want to show what we talk about rather than making bold announcements without anything [to support] them. So be patient: there is very exciting news to come.

OPM These days, gamers know almost everything about a title before they even get to play it. Do you think this gamut of info needs to be reined in?

DC It depends on the type of games we're talking about. If we're considering first-person shooters, for example, I don't think knowing a lot about the story hurts the experience in any way, as most of the time it's not central to the experience. For games that are story-driven, it's definitely an issue. I understand the curiosity and passion of fans, but at the same time, who would like to see a film knowing everything about the plot? Discovery is a part of the pleasure and you don't want to spoil it. I also understand that games are expensive, so people want to know as much as possible beforehand to make sure they won't be disappointed. As authors become more and more visible, there are some creators' games I'd buy anyway just based on their name, the same way there are some films I'll go and see based on the name of the director. At the moment, most people only blindly buy sequels because they know what they're going to get. I hope more and more creators will be given the same credit.

OPM What have you made of PS Vita so far? Is it a machine you can see yourself working on at some stage?

DC At the moment, Quantic Dream is busy working on console titles, but I wouldn't mind working on a portable device. There is a lot to do and new things to invent, so it'd definitely be a very interesting challenge.

In the mood for... Plants

Getting green fingers with PlayStation's badass botany

David Attenborough may try to stick his esteemed oar into their business, but plants really do deserve a private life. This is especially true in the less-than-pristinely cultivated garden of PlayStation – the wild jungles of man-eating Venus flytraps, killer chrysanthemum seductresses and sentient alien bulbs are hardly going to fit into a tent at the Chelsea Flower Show. Not every colourful earth-sapper wants to introduce you to a thorn-impaled death, though – the array of shrubbery in Thatgamecompany's inspiring Flower is enough to make even the most cold-hearted digital gardener's ticker grow warm. So lift a trowel to PlayStation's plants. They really do brighten up the place in their own special (usually murdery) way.

Burster plant [Killzone 3]

Being a botanist on Helghan must be tough like growing sunflowers on the dark side of the Moon. And given that its woodland areas are teeming with spiky

Burster plants, there's nothing at all welcoming about the planet's Kaznan Jungle. Use one to kill a space Nazi though, and you'll at least unlock a trophy for your efforts.



Poison Ivy [Batman: Arkham Asylum]

We've all had unrepeatable dreams involving shrubbery, yeah? Oh. In fairness, our fantasies do involve Batman's sultry plant nemesis as opposed to the fern in our lounge. Once Ivy breaks free of her greenhouse cell at Arkham she enters into an almighty (alright, fairly rubbish) scrap with Bats.

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Ivy Plants [Resident Evil 2]

Unlike the Dark Knight's slinky sprout nemesis, this particular form of ivy would rather spit poisonous acid in your face than plant a mind-distorting smacker on your lips. These hideous mutations are 'improved' versions of the creeping vines that spread throughout Spencer Mansion.

Shudder. Pass the weed-whacker, Leon.



Hyper-Mutated Flytrap [Bulletstorm]

That cheeky beggar out of Little Shop Of Horrors is a delicate rose in comparison to this guy. Trust Grayson Hunt's sweaty shooter to cook up a dirty name for the flytrap's level, too. Maneaters Prefer Tight Spots [cough] sees Hunt saving his pal Ishi after the spore-shooting goliath takes him for plant food.



intermission

A tasty PlayStation snack

Terramorphous (Borderlands 2)

When a boss appears in a mission called You. Will. Die. (Seriously), you best prepare for pad-smashing misery. A giant Thresher beastie, Terramorphous is essentially an enormous tentacled shrub. More painful than replacing your loo roll with thistles, you basically need four level-50 characters to down this wicked weed.



The Thorian (Mass Effect)

And we thought redwoods were the old codgers of the plant world. Compared to the 50,000-year-old Species 37 (as it's known to its brainwashed mates), a Californian sky-sprouting tree is but a whippersnapper. Able to tinker about with your mind thanks to its sensory network, Shep thankfully digs up old 37 with deadly force.



Now have your say

Have we uprooted your most botanical PS fave? Plant your opinions at opm@futurenet.com. Here's what we weeded out.

■ Skylander's Camo is pretty adorable for a plant. Pity the wee fire-breather is more dragon than sentient shrubbery.

■ The garden growths in Plants vs Zombies are good at slaying the undead, but a bit too sickly sweet for our liking.

■ Braid's spitting flowers are pretty but a right nuisance when you're bending space and time with a miniature atom-bomb scientist.

Flowers (Flower)

The game that finally made Sixaxis controls vaguely acceptable. While the sizzling scorch marks of Lair still burn, Flower makes bringing fields of flora into bloom a life-affirming pleasure. Pretty much the only plants on these pages that don't want you dead, the top-notch PSN petal-'em-up encouraged creation like few games.



feature

Destiny



A BRAVE N

E W W O R L D

089

After over a decade dominating Xbox, Bungie leaps on to PlayStation with **Destiny**, its most ambitious project to date



"One thing's crystal clear: this isn't a rebranded Halo."

If we've looked at any developer with green eyes here in the realm of PlayStation gaming, it's Bungie. A studio that defined the first-person console shooter formula with its pioneering two-weapon, recharging health mechanics in *Halo* and went on to make that formula so effective that gamers spent a collective 235,000 years playing the series. A studio that created one of the most iconic player characters in history, and a multiplayer experience that's hosted over 20,000,000,000 games since *Halo 2*'s release in 2004. These numbers aren't intended to sting your eyes, nor should they. Bungie's new project *Destiny*, a persistent shared-world FPS, is heading to both PS3 and PS4 – and with platform-exclusive content to boot. It brings not only the

Halo studio's undeniable shooter mastery, but one of the most ambitious visions we've ever heard. And it's all funded by Activision, creator of enormous, world-stomping franchises. If any partnership can make such an ambitious game as *Destiny* actually work, it's this one.

Big switch

So now we can finally acknowledge Bungie, and it feels great. But who exactly is this studio? A collective of savant coders in green spacesuits that stomped DualShocks on sight until its split from Microsoft in 2007? Do the staff bounce around the office on space hoppers, extolling the merits of a Valve-esque 'flat hierarchy' and taking bi-hourly group hug breaks? To crack into the Bungie psyche, we explore its Seattle headquarters – a

converted cinema. "This mezzanine is where the projectors used to be," says COO Pete Parsons, guiding us through an impressive open space littered with awards gongs, life-sized Master Chiefs and wide-eyed journoes.

Sure enough, there's a touch of the unorthodox to Bungie: a ten-foot climbing wall where most offices would have a couple of sofas, an absence of individual offices, masking-tape marks on the floor where a kind of knighting ceremony for new employees and five-, ten- and 20-year veterans took place several weeks back, and an ever-shifting desk arrangement. "Back in 2005 we decided to put everybody's desks on wheels," says Parsons. "We probably do ten to 15 desk moves every week." These are the affectations of a studio that's earned the right to hang a little loose



The refitted movie theatre where Bungie earns its trade has very few offices, employees instead preferring to work as a hivemind in one open space. Many work standing up, too.



by its body of work. You could walk through the doors in foot gloves and a propeller hat if you had a particular predilection for it... so long as you helped make one of the biggest shooter series of all time. And there's more to that knighting ceremony than fistbumps and bro-ing out – over half the team that created Halo: Combat Evolved back in 2001 is still here today, working on Destiny. An increasing rarity in game studios that's well worth celebrating.

And arguably for the first time since 2001, the studio's truly out of its comfort zone. Destiny is a rather nebulous project at the moment: it's a persistent online world, but not an MMO. It's a first-person shooter, but bears glaring RPG elements that include loot, character upgrades and stat progression. One thing's crystal clear, though: this isn't a rebranded Halo for multiplatform release. As Activision CEO Eric Hirshberg describes it: "I think what Bungie has created is the world's first shared-world shooter. It's a game that's always evolving, with persistent progression for your character."

Bungie's approach? Build an awesome world (these guys *love* the word awesome), and you've already won half the battle. It's even one of the seven 'pillars' of design that creative director and co-founder Jason



Finally, your incredibly specific fantasy involving riding a fish-bike through the desert dressed as a Xenomorph has a vessel with which to be fulfilled. That's a good thing, right?

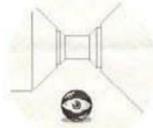


TRAIL BLAZERS

Destiny promises innovation on a grand scale, like these historical marvels of the videogame world.

■ First peer-to-peer game

Way back in 1974, the kids were playing a network-enabled first-person shooter called Maze War. It might look like a broken Etch A Sketch by today's standards, but the viewpoint – along with the idea of shooting strangers – caught on, like, big time.



■ First online PS2 game

The now defunct Zipper Interactive's SOCOM: US Navy Seals blazed a new trail for online gaming with the PS2's shiny new network adapter, enabling online and LAN multiplayer matches and headset support. Servers closed as recently as August 2012.



■ First MMORPG

Maze War and edutainment interface PLATO had the systems up and running, but it was 3DO's Meridian 59 that put the 'G' back into MMORPG back in 1996 and defined the traditions of the genre (that would be loot, killing, and monthly subscription fees, then).



■ Biggest budget

There are unconfirmed reports floating around of Bioware's Star Wars: The Old Republic costing over \$200 million, and PC MMO TERA Online racking up a staggering \$400 million, but Big Apple darts-'em-up GTA IV's \$100 million budget is the largest confirmed.



■ Longest development time

Honourable mentions are due to Valve for Team Fortress 2 (1998-2007) and Blizzard for Diablo III (2001-2012), but Duke Nukem Forever's 15-year development spell (ten years at 3D Realms, then five more at Gearbox) is the longest ever – and one of the few reasons to hail to the king.



■ Most simultaneous online players

Bungie's working its shared world angle *hard*, but will it manage to populate the world of Destiny with more players than any game that's gone before? It'll have to top PC MMO World Of Tanks' 500,000 simultaneous players to do so.



■ Most guns

It's time to pay Gearbox its due. Duke Nukem Forever holds one distinctly unenviable accolade, but Borderlands 2 claims this prestigious gong. How many guns exactly does it have? More than the first Borderlands' 17,750 million. No one knows how many more.



feature

Destiny

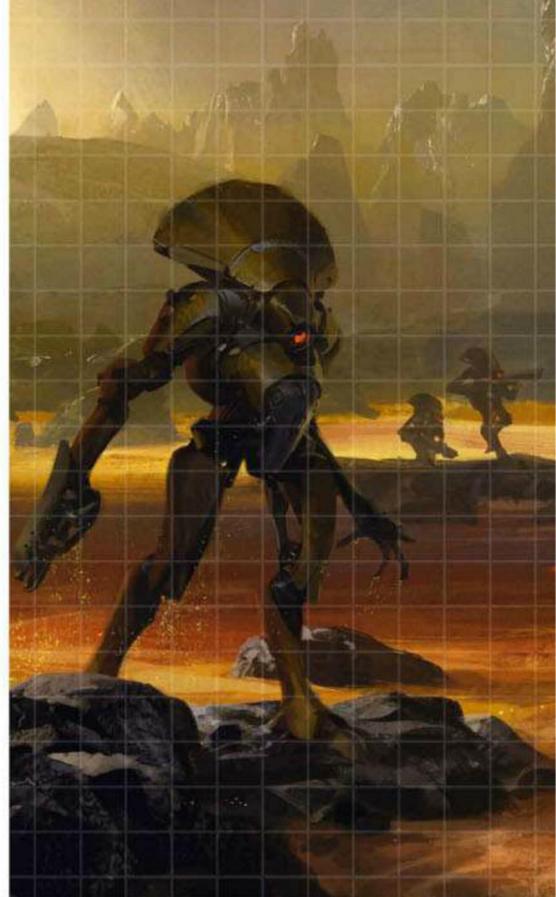
Jones describes: "A world you want to be in... This pillar was a big influence early in development. It let us create a world that was hopeful, that was full of mystery, a world you wanted to be part of and to explore." You can throw in all the brutal melee takedowns and slo-mo 'mark for death' mechanics you like, but if your world is as fun to inhabit as an Aldi car park, your game's going to fail. Destiny's reveal presentation is big on ephemeral concepts and promises, but the game world is something both story lead Joe Staten and art director Christopher Barrett are upfront about. Destiny takes place across our entire solar system, or at least a version of it. Far into the future, humanity's once-sprawling space empire has been ravaged by a mysterious and powerful enemy. We were all but wiped out, saved only at the last second by an entity known as The Traveller, whose vast silver sphere hangs above the last safe city on Earth.

It's a haunting sci-fi vision, as Barrett describes: "The Cosmochrome Breach, frozen in time before the collapse. Ruins on the edge of the European Dead Zone, with a perpetual

dark storm looming above. The swamps of old Chicago. What once was a 12-storey window in a skyscraper is now a doorway to a dungeon buried deep beneath the snow." Further afield in space, there are eerily abandoned Moon bases, lost cities on Mars, "mile-long tomb ships" floating through space, and – Barrett's favourite – "giant obsidian pyramid ships". Due to the galactic scale Destiny deals in, you couldn't pin down its lore as having one particular character, and it's all the more enticing as a result. Camp '70s sci-fi sits next to dark graphic-novel material, vaguely plausible locations such as man-made Moon facilities exist just a stone's throw from physically impossible floating alien constructs.

Cabal and chain

Enemy design picks the pockets of many mythologies, too, populating the solar system with "planet-crushing war-beasts, spider pirates and their rusted machines, time-travelling robots, and evil space zombies," says Barrett. We also see a porcine race called the Cabal (think Duke Nukem 3D's pig



Enemies include zombies, robots, beasts and the deadliest of all: other people. Teabagging is inevitable.

"The game takes place across the whole solar system."



BUNGIE TIMELINE

Tracking the meteoric rise of a couple of enthusiastic coders from modest success on Mac OS through to the all-conquering Halo franchise

The birth of Bungie 1991

Now-departed founder Alex Seropian creates Bungie Software as a means of putting out *Operation: Desert Storm* on Mac OS. It sells just 2,500 copies, taking its subject matter from the Middle-Eastern conflict of the time. The game is funded by friends and family, requiring Seropian to do all of the legwork when it comes to the logistical tasks of writing discs and assembling boxes.



Out of the dark 1993

Teaming up with co-founder and current creative director Jason Jones, Seropian releases a Mac-only first-person adventure set in Central America in which the player has to stop an ancient god from awakening. *Pathways Into Darkness* success is a surprise for the duo, outselling all of their previous games and helping to fund the company's move to a dedicated office in Chicago's South Side.



PC era 1994

Bungie hits its stride with the Marathon sci-fi trilogy, which draws inspiration from *Doom* and *System Shock*. In 1997 the studio branches out into the strategy market with *Myth*, a fast-paced and bloody title that focuses on unit management rather than resource collection. It's a hit that spawns two sequels, and funds a California branch that produces action game *Oni*.



There isn't one unifying motif in Destiny's environment design, but with a whole flippin' solar system to create, it's going to be important to avoid monotony.



cops) guarding a "vast machine intelligence" called Charlemagne within some Martian ruins. Staten describes how a typical mission plays out with these guys: hopping into a space craft with his buddy, he heads to the ruins in daytime, knowing the Cabal will be out in smaller numbers than his last nighttime excursion. "[Suddenly], a Cabal dropship swoops in over the skyscrapers, unloads over our position with rockets, and drops a whole squad of Legionaries, backed up by a Centurion. It's not looking good, and for a second I wonder if [we're] even going to live long enough to make it through the front door." Here's where Destiny's shared world shtick comes into play: "But then she shows up out of nowhere. Carving sand on a stolen pike, strafing Cabal with her dual shock cannons. You see, the Dust Palace is one of Destiny's many public locations where you just cross paths with other Guardians." The party of three proceed to righteously make pork chops of the Cabal, grab Charlemagne along with some loot (guns), and go their separate ways. Staten concedes that there is a general story arc for all players in Destiny, but most of your story is written by you – where you decide to go, and what you do when you get there.

We've seen just three classes so far: a Titan, a Warlock and a Huntress (the only discernible difference so far is that when the Warlock uses their magical ability, "it feels like punching someone in the face with a piece of the sun") and everyone starts as a human



Just three player classes have been unveiled thus far and, due to the story's confines, all are human. Cry some more, elf.

Guardian, blessed with a fragment of The Traveller's power. That essentially means it's a whole universe populated by Master Chiefs, bumping into each other and interacting via co-op missions, party raids and competitive multiplayer in a theoretically seamless manner powered by bleeding-edge server tech. This time Bungie needs to make every player special and unique, the hero of their own story, never overshadowed by higher-level players. "They might get in your way sometimes," continues Hirshberg, "[and] team up with you at other times, but the world is always shared and inhabited by other players."

Hold on, this couldn't sound more like an MMO if you threw in Korean gold farmers

and dancing Night Elves. Why is Destiny so keen to distance itself from that genre? The answer has less to do with the inner workings of Bungie's online world and more to do with subscription fees, explains Hirshberg: "I know the words 'persistent world' sometimes come with the assumption of a certain business model, and I want to just address this upfront and rip this band aid off right away – we have absolutely no plans to charge a subscription fee for Destiny." It's a boxed-copy console release with a gun pointing into the horizon – except for that, it's hard to join the dots back to the Halo games.

And it's not just the high concept behind Destiny that pushes Bungie out of that

Combat evolves 2001

Originally slated as a Mac/PC release, Bungie's now-iconic shooter *Halo: Combat Evolved* is snatched up as a first-party Xbox game and releases to critical acclaim and gigantic sales figures. "We deliberately did very heretical things to first-person shooters," recalls Jones. "We limited it to two guns, your health recharged automatically, we saved the game automatically." Mechanics that are still around today.



Matchmaking 2004

Halo 2 releases with a multiplayer focus, persistent player stats and more sophisticated online matchmaking. It arrives to more critical acclaim, and scoops the Game Critics Award for Best Console Game, and many more. Some berate the campaign for its brevity, but more get stuck into the multiplayer – making it one of the biggest online FPS communities ever.



Independence and Destiny 2007

5 October, 2007: Microsoft announces its split from Bungie as a parent company, retaining the rights to the Halo franchise. After a conspicuous absence at E3 2008, Bungie returns with *Halo 3: ODST* in 2009 and *Halo: Reach* in 2010, beginning pre-production of Destiny some time in 2009. In April 2010, Activision announces a ten-year partnership with Bungie.



feature

Destiny

■ Borderlands 2

Destiny meets Gearbox's celebrated blaster in terms of obsessive loot collection and co-op, but it doesn't go as far as sharing its comic-book graphics, tongue-in-cheek characters and wub-wub.



■ Journey

That game company proved less is more when it comes to in-game social interaction, sneaking co-op under your nose without so much as a lobby or the crackle of a cheap headset. Beat that, Bungie.



■ Skyrim

A melting pot of Norse myths, Dungeons & Dragons baddies, fairytale giants and mammoths to explore at your leisure. Bungie's shooter adopts a similar hotchpotch, with a lick of sci-fi paint.



IN THE MIX

The games that make up
Destiny



■ Halo

It would be hard to imagine Bungie's next big shooter not playing at least a *little bit* like Master Chief's escapades, wouldn't it? Bungie says it's proud to stamp that familiar feel on to Destiny.



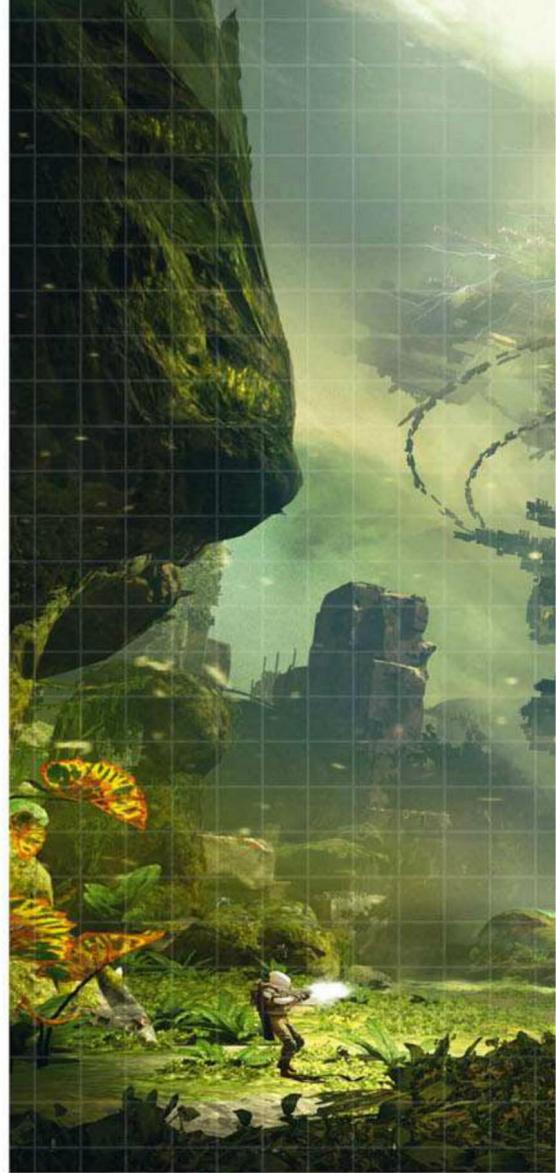
■ Planetside

There aren't many MMOFPS games out there (maybe a result of that horrible acronym), but approximately *all* of them owe something to this visionary 2003 PC online warzone.

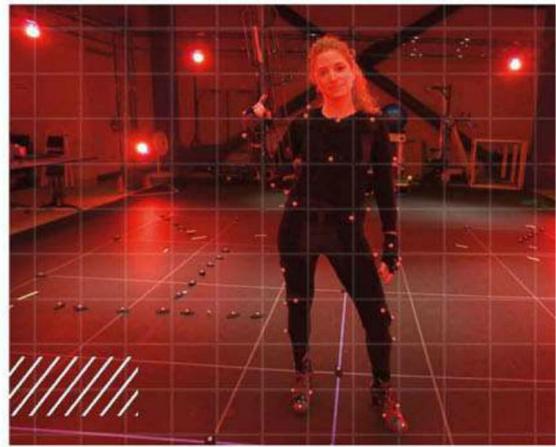


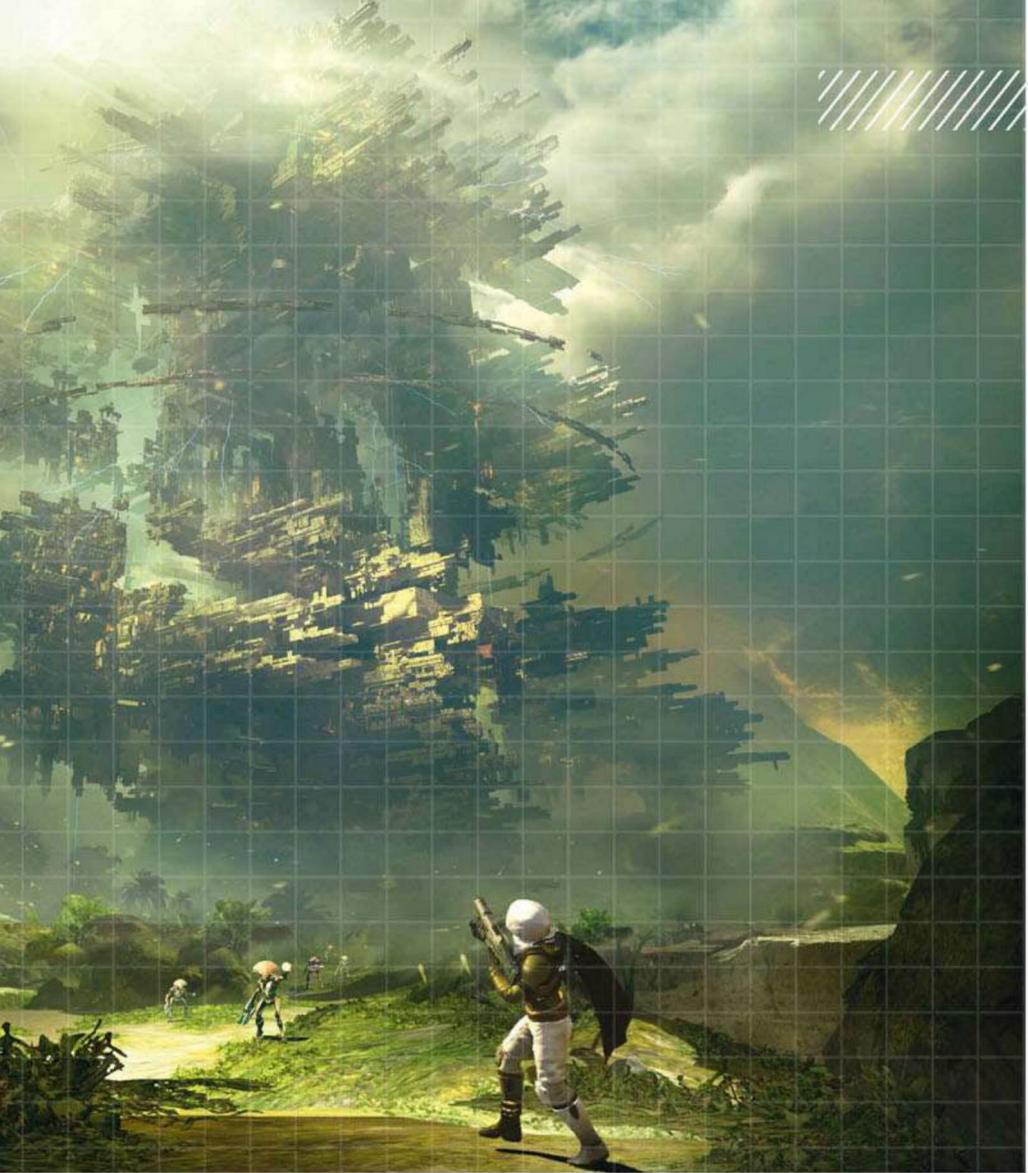
■ Mass Effect

The biggest, most involving sci-fi universe we've been treated to on PS3 thus far (no offence, Lost Planet 2), giving you the power to hop between entire solar systems in a matter of mere seconds.



Halo-shaped comfort zone: it's the entire infrastructure of technology used to build and maintain the game. "In order to meet this challenge we've had to rebuild almost every part of our game technology," says technical director Chris Butcher. "We've been working on this for six years and we've built our largest, most talented engineering team ever." There's a wealth of new server-side tech, a bespoke level-building tool affectionately known as Grognek, Creator Of Worlds, and a graphics engine designed with ten years of tread on the tyres. "If you guys have somehow been able to read our contract with Activision, and I don't know how you'd be able to do that," jokes Joe





It's not just about making *Destiny* sing on PS3 for Bungie: it's about pushing PS4's limits right out of the gate.

Staten, "you'd know we've got our work cut out for us. Our contract signs us up for a lot of games over a really long time." The contract, now available on all corners of the internet that aren't taken up by cats and pictures of people's lunches, requires Bungie to produce four games, one every other year from 2013 (although Activision has now confirmed *Destiny* won't release until 2014). We won't see the ceiling of the new tech on PS3, but Bungie's ten-year plan for the franchise involves not only maxing out the current machine, but also stretching the limits of PS4.

Hao Chen is Bungie's senior graphics architect, and offers the most tangible info

on how ambitious *Destiny* is on a technical level. "Over the last four years we have built a truly state-of-the-art engine," he says. "It's by design multiplatform – it's highly multithreaded, scales very well to the current generation and the future generation of hardware. We have a ton of new features, from our multi-resolution terrain systems, to our forests and trees, to rivers, to real-time lighting, visibility... lots of cool technology."

Bungie jump

The challenge for Chen and his team, first posed in 2009, has been not just to create next-gen visual fidelity, but to give level artists and designers a toolset that makes it possible to work efficiently enough to build a universe of the size *Destiny* promises – our solar system, bruised by years of conflict with an unknown or forgotten alien force. "The main reason why we needed to write an entirely new engine is because the sheer amount of content that we have in this game is just impossible to build in the way we needed to build [it]."
In the old days, he explains, building something as simple as a room meant precisely stitching the walls, floor and ceiling together. Adding a door meant cutting out a hole, and an object the exact same size: "It's a very painstaking process, it's a technical process and it's also error-prone." Using Bungie's new toolset, Chen describes

the process as more like, "Jamming the ceiling together with the floor, and if you need a door, move it over there and drop it." What's more, the team created the first *Halo* game without even an 'undo' in its toolset.

But there's no question of the studio losing its unique identity in the wash of all this new tech. "It will be a Bungie game and absolutely will have our fingerprints all over it," says Parsons. "We want to make a game that we want to play. We want to build a universe we want to be in." And after all the dust settles from *Destiny*'s reveal, the most exciting aspect of it all remains Bungie itself. Anyone can tell you they're making a shared-world shooter spanning the solar system, with seamless competitive and party play, but would you really believe them unless they happened to have the *Halo* series on their CV, six years of work tucked away under their belt on the project, and funding from the publisher that *World Of Warcraft* and *Call Of Duty*'s sales go to? That, above all else, is an indication of just how momentous *Destiny* is likely to be. Until that partnership's ready to come forward with more concrete evidence of *Destiny*'s potential, Bungie and Activision are asking us to take a leap of faith with them – but in an industry of yearly release cadences, sequels and reboots, this genuine attempt at something completely new is worth taking that leap for.



Bungie's full performance-capture studio has double doors, enabling actors to get a running start into the room for action sequences. Health and safety officers: look away.

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PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

Reviews

Your essential guide to every new release

The year begins in March." That's what they say, isn't it? What do you mean, no? Well, we're saying it now. With Easter, the clocks going forward, and the occasional five-minute glimpse of blue-ish sky, 2013 is now a place to call home. And after a stuttering start to the gaming calendar, things are really kicking off in earnest now – starting with the return of PlayStation royalty. Lara's back, younger than ever and with Nathan Drake posters adorning her bedroom walls. Thankfully, her change of direction has gone far more smoothly than when we decided to take the 'shortcut' back from Cornwall. Those poor cows...

But our young treasure hunter isn't the only star of The Month The Year Begins (look, we're sticking with this, alright?). Crysis 3 definitely has the looks, but unlike your average Zoo cover model it's also got the substance. And coming in under the radar is Urban Trial Freestyle: the most fun you can have with bikes since you tied your sister's shoelaces to the pedals when she wasn't looking.



98

TOMB RAIDER

An origins tale [it's either that or the most successful episode of Ten Years Younger in history] that sees Lara stranded on a mysterious and deadly island.



110

URBAN TRIAL FREESTYLE

You have to have your head stuck in a Sahara's worth of sand not to see the inspiration, but this is a successful take.



112

CRYYSIS 3

Prophet's back, and he's in New York – concrete jungle where dreams are... ruined by aliens drooling all over your Nanosuit. At least it's *really* pretty drool.

How we score our reviews...

10 Essential

Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

9 Outstanding

Highly recommended, and an investment you won't regret.

8 Very good

Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

7 Good

Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement. Rent it first.

6 Reasonable

A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Average

A game that is both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Below average

Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

3 Poor

A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful

A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

1 Horrific

Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.



Our highest accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and profound appeal.

Croft conversion

Tomb Raider

098 Uncharted territory a far cry from series roots



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub Square Enix Dev Crystal Dynamics Players 1-6 Web tombraider.com It's like Nathan Drake had a sex change, followed by some age reversal therapy.

If series reboots are the new black (and let's face it, it's either that or brutal melee takedowns), then it's safe to say Lara wears hers well. And while this origins story leaves many of the franchise's traditions at the door, Crystal Dynamics' cobble job is thankfully far more Batman than Conan; more Street Fighter than Duke Nukem. It cribs heavily from the top dogs in its own as well as other genres, but it does so sensibly and effectively, while throwing in a handful of neat new features along with an enjoyable (if not always totally coherent) shipwreck storyline.

There's no denying the biggest influence behind Lara's ninth canonical outing is the Uncharted series, and as such we've come full circle. Back in 2007 Nathan Drake was cited as the new Lara, and now (at least until Nate-dog returns), Lara is the new Drake. Or the new old Lara. Or something. Raider falls just short of Uncharted in most regards, but

that the distance is not overwhelming should be deemed cause for celebration – let's face it, you'd be pretty chuffed if you could run the 100m in 9.8 seconds.

And, in fact, there are a couple of areas in which our heroine outshines Sony's golden boy. When climbing, for instance, your hand isn't held to quite the same degree, and nor are routes so immediately obvious as with Uncharted's bright yellow piping. After making the bigger jumps you often need to tap **□** in time to stop Lara from losing her grip, and later in the game you have to construct your own routes to the top using rope arrows and various gizmos purloined during your adventuring. The more manual nature of the mechanic means that there's a genuine sense of peril to traversal, and a number of leaps get the 'will she/won't she?' doubts circulating in your mind.

Mapped out

Tomb Raider also gives you more reason to explore your lush surroundings. While the Uncharted trilogy (and the latter two games in particular) provides plenty of moments where you stop and stare at the beauty and detail around you, there's little to do away from the game's beaten



► Ah, the old 'run in a straight line from a threat coming from directly behind you'. Classic.



► The shooting is rock solid, with all guns possessing a good sense of weight and impact.

track. Which isn't a problem when that track is so compelling and brilliantly realised, but the structure here does well to fuse that linearity with some open-world tendencies. At numerous base camps throughout the game you're able to both fast travel back to previous locations, and see how many of the area's collectibles and secrets you've discovered. In the same fashion as the Arkham games, some of these are only accessible once you've gotten your hands on better bits of kit at later points in the story, meaning that when you revisit locales (the plot takes you back through previously visited sites, à la BioShock) there's actually some fun to be had in looking around. How compelling you find these collectibles of course



► Climbing this radio tower marks a milestone in the game's narrative. It's also really, *really* tall.

depends on your completionist bent, but they're as appealingly integrated as collectibles can be, and their more active nature certainly elevates them above Uncharted's scattered treasures.

Cast of us

One place where Naughty Dog still undoubtedly leads the way is in

is a fairly clichéd bunch – gruff Scot, sassy black woman, large Polynesian gentleman – but they each fulfil a role, and the voice acting and script are strong (albeit not a patch on you-know-what). They are, though, very much second fiddle in the grand scheme of things, and Lara's adventure is an almost entirely solo effort – all the more reason to be thankful this reimagined version has been well realised.

Over the course of the game's running time (which clocks in at around ten hours for an average playthrough) Miss Croft evolves from a bright and intuitive yet hesitant young thing to a confident life-saver and expert weapons handler. The progression in her abilities is a little tough to swallow (more on that later), but the changes in her personality are handled

"Crystal Dynamics has pulled no emotional punches here."

storytelling, although Raider's origins tale does what it sets out to do, and Lara in particular is a pleasingly well-rounded (no, not like that) lead. After a storm leaves her and her crew shipwrecked on a mysterious and – shock horror – deadly Pacific island, the team's archaeological mission is put on hold in favour of saving their skins and getting away from the Isle Of Maneaters. The supporting cast

well and believably. The voice work from Camilla Luddington plays a part in this, as does the set of circumstances into which she's thrust: the various levels of peril and tragedy that befall her band of comrades would elicit an impassioned response from anybody. Crystal Dynamics has pulled no emotional punches here, and the experience is all the better for it.

► Despite the scowl and combat garb, this is actually not a bad guy.

Timeline Tomb Raider series highlights

1996	1997	1998	2006	2008
Tomb Raider PS1 A brilliant and beautiful adventure of huge scope, as well as the birth of a true gaming icon.	Tomb Raider II PS1 New weapons and moves, but the same great platforming and puzzling – now with added vehicles.	Tomb Raider III PS1 A truly globetrotting outing as Lara visits London, Nevada and the South Pacific – in your choice of order.	Tomb Raider: Legend PS2 A real return to form sees Lara surviving a Himalayan plane crash and discovering King Arthur's tomb.	Tomb Raider: Underworld PS3 A new grappling hook and, for the first time, the ability to dual target help Lara find the hammer of Thor.



Did you know?
English actress Camilla Luddington, the new voice of Lara, played Kate Middleton in 2011 made-for-TV movie William & Kate.

With regard to how Lara's skills as a raider of tombs increase, it's a two-sided coin. Otherwise known as: a coin. From a gameplay perspective it works well: most in-game actions reward you with XP – story progression, hunting wild animals, hoarding collectibles – which in turn translates to a Skill Point once you've harvested enough. These can then be spent in a number of different categories. You can enable Lara to fall from high places without suffering damage, to develop additional close-combat skills such as arrow executions, or to harvest more resources from fallen animals or enemies. In turn those resources, referred to as Salvage, are what allows you to upgrade your weapons, increasing power, ammo capacity and the like. Spare parts to overhaul each firearm – turning your AK-47 into a Commando Rifle, for instance – are also found at random throughout. The game makes all of this eminently manageable: there's a limited but sufficient number of firearms, and the upgrades function independently of one another for the most part, so you



ScorePole
She may not be topping the charts, but Lara should be pleased to keep such exalted company.



Ability upgrades allow Lara to perform executions with various weapons. We call this the 'gut rot'.

needn't commit to one particular set of skills at the expense of another.

Fast learner

An island filled with murderous inhabitants, deadly wildlife, and a young kid battling to save their friends using an ever-expanding set of resources – we know what you're thinking: how long until ITV makes this into a reality show? Once you're done picturing Ant and Dec narrating as Pixie Lott fires a longbow at a cannibal, you may also think this sounds a tad reminiscent of Far Cry 3. And you'd be right. While the plot elements and cinematic flourishes are a clear Drake homage, the emphasis

on exploration and upgrades (not to mention being stranded on an island full of nutbars) echoes Jason Brody's holiday from hell. And while it was difficult to believe that a carefree fratboy miraculously transformed into a tribal leader, Lara's metamorphosis is an even tougher pill to swallow. Even with the 'it's a game, dummy' caveat, bullets have left guns slower than the speed at which our girl changes from a shy scholar into a grenade launcher-wielding commando. And all in the space of roughly three days – at least J-Bro's journey took place over a period of weeks or months.

But I'm nitpicking, and once your disbelief has been suspended there's a



huge amount of fun to be had in trying to rescue your friends from this island of the damned. The shooting, for one, is rock solid. Working with the trigger buttons as you'd expect, all the guns have a pleasing sense of weight and impact, and the crosshairs are nicely responsive when it comes to lining up satisfying (and XP-rich) headshots.

What you might not expect is that the cover system (Lara automatically ducks down behind anything waist-height when you're in combat) also works a treat, and is a nice touch that deserves the flattery of replication. The bow is the star of your arsenal, capable of stealth kills as well as (once suitably upgraded) firing flaming arrows and projectiles that can create ziplines or yank down chunks of wall. If you want to play the game low-key – or just fulfil some Robin Hood fantasies – this is likely to be your staple firearm. A word of warning, though: the stealth system is something of a damp squib for those used to Far Cry's brilliant implementation. If you keep Lara hidden it is possible to pick off a room full of goons, but as soon as one person spots you, every enemy in the vicinity instantly knows your location – these island dwellers must be the psychic sort. It doesn't totally nerf the enjoyment of playing incognito, but it's a fairly remedial error for

a game this polished and ambitious, and is a definite disappointment.

What's also a shame is that the latter half of the game is a letdown in comparison to the former. In the early hours there's a good mix of exploration, puzzling and combat – and the combat when it does take place generally tasks you with using the environment to your advantage as you tackle fairly small numbers of enemies. However, as the game progresses someone seems to push the button marked 'engage Michael Bay mode' and everything is either on



Enemies with shields provide a different threat, but Lara's agility serves her in good stead.

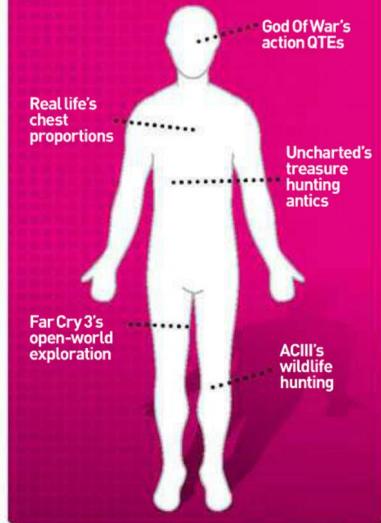


Early sections of the game are well-paced and allow you to take in the beautiful surroundings.



Videogame Frankenstein

Tomb Raider may have borrowed ideas, but it's cribbed from the best.



fire, exploding, or armed to a degree that would make '80s Arnie jealous. I'm all for varied pacing and narrative crescendos, but this is overplayed in terms of both intensity and duration, and the game never manages to recover the feel of the opening acts.

Brief getaway

Other problems are limited to things such as fiddly QTEs that break the immersion – seeing Lara getting strangled to death three times in a row because you failed to press **A** during a split-second window hardly keeps you invested in this story of survival against the odds. It's also true that, while Crystal Dynamics has done a decent job of making it fun to explore as you return to locales, there's far less longevity in the side-activities than there was on Rook Island. Once you've ventured into some previously inaccessible locations and hoovered up some missed collectibles you're heading back to the main trail and onwards with Lara's adventure.

One thing you will distract yourself with – as the name suggests – is tombs. Little



▲ "Mayday, mayday, I've got an amazing view in the background and no way to take a Facebook profile pic. Send a cameraphone, stat."

of your main quest is concerned with the raiding of these bad boys, but there are a number of optional caverns to explore. These all consist of a small puzzle – usually switch, lever or timing-related (or a combination thereof) – with a reward at the end. They're not game-changing but most provide a pleasant distraction and tease the brain gently, and they all offer a welcome change of pace. There's also an online multiplayer offering, which we'll test fully in a future issue.

This is a rollicking and hugely

minimal – they only become magnified in light of the games it's been inspired by and can be compared to.

The story, script and cast fall some way short of the brilliance that the Uncharted series has consistently achieved, and the set-pieces never have quite the same 'it's too amazing for my brain to process' factor. The exploration, side-activities



enjoyable adventure, filled with spectacular set-pieces, emotional highs and lows, and – thankfully – not an oversized sports bra in sight. Crystal Dynamics has set a shining example of what can be done when reimagining a franchise from the ground up, and all of the elements on show have been well-conceived and well-crafted, and they come together to form a cohesive whole. The game itself contains some minor irritations, but Tomb Raider's own failings are

and setting never compels or excites to the level of Far Cry 3, and the package offers much less for your money. Even the tombs can't match up to the brilliant catacomb-climbing sections from Assassin's Creed II. These bars have been set high for any game to reach, no doubt, but Tomb Raider is not far from breathing that same rarefied air. PlayStation's first lady is back in style, even if the crown no longer fits as it once did.

Joel Gregory

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*Based on metacritic average rankings across available platforms.

Heading Nord

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim Dragonborn

Taking flight on a chariot of fire

Life isn't easy when you're Dovahkiin. I've saved the world from a dragon apocalypse, overthrown the Imperials as a key part of the Stormcloak rebellion, and rebuilt the Thieves' Guild into a force to be reckoned with. You could forgive me for wanting to take it easy. But no, now comes a largely enjoyable chunk of Skyrim DLC that tasks me with taking on an evil pretender to my title.

The first of three DLC packs headed to PS3 – Hearthfire and Dawnguard are set to follow, weirdly making the release schedule the reverse of that on other formats – Dragonborn landed on Xbox two months previously, with a main quest that clocks in at several hours for your £13. Worth the wait? In terms of exciting new foes to spill the blood of and fresh terrain to spill it on, absolutely – even if the whole 'dragon riding' thing is far less spectacular than it sounds.

It starts when you're accosted by a pair of sinisterly masked men who ask if you're Dragonborn. They call you a



liar – seriously dudes, I killed Alduin, what more do you want? – and start literally trying to kill you with fire. Turns out these would-be assassins are Cultists, sent by the mysterious Miraak, the first Dragonborn. He's planning a big comeback and wants you out of the way. Tamriel evidently ain't big enough for the both of you, so off you venture to root him out and teach him a lesson about respect. Oh, and he's also keeping the peaceful Skaal under his control. You should probably sort that out, too.

This brief introduction aside, Dragonborn takes place on the island of Solstheim, just off the coast of Morrowind – we're not in Skyrim anymore, Toto. It has a distinctly separate feel, a largely ash-strewn vista dominated by an erupting volcano off in the distance. As such, there are new ingredients, armour types and enemies

to discover, plus a couple of additional shouts to add to your arsenal. It's a decent-sized area of map to explore, with plenty of interesting locations to make that exploration feel worthwhile.

Moran that

Thanks to some nifty Black Books, the main quest also whiskers you off to the realm of Apocrypha. Leafing through one of these artefacts never fails to provoke an amusing response from faithful follower Lydia – "I do wish you'd stop doing that..." – before you get sucked into this parallel dimension. This Plane Of Oblivion – associated with Hermaeus Mora, Daedric Prince of fate, knowledge and memory – is a Lovecraftian labyrinth built from stacked books and flapping pages. In other words, what Waterstones employees' nightmares must look like.

Apocrypha is home to the horrific Seekers – writhing masses of tentacles that fire off ranged attacks at you and clone



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He's looking so naked because he knows that soon he'll be the equivalent of our dressage pony.



Raven Rock is Solstheim's only proper town, and so forms your main port of call for supplies.

themselves during scraps. If you're skilled in archery, they're best dealt with from a distance, but if you run out of arrows (as I did a few times) you can only restock back in Solstheim proper, and even then there's only one real town at which to do so. It's infuriating and sometimes leaves you in a fix. In comparison, the hulking Lurkers – big, stompy things that puke in your face like they're in an episode of *What Happens In Kavos* – are practically a breeze. In tandem, these new foes make for some of the tensest, most challenging combat I've encountered in *Skyrim*.

One of the DLC's headline features, though, is the fact it lets



Apocrypha is bathed in a sickly greenish glow, adding to its sinister air.

you ride dragons. Badass in theory, sure, but in reality it's unwieldy like a First Great Western commute. You can't control where your willing beastie flies, only set your sights on those back on the ground and let loose with a blast of dragon breath. It's not even in first-person, which jars disappointingly. It feels more like a gimmick, and doesn't really add a lot.

Another niggle is the fact that, in order to get *Dragonborn* working, I had to reinstall the entire game, patch and all, before downloading the DLC for a second time. Which was fun. After that, however, it slotted neatly into my 60-

hour save, with only a few crashes over an extended period of play.

Still, with an engaging storyline and a multitude of extras to keep you entertained, *Dragonborn* justifies its price tag. If you've rinsed *Skyrim*'s dense main map – and you probably have: it's been 14 months since the game came out – this is a meaty, if long overdue, slice of additional adventuring to get stuck into.

Emma Davies



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► It's another strong outing for Kratos, but for once the boss battles are a let down.

Morning gory

God Of War Ascension

Beautiful brawler gives rise to the silver Spartan

When you've broken into the king of the gods' gaff and punched him square in the face until his divine cranium caves in, where do you go next? That's the problem facing both our surly Spartan and Sony Santa Monica in what's surely God Of War's slaughter-heavy swansong on PS3. After scaling Mount Olympus and vanquishing Zeus last time out, Ascension has no option but to go back... both literally and, very occasionally, gameplay-wise.

First off, let me state the score over the page (don't pretend you haven't looked) is based purely on the game's single-player – we'll be reviewing its online side in a future issue. Despite sounding like I'm about to get a gripe on, this prequel remains an incredibly polished, extremely confident adventure. Set shortly after Kratos makes a blood oath



Info

Format: PS3 **ETA:** Out now **Pub:** Sony Dev: Sony Santa Monica **Web:** godofwar.com

Players: 1-8 **It's like:** Kratos became a new-age man, albeit one who still regularly decapitates three-headed mutts.

with Ares but before the original game, combat in the latest GOW is as slickly tempting as ever. Subtle tweaks lend the Minotaur-bashing blade work a fluency and forceful grace Raiden could only have slicey night terrors about.

Whip to be square

Todd Papy (GOWIII's design director, who's now levelled up to become overall game director) guides the ash-covered brawler by the bloodied hand on this occasion. He proves quite the dance partner, too. Ascension makes some understated yet game-changing alterations to fights, with Kratos' updated whip move now the star. Called Orion's Harpoon (here expanded from previous games), a quick tap of **△** wraps the Blades Of Chaos around most monsters' necks. From here, you can yank said foe

backwards before picking them up and using them as a projectile. Of course, if you'd rather murderously multi-task, simply hold your enemy on the end of the chain like a naughty pooch and continue to whack other Greek ghouls as you go. It proves a wonderful addition to your arsenal, greatly increasing Kratos' reach and finally making him a lethal long-range killer.

The Blades' new elemental attacks are a mixed bag, however. Ascension drops the smashing (and mega-smashy) Cestus gauntlets and spectral Claws Of Hades from GOWIII in favour of more varied D-pad attacks. Although the Spartan soldier is now limited to his legendary chains, their array of fire, lightning, ice and undead attacks are often useful for dealing with crowds. Thanks to the comboing abilities on offer,



Activate your flaming magic attacks on **△**. Great for killing crowds of bad guys



combat doesn't really feel stripped-down from the last game, even if electrifying a Harpy is less satisfying than hooking Hercules with a lion-headed haymaker.

Quite why Santa Monica decided to needlessly tweak with its countering system is any deity-doer-inner's guess,

parries much more difficult, meaning you're mostly forced to rely on Kratos' right-stick roll as your sole form of defence. It's certainly not a deal-breaker, with the superbly animated, juggletastic to-and-fro of combat proving too irresistible for a borked block to dampen.

Cheer up, Spartan. Sure, you're hallucinating about the dead wife, but those pecs are looking strong.

"There's a fluency Raiden could only have night terrors about."

mind. In past titles, parrying was effective and uncluttered. You simply judged your timing, then tapped **□** to bat away attacks. Now, though, there's the unnecessary hoop-jumping of having to press **X**, too. The intrusion of the added button makes judging the windows for

As Ascension's dizzyingly directed set-pieces attest, technique has never been the problem with this iconic PlayStation series. Want to see a studio at the very apex of its powers? Look no further than an early section where Kratos struggles his way to the temple of an Oracle using a winding network of gargantuan metal snakes. Why go British Rail when you can travel Anaconda Express?

Don't looker now

Sony's Californian studio has constantly pulled more gorgeous bunnies out of both PS2 and PS3's graphical top hats than any other developer. Alongside the third entries for Uncharted and Crysis (reviewed on p.112), Ascension takes the



Ascension's downhill sections handle with a surprising grace. Big-ass slides = fun.



Flume fun

Ascension boasts some ace sliding sections that make you feel like a hyperactive child at a water park. [Vomits.]



Platform shoes

Fluid, Uncharted-esque climbing sections replace the previous games' somewhat clunky platforming bits.



Taking the stick

The new right-stick mini-games are less intrusive than QTEs – and stupendously gory to boot.

LOVING HATING

What a Herc

The useful Spirit Of Hercules combo can annoyingly only be used while you're in Rage Of The Titans mode.



Flash Gorgon

We may love splitting their stupid serpent heads into bits, but Medusa's pals are dang annoying nonetheless.



seven-year-old console to visual heights you wouldn't have thought possible battling historically accurate giant enemy crabs back in the day. Whether it's the sweeping camerawork as you clamber across a statue of Apollo so enormous it makes GOWII's Colossus Of Rhodes look like an irritated garden gnome or a prison constructed from a hundred-armed Titan, the scale never fails to astound.

Everything described so far no doubt sounds like vintage (if surprisingly sensitive) Kratos. So why am I sporting the sort of slightly disappointed frown

Five murderous Ascension money shots


BRAIN PAIN

The new Juggernaut beasties seem to be part elephant/part cyclops. You become pals with the first one you meet by slicing its delicious brains open.


SNAKE EYES

The Gorgon Serpents are colourful like a slithery rainbow. Finish 'em off by slicing their faces open – and don't stop until you reach the chest.


NECK OF TIME

Our beautiful eyes! Witnessing Kratos slaughter one of the Hecatonchires' insect growths by slitting its neck with the beast's own claws is grim.


LOVE GOAT

These fellas are anything but sheepish. Teach the furry dastards a lesson by cutting off their legs and impaling them with a massive sword.


GUT FEELING

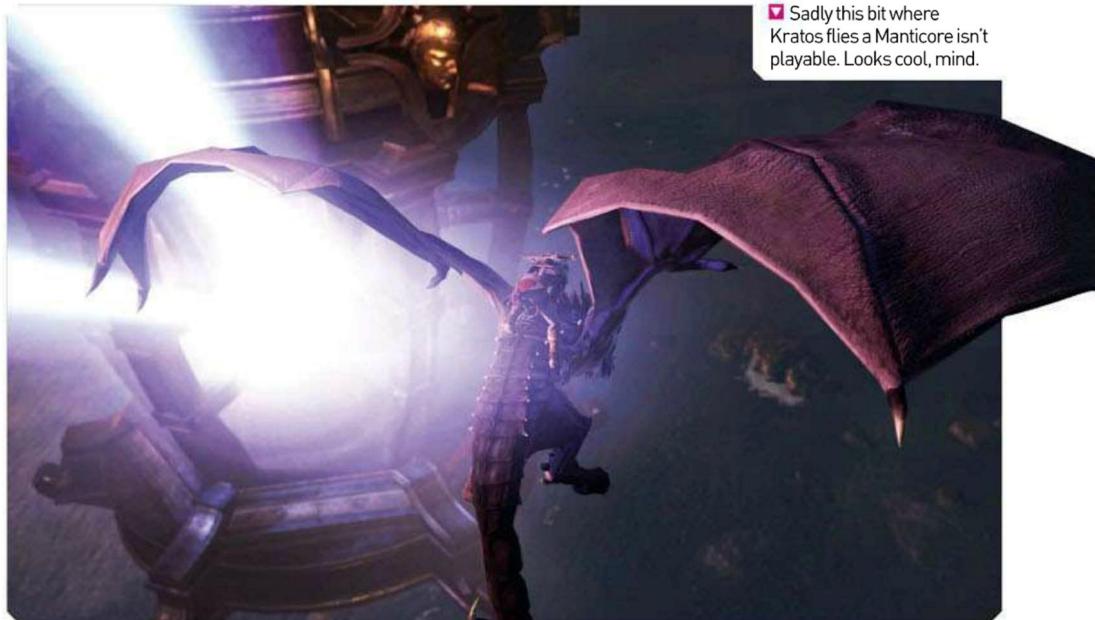
Old Ivan One Eye must be delighted in Ascension, because you never touch his peeper... you just playfully gut his fat stomach instead. D'oh!



With fewer proper bosses, the miniature variety play a bigger role than ever before.



QTEs are now more about subtle stick-wagging than on-screen button prompts.



▀ Sadly this bit where Kratos flies a Manticore isn't playable. Looks cool, mind.

"The noodle-scratchers are the most engaging in the series."

pacing, it's alarming to see Kratos' journey slow to a crawl a little too often.

Puzzle perfect

In spite of the odd ponderous patch, there are still moments that rank alongside the finest in the franchise. This is especially true of the game's puzzles. Aside from the odd overly obtuse solution, its assortment of noodle-scratchers are the most engaging in the series. Just wait until you wrap the pale demon's digits around the Oath Stone Of Orkos, a device that enables you to create a clone. Not only is copycat Kratos useful for crank and platform puzzles, but you can even summon him during scraps. Two (slap)heads are better than one, after all.

If the puzzling surpasses expectations, the same can't be said of boss

battles. Usually a series strong point, camera issues and underwhelming enemies mute all but the first and last sizeable scraps. When you've eviscerated Hades, slapping about a camp bloke with a conjoined twin growing from his abdomen can't quite compare. There's certainly nothing here to rival the original's breathless Hydra encounter.

God Of War: Ascension is still a fantastic game, just one that can't quite compete with the true greats of the genre, such as Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow. Yet with such a strong combat

system and its beautiful looks,

Kratos' prequel could have eclipsed them all with a handful of key tweaks. Not the meteoric rise we were hoping for, then, but certainly not a fall from grace either.

Dave Meikleham



ScorePole
Dante and Kratos' new games fight out a drawing draw, but the latter's PS3 debuts floor them both.

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■ Avoid the ghostly blue kids: they're hungry for your insides.



Dead bizarre

Corpse Party Book Of Shadows

After-school soiree hits a few wrong ends

Don't you hate it when your occult friendship-sealing ritual goes awry and you end up in a macabre alternate version of your school, then a bunch of your friends get horrifically killed? Total buzzkill. Well, just imagine being sent back to experience it all again. A sequel to 2011's Corpse Party, Book Of Shadows' seven main chapters preface or expand upon the characters' experiences in the original game. The poor blighters.

If you've not played said forerunner, this is all a little 'WTF?', with a mix of horror tropes (dark corridors, creepy children, female character, er, leaking black fluid?) thrown together with little explanation. Not quite as 'WTF?', mind, as an early scene lasting at least ten minutes of two schoolgirls flirting obscenely as they soap one another in the bath.

Watch and learn

It mainly plays out as a visual novel, with largely static graphics and subtitled Japanese dialogue (which occasionally feels like it was translated by someone with too thick a thesaurus for their own good). Pretty sure 'conglomeration of meat' is what got Findus into trouble). This is punctuated by point-and-click segments in which you move your



Info

Format PS Vita ETA Out now
Pub Xseed Games Dev 5pb/Team Grisgris Players 1 Web corpsepartybookofshadows.com It's like Your worst ever schoolday, with added hacked-off limbs.

cursor with the left analogue stick, hitting **X** when it turns blue to interact with environments and objects. You're given the odd binary choice, but ultimately spend much of your time in a passive role – thankfully, the emotive voice acting and superb 3D sound design tend to keep your attention hooked.

It's often either frustratingly vague or vaguely frustrating. Sometimes you think you're stuck, only for a door to unlock of its own accord as you pass it for the fifth time. At one point I made a wrong choice and killed a friend by accident to reach a 'wrong end' (AKA game over). I reloaded, and after a few tries was successful. She promptly died in another manner. A ghost-child laughed in my face. Did I really think I'd be able to prevent her death? Chapter cleared!

It's a blood-soaked invite that will only appeal to a niche selection of revellers, but there's enough gore-spillage here to satisfy that Japanese horror hardcore. Just watch out for the severed head in the goody bag. **Emma Davies**

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Japan Watch

This month's overseas action in a nutshell

Sei Madou Monogatari

Format PS Vita Publisher Compile Heart Subtitles No

Pupuru is studying to be a witch, but when she's sent to retrieve a magical artefact, she finds a recipe book. So she swaps sorcery for, wait for it... saucery and sets out to make the ultimate curry. Which requires, you won't be surprised to hear, rare ingredients and hours of conjuring enchanted tubs of ghee.



Macross 30: Ginga O Tsunagu Utagoe

Format PS3 Publisher Namco Bandai Subtitles No

It barely seems possible but Macross is 30. Back in 1983 the idea of gigantic fighting robots piloted by gender-non-specific warriors was complete fiction. And today? Well, we have boring grey drones piloted by boring grey nerds in bunkers. Oh, and a new Macross game that reunites the gang from three decades of clanking cheese dreams.



Sakurasou No Pet Na Kanojo

Format PS Vita Publisher Kadokawa Shoten Subtitles No

This barely interactive light novel follows the adventures of Sorata Kanda, who finds himself sharing a dorm room with a world-famous manga artist. So far so good, but she's a bit scatty – to say the least – so our hero is employed to be her 'handler'. Cue hilarious and slightly smutty hijinks...

Exotic Boxart Of The Month



PlayStation All-Stars: Battle Royale

Very much an everything and the kitchen sink approach. Note Sony Japan mascot Toro Inoue standing front and centre? Sackboy could have him, easy.



Sengoku Hime 3: Tenka O Kirisaku Hikari To Kage

We'd be slightly perturbed, too, if it transpired someone in our immediate vicinity had used almost the exact same hair dye as us. Get your own style, guys!



Steins Gate Hiyoku Reni No Darling

You know what? This may be the first bit of Japanese boxart where figuring out which half of the couple is male and which is female doesn't involve flipping a coin. Result!



▀ Riding a bike while wearing only a neckerchief and baseball cap? Keep your ass on the seat!



▀ Policecars, boxes and entire trains are some of the 'tricky bits' thrown into your path.



▀ Individual obstacles are easy to nail – doing them all in a row for a perfect run? Maddening.



▀ Stunt runs require some canny strategy for scoring big on height, speed and backflips.

Bike tick

Urban Trial Freestyle

Imitation is the purest form of flat-out runs

Let's forgo the pantomime of pretended innocence – "Trials who? What's an Ex-Box?" – and acknowledge from the off that Urban Trial Freestyle is a pretty naked attempt to deliver a Trials HD experience on PlayStation. The Xbox-only stunt biker has been a huge hit on Live Arcade, and a source of justified envy from this side of the fence. That's why the important question when weighing up Urban Trial Freestyle isn't, 'Should the dev be doing this?' but, 'Has it done this well enough?' And the morally queasy answer is: yes.

Although maybe it's not that shocking at all. The stunt bike genre has a history far older than Trials HD, with the basics of riding over improvised urban and outdoor environments while optimising balance, speed and height to nail the fastest time possible long established. Not to justify the similarities – the punky edge and the



dusty, defocused visuals are shamelessly nabbed – but much of what Urban Trial Freestyle does very well are genre basics, and it really nails them.

What this means in practice is that you become extraordinarily well-acquainted with the **SELECT** button. Urban Trial Freestyle is a game of tenths, often hundredths, of a second, and **SELECT** is the one-touch magic

"This has the rare, old-fashioned appeal of being a real pad-passing."

button to reset the current event. You land squarely and kill your momentum – **SELECT**. You rear backwards on the start line – **SELECT**. You misjudge the apex of a fence jump by barely a pixel – **SELECT**.

Quick pixel

The reason for this obsessive approach to pixels and barely measurable units of time is that the game isn't really about getting five-star ratings on each of the 20 tracks. It's about competition – not direct multiplayer, which the game sadly lacks, but compelling rounds of

one-upmanship that force you to analyse the way you approach every obstacle of every section of every course, looking for ways to shave off slivers of time.

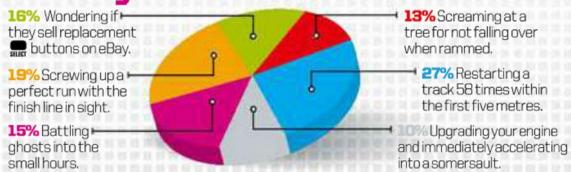
In other words, this has the rare, old-fashioned appeal of being a real pad-passing – the satisfaction of setting a new record and handing the controller over to your opponent is sweet and, in my case,

probably more aggressive than strictly necessary. And if you've not got company, the ghosts do a similar job, showing an outline of your best-performing friend.

The PS Vita version is so close to its PS3 counterpart that the lack of any crossover between the two is a big disappointment, the silver lining being

that it's one of the very best things on the handheld. On PS3 this is a quick, compelling snack, but on PS Vita it's essential – and easily good enough in both cases to make the lack of originality a non-issue. **Nathan Ditum**

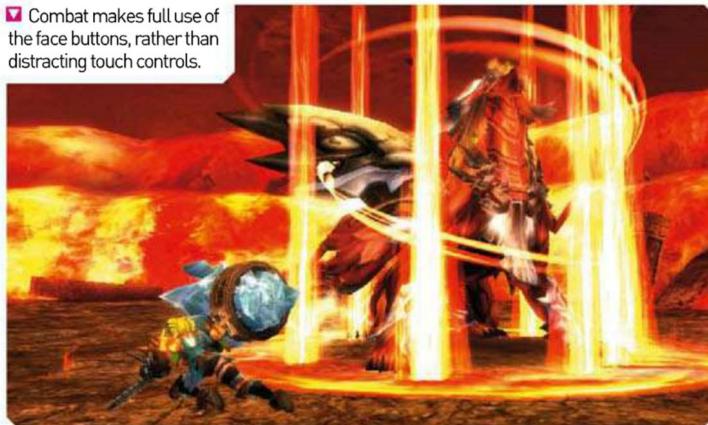
What you do in... UTF



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Combat makes full use of the face buttons, rather than distracting touch controls.



Monster chaser

Ragnarok Odyssey

What's that coming over the hill?



With a name like Ragnarok Odyssey you might expect to find yourself tangled up in a party of Lightning lookalikes on a 90-hour corridor quest to stop the universe from collapsing. Thankfully (or not, depending on your predilections) you'd be wrong. This is an RPG that concentrates on the killing of big beasts over emo whining – and a hell of a lot of it.

So far so Monster Hunter, then, but Ragnarok Odyssey just about manages to set itself apart from Capcom's revered series – it just never surpasses it. There are six different character classes to branch out from, with swords, hammers, bows and elemental magic offering ample variety. Combat is smooth, keeping a pleasing rhythm against a backdrop of simplistic quests.

The segmented 30-minute stages also make for one of the best-paced games on Vita, never constraining you for extended periods. However, the absence of traditional progression detracts heavily. Instead of standard levelling-up, collectible stat cards boost your character. It's a slow way to progress, and you're regularly left feeling like you haven't achieved much. On top of that, some quests just require you to gather items, and you're able to breeze through without murdering anything. You're occasionally trapped



Info

Format PS Vita ETA Out Now Pub GungHo Online Entertainment Dev Game Arts Players 1-4 Web ragnarokodysseyvita.com It's like Fast-forwarding an RPG so you only see the action scenes.

within impassable killing arenas, but it's odd that the game frequently allows you to sidestep its only real objective: making things dead.

Strangers' wrath

Despite the single-player's repetitive nature, hopping online offers more enjoyment. It's less tiresome going through the same levels with a party of friends alongside you, and stringing attacks with different classes is massively satisfying. That's not to mention the fact that the game's lofty difficulty is softened with companions. The lobby system is unrefined but functional, and there's almost no lag – providing the host doesn't quit for dinner.

All told, Ragnarok Odyssey is never bad. Its extreme focus on combat is both its greatest strength and most detrimental weakness, and the lack of narrative depth and variety will leave some unsatisfied.

But if you think '80s Arnie films strike just the right balance between mindless slaughter and plot, you've just found PS Vita's Commando.

Sam White



Minis round-up

With Emma Davies



The premise of **Bunny Dodge** (£2.49) struck me as somewhat uncomfortable. Aliens have been messing about with science (damn those aliens) and accidentally set a space-time missile on the loose. Their leader decrees that the first creature

they encounter will be the one responsible for sorting the whole darn mess out: enter Smokey the rabbit, who has to collect falling coins and goodies while avoiding the plummeting blocks that'll turn his head into terrine. Um, aren't things like animal testing and bloodsports largely frowned upon these days? Anyway, this is simple and not exactly unenjoyable, but it's also repetitive and not exactly original. **6**

There's a lot I don't like about **Hysteria Project 2** (£1.74). I should probably start, though, by stating that I like the setup – which sees you in a creepy hospital, trying to keep out of the clutches of an axe-wielding psycho – and how the gameplay segments are punctuated by grainy, atmospheric live-action cut-scenes. But I don't like the controls, which frequently seem either broken or overly obscure, and that's quite a big obstacle when you're basically playing a dolled-up series of mini-games with unforgiving error margins. I also really don't like the skin-crawling sense of horror it breeds in me, but I guess I can't really blame the game for my own tragic wussiness. **5**

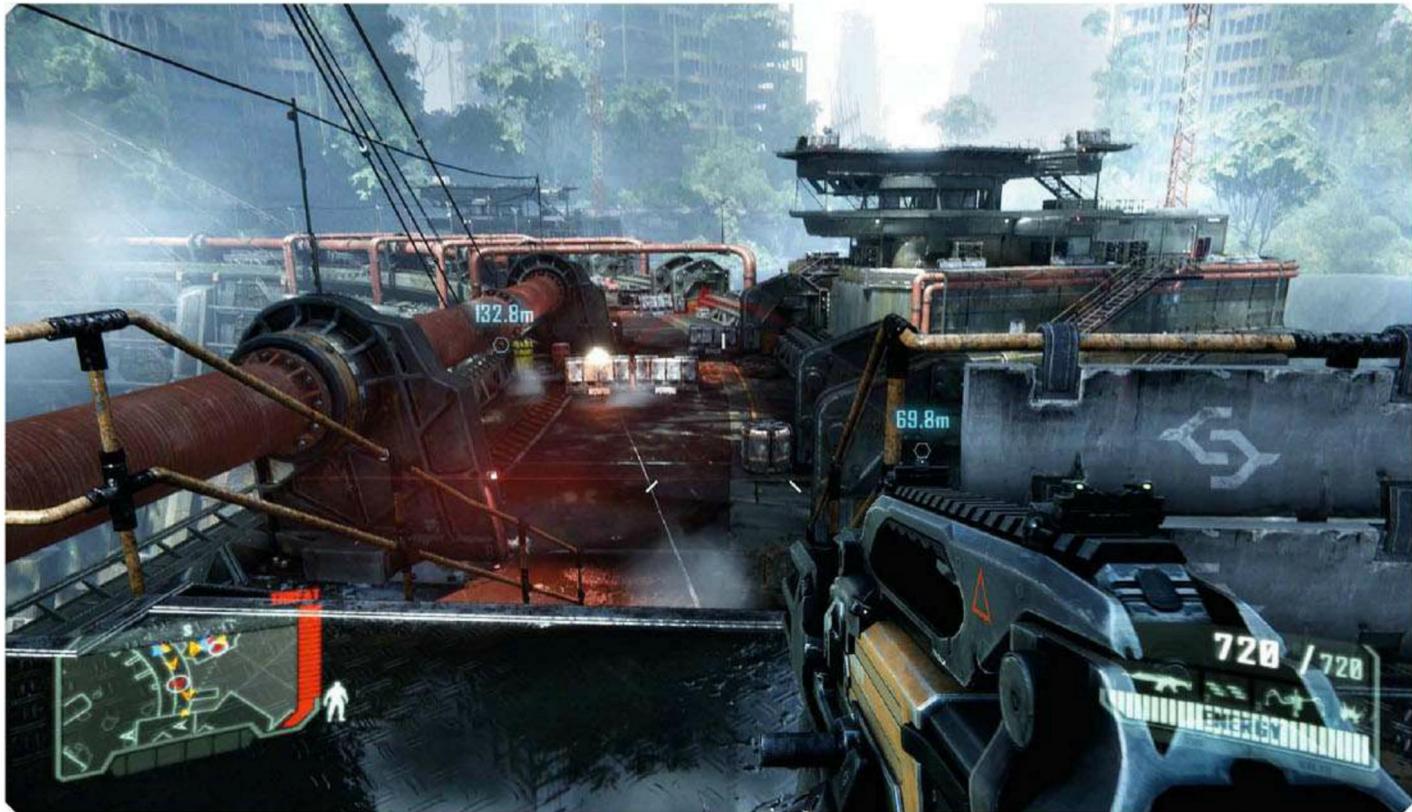


I am so very, very tempted to restyle myself as the adult equivalent of the titular heroine of **Dr. Maybee And The Adventures Of Scarygirl** (£3.49), because she's a super-cute, punky little pirate girl as imagined by Tim Burton. Her attack is a twinkle-toed twirl, thwacking foes with her hook-hand as she goes, and I think she's utterly freakin' awesome. Her game... somewhat less so. It's a colourful – but sadly murky-looking when played on PS3 rather than Vita – and slightly surreal platformer in which you run around, collecting things. All of the things. So many flipping things, for little reward in terms of excitement or variety. **6**



Mini of the month

You've got to admire the ethos behind **Gamocracy One: Legend Of Robot** (£2.49), giving backseat developers the chance to have their eager voices/ideas about game design/ranting about pigeons finally heard. This is a fairly standard 2D platformer, with you controlling an alien robot gone rogue. Cutely, he can detach his head with a tap of **O** and use it as a springpad to bounce on. Hell, he can even freeze it in mid-air. I can barely even lift my head from the pillow without a strong cup of coffee, so kudos to the little guy. Maybe too many cooks don't always spoil the broth, even if the hive mind hasn't invented an entirely new flavour of soup. **7**



Nano bread

Crysis 3

Stealthy shooter suits you, sir

Like Big Willie in Men In Black, you should prepare yourself for the last suit you'll ever wear. Well, at least when it comes to controlling an eight-foot-tall supersoldier who looks like a shaved silverback. Prophet's wardrobe ain't exactly Elton-esque, but when his clobber lets you invisibly stalk hordes of aliens and punt a jeep with your big toe,

impression, lending firefights constant scope for enjoyable improvisation.

Wait, New York again? If you're thinking 'so far, so very Crysis 2', you're partially right. While it's true your suit powers haven't really evolved from the last game, the environments you interact with definitely have. Forget the Big Apple. Try the 'Humongous Greenhouse' on for

"Your bow fires Semtex-tipped arrows to make Ceph go boom."

you won't be calling it the blues in this stealthy, satisfying shooter.

Getting Nanosuited and booted is what elevates Crysis 3 above the majority of PS3's FPS crop. There's no question Crytek's technically stunning take on an apocalyptically ruined New York courts Michael Fassbender levels of dashing good looks. The game also offers a robust package, with the (admittedly overly short) campaign backed up by truly excellent online multiplayer. But it's the iconic armour that leaves a lasting

size. Returning from the original game, Laurence Barnes' trip through NY is like a particularly murdery episode of Gardeners' World. With the City That Never Sleeps going all I Am Legend, the expansive, foliage-filled streets make Crysis 3's combat feel much more open than Alcatraz's adventure.

Dome ranger

Set 24 years after its predecessor, the series' evil CELL Corporation has encased most of Manhattan inside its



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now
Pub EA Dev Crytek Players 1-12
Web crysis.com/crysis-3 It's like
Home Alone 2... if Kevin spent his
time in NY killing aliens rather than
pegging it from Joe Pesci.

Trophies



Roadkill
Kill five enemies with the buggy.



Inside Job
Off ten foes with hacked guns.



Bang For The Buck
Kill a deer with explosive arrows.

Liberty Dome. Think the giant bowl in the Simpsons flick... sadly minus Spider Pig. The slightly bastardised sci-fi setting combines the first game's open-ended tropical jungles with the second title's more structured concrete playgrounds, leading to urban rainforests that capture the best of both environments.

Hold all the horses, though. Just how paltry is that single-player offering I mentioned earlier? 'Pretty damn' is the sad-faced answer. I clocked the campaign in exactly four hours, 55 minutes and 40 seconds. Even briefer than Black Ops II, it's hard not to feel slightly short-changed by Prophet's brisk jaunt.

Despite the campaign's brevity, the minute-by-minute action in battle is never less than interesting. And that's mostly down to the freedom these forest-meets-Fifth Avenue levels provide. Designed to make the most out of your Nanosuit's invisibility cloak, the sweeping marshlands and dense swamps beautifully sync up with your superpowers, enabling you to carefully and methodically hunt enemies through



▲ Your pal Psycho and intel expert Claire enjoy a burgeoning romance amid the alien invasion.



▲ The best way to halt an enemy tank is with a missile launcher roughly the size of a Humvee.



▲ Hunting CELL troops in flooded Chinatown is probably the campaign's strongest mission.

the shooty sandboxes. Ooh, a posse of Ceph (Crysis' squid-like ET dastards) have ventured into that lake in yonder distance, have they? Eat electric arrow of death, alien evil-doers!

Ah yes, the Predator Bow. Gaming's current in-vogue weapon is the star of an otherwise uninspired arsenal. Don't get me wrong, from the punchy Scarab rifle to the devastating crunch of the Gauss Sabot Gun, Crysis 3's weapons all handle with an enjoyable heft – it's just that none are particularly imaginative. So may futuristic, invisible Jeebus bless the bow that can pin men to walls from a mile off or fire sticky, Semtex-tipped arrows to make Ceph go boom. If there's a more satisfying weapon this year, I'll come to work in my Metal Gear jimmjams.

It's a pity the game can't cook up some more exciting scenarios for you to wield Robin Hood's killing tool of choice in, mind. While Crysis 3 maintains a consistent quality throughout (save for a couple of annoying end-game bosses), the action never quite crescendos to the heights it should. The Liberty Dome houses Seven Wonders. You've got Dopey, Sneezy, Grumpy... hold up, that's Snow White's short-arsed hangers-on. These distinct districts of New York are supposed to offer a varied spectacle

Creepy Ceph

Three of Prophet's maddest enemies



STALKER

These sneaky wrong 'uns love to stalk their prey through long grass, and are dang hard to get a bead on thanks to their darting movements. Stealth kill one of 'em for the Clever Girl trophy.

Rap sheet	Celebrity prowling
Weapon	Stabby claws
Key talent	Evisceration
Fave NY landmark	Battery Park
Murder with	Your bare hands
Fave alien film	Close Encounters



SCORCHER

Hmm, sure is toasty around these parts. Oh, that's because I've been set alight by towering beast. Snipe these dudes from a decent distance, if you can. Anyone got a fire extinguisher handy?

Rap sheet	Serial arsonist
Weapon	Flame breath
Key talent	Barbecuing chicken
Fave NY landmark	Rockefeller Center
Murder with	Explosive arrows
Fave alien film	Fire In The Sky



MASTERMIND

Magnus Magnusson would never have been allowed to finish if he encountered this boss baddy... mainly because it would have incinerated him with Ceph projectiles. Deeply irritating to fight.

Rap sheet	Con artist
Weapon	Mind control
Key talent	Hypnotising minions
Fave NY landmark	Trump Tower
Murder with	Lots of rockets
Fave alien film	Batteries Not Included



▲ Crossing the Brooklyn Bridge proves an ET-kiboshing treat midway through Prophet's journey.

throughout the seven single-player missions. In reality, the procession of samey flooded streets and overgrown swamps eventually bleed into each other, rarely allowing the otherwise engaging gun battles to evolve into truly memorable set-pieces.

Pace for life

The key to any great shooter is pacing – just look at Half-Life 2 or Resistance 3. Constructed from sharply defined levels and ingeniously engineered atmosphere, I can still remember the former's masterfully chilling Ravenholm section or Insomniac's shooter taking an unexpected turn by hurling me into a Chimera-infested prison. It's a skill Naughty Dog demonstrates

with every Uncharted. Start slow, establish character with quiet moments punctuated by light shooting, then... POW! Suddenly you're hit with a megaton set-piece spectacle (think the Nepal chopper chase in Among Thieves) that sees your DualShock shimmering with sweat. Effective pacing needs peaks and troughs: yet Crysis 3, while mechanically excellent, is flat like Holland's tulip fields.

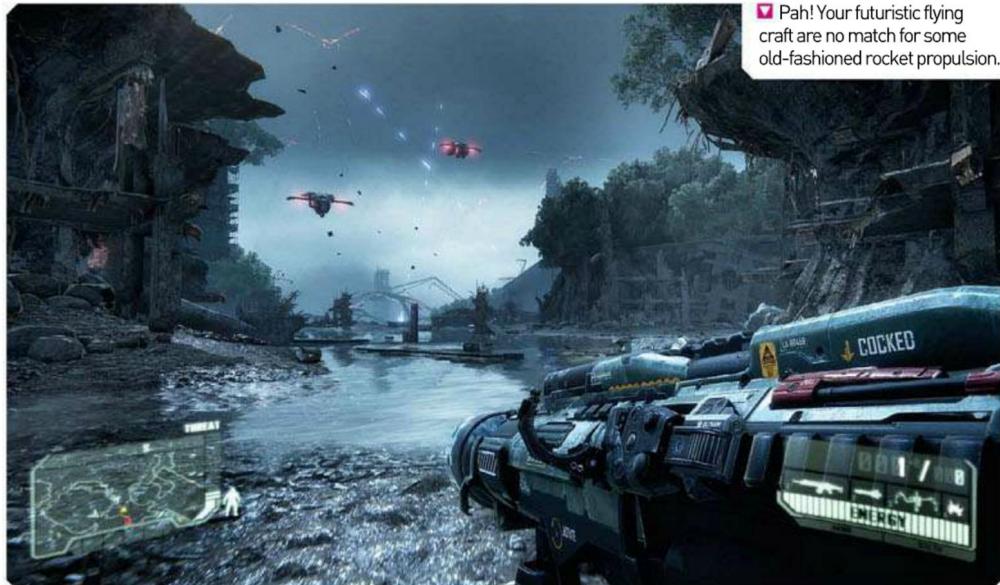
That's not to say Prophet's quest to save the world from alien destruction isn't worth playing. On a purely technical level, the work Crytek has squeezed out of Sony's ageing box is sensational. The engine rarely dips below a sturdy 30fps, as the game dribbles a constant stream of incredible textures, particle effects and striking character models



► Your leap frog legs let you rain down terror (and tons of bullets) on your unlucky enemies.



► Like everything else in Crysis 3, vehicles handle confidently, even if the buggy's appearance is brief.



► Pah! Your futuristic flying craft are no match for some old-fashioned rocket propulsion.



► Best take some factor 50 for your encounters with Scorchers. You'll need it.

into your tellybox. Although the facial animation isn't as convincing as LA Noire's, the sheer detail that's gone into the supporting cast (take the scars on irritating Jason Statham wannabe Psycho, for instance) is staggering. Crytek is inhaling the same rarefied air as Naughty Dog, with Crysis 3 arguably the best-looking game on PS3... after Uncharted 3, natch.

While the online component is pared down visually from the single-player, take your Nanosuit on to PSN and the game sings a cheery tune about duffing up folk with lampposts. If the campaign is a little on the soulless side, then multiplayer brings a unique personality and flavour that really separates it from the COD-chasing crowd. Rocking 12 maps and eight modes (including two new additions over Crysis 2), the game's online offering boasts stealthy slaughtering and muscular, frenetic fighting.

Seeing as Crytek UK (formerly Free Radical Design, of Timesplitters fame) is at the incredibly homicidal helm, it's no surprise to see such confidently designed multiplayer action. Spears and Hunter are the new headbangers turfed into the

Nanosuit moshpit and the latter proves the star of the entire game. Where the former is merely a pretty vanilla spin on a capture-the-base mode, Hunter takes your classic infected match and turns it into a tense game of cat and mouse. The kind where Tom harpoons Jerry through the heart with a four-foot arrow.

Hunter games

It all starts with a simple setup. Initially pitting two bow-wielding, cloaked badasses against a team of puny CELL soldiers, it's your job to turn tail, hide and survive for 90 seconds if you're not lucky

and armour perks. Thanks to your suit's athletic, amphibian-aping thighs, it's also a cinch to escape from gunfire by leaping 15 feet in the air to safer vantage points.

The game encourages vertical combat like few shooters on PSN. Equip the Phantom and Surveillance perks to let you invisibly tag folk from the roof of a crumbling building in Hell's Kitchen or an elevated position in the midst of a ruined Brooklyn Bridge, and you're in sniper's paradise. Alternatively, plump for perks such as Point Fire Enhance (increasing hip-firing accuracy) or Armor Transfer (your shield is bolstered

"The sheer detail on the supporting cast is staggering."

enough to be dropped into the Nanosuit loafers of a Hunter. Impaling players with a well-aimed projectile from half a map away is invigorating, conveying the sense of actual superpowers so many licensed comic-book games normally bugger up. Conversely, if you're the prey, the ratcheting tension as Prophet's pals zero in on your location while you anxiously watch the motion sensor blip is exactly how Aliens: Colonial Marines should have felt. It's a truly masterful mode.

One of the main reasons the Nanosuit brings so much to the traditional deathmatch table is how harmoniously it works with the multiplayer maps on show. A mix of returning Crysis 2 levels and some newbies, each lets you drastically alter your playstyle to get the most from your custom loadouts

every time you off someone) and you'll muller anyone you corner. Tailoring a class that works for you, knowing the game is unlikely to punish your choices, encourages experimentation and makes this multiplayer feel comfortably fair next to the competition's cheaty scorestreak power-ups o'doom.

If I was reviewing the single-player in isolation and had to pluck a number from the Official Leaflet Of Review Scores, I'd give the game a 7. Yet such is the strength of the online modes, they lift the overall package comfortably above

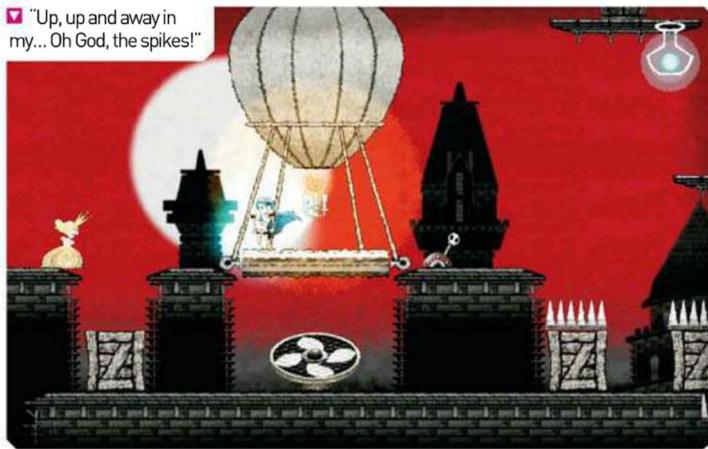
the scant story offering. It pains my digits to write 'technical tour de force', but it's hard to describe Crysis 3 any other way. Though lacking soul in places, this striking Prophet can still channel the divine.

Dave Meikleham

Gunlist Sharp death  Predator Bow Go medieval on some alien ass with the best crossbow in games.	ET missile  ET missile A Ceph rocket that violently grills any bad guy in a 200ft radius.	Rapid rifle  Rapid rifle A Ceph rocket that violently grills any bad guy in a 200ft radius.	Typhoon  Typhoon This spitty machine gun peppers your foes before you can blink.
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“Up, up and away in my... Oh God, the spikes!”



Doctor who?

Dokuro

Handheld platformer on a royal mission

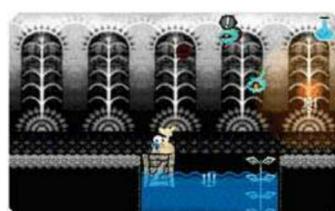
To say this Vita puzzler is obscure is an understatement – it's so far off the beaten track you lose all trace of phone signal while you're playing. But what Dokuro lacks in tube station billboard ads and trailers featuring music from Skrillex, it makes up for in thoughtful, inventive platforming challenges. You fumble until you become fluent in its devious level design, then you come out the other end relishing the challenge – and, of course, saving the princess.

The Dark Lord's kidnapped said damsel for his own amorous agenda, and you – a lowly skeleton in his dark army – decide to bust that babe out of there. The objective in each of Dokuro's roughly one billion puzzles is to get the Princess and your own creaking bones past a set of obstacles and to the safety of a single flower that waits on the other side. The Princess walks unremittingly forwards as long as there's ground ahead of her; so puzzles initially involve raising and lowering platforms with pulleys to guide her away from spike pits and fireballs. Dokuro's bristling with mechanics, throwing levers, see-saws and pendulums at the pair of you just as you're used to the last trick you learned. Double-tapping Vita's touchscreen turns you into a knight, capable of carrying your companion and lashing out with powerful sword attacks, and you can 'draw in' missing sections of objects such as



Info

Format PS Vita ETA Out now
Pub GungHo Online Dev Game Arts Players 1 Web gungohonline.com/dokuro It's like A prototype of Limbo, with a score from teen Tim Burton's B-track.



It's all about getting the pert Princess safely from A to B – in this case via the sea.

broken ropes. As you might expect, then, success in guiding the Princess to safety comes through iteration. So. Much. Iteration.

Happy chalk

Cards on the table: I swore a lot at Dokuro, but I never put it down and walked away – which is to say it can be devilishly challenging, but never seems insurmountable. Also, I swear at pensioners and passing planes, so you probably shouldn't read too much into that. It massages the grey matter with just the right vigour, yet is held back from a bigger score because it lacks the incendiary spark in the art style or storytelling departments that elevate games beyond the inevitable two-hours-in repetitiveness. Still, Dokuro is much more princess than pauper.

Phil Iwaniuk

PlayStation.
Official Magazine - UK

7



Straight to bargain bin

With **Joel Gregory**



In the dark recesses of my mind where I store

useless memories – such as the quadratic formula, and where my sister keeps her EpiPen – is a hazy recollection of once seeing **The Cube** on TV. My initial excitement that it looked like a Saw-style gameshow, with contestants locked in a Perspex box, faded as they were not then

hacked to bits with rusty blades. It just contained some fairly elementary physical and memory challenges, which have now been shoddily transposed to PS Move. Unresponsive, uninspired and ugly, the only positive is that the crowd look like a sinister mob all dressed in hi-vis vests. I'm not sure why that's a positive, but it is.

I'd be tempting to say – especially in the context of this column – that **Of Orcs And Men** is a decent-looking game, but once you get past the surface sheen the art style is about as varied and interesting as a selection of paving-stone chippings. It's an action-RPG title, although with different combat stances and a queuing attack system the emphasis is very much on the latter, and stop-starting the gameplay every few seconds to stack up your moves is as tiresome as you might imagine. But generic this is not: in the battle of man vs orc, this time you play the role of – wait for it – the orc! Bet you didn't see that one coming, eh? EH? Sigh.



Is there a videogame version of Stockholm syndrome? If so I think I might be suffering from it, because I was actually looking forward to playing **Cabela's North American Adventures**.

Despite my moral objections to the glamorisation of the murder of loveable woodland creatures, the last pair I've played I actually (whisper it) quite enjoyed. Thankfully this has kicked my brain back into the correct gear, because it's basically rubbish. It's a distinct visual step down, and the auto-targeting is so helpful that mass animal murder comes a bit too easy. However, it does let you do a duck call – which is a first for me – so that's... something.

Abomination of the month

I have seen Hell... and it's not so much white, as called **Just Dance Kids**. Specifically what is apparently known as The Gummy Bear Song in Just Dance Kids. Now, dancing games aren't my thing at the best of times, and kids scare me, so I'm admittedly not the ideal test audience for this game. But, the experience of playing it has left an indelible scar on my soul, and I don't know if I can ever recover. You know when you see something awful – war footage, your parents making physical contact, a mime who isn't being beaten up – and you wish you could scrub your brain clean with steel wool? Yeah, that. Forever that.



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The biggest names in development reveal what they think of Sony's new console - and discuss their next-gen plans

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■ "I challenge you to a duel, Henry Hatchback-sized Hands!"



Agura's wrath

Sumioni

Demon Arts

The devil's in the doodles

Come here, Amaterasu! There's a good doggy/hairy sun goddess. Now, while you're slavering over my cel-shaded slippers, can you go and fetch yourself a restraining order against this well-crafted copycat? I know imitation is supposed to induce fits of rosy-cheeked blushing, but this handheld 2D platformer-cum-side-scrolling slasher has the most serious case of Okami envy ever.

That's no bad thing, of course. Clover's charming wolf-meets-randy-bug adventure is one of the most beautiful games ever to appear on PlayStation. [Sniff.] And if you're going to riff from a playbook, better Barca's than Barnsley's. Aping Ammy's visual style with a hand-drawn, watercolour vibe means Sumioni is a dang handsome doppelgänger indeed.

Arty pants

Demon Arts also has some brilliantly implemented ideas. Like Okami's Celestial Paintbrush, the game provides a magic drawing tool. Agura (the main devil dude, who looks like a samurai Hellboy) wields the Platform Brush, which lets you slice up enemies and create impromptu bridges. The latter power sees you sketching simple ink catwalks by making slashing gestures



Info

Format PS Vita ETA Out now
Pub Xseed Games Dev Acquire Corp Players 1 Web sumioni.com
It's like If that game with the cartoon wolf pushed Ammy aside for a shiny red monster.

on the screen, then using them to navigate spiky deathtraps. It's easily Sumioni's most confident feature, and channelling your inner Tony Hart while acting like a horn-headed Prince Of Persia is an elegant, inventive way to tackle platforming.

Usefully, your doodling monster can also evaporate projectiles with a water brush. In another nod to Okami, Agura is also able to summon mythical beasties if you trace shapes with your digits. Conjuring a fantastical wolf with an Elvis barnet or a phoenix with jewellery that would shame Little Richard is far more interesting than unleashing your average power-up.

Sadly, the frantic combat is never as graceful as it should be, because switching between the shoulder buttons, touchscreen and rear touchpad is exhausting like hurdling the 110m in tungsten shorts.

Sumioni's attractive action is a welcome Vita curiosity, but it ultimately feels derivative next to PlayStation's most loveable lupine.

Dave Meikleham



PlayList

Essential tunes to download this month

The Knife Full Of Fire

Format Single ETA Out now Price £0.79

A profoundly weird but still quite wonderful return by spooked-out Swedish duo The Knife, who haven't released a proper album since 2006. Here's a taster for the new one, a meld of brittle techno beats and Karin Dreijer Andersson's icy vocal. theknife.net



Iceage You're Nothing

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Is there a better rock band on Earth right now than Denmark's Iceage? This, the Copenhagen quartet's second long-player, is a brutal but beautiful collection of hooligan punk rock that's at its best on the bruising Coalition, a chaotic sprawl of sludge-dipped guitars and singer Elias Rønnenfelt's ragged roar. iceagecopenhagen.blogspot.co.uk



Bastille Pompeii

Format Single ETA Out now Price £0.79

No one could accuse Dan Smith, the creative brain behind Bastille, of being short on imagination: this teaser single before new full-length Bad Blood, is a love song told from the perspective of a couple encased forever in ash following the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Good to whistle to, as well.

bastillebastille.com

Download of the month Deap Vally Lies

Format Single ETA Out now Price £0.79

Here's a band to put steam on your spectacles: Californian girls Lindsey Troy and Julie Edwards, who together make a torrid and gritty rock 'n' roll racket that ought to charm the pants off of anyone who likes a bit of the The Black Keys or The White Stripes.

deapvally.com



► Musou attacks are deadly, take out scores of enemies, and almost always involve fire.



Chinese burn

Dynasty Warriors 7 Empires

Create-your-own warmongering with a side of strategy



How do you unite a country ravaged by centuries of war under one banner? 'With this spear the size of a telephone pylon, that's also on fire,' says *Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires*, before it twirls said weapon 20 times around its head and eviscerates an entire squad of soldiers in the process. And that's always been the draw with *Dynasty Warriors* – the chance to play as an invinci-warrior with impossible hair who can scythe through hundreds of opponents single-handedly without so much as getting grass stains on his kimono. The drawback being that the gameplay is regularly about as deep as Amy Childs' Twitter feed.

Empires, however, has covered its brawler bones in a taut slice of strategy muscle – so much so that when playing through the game's titular Empire mode, you spend more time worrying over food resources, training up your troops or forming shady alliances than you do



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now
Pub Tecmo Koei
Dev Omega Force
Players 1-2 Web
dynastywarriors7.eu/empires It's like
All the other *Dynasty Warriors* games, but with added thinking.



sticking a burning sword into someone's face. Even more incredibly, this menu-heavy politicking isn't *that* rubbish, injecting some much-needed contextual bite into the otherwise simplistic combat.

There's plenty of choice, too – you can raise your own banners and carve out a kingdom of your own, or be a mercenary fighting for fame and a fat wallet. Either way, you spend each in-game month fiddling with your stats to determine whether or not you want to be a noble 'for the people!' hero or a peasant-quashing tyrant.

If that sounds a bit too cerebral for an all-action brawler, then don't worry – it's a system as basic as 'tax your subjects? Evil +10. Give your subjects food? Kindness +10' and is there primarily to give you something to care about when the time inevitably comes for cracking out the combat gear and invading another kingdom.

War weary

On the battlefield, *Empires* plays out exactly as you expect – in that to earn victory you need to capture your opponent's base, the only caveat being the 3,000-odd soldiers standing



► 59 people KO'd with three buttons – the kills-per-thumb-move ratio is second to none.



► You know the era of warring states in ancient China? Well, this is exactly what it didn't look like.

dumbly in your way. 'Standing' because, well, that's all they really do, and 'dumbly' because armed with the legendary weapons of ⌂ and ⌄ you can chop your way through pretty much anything. It's repetitive as all hell and painfully ugly to boot, but the secret to winning battles is more about cutting off enemy supply routes and shoring up your existing defences than mindlessly flailing about like a dynastic meat-grinder.

The real fight, then, is played out on the territory map, in making sure the blue dots are repelling the red ones and in sensibly deploying your Strategems (one-use moves that cause environmental battlefield effects such as a hail of arrows, or confuse enemy troops). It's like the Championship Manager of war sims – except not as good as Championship Manager.

There's a pleasingly deep character creator to fiddle about with, too, ensuring that – ironically – there's more fun to be had in *Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires* through

customising your appearance, your kingdom and your battle plans than there is in actually putting those plans into practice.

Rob Pearson



By the numbers

Playable characters	66
Playable modes	1
Enemies you kill in one battle	1,200
Nose variations in the character creator	6
New weapon types	2
Territories to fight for	24
Characters called Wang	2

As well as health, the bars above troops' heads denote their element.



Missed beat

Orgarhythm

Bust a move, kill a monster

Ever had an attack of full-on 'WTF?'s in a Amsterdam nightclub? This is ten times wierder. The God Of Light is off to war, colour-coded minions in tow. And rather than charging out on an armoured steed, fiery bow in hand, he's loping across the screen at a leisurely pace to an ambient beat, putting in the occasional twirl for good measure – think John Travolta in Saturday Night Fever, minus the migraine-inducing white flares.

Monster mash

Your army of boogeing killers is divied up into three elements – earth, water and fire – and enemies fall into the same categories. In classic rock/paper/scissors fashion, water puts out fire, fire burns earth, and earth covers water. You deploy your troops by tapping the screen in time to the beat. One tap on the God Of Light, followed by another to choose your element, and a final one to select an attack type – then draw a line on the screen and out they go to kill some beasties. Essentially, it's a shallower Patapon.

Timing everything correctly levels you up, and vice versa. When it's all going right, you feel a bit like Dave Grohl (albeit with a miniature army contained within a Vita, rather than a drumkit and a copy of Nevermind) but it's equally easy to wind up prodding away crossly like Animal.

Annoyingly, there's no way of controlling the God himself. He continues his



Info

Format PS Vita ETA Out now
Pub Xseed Games Dev Nella/
Acquire Corp Players 1-2
Web orgarhythm.com It's like
Tribal warfare got its serious
groove on.



Your troops can carry out various ranged attacks, as well as basic melee.

relentless slog through the repetitive, rough-round-the-edges environments automatically, and there's no manual means of moving the camera. It makes the game feel frustratingly oversimplified – for instance, being able to swing the view around would be handy in boss fights. There's also no one-button means of recalling troops. After a while, they give up on what they're doing and shimmy back to rejoin your Pied Piper-esque trail, but if you want them rounded up immediately you have to deploy them to your heels and hope they get the hint.

This fusion of rhythm action to real-time strategy is an interesting experiment, and Vita needs more kitsch distractions like Orgarhythm. But for all its novelty value, there's no chance of it leaving your feet on fire.

Emma Davies



Release Schedule

Coming soon to a PlayStation near you

	Publisher	ETA	Format
God Of War: Ascension	Sony	15 Mar	PS3
Hyperdimension Neptunia Victory	NIS America	15 Mar	PS3
Sniper Ghost Warrior 2	Namco Bandai	15 Mar	PS3
Dead Or Alive 5 Plus	Tecmo Koei	22 Mar	PS Vita
Bioshock Infinite	Take Two	26 Mar	PS3
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	EA	29 Mar	PS3
Ghost Recon Anthology	Ubisoft	29 Mar	PS3
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	Sony	29 Mar	PS3
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	EA	29 Mar	PS3
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	Activision	29 Mar	PS3
Lost Planet 3	Capcom	31 Mar	PS3
Arcania: The Complete Tale	Nordic Games	5 Apr	PS3
Defiance	Trion World	5 Apr	PS3
Painkiller: Hell And Damnation	Nordic Games	5 Apr	PS3
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	Rising Star	19 Apr	PS3
Injustice: Gods Among Us	Warner Bros	19 Apr	PS3
Dead Island: Riptide	Deep Silver	26 Apr	PS3
Resident Evil: Revelations	Capcom	26 Apr	PSN
Star Trek	Namco Bandai	26 Apr	PS3
Mars: War Logs	Focus Home	Apr	PSN
Zeno Clash II	Atlus	Apr	PSN
Soul Sacrifice	Sony	1 May	PS Vita
Grid 2	Codemasters	31 May	PS3
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	505 Games	May	PSN
Rambo	Reef	May	PS3
Remember Me	Capcom	May	PS3
Sacrilegium	Topware	May	PS3
South Park: The Stick Of Truth	Ubisoft	May	PS3
The Last Of Us	Sony	14 Jun	PS3
Ashes Cricket 2013	505 Games	Jun	PS3
Deadpool	Activision	Jun	PS3
Disney Infinity	Disney	Jun	PS3
Fuse	EA	Jun	PS3
One Piece: Pirate Warriors 2	Namco Bandai	Jun	PS3
Until Dawn	Sony	Jul	PS3
Splinter Cell: Blacklist	Ubisoft	23 Aug	PS3
Grand Theft Auto V	Rockstar	17 Sep	PS3
Killzone: Mercenary	Sony	20 Sep	PS Vita
Lego Marvel Superheroes	Warner Bros	Sep	PS3
Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix	Sep	PS3
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee HD	Just Add Water	Sep	PSN
Raven's Cry	Topware	Sep	PS3
Tales Of Xillia	Namco Bandai	Sep	PS3

! All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.



READY MADE EXCUSE #79

Pull a sickie for... Splinter Cell: Blacklist

Having a recurring dream in which I'm a man called Sam. Last night it was Allardice, and now I can see round objects flying over my head...



Isaac and Carver may look after one another, but their relationship is even frostier than Tau Volantis.



Pair away

Dead Space 3

Two's company, three's the alien trying to chew your face off

Info

Format: PS3 ETA: Out now Pub: EA Dev: Visceral Games
Players 2 Web: deadspace.com It's like: A sci-fi buddy movie where the buddies actually hate each other.

I didn't find Dead Space 3's single-player campaign scary. That's not because I'm some kind of horror-hardened tough nut: I tend to subtly look the other way when there's graphic violence in films, and when I saw Scream as a ten-year-old I barely slept for a week in fear of someone smashing my bedroom window and stabbing me to death through my X-Men duvet cover. No, the reason I wasn't quaking in my engineering suit during Isaac's third outing – even in a jump-shock sense – was because I could see the intended scares coming long before they

happened. This was a consequence of both being a veteran of the series and some over-familiar design, but it did make me worry that once I dived into the game's co-op campaign things would be about as terrifying as a tea party with the cast of Ni No Kuni.

Brothers in harm

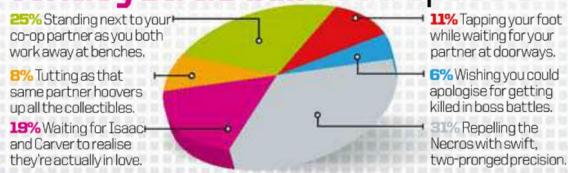
And this is partly true: even if you needed Mother in the room and your blankie on your lap when playing on your own, it's undeniable that there's far less fear with another man by your side. And not just because any tension is instantly undone as they clomp around stomping on everything in sight or – if you're particularly unfortunate – blaring some DMX through their headset. It's also down to the fact the game's difficulty doesn't quite scale in accordance with the presence of a second player, so even in the more fearsome enemy encounters the threat level never gets

above 'moderate' thanks to the additional firepower and ability to share resources such as ammo and health packs.

On a practical level Dead Space 3's co-op system has both its plus points and its negatives. On the one hand it's very easy to set up, and both recovering from lost connections and saving progression are handled well. You can quick-search for a game, specifying which chapter you'd like to start from, what difficulty level, and various other parameters, and I generally didn't have to wait more than a minute or two to find a partner. If the connection does get severed while you're playing, you're then given the option to continue from the last checkpoint as Isaac, seamlessly moving on from where you and your pal left off. Additionally, if you make progress in co-op – playing, say, the first six chapters – but then decide to fly solo, you're able to start off from where your joint adventure took you to.

On the flip side, if you jump far ahead

What you do in... Dead Space 3





Given the feebleness of the enemy, all of this blasting is probably a little bit like overkill.



Boss battles such as this are definitely improved with the presence of a co-op partner.

of yourself into another player's game it's easy to feel completely out of your depth. This isn't a problem if you've already played through the game in single-player as your collectibles and salvage transfer over, but if you're a first-timer you'll both struggle and feel woefully under-equipped. I know this because, having started a new save

These balancing issues can be avoided if you play through the duration with the same partner at the same rate, and that is the ideal – if not always realistic – way to experience Dead Space 3 in two-player. The game also has a pleasing number of facilities to swap goods between the two of you (although irritatingly there's no way to trade

"There's far less fear with another man by your side."

and jumped into another game at chapter five, I watched a man fire a gun that could disintegrate a tank while I pew-pew-ed a starter-level pistol like a pre-teen with a cap gun. I also died several times because my health bar was undersized (no, that's not a euphemism), leaving my companion shaking his nightmare-infested head. (On which note: a basic gesture system would also prove incredibly useful for those playing without headsets.)

scavenged crafting resources), and being revived and provided with health packs by a warm-hearted buddy always raises a smile (I'll never forget you, Zephyr_Assassino). Light on scares – I'll take some convincing that survival horror doesn't work best solo – yet with well-implemented mechanics, co-op doesn't revitalise a flagging series but will be a welcome addition for anyone feeling snow lonely. **Joel Gregory**



Online round-up

With **Dave Meikleham**



It's always the way, ain't it? You're holidaying on a large boat in **Far Cry 3**'s free **High Tides** DLC with a bent cop, a Russian hitman and a Scottish reprobate when your ship's cook tries to sell y'all off to a gang of pirates. This gratis add-on pack provides fresh skins and two

new maps for the game's four player co-op mode. Jailbreak sees you and your island chums escaping from an underground pokey before laying some hurt on your captors, while Redemption has your four adventurers trying to earn some karmic Brownie points by saving families from bandits. New tribal tattoo character skins are a bit superficial, but the maps tie up the co-op's storyline fairly well.

Forget a bicycle built for two, Meiks and **Max Payne 3** are a **Deathmatch Made in Heaven** (£7.29). Sure, both myself and Rockstar's alkie rozzers enjoy the odd belt of Kong whiskey or six, but we also share a love of digitally rearranging dudes' faces with swan-diving bullets. Maximilian's likeably daft new multiplayer pack features four new modes, including a co-op mode where Payne and his pal Passos face endless waves of goons. The highlight comes in Run And Stun, though. This new mode sees one player cast as a foam-headed baseball mascot who pelts about maps knocking folk out with a Taser. For such a miserable game, it's nice to see Max channel his silly side.

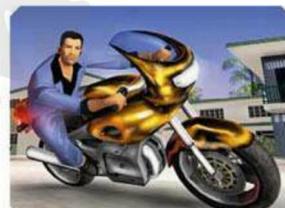


After playing **Borderlands 2**'s **Sir Hammerlock's Big Game Hunt** (£6.99), my seething hatred for Avatar has fully crystallised. Little Jimmy Cameron's Pandora, with its preachy blue aliens and duff 3D, can't hold a candle to the planet with the same moniker Gearbox

has created. Especially when the latest expansion for the co-op shooter takes place in a new African-themed sector called Aegrus. Filled with narked-off tribal warriors and giant scorpions, its savannahs and sweltering caverns sharply juxtapose the icy climes of the main game. You'll need a hefty levelled-up character to fully enjoy Hammerlock's adventures, but the DLC's hovercraft is worth any amount of grinding.

Download of the month

Look, contrary to PSN title-tattle, Billie Jean is *not* my lover. She's just a lass who claims that I am the one... but Tommy Vercetti is definitely *not* my son. No, he's just the star of **GTA: Vice City** (£7.99), arguably the finest open world Rockstar has ever constructed. If there's a more enduring memory on PS2 than bombing through Vice Point on a chopper as your mobster's Hawaiian shirt ripples in the breeze, it's clearly been bludgeoned out of my brainbox. While not an HD upgrade of the sandbox masterpiece, this untouched port still retains much of its nostalgic '80s charm. Thanks to an amazingly on-the-money soundtrack, there's no game that captures a sense of time and place quite like Vice City and its inspired take on Miami.





122 Faking it

Argo

Affleck's escape plan is a classy Canuck Caper

The magic of movies, eh? From injecting our eyeballs with six bobbins Resi films to somehow thinking it's fine to cast Paul '2 Fast 2 Furious' Walker as 47 in the next Hitman flick, Tinsel Town has a lot to answer for. Occasionally, though, cinema can actually achieve some honest-to-gosh-darn-it good. Never more so than in this true-life tale of a fake film legitimately saving the lives of six people in Iran.

True lies

Say wha'? The titular make-believe movie is, as Bryan Cranston's weary CIA boss puts it "by far the best bad idea" the covert agency could cook up to save six US Embassy workers stranded in the Middle East during 1979's Canadian Caper. Under the premise of location scouting for a sci-fi flick called Argo, the State Department attempted to extract the Americans from Iran following militant uprisings that saw anyone



caught trying to flee the country with a US passport being imprisoned or executed.

Enter Ben Affleck as badass pencil-pusher Tony Mendez. Tasked with 'exfiltrating' his fellow Yanks who've sought sanctuary in Tehran's Canadian consulate, the covert agent seeks Hollywood help to make the cover story semi-plausible. With the aid of Alan Arkin's awesomely sweary producer and John Goodman's special-effects artist, the trio convince La La Land and the outside world that Argo is the next Star Wars. Hey, if Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes got greenlit, why not a fake film designed to sneak folk out of a warzone?

If this all sounds at once overly political and borderline farcical, fret not. Argo is a masterfully taut movie of escalating tension and strong performances. Putting in turns as star and director – and rewarded with this year's Best Picture statue

– Affleck boasts a refreshing lightness of touch both before and behind the camera. Toasty on the heels of the evocative Gone Baby Gone and 2010 heist flick The Town, he's deservedly become Hollywood's hottest helmer. Sure, that's partially because you could grate gorgonzola on his abs. But it's mainly down to Affleck's eye for detail – just look at Argo's subtle desaturation, which evokes the kind of worn, understated colour palette of '70s cinema.

Although the final reel sometimes feels like it's been torn from the Bumper Book Of Chase Clichés, the darting camera pans and anxious performances sell the tension in Argo to a nerve-shredding degree. Judging by this thrilling evidence, you really can take the boy out of Boston. Affleck is well and truly out of his murdery Massachusetts comfort zone. **Dave Meikleham**





Dog wild

Seven Psychopaths

Pinching pets in a killer's heaven

Despite the titular similarities, this oddball black comedy is – perhaps unfortunately – no relation to Suda51's *Killer 7*. It is, however, every bit as batpoop mental and, thankfully, a good deal funnier. Penned and directed by Martin McDonagh of *In Bruges* fame, it's not quite the slice of quotable brilliance that the 2008 'hitmen on holiday' romp is, but it's a more than solid follow-up.

Colin Farrell ostensibly leads the line here, too, although there are no dead children or rambunctious dwarves to contend with this time. Instead there's writers block, as his Hollywood screenwriter Marty Faranan struggles to contend with penning the characters for his new creation: *Seven Psychopaths*. Luckily for his creative process – albeit less so for his personal life – things take an unexpected twist when best friend and dognapper Billy (Rockwell) inadvertently steals an LA gangster's prized shih tzu.

Joshua three

If that sounds bizarre, you haven't heard the half of it. Billy's partner in crime is Hans, played by Christopher Walken – and you know things are getting weirder when Walken is in the frame. It's difficult to reveal too much without venturing into spoiler territory, but that the final third of the film



Info

ETA 15 Apr **Distributor** Momentum Pictures **Year** 2012
Director Martin McDonagh
Starring Colin Farrell, Sam Rockwell, Christopher Walken
Extras TBC

consists of Farrell, Walken and Rockwell driving into the desert to finish the screenplay while drunk, tripping on peyote, and utterly unhinged respectively should clue you in as to how off-the-wall it gets.

McDonagh handles proceedings well, the film consistently providing big laughs and 'WTF?' moments but rarely descending into farce. And there's a quartet of excellent performances, the trio of 'good guys' complemented by Woody Harrelson's blend of menace and comedy as the crime boss committing multiple homicides just to get his beloved Bonny back.

The film's only real problem is that the last act is overly indulged – while it's more bonkers, it's actually less entertaining than what leads up to it, and there are moments when charming zaniness edges into try-hard territory. But overall it's another assured outing for McDonagh and his favourite Irishman, even if Farrell and his ever-expressive eyebrows play second [or should that be eighth?] fiddle to the bunch of weirdos of the title. **Joel Gregory**

PlayStation.
Official Magazine UK

7

Round-up



HD films to feed your next-gen disc player

Sightseers



Director Ben Wheatley **Starring** Alice Lowe, Steve Oram, Jonathan Aris **ETA** 25 Mar

Ah, the great British caravan holiday. A real shame if it goes awry when your seemingly normal new fella ruins it by committing a string of gruesome murders, isn't it? Often underplayed and with some surprisingly touching moments, this manages to be both tender and absurd, frequently veering closer to 'dark' than 'comedy' territory. **B**

Premium Rush

Director David Koepp **Starring** Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Michael Shannon, Dania Ramirez **ETA** Out now

Somehow squeezed into his jam-packed schedule, Hollywood hard-worker Gordon-Levitt finds time to play a bike messenger with a dodgy package (ahem) in this fast-paced thriller. It's a slightly by-the-numbers affair but a good time nonetheless, with playful dialogue, exhilarating chase scenes and, of course, plenty of JGL's winningly cheeky smile as he's chased down by a dirty cop. **B**



Frankenweenie

Director Tim Burton **Starring** Winona Ryder, Catherine O'Hara, Martin Short **ETA** Out now

A boy living in black-and-white, smalltown America uses his newfound enthusiasm for science (sparked by an enthralling Martin Landau as teacher Mr Rzykruski) to resurrect his dog Sparky. A tad too macabre and light on dialogue for the younger half of the PG crowd, but it's still serviceable stop-motion creepiness from weaver of dark dreams Tim Burton. **B**

Hit And Run

Director David Palmer, Dax Shepard **Starring** Dax Shepard, Kristen Bell, Bradley Cooper **ETA** Out now

Surprisingly watchable chase comedy for a film of this name – and one co-directed by its star – in which a witness protection participant is lured back to former hometown LA by his girlfriend (Bell) with dreadlocked lunatic crime lord Alex (Cooper) hot on his heels. Its intentionally overcomplicated plot, indulgent slo-mo hot-rod shots and offbeat dialogue are an odd mix, but an invigorating one. **7**

mail@opm



JRPG love, Metal Gear Solid fandom and some very unlikely parallels indeed.

Effective fantasy

In issue #80's review of the Mass Effect Trilogy, you quite rightly state that the second game is the finest of the three. While it has many strengths, I couldn't help but notice it shares more than a few of them with Final Fantasy VII (a game I still love and play to this day).

Firstly, both games have a terrific, weird and wonderful cast of characters. For the final part of FFVII its characters are dotted around the airship Highwind, always ready to chat while you explore the map. This is, of course, how ME2 sets

itself up from the beginning. It also has a huge range of worlds for us to explore, each filled with side-quests. I know hubs and cities aren't unusual in RPGs, but only Mass Effect 2 gives us the variation and sense of wonder that FFVII provided. It's even something I thought was lacking in the third Mass Effect.

Then there's the fact that these characters you come to love can ultimately be lost for good. You can't tell me that's not a lesson Bioware learned from FFVII – nothing hits you harder in a game than taking away a beloved character. You might even make comparisons regarding the combat. ME2 may look like a third-person shooter, but there's turn-based strategy in there, too.

All these similarities may seem coincidental (or even just a bit tenuous) but my point is that ME2 is the only RPG I've played that's managed to give me the same feeling I had years ago playing FFVII for the first time. It's the feeling that got me into gaming in the first place – not just of enjoying the experience, but of being lost in it.

Pete Wisdom, via email

When it comes to intergalactic exploration, Mass Effect 2 is among our all-time faves. We'd never considered its



Shepard's second outing remains Mass Effect's high point.

parallels with FFVII before, but it's an influential title in RPG history, so it's not infeasible for Bioware to have lifted some inspiration from Square's classic. We're still not over poor Aeris... [sob].



Text OPM
Text 'Letters' then a 140 character message to 87474 – we'll include the best txts in the mag innit!*

Lightning the way

I read the feature on the OPM website about what JRPGs must do in order for the genre to survive. While I'm a big fan of JRPGs, I really want them to get better. For example, Final Fantasy XIII: I do love that game, but it's damn annoying because every battle is so repetitive. No one wants to have to fight six of the same enemy in order to proceed to the boss battle behind the giant door... and then have to use the same repetitive routine of mashing to defeat yet another giant monster that almost has nothing to do with the plot... Also, am I the only person who kind of likes quick-time events?

Nicole Karakulz,
via Facebook

What's on my hard drive



Jamie Spurway,
Exeter

Video

Dead Snow, plus Ni No Kuni, The Last Of Us and Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance trailers

Music

Atreyu, Still Remains, Blink-182 and a few soundtracks.

Friends

My best mate, brother, and a few guys and gals I used to work with.

Games

I'm currently playing Far Cry 3. Also: Dark Souls, Demon's Souls, FFXIII-2 and the obligatory COD.

Photos

A few of me and the missus, a load of the dog and some from Games Day with my bro.

great things to come. How about year's OPM subscription to keep you up to date?

Player one

After hearing the news about the inclusion of multiplayer in Tomb Raider, I have to say I'm sick of this obsession with online multiplayer for every game ever. They'll be doing online multiplayer for solitaire next! Is everyone now incapable of playing games on their own, without someone to shout at through their overpriced Turtle Beach headsets?

Peter Chandler, via Facebook

Don't worry, that'll never happen: the name 'solitaire' comes from 'solitary'... oh, we see what you were doing there. Multiplayer does seem to be a habit these days, and it is an odd fit for Tomb Raider. That said, there's no obligation to hop online, and if it doesn't detract from the single-player then no harm done?

Ground up

I recently finished Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker, and I was amazed at how well Kojima had developed the character of Big Boss. From the very first Metal Gear game we've believed Big Boss was a terrorist who wanted to take over the world and do other terrorist-y things. By the time MGS3 rolled around, we had a completely new view of the character. I'm very eagerly anticipating Ground Zeroes – it will be fascinating to see this broken soldier become the leader of a 'terrorist nation'. Perhaps Ground Zeroes will make us think otherwise.

Sean Hollyman, via email

What we've seen so far of Ground Zeroes leaves us with more questions than it does answers, but one thing's for certain: we can't wait to find out what happens to Big Boss. Kojima is a master of characterisation and a stickler for detail, so after the mixed bag that was Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance, the prospect of a new MGS game has us almost excited enough to don an eyepatch of our own.

Tough cell

I was disappointed to hear Michael Ironside isn't returning as Sam Fisher in Splinter Cell: Blacklist, as his voice is so iconic for the character. That said, I understand why Ubisoft has changed voice actors due to the use of motion



Q Fisher's probably got more tech in that suit than you have in your entire living room.

capture, which should make the game's cinematic moments even better. The only thing I'm worried about is that the trailers so far have shown the game to be very action-heavy – which I'm fine with as long as it's an option, and the traditional stealth gameplay is retained. I'd like to see the move back to a more varied light/dark meter, too, instead of Conviction's monochrome.

Christopher McDonald,
via Facebook

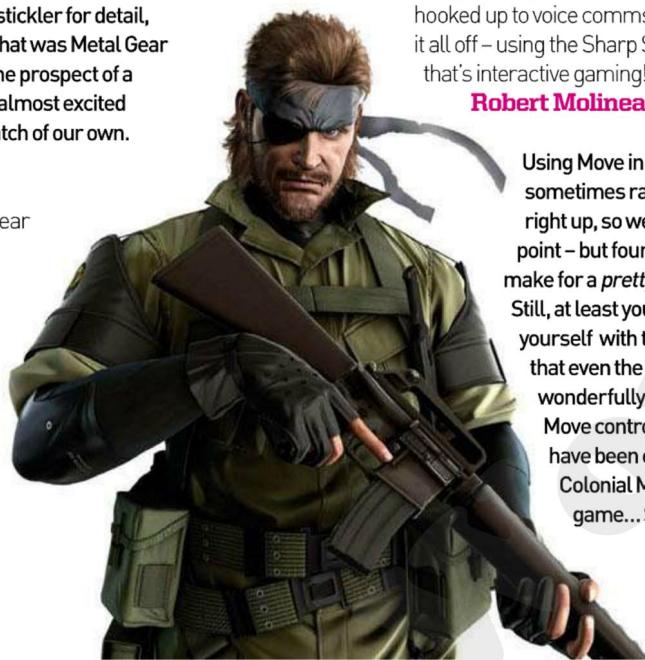
Don't worry – as we explained in issue #81, stealth is still very much an option in Blacklist, with the 'Ghost' XP specifically rewarding sneaking prowess. Ironside's voice is an iconic part of the past Splinter Cell games, but if a new man is a way of making Fisher's undercover ops even slicker, we're in. Oh Sam, how we've missed you. Welcome back.

Game over

So, after many moons of waiting for a game that could have been such a great FPS, I am disappointed to see Aliens: Colonial Marines not take the opportunity to use PS Move. I had this idea of a multiplayer game with a team of four players in a blacked-out room, maybe using four separate screens, all players hooked up to voice comms and – to top it all off – using the Sharp Shooter! Now that's interactive gaming!

Robert Molineaux, via email

Using Move in shooters can sometimes ramp immersion right up, so we can see your point – but four screens would make for a pretty pricey setup. Still, at least you can console yourself with the knowledge that even the most wonderfully implemented Move controls wouldn't have been enough to make Colonial Marines a great game... Sigh.



Off the Wall

Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group

Light up

Did anyone ever press the analogue button on the PS2 controllers other than out of curiosity or to turn on/off the light?

Alastair Smith

Pig out

"Everyone should have a pork bun in their hand. That way lies enlightenment and happiness for all."

Claire Little

Party pooper

"Except the pig."

Denice Law

Couch potato

"Bought and downloaded Move Fitness last week from PSN. This week I might put it on. Next week I might charge the Move controller."

Ben Dolan

Going solo

"Sod multiplayer. I'm anti-social..."

Ben Roberts

Over and over

"COMPLETE DMC HOW MANY TIMES TO GET THE PLATINUM?!"

Jaryd Trainer

Four eyes

"I normally only wear my glasses when playing games, but I'm not while playing Aliens: Colonial Marines... Makes it look better!"

Tommy Doc-Holiday Keough



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PS3

Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games

01

**Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception** 10

Against all odds, Naughty Dog's finest creation to date manages to outdo its predecessor. The most accomplished storytelling of the generation meets graphics so good you'll want to lick your TV, along with set-pieces that grant you a scarcely believable level of control. The script's funnier than most comedies, and your favourite characters make a return. Plus, Nate remains the only PS3 character we'd happily turn for.

02

**Red Dead Redemption** 10

Putting a bullet through the brain of the notion that gamers aren't into cowboys, Rockstar's sweeping take on the death of the Old West is brilliant from start to finish, and the richest open world on PS3.

03

**Mass Effect 3** 10

Everything that made Mass Effect great up to now has been surpassed. You'll remember the cast, the locations, the decisions you made – and their consequences – for the rest of your gaming career.

04

**Batman: Arkham City** 10

The Bat is back in the greatest superhero game of all time. Gliding around this open-world Gotham is one of PS3's most thrilling activities.

SEE READER CHOICE

05

**LittleBigPlanet 2** 10

Somehow they've made this create-'em-up simpler to use but even more powerful. An amazing game with an entertaining story and seemingly endless online user-created content.

06

**Portal 2** 10

One of the funniest, most clever games out there. If the sharp script, ace performances, brilliant co-op and ingenious puzzles don't do it for you, you should probably swap PS3 for another hobby. Macremé?

07

**God Of War III** 9

Kratos signs off, as expected, in a shower of deicidal blood and worried-looking minotaurs. If it is his last game (it's not), then his legacy will be whipcrack combat and bosses the size of the moon.

08

**Metal Gear Solid 4:**
Guns Of The Patriots 10

The concluding title in the Metal Gear chronology is an exotic action treat, full of Hideo Kojima's humour, anti-war politicking and cinematic nods.

09

**L.A. Noire** 9

Immersing you in the grimy, gritty world of 40s detective Cole Phelps, this savvy crime thriller is slick, challenging and typically brilliantly produced. Yet another Rockstar classic.

10

**Grand Theft Auto IV** 10

No parachutes, just Rockstar's twisted crime satire taken to startling new depths. Bold in its choice of lead character and remarkable in its creation of a modern city, this is a masterpiece.

11

**Heavy Rain** 9

Probably the most ambitious game on PS3 – and certainly the most artsy – this dark thriller sinks its hooks in early and never lets up. An intense and involving detective drama like nothing else.

12

**Dishonored** 9

Brutal FPS, slick stealth sim and thoughtful interactive story rolled into one, this proves first-person gaming can be smart, non-violent and hilarious. Head into Dunwall without delay.

13

**Hitman: Absolution** 9

47 returns, again proving a deadlier baldy than Bruce Willis on bath salts. With levels that invite you with opportunities rather than signpost your next move, the series is back to its murderous best.

14

**FIFA 13** 9

A brilliant refinement of last year's game, with gameplay tweaks where needed and additions that make this the most compelling virtual football ecosystem ever.

15

**Bulletstorm** 9

The new kid on the FPS block shoots straight to the front of the pack. With a playground of death to frolic in, it eschews realism and makes things fun again, giving the genre a rocket up the backside.

16

**Gran Turismo 5** 9

Spectacularly late, but also spectacularly over-specced and gorgeous to drive. GT5 contains enough automotive content to last you a decade, which is just as well... That's when GT6 is due.

17

**Dead Space 2** 9

Improves on every aspect of the spacesuit-soiling original, with lavish production values, a smart script and even more fun laser surgery. "Sorry ET, I'm going to have to amputate. Yeah, all of them."

18		BioShock 10 Mix gene-spliced powers with big guns as you investigate underwater shenanigans in what's still the smartest shooter on PS3. Features terrific art design and a zinger of a twist.	29		Need For Speed: Most Wanted 8 Social networking put to its best use – humiliating your friends list. It might not have the possibilities of Burnout Paradise, but Most Wanted finds new strength with Autolog and a few mates.
19		Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10 The sequel may have surpassed it, but this is still utterly essential adventuring. From the opening scene it's clear that this is something special, and the pace doesn't relent during a campaign that's impeccable from start to finish.	30		SingStar 9 Still our favourite party game (hey, it's hard to play a toy guitar while holding a mojito) and your gateway to the ever-expanding SingStore. Go on, download The Ship Song. We dare you.
20		Mass Effect 2 10 No game has made us want to build an actual spaceship more than this sci-fi RPG. Assemble your team of renegades, mercs and aliens, then save the galaxy. A genuine epic and a must-play.	31		Bayonetta 5 Only an idiot could fail to love a plummy witch clad solely in sexy secretary specs and her own magical hair. And you are not an idiot. The fact that the combat is like Devil May Cry, only amped up insanely, helps.
21		Far Cry 3 5 It's everything you could want from an open-world shooter, allowing you to play through a bonkers and engaging story in any way you see fit. Plus you can punch sharks, and that's always a huge plus.	32		InFamous 2 5 Builds on the electrifying first outing with engaging environments, supercharged powers and gorgeous visuals. User-created content is a clever, LBP-style addition. With more murders.
22		Rock Band 3 9 Is it the brilliantly camp keyboard that makes this so good? The 2,400+ song DLC archive? The fact that it's as much fun to play solo as it is with a group of mates? Trick question: it's all three.	33		Deus Ex: Human Revolution 8 Be anything from an invisible robo-ninja to a human tank punching through walls in this sci-fi shooter. The open levels offer plenty of room to experiment, and there's endless scope to fine-tune your world-saving approach.
23		Call Of Duty: Black Ops II 8 With a more narrative-driven single-player campaign, finely tuned multiplayer, and a brilliant new take on Zombies, this is Call Of Duty taken to its logical conclusion on PS3.	34		Dark Souls 9 Dark Souls will hurt you. And you'll come crawling back for more, because this resonant online world is a deep, elegantly wrought adventure like no other. Mean, unique and beautiful.
24		Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD 10 Two of the most moving games ever get buffed with the HD chamois. The stories are gripping and intimate, plus they let you feel all artsy and superior.	35		Assassin's Creed: Revelations 8 A perfect conclusion to Ezio and Altair's stories, this is action on an epic scale. Constantinople is a free-running Assassin's paradise in which to use your wristblade with murderous abandon. Also: Renaissance bombs!
25		Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 9 Sadly overlooked by many, this reinvention of the age-old series is a genuine classic. With an ocean-deep combat system and teasing puzzles, the range of ideas surpasses GOWIII.	36		Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch 9 Level-5 and legendary animation house Studio Ghibli join forces and take you on a pure-hearted adventure that melts away JRPG clumsiness.
26		Final Fantasy XIII 9 Split the fans with its lack of villages and relentless linearity, but it's a looker – with the most rewarding battle system of any Final Fantasy. It does actually open up after the first 30 hours, so we're in the pro camp.	37		Sleeping Dogs 9 An open-world fusion of the best elements of the genre, where crisp shooting, brutal combo-based fighting and a virtual Hong Kong full of fun pull you in – and the morally murky plot keeps you hooked.
27		Killzone 3 9 The most serious COD contender and perhaps the true dawn of 3D gaming. Exquisite tech combines with excellent AI, strong shooting and spectacular set-pieces to beautifully brutal effect.	38		MGS HD Collection 8 Some of the finest games ever committed to disc reunited in a glorious threesome. If you haven't played 2 and 3 already then we can't be friends, and HD Peace Walker is a must for stealth-lovers.
28		Street Fighter X Tekken 9 Who'd have wagered SF's time-honoured mechanics could be made even tastier with the addition of tag team play? A bold move from Capcom shifts Ryu and co even further ahead of the competition.	39		Borderlands 2 9 Co-op shooting at its finest. The guns are the star in this weird and wacky world of bizarre enemies and compulsive looting. Oh, and it also looks good enough to have relations with.
Reader Choice Batman: Arkham City		I didn't think anyone would succeed at making a game in which you feel like a superhero. But Rocksteady did just that – from the Batarangs to the gliding, this is an absolute masterpiece. Dermot Brogan, County Donegal	40		Xcom: Enemy Unknown 9 Anyone who thinks this is a dry and dusty strategy sim deserves to be probed by aliens – the balanced gameplay and attachment to your troops make this as tense as any shooter.

PSN Essential collection

Bored of boxed games? Save shelf space and still have fun with this must-buy selection of downloadable hits

01



Journey 10

An object lesson in how less is more, this two-hour voyage crafts an incredible, immersive narrative and genuine emotional connection using little more than near-silent figures and floating pieces of cloth. A remarkable and unique experience, as well as a new high for PSN gaming.

02



Stacking 9

Tim Schafer puzzler-cum-adventure-cum-headtrip in which you solve mysteries by stacking Russian dolls with unique abilities. Intelligent, insane and totally immature.

09



Pac-Man Championship Edition DX 9

How do you update an all-time classic? Why, up the pace, throw in loads of neon and add some of the most satisfying sound effects ever. Sold!

03



Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light 9

Ignore the look and know that this is the best Raider in years. Great two-player action plus loads of treasure hunting. A co-op essential.

10



Limbo 8

This understated, monochromatic tale of a lone boy's escape from a danger-filled forest is as gorgeous as it is frustrating. A glorious combination of art and gore.

04



Braid 9

If you want to make the argument that games are art, this is the place to start. An achingly beautiful hand-drawn style combines with brilliant but brutal time-bending puzzles.

11



Resident Evil 4 HD 9

One of the best games on PS2 gets a hi-def makeover. Still the pinnacle of survival horror, you'll get scared, shooty and decapitated by a chainsaw. Triple win.

05



Flower 9

More 'experience' than game, this collect-'em-up sees you steering a petal on the breeze by tilting your Sixaxis. It's a soothing mix of colour and music; a lovely deviation from frantic action.

12



Papo & Yo 8

Eccentric fantasy platforming with heart and soul. Puzzle your way through magical favelas accompanied by Monster, your best friend and worst enemy in one.

06



The Walking Dead 9

With this episodic zombie series now drawn to a close, it stands among the best downloadable games ever, with emotional ties and consequences for your actions.

13



PixelJunk Shooter 9

Expanded on by the sequel, but the inventiveness and satisfactorily simple twin-stick gameplay mechanics of the original mean that this is still the best PJ title around.

07



Castle Crashers 8

No game can better recreate the excitement of clutching a fistful of coins in a sticky-floored arcade. Violent, fast, funny, this four-man co-op brawler is a modern-day Streets Of Rage.

14



Okami HD 8

Beautiful like Nathan Drake standing in front of a Hawaiian sunset, this tale of a wolf goddess and her celestial paintbrush is still unique six years after its original release.

08



Joe Danger 8

The cheery appearance of the loveable cartoon stuntman belies a game full of depth, nuance and blisteringly high scores. It's part-platformer, part-racer, part-puzzler, but all fun.

15



NHL 3-On-3 Arcade 8

A twist on EA's hockey series, with massive-headed players and preposterous power-ups, like the ability to turn an opponent's keeper tiny. The funniest sports game of any generation.

PS Vita Essential collection

The most powerful handheld ever is here. Get the best of it with the games we've given two thumb[stick]s up to

01



Persona 4: Golden 9

NEW

If ever a game could make you forget the existence of anything outside the Vita's screen, it's this thoughtful and unique JRPG epic. Essentially it gives you another stab at high school, this time with intrigue, mystery, and superpowers instead of acne, nerves and an unpredictable vocal register.

02



Virtue's Last Reward 9

A tense visual novel/puzzler that keeps getting better throughout its 40 hours. The dialogue's engaging and however tough the puzzles get you're never left rage-scouring for clues.

09



FIFA Football B

The sequel's a shameful rip-off which only updates kits and rosters, so unless you find them both for the same price then this entry is still the best way to get a footy-on-the-move fix.

03



Gravity Rush 9

Use a gravity-defying cat to break the laws of physics and zoom across the skies of a floating steampunk city. With stylish comic-book looks and a sassy heroine, this is a rush to remember.

10



Tales From Space: Mutant Blobs Attack B

Simple but gloriously addictive. Make your ball of goo grow to vast proportions, all while taking in the pop-culture zingers in the background.

04



LittleBigPlanet 9

Sackboy's back, smaller but just as loveable as ever. His platforming antics work perfectly on Vita, and the new control inputs complement the level creator brilliantly. Also: d'awwww.

11



Super Stardust Delta B

HR policy means heroin use is frowned upon, but we can't imagine this is any less addictive. A brilliant port of the PSN twin-stick shooter, you'll never stop scratching the high-score itch.

05



Lumines: Electronic Symphony 9

Part block-puzzler, part on-the-go disco, this is as certain to have you nodding along to ace choonage as it is to keep you coming back for more reflex-testing, square-clearing action.

12



Blazblue: Continuum Shift Extend B

There's almost *too much* content here – the wealth of game modes is a nerdgasm for fans, and the characters are insanely diverse.

06



Metal Gear Solid HD Collection 9

Two of PlayStation's finest adventures scale down beautifully, with pint-sized neck-snapping and enough cut-scenes to fill a transatlantic flight. Now there's even less excuse not to play.

13



Wipeout 2048 B

The series' futuristic hovering action has rarely looked better, thanks to the clarity Vita's OLED screen brings to the party. Every bit as fast and handsome as PSN's Wipeout HD.

07



Uncharted: Golden Abyss B

Drake proves he's just as adept on the go, with screen size no impediment to another epic adventure. A prequel story that's classic jungle action, and full of typical Uncharted charm.

14



Unit 13 B

Free of any half-arsed story or COD-posturing, this shooter embraces Vita's features without being gimmicky. Its solid mechanics make the generic warfare more than forgivable.

08



Rayman Origins B

He of no limbs finds the perfect home on Vita's OLED screen. Beautiful visuals and flawless platforming make Rayman a handheld delight of quirky cartoon ridiculousness.

15



Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3 B

Imagine the PS3 version, but smaller. Now add some nonsense touchscreen controls you can mercifully opt out of, all the DLC characters and a near-PS3 level of prettiness, but *on the go!*

Jason Brody

Far Cry 3's sharp shooting student

Clearly we did uni wrong. At the time, skipping lectures to watch Bargain Hunt, subsisting on out-of-date packet noodles and drinking our body weight in sambuca seemed like a swell idea. In retrospect, now that we've seen Far Cry 3's college graduate Jason Brody single-handedly liberate Rook Islands' Rakayat tribe from psychotic pirates and corrupt mining magnates, maybe we should have paid more attention in 'becoming a badass FPS hero 101'. A talented athlete during his school days, Brody's ball skills have evolved into crack shooting... although that may have more to do with the paranormal tattoos he gets plastered on his hide than his homer stats.

Brody's memorable moments

Party pooper

Visiting Bangkok with his brother and college buddies, Brody's break descends into holiday hell when they're all kidnapped by certifiable pirate Vaas. At least they got in a couple of days of sun and sand beforehand.



Cage rage

Once captured, Jason finds himself imprisoned in a wooden cell with his brother Grant. Thanks to some shonky guards, a Shawshank-style escape ensues, but just when freedom seems possible, Grant is killed. RIP, bro.



Friends reunited

Despite brandishing the monikers of skin f**k stars, both Daisy Lee and Liza Snow prove integral to Jason's journey. After he saves both his missus and his brother's other half, the trio plot their escape via clapped-out boat.



Going down

Aside from being vaguely obsessed with Lewis Carroll quotes, Vaas is also fond of tethering folk to boulders then hoofing them feet-first into watery ravines. Thank the lord Jason boasts a strong backstroke.



Jason's survival skills



Healer

Demonstrating all the booboo-curing properties of Dr Quinn Medicine Woman, our Jase is a dab hand at using his knife to pull out any pirate lead that pierces his skin.



Hunter

Ssshh, Brody is trying to keep his critter-slaughtering schtum from the WWF. An adept animal poacher, Jason usually skins his kills and uses the pelts for crafting.



Wheelman

Whether bombing through jungles on a quad bike or outrunning goons in a jeep, Brody often has a wheely good time (sorry) on the island. Eat your helmet out, Stig.



Tattoo artist

After buddying up with the Rakayat, our shooey student becomes quite the tribal tattooist, with the network of epidermis doodles growing as you upgrade his abilities.

Friends and enemies

Vaas Montenegro

Far Cry 3's poster boy is your go-to-guy for promoting dribble-faced insanity. Utterly ruthless, this pirate is madder than a tea party involving top hats and talking hares.



Dennis Rogers

Born in Liberia, Dennis moved to the States and became a mechanic before ending up on Rook Islands. With the whole tribal warrior thang, Brody's ally has quite the CV.



Dr Eamhardt

A quack who'd rather lick hallucinogenic toads in a greenhouse than sun himself on a tropical beach. This English doc shelters Jason, but is still a deranged drug peddler.



Citra Talugmai

Seen as a warrior goddess by her loyal followers, the leader of the Rakayat makes Brody gargle unhinged Kool-Aid before they engage in rumpy-pumpy in front of her tribe.



Far Cry 3 trivia



A chap named Robert Crooks voices Brody. According to his IMDB profile, his style "is often compared to that of Edward Norton". Sure it is.



The PS3 version of Far Cry 3 comes with the High Tides DLC. This free pack includes new co-op maps and character skins.



Jeffrey Yohalem (the game's writer) caused quite a stir when he claimed critics missed the point of Brody's fairly polarising plot. We get it. Jason saving the tribal folk is 'ironic'. Sheesh.



Like fellow Ubisoft mega-hit Assassin's Creed III, Jason's psychotic shooter begins with a reference to Alice In Wonderland.



Forget remote-controlled COD cars. The Insane Edition of Far Cry 3 comes with an ace Vaas bobblehead. Awww, what a cute psycho.

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RETALIATION

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Directed by Roger Bartow, Jim May, A.C.E.
Production Design by Andrew Menzies
Cinematography by Stephen Windon, ACS
Executive Producers: Stephen Sommers, Herbert W. Kao, Erik Hovland, Gary Barber, Roger Birnbaum, David Ellison, Dana Goldberg
Producers: Brian Goldner
Based on Hasbro's G.I. JOE® Characters
Written by Rhett Reese & Paul Wernick
Directed by Jon M. Chu

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