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GALAXY S5
Unveiled!**

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MOSQUITOES!!!**
6 Weirdest Games Ever

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Run On

As I've been getting back into running this year, I've set myself the task of doing a 21 km soon. Running is, mercifully, a relatively cheap sport. If you've got yourself a decent pair of shoes (no need to skimp if you value your knees and joints) and the open road, you are good to go. But, like most sports, you can invest in a wide variety of more expensive gear. At races you often see folks decked out in running shorts with laser cut perforations on the side (R400), singlets with flat-seam construction (R400), not to mention the latest GPS watch with a heart rate monitor (R4 800). They don't of course make you run faster, but I think it does serve another important value to their wearer – humility. Since there is nothing more humbling to see a guy dressed up in nothing more but PT shorts, a t-shirt and tekkies come screeching past you while you huff and puff your way up a hill.

TechSmart this month is once again filled with the latest and greatest gadgets, from the just announced Samsung Galaxy S5, awesome multi-tools, excellent cameras to impressive coffee machines. We've been getting good feedback about the magazine's new direction, and as always you are welcome to email me about your likes and dislikes.

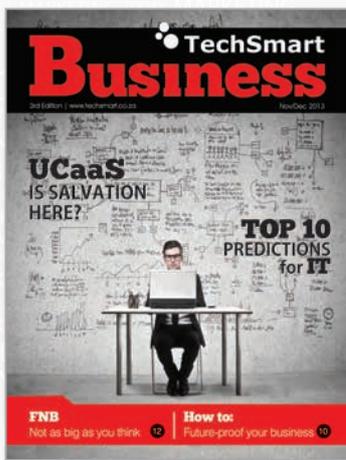
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EDITOR PRINT & ONLINE

Mike Joubert: mike@techsmart.co.za

ADVERTISING

Agencies: Karien Steenkamp > 083-748-3413;
karien@smartpublishing.co.za
Directory: Anneke Claassen > 083-301-9134;
anneke@smartpublishing.co.za

STAFF WRITERS

Ryan Noik [RN], Robin-Leigh Chetty [RC], Mike Joubert [MJ]

DESIGNERS

Lizelle Cronjé, Annemart Swanepoel

CONTRIBUTORS

Stephen Aspeling, Deep Fried Man, Linda Pretorius, Moray Rhoda, Pippa Tshabalala, Mynhardt van Pletsen, Allen Simpson

COVER PHOTO

Basil Koufos > 082-439-2022

SMART PUBLISHING

General manager: George Grobler
george@smartpublishing.co.za

Sales Manager: Anneke Claassen
anneke@smartpublishing.co.za



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ABOUT THE COVER GIRL

BLACK WIDOW

Model: Charmaine

Also known as: Natalia 'Natasha' Alianovna Romanova; Natasha Romanoff, Black Pearl

Featured movies: The Avengers. Captain America: The Winter Soldier

Quick Facts:

Like many superheroes, Natalia/Natasha had a tragic upbringing; as she was left orphaned in an attack on Stalingrad and rescued from a burning building.

The reason why she is so lethal can be attributed to her training by Soviet intelligence, and subsequently, thanks to her recruitment into the Black Widow programme, where she was trained as a sleeper agent by Captain America's sidekick.

As for her grace, this comes from Black Widow's other training – as a ballerina.

While initially intended as being a lethal Russian spy, Natalia later defected to the United States, where she became a freelance operative for S.H.I.E.L.D.

Black Widow has enjoyed a number of alliances with other superheroes, including but not limited to another anti-hero turned superhero (and her first American love, Hawkeye) and later Daredevil and Logan/Wolverine.

Famous Black Widow quotes:

"My past is my own."

"I'm involved. Off the market, as they say in the civilized world... So why don't we make your price the antidote to the poison I put in your first drink, darling? Then we can catch up on old times..."

"I can take care of myself, thank you!"

"So to recap: elemental forces. The world's latest tech. And assassins trained in centuries-old methods of efficient slaughter. But that's not the worst of it. My ex-husband is here." **ts**



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GREAT GEAR!

SAMSUNG GALAXY S5

Finally, Samsung ended the anticipation and rumour-mongering and unveiled their latest pinnacle of the Galaxy range, the Galaxy S5, at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it – the Galaxy S5 boasts the same Super AMOLED screen that wowed us when we saw it on the Galaxy Note 3 and the S4, with a sumptuous resolution of 1920x1080.

Hardly changed from the S4 is the size of the screen; at 5.1" it is still nowhere near the behemoth that is the 5.7" Note 3, and should still fit comfortably in the hand and rest not too conspicuously against the ear.

Snapping up a distinct advantage on the camera front, the S5's back camera is a 16 megapixel offering, a full 3 megapixels more than its predecessor, and the capability to offer high dynamic range (HDR) shots as well.

New to the mix is an included fingerprint sensor for biometrically unlocking your phone, and an integrated heart rate monitor as well, to ensure that your beating heart has not, in fact, gone still – which would be very bad news for your general health.

Doing duty internally is a 2.5 GHz Snapdragon 800 processor clocked at 2.5 GHz along with 2 GB of memory, although another region-specific variant will apparently boast the no less able octo-core Exynos processor clocked at 2.1 GHz.

No local release date or price were available when going to print.



SONY XPERIA Z2

Also grabbing headlines is Sony's newly announced Xperia Z2 smartphone, a 5.2" fully waterproof offering that boasts a 20.7 megapixel camera and 4K video recording. The device, which similarly sports a full HD display, is powered by a Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 processor with 2.3 GHz quad-core Krait CPUs and a generous 3 GB of memory. Let the smartphone games begin! [RN] **ts**

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GREAT GEAR!

2014 AUDI S1 SPORTBACK

Set for unveiling at the 2014 Geneva Motor Show, Audi channels its Quattro rally racing roots with a urban-styled interpretation of the hot hatch, the S1 Sportback, arriving in SA in the final quarter of 2014.

The transmission system is available in six-speed manual or dual clutch variants. This is coupled with Audi's Quattro, all-wheel drive system, ensuring that you stay plastered to the tarmac. Which should come in handy while reaching top speeds of roughly 250 km/h and hitting 100 km/h in 5.9 seconds.

The finer details for this Vorsprung pocket rocket see it powered by a 2.0 litre turbocharged 4 cylinder engine capable of producing 170 kw of raw aggression. More than enough to keep its big brother, the S3, constantly checking its rearview mirror.



The S1 Sportback's interior will also be decked in the latest Audi swag. Featuring an interactive fold out monitor tricked out with MMI navigation, Bluetooth connectivity, web browsing and Bose surround sound.



Pricing for this little gem is €30 800 and €29 950 for the standard S1 model. This should translate to an estimated R350 000 for SA buyers. Start checking if you have any unnecessary organs you could sell into the black market.



RENAULT KWID CONCEPT

Showcased at the 2014 Delhi Auto Expo, the Renault Kwid is a true example of what happens when creative minds flourish. Drawing inspiration from a bird's nest, the Kwid is intended to resemble a portable, protective cocoon. Among the many enhancements this crazy concept boasts a centre-dashboard-mounted steering wheel, tablet controlled flying quadcopter companion and suspended seating made from elastomer. The quadcopter drone is stowed away in a concealed roof compartment, launching via the in-car tablet to scope traffic, take aerial shots and fly to programmed GPS coordinates. The Kwid is powered by a low emission 1.2 litre turbocharged engine with full battery powered capacity. **ts**

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GREAT GEAR!

RYNO MONO WHEELED ELECTRIC BIKE

The Ryno is a one-wheeled, battery powered bike looking to revolutionise urban commuting. Could it be the future of personalised city travel?

The brainchild of Americans Tony Ozrelc and Chris Hoffmann, the Ryno went through four prototype stages before the insane looking final build hit mainstream streets of its native Portland, Oregon.



It is fitted with two SLA batteries, offering a range of 16 km, each of which require six hours of charge time. There is also an additional fee option of Lithium Ion batteries, that provide a further 1000 extra recharges.

Tipping the scales at a relatively light 73 kg, the Ryno has a maximum load capacity of 117 kg.

Born from the inspiration of seeing a one-wheeled vehicle in a video game, at full speed the Ryno is capable of reaching a steady 16 km/h, making it an alternative for short-distance commuters.

It may have half the number of wheels as a bike, but it still costs a pretty penny at \$5 295, not to mention the costs to ship for those not living Stateside. There is also a handy carrying rack that will cost an additional \$170.



SOLOWHEEL

The Solowheel is an electric unicycle, requiring nothing more than two feet and a destination. The secret lies in the patented gyro-stabilised wheel, which ensures a steady ride while negotiating the city sidewalks. It is said to recreate the illusion of gliding on the ground, drawing inspiration from the iconic hoverboard of *Back to the Future* fame. Weighing 11 kg and generating speeds in the range of 1 to 6 km/h. The motor produces 11 hours ride time (dependent on speed) and requires one hour to fully charge. It's a pretty awesome way to get around, especially for people in walking cities or those who choose to leg it to work. It retails for close to £2 000. **ts**



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APPLE iPad Air

Surpassing and superseding its already highly successful iPad (4) was no small feat, but in the iPad Air, Apple has done just that.

By now, you might be inclined to roll your eyes every time Apple announces a new iPad, but the iPad Air really does offer the best iOS tablet experience yet. Granted, the Retina screen has remained unchanged from the iPad 3 and iPad 4 (it still has the same luscious 2048x1536 resolution and 264 ppi), but not so the design and several other important factors. Starting with the obvious, the iPad Air is exceptionally thin at 7.5 mm and noticeably light at 478 g. This means that the device is light enough to comfortably hold in one hand, and even grip as one would a smaller 7" tablet.

A trim and a tuck

The newly trimmed bezels make a substantial difference in everyday use, as the 9.7" tablet is considerably more portable and compact than its predecessors. These factors mean that everything that the iPad is famous for catering to, from web browsing to playing games, is made more comfortable and ultimately enjoyable.

REALLY WINNING US OVER WAS THE BLAZING SPEED OF THE DEVICE, THANKS TO THE NEWLY IMPLEMENTED A7 PROCESSOR.

The trimmed bezels and thus decreased width of the device has another benefit as well. It meant that we were able to type on the touch keyboard much faster than on previous, wider tablets, with both our thumbs comfortably reaching across the onscreen keyboard.

Need for speed

Really winning us over was the blazing speed of the device, thanks to the newly implemented A7 processor and dollop of extra memory. Apps open and close much faster; while iOS 7 simply flies. Furthermore, we found that sound seemed to be quite a bit louder on the iPad Air when compared

with our older iPad 2. The one negative though is that if you tap the iPad Air's screen hard enough, it does feel a bit less solid than the iPad 2's screen for example. This can be a bit disconcerting at first, depending of course on how vigorously you are used to handling the tablet. However, that is really the only negative we could find in the Air. Its build quality is still otherwise unchanged – i.e. very good – and its battery life is once again just over the ten hour mark.

Apps optimised for the new OS are larger than on iOS 6, so you may want to invest in a larger capacity (which ranges from 16 GB and 32 GB to 64 GB and 128 GB) than you think you may need. One word of warning – while current stock starts at the R5 000 mark, the rand-dollar exchange will apparently change this in the foreseeable future. [RN] **ts**



QUICK SPECS

| Processor | Memory | Screen size and resolution | Storage | Weight |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|----------------|--------|
| Apple A7, Dual-core 1.3 GHz Cyclone | 1 GB | 9.7", 2028x1536 | 16 GB – 128 GB | 469 g |

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OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1: 3 Things to Love

We were pretty much enamoured with the Olympus E-M5 when we tested it in 2012. The E-M1 takes the best from that camera and further ups the ante. Here are three things to love about this camera (and a few to hate).

1 Dynamite in a small package

There is truly a lot to love about the E-M1. For us though the key factor is that you are dealing with a semi-pro camera in such a small 497 g body (the Nikon D7100 weighs 765 g) that it's no hassle to lug around everywhere. Many scenarios in the past had us questioning whether to lug around a big DSLR – not so with the E-M1, which meant more opportunities to shoot. Granted, it's not as small as the E-M5, but we had no qualms carrying it in a regular backpack when flying – something that would not have been quite as comfortable with a semi-pro DSLR. The EM-1 is also a solid piece of manufacturing, featuring a magnesium alloy build which Olympus calls dust, splash and freezeproof.

YOU ARE DEALING WITH A SEMI-PRO CAMERA IN A BODY THAT'S NO HASSLE TO LUG AROUND.



REVIEW

2 EVF deserves R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

While not everyone is ready to defect to an electronic viewfinder instead of a regular optical one, we would do it in a jiffy. That is if all were as good as the E-M1's, which is crammed with 2.3 million dots. There are two reasons why. The EVF is crisp and clear and keeps its clarity around the edges too (some EVFs begin to blur/streak) – this means composition is not a problem. Here's the clincher though – when you adjust exposure you can see exactly how your image is going to look since this is reflected on the EVF. Secondly you can shoot the picture and it immediately shows up in the viewfinder. In our case this resulted in a lot less 'aping' (constantly checking the display at the back to see if the image was correct) and more shooting.

3 Levers, buttons and dials galore

Compared to most other manufacturers (and especially the new Nikon Df), Olympus has their buttons and dials game down. The EM-1 is highly customisable, with 10 reprogrammable buttons, even one on the 12-40mm 2.8 kit lens. As another example, the dials at the front and the back can be customised further to function differently for the individual PSAM settings. Add to this an innovative lever that can further dictate what the dials can change. If it sounds confusing, it is – and you would have to spend some quality time with the manual if you really want to master this baby.

And the bad...

Certainly the biggest problem we have with the E-M1 lies not with its functionality, but rather its price. At R20 000 for the body alone we simply cannot see many photographers switching. In light of Nikon's top APS-C sized camera, the D7100, costing R16 000, Olympus is expecting a lot when it asks for a further R8 000 to kit the E-M1 with the 12-40mm f2.8 lens. The upcoming E-M10 should offer a more affordable option if you have your eye on the OM-D range.

Finally, the battery life is not that great, so investment in a second battery is a necessity, while the EVF also takes a bit of time to start up – many times we were staring into a black space when we were ready to shoot. [MJ] **ts**

QUICK SPECS

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MTN Steppa

Steppa is MTN's exclusive Android-powered budget smartphone. At a mere R499, it may have the potential to be a real game changer.

The MTN Steppa is by no means a flagship device, nor is it intended to be; at R499 it's touted as the most affordable smartphone in South Africa to date. For R500 you get a 3.5" touch enabled TFT display, a 1 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon single core processor, and Android 2.3.5 (Gingerbread) OS. Relative to the price, it adds up to a solid, smooth running system.

Budget crowd pleaser

MTN played a major role in the look and feel of this device, with its logo and colour scheme not so subtly embellished throughout the user interface. Furthermore, if you are thinking that you are getting the standard Android look and feel, think again, since this too is customised by MTN.

One aspect we were quickly frustrated by, was the in-app advertising on the home screen. The advertising indicated additional information for basic versions of pre-loaded apps such as AVG Antivirus and Facebook. When selected, it opened up a link to download premium versions of the apps. The integration of such 'spamware' really detracts from a solid smartphone experience.

No bells and whistles

MTN fitted the Steppa with a 2.0 megapixel camera that produced poor quality images and video, with most looking quite dark and heavily streaked when capturing a moving object. In this regard the Steppa won't appeal to serial Instagrammers, and the lack of front

facing camera may shy away the duckface selfie crowd. MTN has included Bluetooth 3.0 connectivity as well as FM radio, a standard 3.5 mm headphone jack and mini USB port for charging and computer connection. This should ensure users can access and share content effectively.



REVIEW

THE STEPPA MAY NOT BE THE CONTENDER FOR BEST PHONE OF THE YEAR, BUT COULD RANK AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT.

As we delve deeper into the plastic casing of the Steppa, there's only 512 MB of internal storage, which does not offer much space for users to download Google Play Store apps, nor photo, video or music content. Luckily there is a microSD card slot, but MTN does not include a card, so you would have to factor in the price of a microSD onto your R500 purchase.

Simple(y) great

For the price you pay the Steppa performs well and without much issue. It should have big appeal for people looking to make the transition from feature phone to smartphone, without having to commit to a contract. At R500, the MTN Steppa may just be the best value for money smartphone out there. It may not be the contender for best phone of the year, but could rank as one of the most important. [RC] **ts**

GIGABYTE P34

The P34 is billed an "Ultrablade Gaming Laptop". Does this streamlined offering have enough nous to win us over?

For a gaming notebook, the Gigabyte P34 is extremely sleek and refined, with no outrageous stylings to speak of. The P34 may just be the most incognito gaming notebook we have yet come across. Tipping the scales at 1.76 kg, it is one of the lighter gaming notebooks out there. The screen portion remains strong and well constructed in spite of this, tilting easily with no give or strain. The P34 features a generous 14" full HD (1920x1080) display, the only issue being some small amounts of blurring when flipping through browser tabs.

Touch and Type

The typing experience on the P34 is one of the best we have had in quite some time, with each keystroke sharp and precise. Unfortunately we did experience some issues with the trackpad, most notably with sensitivity, or lack thereof.

The P34 is supported by an Intel Core i5-4200H processor, Nvidia GeForce GTX 760M graphics card and 4 GB of RAM. Gigabyte has also fitted this notebook with a bevy of ports, featuring two USB 2.0 and 3.0 slots respectively, single HDMI, D-sub connection and SD card reader. This all adds up to an effective office or student multitasker. Powered by an 11.1 V



Li-polymer battery, the P34 will last lengthy meetings, but won't make it for longer stretches. This is the only true failing of the notebook, as the battery lasted a disappointing 3.5 hours.

THE GIGABYTE P34 IS EXTREMELY SLEEK AND REFINED, WITH NO OUTRAGEOUS STYLINGS TO SPEAK OF.

When we put this notebook through the ringer, it performed well, scoring solidly in all our benchmark and gaming tests. This confirmed that the P34 was not necessarily a flagship gaming notebook, but definitely warrants its R14 000 price tag.

Tale of the tape

The P34 has enough subtlety and power to make it a perfect cubicle companion, we just struggled to imagine it as a dedicated gaming unit. This P34 is by no means a subpar performer, it simply may not have enough gaming panache to ever tempt the hardcore gamer, but it might just appeal to the office worker that also does gaming on the side. [RC] **ts**



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LOGITECH Z200 Speakers

One of the biggest problems with mobile devices, such as notebooks and tablets, is that invariably the integrated speakers aren't that big, and often, not that loud. Addressing this issue is Logitech's Z200 speakers.



The Z200 speakers consist of two desktop speakers that add a nice combined 10 W boost of sound. To start with, the speakers are modern looking, while one speaker also plays host to a volume and tone control as well as a headphone jack. Otherwise, a single, standard 3.5mm connection enables users to plug the speakers into any standard audio out port.

AS TO THE SOUND ON OFFER, WE HAD VARYING RESULTS DEPENDING ON WHAT WE WERE PLAYING.

The speakers themselves are on the large and thick side, standing almost as tall as a 15" screen, and require their own power source. Setting them up is easy, and they are exceedingly straight forward to use. In the speakers' favour, they came with ample 2 m of cable.

Listen up

As to the sound on offer, we had varying results depending on what we were playing. Music through an iPod for example was not as loud

as we expected, even with both the speakers' volume and our iPod's volume turned to maximum. Playing games such as Oceanhorn with the speakers connected to our iPad yielded a much more favourable result. Here the sound was richer and louder, a far cry from the comparatively weak speakers on the iPad. This made mobile gaming (on a couch, not on a train) considerably more immersive, and from an auditory perspective, much more enjoyable. Media through the speakers from our notebook was a bit of a mixed bag – loud, but with ill defined treble and a little bit of distortion at the top end. Sound in movies, meanwhile was satisfactory and decent, but not brilliant.

Hear ye, hear ye

If we had to fault the speakers though it would be in their volume range – anything below a third into the volume dial's range is simply inaudible. Nonetheless, as desktop speakers and for their reasonable price, the Z200s still proved their worth, particularly when playing games and video on a tablet. RRP: R400 [RN] **ts**

ASUS dual-band Wireless N900 modem router

Not all routers are created equal, with the Asus dual-band Wireless N900 proving the point as the cream of the crop.

Routers and modems may be the often overlooked heroes of the connected home, but the devices are all still the heart of one's connection to the internet and the efficiency of a home network. It stands to reason, therefore that a great modem router would deliver a host of benefits that make it worth one's while (and money). The Asus dual-band Wireless N900 does not only take these devices' style to the next level, but also provides both modem and router functionality.

Connectivity, uncomplicated

For wireless connectivity, users can choose between two connect speeds – 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz (with this option proving considerably faster) – and each of these can be given individual SSIDs to distinguish them. They can also be used concurrently, useful for when multiple users share the same wireless network. Suffice to say, we were happy to see that our wireless connectivity in

THE N900 WAS A PLEASURE TO SETUP AND USE; PROVING BLAZINGLY FAST AND EASY TO MANAGE.

general, and streaming in particular, on our mobile devices flew.

As for setting up a new network connection via the modem router, the process was painless, taking all of five minutes before we were up and running, while the included software to set-up and manage the device graced us with a three step process, and didn't resemble trying to decipher the Rosetta Stone as has been the case with some other solutions.

Connectivity though is not all the N900 has to offer. It further boasts two USB ports for connecting storage devices and/or printers; and if you already have your own modem that you would like to keep, then the N900 accommodates this as well thanks to the inclusion of an extra WAN port. This renders the device simultaneously a standalone router, or a combination router and modem; a feature we cannot recommend strongly enough, having had our fair share of sudden modem failures and having to ensure the internet blackout that ensues.

All hail the hero

To its credit, the Asus router-modem (which boasts dual CPUs) comes with a couple of little extras, always good to see in the box, including an Ethernet cable and a phone jack adapter. In the final analysis, the N900 was a pleasure to setup and use; proving blazingly fast, easy to manage and connect, and full of features. RRP: R3 400. [RN] **ts**



ZYXEL PLA4231 Powerline Wireless N Extender Kit

One of the bugbears of wireless networks is dead zones within one's home, where the Wi-Fi signal does not reach. The solution? ZyXEL's 500 Mbps Powerline Wireless N Extender Kit.

The solution rather ingeniously relies on something that is very common in just about every room, namely electrical outlets. By plugging the Powerline adapter into these outlets, users can effectively create a Powerline network that functions like a Wi-Fi network, but with several compelling advantages. To start with, one of the main benefits offered by the Powerline extender kit is that users can connect in rooms that would otherwise pose a problem for conventional Wi-Fi signals, such as when there are thick concrete walls between one's devices and the router.

Streaming, streamlined

For connected users who have a particular preference for streaming high-content media like video and games, the device also boasts stability as well as improved performance thanks to the inclusion of IEEE 1901 500 Mbps technology. Another common scenario addressed by the Powerline Wireless N Extender Kit is that of multiple users in a household, each requiring stable and very good performance for simultaneous intensive uses, such as HD streaming, multiplayer

gaming and surfing YouTube or the internet. For any type of connectivity, especially wireless, security is always of paramount concern. With this in mind, the kit boasts 128-bit AES encryption and Wi-Fi Protected Setup (WPS).

Better than...

The ZyXEL PLA4231 bests many of its competitors in a number of ways. Firstly, the ZyXEL device boasts a data rate of up to 500 Mbps, more than double that of most competitors' 200 Mbps. Furthermore, the two Ethernet ports on the device enable users to now connect more than one wired device (smart TV, home-theatre, console) at a time. The ZyXEL is also both sleeker and smaller than what others are offering.



ZyXEL

Available from selected Telkom Direct and Matrix Warehouse stores. For more information on the ZyXEL PLA4231 Wireless N Extender Kit, visit www.zyxel.co.za **ts**



Extend Your Network

Throughout your home using your existing electricity cables




500Mbps Powerline Wireless N Extender (PLA4231 Kit)

- 500Mbps data rate
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- 1 x PLA4201 (wired) and 1 x PLA4231 (wireless) unit
- 1 x LAN port (PLA4201) and 2 x LAN ports (PLA4231)
- On/off switch
- Compact wall mount design

How do Powerline Adapters work?

Powerline adapters use your existing electricity cables to transfer Internet/data. You simply connect one adapter to your router and the second you plug into a normal wall plug where you'd like to extend your Internet/network to. The second unit will then give you access to the Internet/network via a LAN port or wirelessly.

— ETHERNET CABLE
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March 2014 | TechSmart

17

SONY

Cyber-shot RX100 II

Sony's RX100 was widely hailed as one of the top compacts of last year. So how does number II fare?

There's no doubt that Sony is on the up on the camera front, having produced a number of sit-up-and-take-notice products recently. The RX100 II is one of these, and based on its image quality alone it finds itself in the upper echelon of compact cameras. This is mainly due to the 20.2 megapixel Exmor R 1.0" CMOS sensor you'll find inside, which is quite a bit larger than regular compact camera sensors. Combine this with the fast f1.8 lens and you're able to get that shallow depth-of-field (and some bokeh) as found on DSLRs.

The must-have new stuff

New to the RX100 II is a tiltable LCD screen, as seen on its excellent NEX range of mirrorless cameras. We actually prefer these to the vari-angle screens, but it's just a shame that Sony didn't bother to make it a touchscreen. The screen (1.3 million dots) is very clear, even outside in the SA sun.

ITS R9 000 ASKING PRICE MADE US DO A DOUBLE TAKE.

Another useful feature is the control ring found around the lens. It's a little trick they nicked from Canon's S-series, making it easy to adjust the user-selectable functions. Options include, for example, exposure compensation, ISO, creative style and,



our favourite, zoom. Although options are more advanced than Canon's, we actually preferred Canon's implementation, since Sony's ring is clickless making it more difficult to control.

Show me the money

There are a lot more features on offer than this review gives proper credit for, with a few of the stand-out ones being NFC and Wi-Fi connectivity; excellent focus peaking for manual focus; solid focus-tracking; a best in class panorama feature; and the inclusion of a normal micro USB port for charging and data transfer, which means you can reload the battery using most smartphone chargers.

If you are on the prowl for a very small compact camera with awesome image quality, then Sony's RX100 II is your new best friend. But, if more DSLR-like handling is a requirement, we would rather go for the Canon G16 or Fujifilm X20, while the RX100 II's R9 000 asking price made us do a double take. [MJ] **ts**

CASIO

G-Shock Bluetooth 4.0 GBX6900B Watch

Casio's latest isn't exactly a smartwatch, but still includes Bluetooth. How does it fare?

The GBX6900B is Casio's second series of Bluetooth enabled G-Shocks, merging street steez and smartphone notification into one sturdy wristwatch. This latest offering features Bluetooth 4.0 functionality, making it compatible with phones such as the Apple iPhone 4S or higher, Samsung Galaxy S4 and Note 3. The Bluetooth connectivity allows wearers to pair their smartphone to the wristwatch and incorporates mail and call notification as well as music control.

THE CASIO'S BLUETOOTH NOTIFICATION FEATURES, ALTHOUGH HELPFUL, WILL NOT ENTICE NEWCOMERS.

The look and feel is in keeping with previous G-Shock watches, with enough weight and bulk (82 g) to let wearers feel like it can handle an active lifestyle. The face has the usual G-Shock features, including a countdown timer, stopwatch with split reading, time zone designation, backlit LED and solid 200 metre water resistance.

Bluetooth-aches

Pairing of the device is a bit long-winded, with users required to download the G-Shock+ app first. This pairing process seems

rather counterintuitive considering the Bluetooth enabled G-Shock is designed to provide instant access and ease of use. Our only wish was that the app contained additional features, such as links to exclusive G-Shock enabled content or sharing functionality, but it merely adds another middleman between you and your wrist. It could also use an enhancement to the mail notification, such as indicating the message sender or subject. Another welcome inclusion would have been the ability to activate the music remotely instead of having to unlock your smart device to start first. Luckily it enables you to locate your phone if lost by sending out a tone.

Worth the price?

The GBX6900B is keeping the rugged tradition of the G-Shock alive and well. However, its Bluetooth notification features, although helpful, will not entice newcomers. At roughly R1 300 more than an equivalently sized G-Shock watch without Bluetooth, the GBX6900B is a pricey investment. The watch is available in three colours, blue, red and, our personal favourite, an all-black version. It should set buyers back roughly R3 000 with an estimated two year battery life based on a connection time of 12 hours per day. [RC] **ts**



CANON unveils new cameras

The last couple of months have been crammed with tasty Canon announcements – with a slew of new compact cameras to tempt photographers.

Canon EOS 1200D

R6 000

It may not be a compact camera strictly, but Canon's latest entry level DSLR is small and light enough at 480g to be toted anywhere. The camera's 18 megapixel APS-C CMOS sensor is accompanied by the company's DIGIC 4 image processor, a 9-point autofocus system, full HD video and a 3" LCD screen (460k-dot resolution). New is the inclusion of a comprehensive companion app that provides tutorials and solutions to common problems. For the creatively inclined – and usually found on compacts – the 1200D packs in-camera creative filters to add various effects to one's images.



the camera boasts a 28mm wide-angle, 5x zoom Canon lens, ideal for capturing that shark sneaking up on you. More reassuring is that while you may freeze at -10 °C, your camera will be just fine (and that was your primary concern, right?). Also onboard is a 3" LCD screen (460 000 dot) and an integrated GPS to ensure your images are geotagged if your camera washes ashore.



Canon PowerShot SX 700 HS

R4 000

To say Canon's slimmest PowerShot with an ultrazoom has exceptional range is an understatement of note. The 16.1 megapixel camera boasts a stabilised 30x zoom (25-750mm – yes, you read that right), which protrudes, like Miley's tongue, out of a ridiculously thin 35mm frame. Also onboard: a 3" LCD monitor (922k dots), full HD (1080p) video at 60 fps and Canon's DIGIC 6 image processor. Not content to only bring Wi-Fi connectivity, this little beauty further packs NFC technology to seamlessly interact with compatible Android devices.



Canon PowerShot G1 X Mark II

R10 000

Showing that its ready for the big time, the PowerShot G1 X received a Mark II moniker, usually bestowed on pro DSLRs. This premium compact apparently boasts DSLR level image quality, with its 12.1 megapixel CMOS sensor billed as being comparable with APS-C ones normally reserved for its bigger brothers. Along with a DIGIC 6 image processor and a 5x optical zoom (24-120mm focal range) the camera also boasts 31 AF points (more than triple the nine points found in the G1 X), a maximum ISO of 12 800, an interesting dual lens control rings setup and a 3" LCD screen. Reminder: this is 'just' a compact.



Canon PowerShot D30

R3 800

Aimed at adventure seekers, the D30 has the distinction of accompanying divers to depths of 25 m underwater, with image quality delivered courtesy of a 12.1 megapixel CMOS sensor. Furthermore,

More Canon Shots

- Another notch on Canon's belt is the announcement that the company had exceeded the 70 million EOS DSLRs mark last month. In less than a year and a half since October 2012, Canon jumped from having 60 million cameras to its new benchmark. This is expected to soar to 80 million during the course of the year.
- Canon scooped the prestigious distinction of being the most used camera brand for photos entered into the World Press Photo 2014 awards, with 58% of entrants turning to Canon cameras (primarily the EOS 1 D X, 5D Mark II and 5D Mark III). [RN] **ts**

**SAMSUNG
FORUM
2014**Malaga,
Spain**A taste of what's coming**

As one of the largest consumer electronic companies in the world, you would expect Samsung to make a bit of a splash when exhibiting its products. Such was the case when we entered the exhibition hall at the Samsung Forum 2014, held in Malaga, Spain. Amongst what seemed like hundreds of flashy products, TechSmart got a taste of what is heading to SA shores during the course of the year.

**Samsung Galaxy Note Pro & Tab Pro**

If the trend last year was to rather go for smaller, 8" tablets, Samsung is taking the 'go big or go home' approach in 2014. Although there was no mention of the Galaxy S5 or the Gear 2, the new Galaxy Note Pro and Tab Pro tablets were on display. The tablets' screen size stands at 12.2", providing a WQXGA resolution of 2560x1600 pixels. Make no mistake, this is large, getting very close to the 13" screen size found on many notebooks. With specs including a 2.3 GHz processor, 3 GB of RAM and Android 4.4 (KitKat) it does seem that performance is key, while Samsung also mentioned the ability to have four separate 'windows' open in your screen and not just the usual two.

RRP: R13 000

Samsung Food ShowCase Fridge

Fridges are another of Samsung's speciality, with its latest Food ShowCase refrigerator providing a solution to the old problem of how to keep food fresher for longer. To solve this, the fridge is divided into both a front and back section. The front section (the ShowCase) stores items that are frequently needed, such as milk, snacks and beer, while sealing off the back section. This means those frequent openings and closings to browse through the fridge to see if there is anything to eat, does not affect the food that needs to be kept colder for longer. An ice and water dispenser rounds off this beauty.

RRP: Still to be announced

**Samsung NX30 mirrorless camera**

Samsung's NX20 and NX300 were great cameras, so we can only hope the new NX30 continues with this trend. The thing that immediately struck us about this mirrorless camera was the adjustable electronic viewfinder that can tilt by as much 80 degrees – a useful solution when doing flower or kids photography. With a 2 359 000 resolution on the EVF, nine frames per second shooting, NFC, Wi-Fi, a 21 megapixel APS-C sized sensor and a new NX AF System II autofocus system, the NX30 is no flash in the pan.

RRP: R12 000

Samsung U9000 Curved UHD TV

Blending two of the latest visual developments into one, is Samsung's U9000 Curved UHD TV range. It is very difficult to do these TVs justice by words alone, since they truly need to be seen to be believed. The curve on the television creates a sense of immersion, almost pulling you into the frame (best viewed from 3-4 m away). It might have been the curve that had us captivated, but it could have simply been the ultra high definition (UHD), which supports a resolution of a staggering 3840x2160 (a regular HD TV is 1920x1080). Although there is not a lot of content available for this format, the television is able to upscale regular content, while Samsung is also including a 1 TB UHD Videopack hard disk that includes Fox and Paramount Pictures UHD films. The TVs are also future proof thanks to the Samsung UHD Evolution Kit that would be able to support future UHD standards. SA will receive the 78" and 65" versions. [MJ] **ts**

RRP: Still to be announced





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Glossary of the GALAXIES

If talk about black holes, white dwarfs and red giants has your head spinning faster than a pulsar, fear not. We'll help you find your way around the stars.

BLACK HOLE

What? A part of space where gravity is so strong that everything around it gets sucked in, even light. The extreme force results when a star collapses and all its matter is squeezed into a tiny space.

So what? Black holes confirm the theory of relativity, which is fundamental to our understanding of how physics work on Earth.

Say what?! The (scientific) term to describe what will happen to you if you come close to a black hole is spaghettification.



27 000 light years

The distance to the black hole at the centre of the Milky Way.



30 000 km/s

The velocity at which a supernova shoots star material into space.

SUPERNOVA

What? An extremely bright explosion when a star collapses or when it has acquired too much matter from another one nearby.

So what? The study of supernovas has shown us that the universe is expanding at an increasing rate. Also, because debris is shot into space when a star explodes, supernovas give us clues about where the stuff in space comes from and how it got there.

Say what?! The most recent Milky Way supernova visible to the naked eye appeared in 1604.

NEUTRON STAR

What? The super dense collapsed core of a star, left over after a supernova. The star is so dense that electrons and protons fuse to become neutrons.

So what? The density of neutron stars is unlike anything we can reproduce in the lab. So, neutron stars are like space labs that tell us things about the universe we would not have discovered on Earth.

Say what?! All the heavy metals in the universe – gold, platinum, lead, and so on – come from collisions between neutron stars.



A BILLION tonnes

The weight of about a teaspoon full of a neutron star on Earth.



Close to 10 000°C

Typical surface temperature of a white dwarf.

WHITE DWARFS AND BLACK DWARFS

What? The leftover core of a smallish star after its death. A white dwarf burns white hot, but gradually cools down. After hundreds of billions of years, a white dwarf would have cooled down enough to not emit any more light. Then it's called a black dwarf.

So what? Because white dwarfs gradually cool down, they can give us clues about the age of the universe.

Say what?! Black dwarfs are theoretical concepts only. This is because it would take longer for a white dwarf to cool down completely than the universe is old.

PULSARS

What? A spinning neutron star that emits electromagnetic radiation. It's called a pulsar because the radiation signal causes a regular pattern of energy spikes.

So what? Pulsars are the proof that neutron stars exist. They also make super accurate universe clocks.

Say what?! Pulsars were discovered accidentally in 1967. The inexplicable spike patterns were first dubbed LGM1, because they were thought to be signals from 'little green men'. [LP]



More than 1500

The number of pulsars already discovered.

Images
Black hole Image Credit: Alain r | bit.ly/Oi4iU
Supernova Image Credit: NASA/ESA/JHU/R.Sankrit & W.Blair | bit.ly/1jIoYky
Neutron Star Image Credit: NASA/Dana Berry | http://1.usa.gov/Oi4Kz
White Dwarf Image Credit: NASA, ESA, H. Bond (STScI) and M. Barstow (University of Leicester) | http://1.usa.gov/1cH0eJ
Pulsars Image Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech/R. Hurt (SSO) | bit.ly/1fwHVSH

SCIENCE

PIC OF THE MONTH

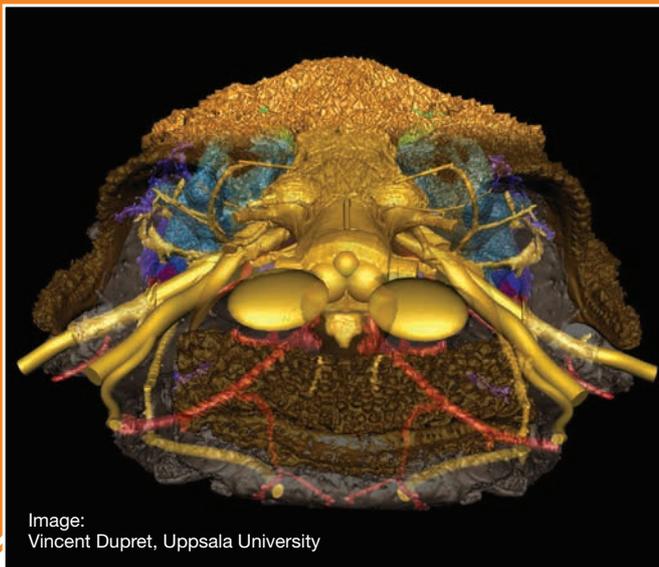


Image:
Vincent Dupret, Uppsala University

This 3D scanned image of the fossil fish Romundina provides evidence for the origin of the human face. More specifically, it offers clues to the evolution from jawless to jawed vertebrates. The Romundina skull is 410 million years old, and according to Vincent Dupret of Uppsala University is “a mix of primitive and modern features, making it an invaluable intermediate fossil between jawless and jawed vertebrates.” The research was published in *Nature* on 12 February 2014.

SMART ANSWERS

Life is full of questions that need smart answers. We can help.



SUPERSTRONG ANTS

Uh-oh, did something go wrong in the lab? No, there's nothing to worry about.

So what's the fuss about then? A recent study showed that a common type of field ant can lift objects up to 5000 times their own body weight.

How do they manage this feat? Micro-CT scans and electron microscope images showed that the materials that make up the neck joint have different textures. The soft tissue of the neck also links up gradually with the hard exoskeleton of the head. Together, these features minimise the stress on the joint without limiting mechanical function.

So can human-sized ants be useful machines? No, they won't be able to exist. At the size of a human, an ant's body would be too heavy for its muscles to support, so no heavy lifting would be possible.

Source: bit.ly/1fcmSjA



WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

That's a philosophical question, right? In part, yes. But science also has a say.

How so? Scientists have discovered an area in our brains that is not found in those of our close primate relatives.

How did they figure this out? The researchers compared MRI images of 12 areas in the frontal cortex of human brains with those of macaque monkeys. Eleven of these areas were found in both groups and were all connected to the rest of the brain in a similar way. One area, though, was seen only in human brains.

What does this tell us about being human? Previous research has shown that the identified area allows us to plan ahead, make and evaluate decisions, and multitask. The finding means we can map abilities thought of as uniquely human to a specific brain structure.

Source: bit.ly/1fK9tjz



THE MATHS OF CURLY HAIR

Say what? Bad hair days are pure maths.

What do you mean? Scientists recently developed a set of equations that include four simple parameters – curvature, weight, length and stiffness – to predict the shape of a hair.

How do these factors describe curliness? A computer simulation showed that a strand of hair curls up from its tip. But as the curve grows, it eventually reaches a point where it becomes unstable under the hair's weight. If a hair is too heavy for its curve, the curl fails.

So then it hangs down straight? Not necessarily. The length and stiffness of the hair determine whether it coils up all the way into a spiral or is pulled down straight.

Why is this useful info? The equations can help film animators to create characters with bouncy, curly hair. [LP] **ts**

Source: bit.ly/1flavYu

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WE DELIVER

2014

MOTOR

GENEVA

SHOW

The Geneva Motor Show kicks off on 6 March 2014, with the world's largest manufacturers all looking to showcase their most innovative technologies, futuristic concepts and high octane machines. Here's a list of some of the most exciting and hotly anticipated cars making their official debut at this ten day long event.

5 AWESOME CARS

Lamborghini Huracán



The Huracán is Lamborghini's replacement for the now discontinued and immensely successful Gallardo. It certainly has a hard act to follow, but Lamborghini has squeezed as much raw power and speed into its hybrid aluminium and carbon fibre exoskeleton with hopes of making a major impact at this year's motor shows.

The Huracán is powered by a V10, 449 kW engine, propelling its aerodynamically designed, 1 422 kg body from 0-100 km/h in 3.2 seconds. All of which translates to top speeds of approximately 325 km/h. The look and feel of the Huracán seems a natural evolution of the Gallardo (which lasted all of ten years), with a perfect mixture of Audi's German precision and Lamborghini's Italian passion. This high end supercar is expected to set consumers back a sizeable \$250 000. Definitely not for the faint of heart... or wallet.

BMW 2 Series Active Tourer

Now onto something a little more practical. The BMW 2 Series Active Tourer is the German manufacturers answer to the luxury urban people carrier. Officially being unveiled at this year's Geneva Motor Show, the Active Tourer is scheduled for local release in October 2014.

Featuring the newly designed TwinPower Turbo Engine, BMW say it will maximise engine response, even at low RPM's. BMW is also looking to capitalise on the eco friendly set, fitting the Active Tourer with an ECO PRO mode which combines an engine coasting function (for automatic version only) and GPS operated route selection system to achieve an estimated 20% less emissions. It should prove interesting to see whether this latest model can attract a new market for BMW, priced at around \$33 000, we will have to wait and see.



Honda Civic Type-R Concept

There are few things more spine tingling than a high powered hot hatch, and the Honda Civic Type-R concept is the pure embodiment of that. Honda teased some images of the concept in mid February, with the real thing set to be released to the public in early 2015.

The Japanese manufacturer has been fairly tight lipped on any definitive details for the Type-R's engine or design components. Many believe it will hinge on the existing VTEC Turbo prototype doing the rounds on the world's most challenging racetracks. That particular Civic features a newly designed direct injection 2.0 litre turbo engine developing 209 kW, with the Type-R concept expected to feature the same. As yet, pricing is still to be confirmed, but one thing is certain, we cannot wait to see this shot of adrenaline in action.



McLaren 650S

The 650S sits in the middle of McLaren's range of highly specced supercars. Nesting neatly between the MP4-12C and P1, its middle-child status should not detract from the 650S' exciting mix of insane acceleration and innovative British engineering. McLaren has improved on the V8, 3.2 litre twin-turbo engine found in the MP4-12C, increasing torque output by 10 %, at an impressive 478 kW. Enhanced modifications to the engine translate to a top speed of approximately 333 km/h, registering 0-100 km/h in 3.0 seconds. The aesthetic design of the 650S draws heavily on the P1, specifically its front end, with a similar headlight and air intake setup.

McLaren has also made refinements to the adaptive damping system, steering feedback and braking response found in the 12C. At an estimated \$300 000, the 650S is every inch the finely tuned supercar we expect it to be. Now all we need is McLaren to come up with some suitable names for their epic machines.

Mercedes-Benz GLA

Part urban SUV, part practical family cruiser, the Mercedes-Benz GLA looks to be all things to all men, but will it be received by consumers as such? One thing is for certain, the German manufacturer's latest hybrid multitasker can fill many roles. The GLA 4Matic (all wheel drive system designed by Mercedes-Benz) model is powered by the 2.0 litre turbo-charged engine found in the equally versatile Mercedes CLA, producing a respectable 155 kW. It isn't a slouch either, hitting 0-100 km/h in a solid 7.1 seconds. The GLA also comes in a high spec 45 AMG version with a similar 2.0 litre turbo-charged engine, tuned to produce 265 kW, registering 0-100 km/h in a surprisingly quick 4.8 seconds.

Mercedes-Benz has tipped the GLA as a direct competitor to the very similar BMW X1, Audi Q3 and Range Rover Evoque, all of which are vying for dominance in a growing market. Set for release in September 2014 the entry level GLA should cost an estimated \$33 000. [RC] **ts**



The right (Multi)Tool for the job

Some of the most useful gadgets can be imminently useful in a variety of scenarios, but for the ultimate convenience, a multi-tool is a must have. Question is, which one should you get?

Handy around the house: Victorinox SwissTool Spirit II

R1 470

If your aim is to have a handy tool for just about any electrical work around the house (amongst other uses) then we would recommend Victorinox's SwissTool Spirit II. Essentially a really good, collapsible pair of pliers, with other tools, that fold into the hilt, this one makes as short work of wiring up your sound system as it does fixing that errant cupboard door. Neat, compact and accompanied by a leather pouch, this multi-tool boasts a myriad of screwdrivers (flat and Philips head), a can opener, blade and saw (no, it won't cut down a tree, but then you shouldn't be attempting to deforest your yard anyway).



Surviving outdoors: Gerber Bear Grylls' Ultimate Multi-tool

R850

If you are more of an action man, and anticipate having to build yourself a shelter or make a fire from scratch, then Bear Grylls' Ultimate Multi-tool could lay claim to a place on your hip or in your pack. The multitool has some jungle-cred, as it is endorsed by the well known extreme survival adventurer himself. More importantly though, its featured tools and rubberized grip are up to surviving the travails of torrential rain and sweaty palms alike. Two knives (one serrated and one fine edged) are joined by a bottle opener, can opener, saw and screwdrivers, as well as pliers and wire cutters.

Everything but the kitchen sink: Leatherman Charge TTI

R2 400

Outdoors one day, indoors the next – if that describes your lifestyle, then the Leatherman Charge TTI could be the multitool to grasp, spear or grip your approval. The gadget has all of nineteen different tools – including a regular and needlenose pliers, two types of wire cutters, several screwdrivers, scissors and ruler. In fact, there might even be a faucet in there somewhere. Best of all is the whopping 25 year warranty that is tucked into the folds and creases of its steel body. Consisting of stainless steel, hard anodized aluminum and titanium, we suspect this could even crack open Iron Man for a final reckoning with Tony Stark.



So, which is best?

Our advice though, is to bear in mind that with multi-tools, as with life, quality is king and a gadget of value is always worth paying a little more. On a budget? Go for the Gerber. If you are willing to spend a bit more, then we recommend Victorinox's offering and if money is no object, then Leatherman's monster is your man. [RN] ts

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by Mynhardt van Pletzen

DINNER PARTY

Style

The South African summer is good for many things, but none of them embodies our unique culture as good as dinner parties with friends. Whether its outside barbeques, candlelit tables or lazy take-away evenings, the dinner party requires a specific style approach. Dressing for a perfect supper impression requires both a sense of comfort and sophistication, and we've scoured the fashion world to bring you the best of both.

MEATY MID-SECTION

The grey chino is this season's style weapon of choice. As the lesser known cousin of the khaki version, this guy plays nice with both blacks and browns, which makes it ideally suited as a compatible dinner companion. Add some subtle colour to your social set with a dark blue denim shirt. Steering clear of the washed-out version, a casual denim shirt presents a welcome change to the worn-out tee. Just one note: with great denim comes great responsibility – never pair your denim shirts and pants in one ensemble. Not unless your name is Jean-Claude, Chuck or Arnold.



Grey slim fit chino R140. RT, Mr Price.



White v-neck t-shirt R180 for two. Cotton On.

Dark wash denim shirt R400. JX, Edgars.



SAUCY SANDALS

In general, shoes are the most underrated fashion item in the man closet. Since the scenario in question is relaxed, social and easy-going, we don't mind dressing down with sandals – but cautiously. Here's some tips on picking the perfect pair: always go with leather; get them in chocolate brown or black; as basic as possible; with as few details as possible. These minimalistic thongs from Country Road fits the bill perfectly, leaving you looking more like a classy individual, and less like a full-time sports fan.



Leather Sandals R500. Country Road, Woolworths.

DELECTABLE DETAILS

Since every good dinner party hinges on the skills of being at once interested and interesting, we're going to help you out with a fashion fool-proof conversation starter. The suspenders might feel weird at first, but if you wear them with confidence, comfort will follow suit. Get a leather pair with brass fittings to match your sandals, and you're instantly upgrading trivial small talk to all-round sexy talk. Also, never wear both suspenders and a belt, choose one or the other – your pants will be OK with it.

Finally, showing up empty handed is just as much a style no-no as it is a social faux pas. A colorful bunch of fresh-cut flowers or a bottle of wine will impress dinner hosts from both sides of the gender spectrum. Plus could just help to press your hosts for the deets of that one cutie. You know, the one that kept fiddling with your suspenders. **ts**



Zevenwacht The Tin Mine Red 2011. R455 for six. www.wine.co.za.



Fresh cut flowers R179. Woolworths Foods.



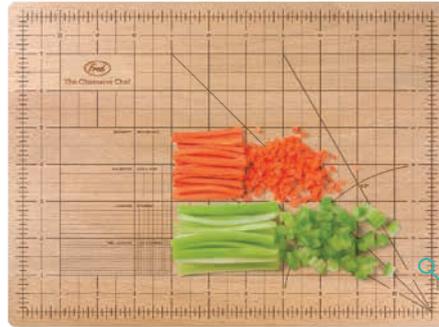
Leather suspenders R300. Markhams.

by Mynhardt van Pletsen

Kitchen **STYLE**

Part of what TechSmart is all about, is a renewed awareness of pleasing aesthetics in the world around us. Making sure things are not only functional, but also beautiful, adds to the experience of living life to the full. Whether it's about fashion, grooming, or in this case, knowing your way around a kitchen. Indeed, ugly food prepared in an ugly way tastes, well, ugly. Like Mr Ramsey says – the eyes eat first. With that in mind, gentlemen, grab your spatulas – it's time to cook with gas.

This Yari Damascus Steel Chef's knives set consists of 67 compressed layers of Japanese steel, and is the closest to a real katana sword you'll ever get.



Once you've got the blades, it's time to become a master of the chopping board. This board is specifically designed for the ultra precise chef, or those with OCD.

The Obsessive Chef Cutting Board. R256.
www.yuppiegadgets.co.za



WesCo's set of bins is much more than just places to put things – they are elements of beauty and design that instantly inspire the inner culinary.
Bread Bin R1 500. Rubbish Bin R4 050.
www.livin.co.za

No kitchen is complete without some form of Le Creuset pottery. Loved not only for their incredible colors, these guys make a mean stew as well. The whistling kettle is the perfect addition to round off your collection.

Prices vary according to size and sets. Le Creuset Store, Woodlands. ts



Smeg/smug – coincidence? Who cares. This incredible 50s retro-style fridge will keep your food stuffs cool while looking hot.

Smeg FAB28RBV3
R22 000. Ehome.co.za



The Coffee Machines

Forget about giving all your money to some Seattle Coffee shop; coffee making machines have lifted the convenience of a self-made cup of brew to an artform, provided that you have the right machine. Here are some of the best.

Cometh!



Nespresso Pixie: R1 800

Living in a small space, such as a flat or bachelor's pad or being on a budget, doesn't mean you have to forego all life's little luxuries. This affordable Nespresso machine also has a small footprint, ideal for smaller kitchen counters. Nor does it make you wait too long for your Nespresso fix, as it takes 25 seconds to heat up and can deliver that delicious drink in under a minute. Furthermore, the machine switches off if not in use within ten minutes, and accommodates the sixteen Grand Cru coffee varieties on offer.



Delonghi Nescafé Dolce Gusto Circolo: R2 500

Along with the fact that the Circolo has more curves than Sofia Vergara, this machine offers one of the most no-fuss ways of generating an enjoyable cuppa. The machine can dish up an impressive array of flavours via the Dolce Gusto capsules, ranging from espressos and cappuccinos to caramel latte macchiatos and chocochinos. A scroll wheel enables you to 'dial in' the right dosage of water relative to the capsule. The machine, which weighs in at a transportable 3.6 kg, also caters to tall and smaller coffee cups better yet, its capsule bin and holder are dishwasher friendly.



Philips Saeco Vienna Plus Automatic Espresso Machine: R7 000

If espressos are your passion and you prefer a hands-on approach to making your own perfect brew, then the Saeco Vienna Plus from Philips may just light your fire and stir you out of bed in the morning. The machine enables you to customise your espresso, by specifying the amount of beans ground per cup. Along with dispensing hot water for other hot drinks, the machine also gives you complete control (control freaks, rejoice!) to froth the milk to your liking.



Miele CM5200: R20 000

This coffee maestro is able to deliver two beverages simultaneously thanks to its double spout. That means no more waiting for your partner to finish brewing their coffee before you can get your fix. The CM5200 can also dole out single or double shot espresso, cappuccino or latte. Furthermore, the machine can cater to your need for some hot milk or milk froth. The best part? It does so without giving a barista's disdainful scowl. Alas, having your own superb coffee(s) on tap doesn't come cheap, as the CM5200 costs an eye-opening R20 000. If that doesn't wake you up, nothing will. [RN] **ts**

Complete waste of time
 awefu...ies
 "Terrible"
 Passion killer

Top 5 Worst movies



Disaster Movie (2008)

Disaster Movie's self-fulfilling title is more of a disclaimer to audiences. This spoof is as funny as haemorrhoids, with half-baked pop culture references and corny first draft writing that leaves the visual gag department to fend for itself. Besides some half-decent 'replica' garments from the costume department, the effects are dismal.

As long as there's a steady slew of indiscriminating spoof fanatics, these genre movies will continue to plague the Earth. Directors Jason Friedburg and Aaron Seltzer are not even Ed Wood bad, they're only in it for the money, and are clearly the only ones laughing... on their way to the bank.

Worst bit? That moment when you realise rock bottom is as good as it gets.

Don't WING it,
 SPLING it!



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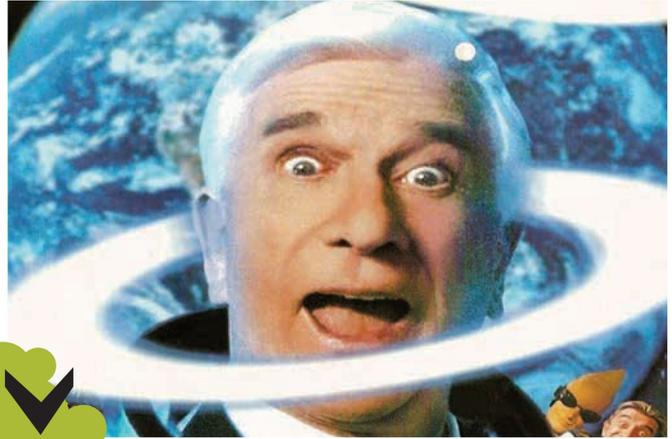


Farce of the Penguins (2006)

While it's intended to spoof the documentary *March of the Penguins*, the real farce at play is how *America's Funniest Home Videos* host, Bob Saget, managed to get any support for this cutting room floor production. He must have some dirt on all the 'celebrity' voice stars, or perhaps he recorded their voices at some charity auction.

The humour is puerile, the parody is wafer-thin, the voice-overs are poor and the story is non-existent. This is one movie that is best watched on mute, or not at all. Rather gather your friends round to do your own voice-overs than listen to this low budget drivel.

Worst bit? The total loss of respect you experience for every voice "talent" you recognise.



Naked Space, formerly known as The Creature Wasn't Nice (1981)

Mr. Rubberface himself, Leslie Nielsen, stars in this spoof that attempts to lampoon deep space sci-fi using retro spacecraft dashboards that could have been constructed from a junkyard. It's jam-packed with throwaway performances, cheesy special effects, even cheesier sound effects and a stupid plot involving a piece of protoplasm that turns into a singing-and-dancing alien monster.

Naked Space is so atrociously bad that you will feel like you're being brainwashed *Clockwork Orange*-style. It is difficult to believe that the cast did not actually conspire to make the worst movie of all-time.

Worst bit? The space crew's reactions to seeing the monster's claw gesturing from around a corner.



Alone in the Dark (2005)

No worst-ever movie list would be complete without including a 'film' from German 'director' Uwe Boll. The despised director, infamous for making box office flops to exploit German tax laws, reached an all-time low with this adaptation of the atmospheric video game, *Alone in the Dark*.

The movie title, Christian Slater, and Tara Reid are the only points of interest in a film that fails horribly in every department. The pithy script, bad acting, poor production values, ridiculous editing and 'adaptation' woes make this Uwe Boll's worst film of all-time, a difficult feat when you consider his extensive collection of prize-winning turkeys that also includes *BloodRayne* and *Blubberella*.

Worst bit? Tara Reid's co-starring role as a talking mannequin.



Battlefield Earth (2000)

John Travolta and Forest Whitaker co-star in a notoriously bad sci-fi film that frequently makes worst movie of all-time conversations. This campy schlock-fest is aggressively bad, ugly to the core, illogically plotted, poorly choreographed, badly written, rounded off by terrible acting, while loosely assembled by director Roger Christian.

Mistakenly branded as Scientology propaganda by some, *Battlefield Earth* cleaned up at the Razzies in its year. With lines like "I am going to make you as happy as a baby Psychlo on a straight diet of kerbango", it's not difficult to see how this abomination has earned its place among the worst in cinema history. **ts**

Worst bit? The bar scene featuring this absolute gem: "While you were still learning to spell your name, I was being trained to conquer galaxies".

NEW Cinema RELEASES



300: Rise of an Empire (7 March)

300's cutting edge visuals and iconic story of outnumbered Spartans charging fearlessly into battle worked beautifully. However, it has taken eight years for the Snyder-produced sequel to emerge. The real battle with

the sequel must have been in the screenwriting department, as simply regurgitating the same visual flair would not make a sequel necessary.

300: Rise of an Empire sees *Game of Thrones* actress, Lena Headey, reprise her role as Queen Gorgo with the introduction of *Casino Royale*'s Eva Green. Otherwise, the cast is relatively unknown, headed by Sullivan Stapleton as Themistocles and Rodrigo Santoro as Xerxes. It looks promising, but no one's holding their breath after *Immortals* flopped.

Why watch? Epic + blood + carnage = extra man points.



Need for Speed (21 March)

Need for Speed, the hot pursuit video game of choice, is finally making the leap to the big screen with the help of stunt co-ordinator turned director, Scott Waugh. Add a screenwriter debut from George Gatins, an unknown lead actor in Aaron Paul, and you've got yourself a bit of a gamble.

The cast is reinforced by the likes of Dominic Cooper, Imogen Poots and Michael Keaton, but is this decidedly vanilla video game adaptation going to do enough to distinguish itself from, and win over fans of *The Fast & The Furious*, which is about to unleash its seventh film?

Why watch? Slick cars, slicker car chases – this time with people!



The Lego Movie (14 March)

While most people who grew up with Lego have a soft spot for the famous building block toy brand, it's still considered to be a rite of passage for kids. *The Lego Movie* is all about entertainment and laughs, thanks to *Cloudy with a Chance of*

Meatballs directors, Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, who truly understand the creative force behind the long-running toy series.

Expect a dazzling mix of realistic stop-motion and CGI animation, laugh-a-minute pop culture gags and a stellar voice cast including: Will Arnett, Morgan Freeman and Will Ferrell. This "story about a nobody who saved everybody" is a movie for all ages.

Why watch? So you can spoil the child inside.



Captain America: Winter Soldier (28 March)

Captain America is just not quite as super as the rest of The Avengers and while he's a poster boy for regular Joes, Chris Evans is a bit cold and distant. This probably explains the sequel's movie title

and why the actor decided to make the superhero switch from being The Human Torch.

What's a little worrying is that it's directed by the Russo brothers, responsible for *You, Me and Dupree*. Luckily, they're working with the same writing team that brought us *Thor: Dark World* and the *Captain America* reboot. Add Samuel L. Jackson and Scarlett Johansson to the mix and the Cap'n could surprise us yet.

Why watch? Johansson... Scarlett Johansson.

NEW ON DVD



Captain Phillips

This emotionally taut rollercoaster ride was unlucky not to get more recognition at the Academy Awards. Tom Hanks returns to form with a devastating performance opposite nominated co-star Barkhad Abdi, to anchor frenetic camerawork and pulsating

storytelling from *Bourne Ultimatum* director, Paul Greengrass. *Captain Phillips* is based on actual events, which makes this real-life hostage scenario even more exciting and a film that deserves a repeat viewing.



Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom

Mandela's long-awaited biopic is a must-see for all South Africans. While Idris Elba isn't on par with Morgan Freeman when it comes to resembling Madiba physically, his towering performance captures the icon's unmistakable accent and strong presence. Anant Singh's epic

and sprawling drama focuses on Mandela's fractious relationship with Winnie Mandela, played by Naomie Harris. It's a powerful film that reminds us how far we've come as a nation, and far we've still got to go. **ts**

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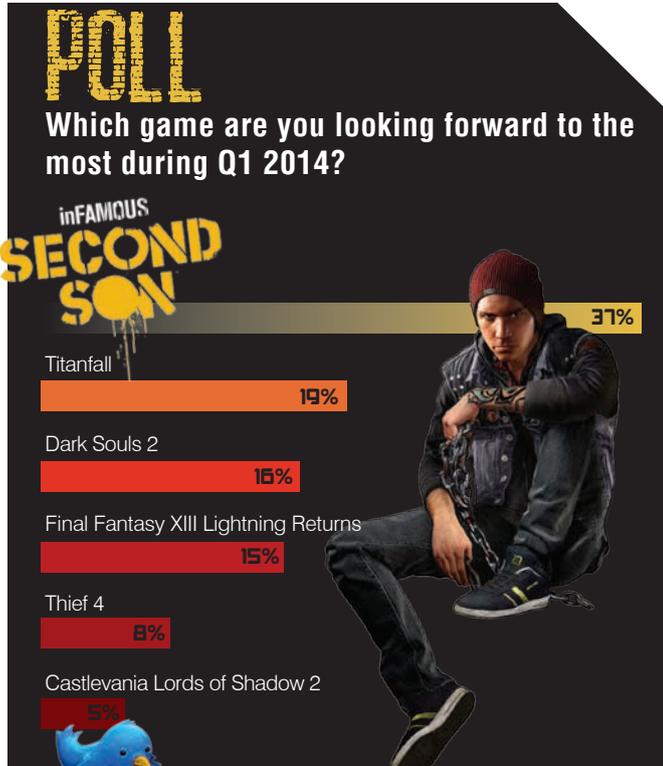
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Which game are you looking forward to the most during Q1 2014?

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| inFAMOUS SECOND SON | 37% |
| Titanfall | 19% |
| Dark Souls 2 | 15% |
| Final Fantasy XIII Lightning Returns | 15% |
| Thief 4 | 8% |
| Castlevania Lords of Shadow 2 | 5% |

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KNOW YOUR ANIME: GIRLS *with* GUNS

The sub-genre we like to call Girls with Guns is quite a hit (no pun intended) with a number of anime fanatics. For them, there is nothing more interesting than watching women with guns fighting it out, be it as good guys or baddies.

NOIR

Bee Train anime studio

This action-packed gun-fest is the tale of two female assassins, Mireille Bouquet and Yuumura Kirika. Kirika starts off the series suffering from amnesia, with the only thing she can remember being the word *Noir* (black in French). Mireille is from a powerful Corsican crime family, one of two survivors after a brutal attack on her family. These two form a dark alliance, calling themselves 'Noir', both setting off on a personal journey to find answers to the mysteries of their past. At first they seem only vaguely related to each other, but as the series progresses they are lured into traps set by a secret organisation named *Les Soldats* ('The Soldiers' in French) with which they share a mysterious past.

Noir is suspenseful, grim, emotional, dramatic and very psychological. If you expect any comic relief as in the usual anime, there is none; this is a serious anime that deserves respect. If you prefer technicolour haired, cute and funny characters, skip it, but if you are looking for a serious, memorable anime, this one is for you.

ALSO CHECK OUT

If you like *Noir* may we suggest you watch the anime *El Cazador de la Bruja*.



GUNSLINGER GIRL.

The girl has a mechanical body. However, she is still an adolescent child.

ガンズリンガーガ

Madhouse

Gunslinger Girl is focused on young cybernetic girls and their adult handlers who use those girls as assassins under the directive of an Italian government organisation.

Section 2 of The Social Welfare Agency (or simply 'the Agency') employs young girls who have experienced traumatic and near-death situations. They are given implants, including synthesized muscles as well as other goodies granting them heightened strength and a greater resilience to pain and damage, and are used as hit(wo)men.

Each girl is partnered with a male handler and each team is referred to as a *fratello* (sibling in Italian). The handler is responsible for his charge's training, welfare as well as field work, and is free to do so by whatever means are considered usable. Some handlers treat the girls cruelly, others treat them as little sisters or daughters, like Henrietta who is a very polite petite girl with a deep affection for Jose, her handler who really cares for her.

This anime is not about the missions they perform, although there is a lot of action (and gore), it is more about the relationships between the girls and their handlers. Different viewpoints are also used effectively, with certain scenes shown from different characters' perspective. Each girl's thoughts and handler's story unfold in an almost *Pulp Fiction*-esque way.

ALSO CHECK OUT

More anime that you might find interesting in the Girls-with-guns subgenre is *Bubblegum Crisis* and *Gunsmith Cats*. **ts**

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR

Allen Simpson is a blogger and a published poet who has a deep passion for anime. He is also co-owner of AnimeFanatika, providing fans with the latest news, reviews and goings on in the industry. Visit www.facebook.com/animefanatika and become a Fanatik today.

SUGO!

UPCOMING (lesser-known) Comics MOVIES

One can barely throw a shield these days without hitting a superhero movie, sequel or re-make. However, comic book guru Moray Rhoda believes that if you are going to spend your hard-earned cash, maybe consider watching some of these lesser-known comic book properties.



What it's about: Based on a five-issue Radical Publishing comic book series by Steve Moore, which debuted in May 2008, *Hercules* stars Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson. Brett Ratner (*X-Men: The Last Stand*) directs.

Tell me more: After finishing the 12 labours of the gods, Hercules turns his back on Olympus and lives only for danger and adventure. Years go by as he makes his living as a mercenary, then his five companions and him are hired by the King of Thrace to train his men to become the deadliest army of all time. To defeat the terrible warlord that threatens Thrace, Hercules must once again become the hero he once was.

Why it should be good: Johnson is perfectly cast as the larger than life hero, and as his many action roles have proven The Rock is no stranger to violence and combat. Combine some good set pieces with his trademark charm and comedic timing and this could be a summer blockbuster.

Release date: August 2014



BIG HERO 6

What it's about: Computer-animated adaptation of the Marvel comic, set to be the first Disney animated feature to star Marvel characters since Mickey acquired Spidey in 2009.

Tell me more: Big Hero 6 is a group of Japanese government-sanctioned superhuman operatives. The story centres on 13-year old boy genius Hiro Takachiho (known as Hiro Hamada in the movie) and his self-created robot, Baymax, who will be tasked with protecting the city of San Fransokyo. The other members of Big Hero 6 are: Honey Lemon who has the ability to pull anything out of her "Power Purse"; Go Go Tomago whose power is transforming herself into an explosive ball of energy; Fredzilla who can channel the power and aura of a Kaiju (monster); and Wasabi-No-Ginger, a chef who uses swords and can also give form to his Qi-Energy, materializing it as throwing knives.

Why it should be good: Marvel's solid characters and big on-screen heroics, combined with Disney's proven heartstring-pulling, money-spinning magic, could easily make this a sleeper hit. [RN] **ts**

Release date: November 2014

March 2014 | **TechSmart**

What it's about: Based on the limited series detective noir Dark Horse comic book by the legend Frank Miller, who actually takes charge of directing too.

Tell me more: Josh Brolin (*No Country for Old Men*) plays Dwight McCarthy, a private investigator who is drawn into a deadly conspiracy by his former lover Ava Lord (Eva Green, *Casino Royale*). Ava needs Dwight to help her escape her abusive husband, but Dwight's initial attempts to rescue her are stymied by her husband's hulking manservant, Manute.

Things soon take a darker and deadlier turn with the rescue becoming a mission of vengeance and violence. Frank Miller's work on *Sin City* has been lauded for the complex structure of its plot and the deep characterisation of the characters, and this instalment should build on the innovative filmmaking of the first *Sin City* movie.

Why it should be good: *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For* includes many of the first movie's ensemble cast reprising their roles (Jessica Alba anyone?), as well as new cast members (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) who should all be worth the price of admission alone. But if that isn't enough, it also promises some very stylised over-the-top violence and hard-boiled dialogue.

Release date: August 2014





and BlackBerry

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BOOGIE BOARD SYNC 9.7

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METAL EARTH 3D METAL MODEL KITS

These amazingly detailed DIY models start as 10cm square steel sheets and finish as amazing 3D models. Use the easy to follow instructions to pop out the pieces, bend the tabs and connect them at the attachment points. (Star Wars models coming soon!)



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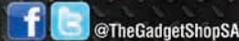
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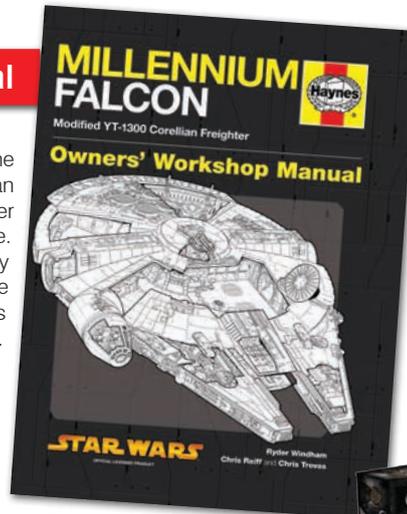
HOT Merchandise

We've seen some awesome merchandise introduced for three of our most loved entertainment franchises. How awesome are these?

Millennium Falcon Owner's Workshop Manual

Haynes Manuals (\$20 on Amazon)

Certainly the most iconic vehicle in the *Star Wars* universe, the Millennium Falcon, was the dream ride of every wannabe Han Solo. This owner's manual comes courtesy of Haynes, a publisher recognised for the in-depth car and bike manuals they produce. Haynes has included blueprints and annotated diagrams of every possible inch of the Millennium Falcon, going so far as to trace the design history of the Corellian Engineering Corporation YT Series of spaceships, the vehicle that the Millennium Falcon is based on.



4D Cityscape Game of Thrones: Westeros Puzzle

(\$55 on Amazon)

There are a 1200 pieces in a newly showcased puzzle map of Westeros, the primary setting of *Game of Thrones*. The puzzle boasts three separate layers, each building on one another, and includes well known sites such as King's Landing, Winterfell, The Wall and The Eyrie. The puzzle, which was unveiled at the International Toy Fair last month comes with a \$60 pricetag – unless you are the Mother of Dragons, in which case you can just take what is yours. **ts**



30th Anniversary Ghostbusters Set

(No price yet)



A new *Ghostbusters* themed Lego set is set to arrive in June, just in time for the movie's 30th anniversary. Lego fan Brent Waller's *Ghostbusters* set submission for Lego's community driven CUUSOO system, beat out four other fan ideas for Lego's approval – without even having to cross proton streams. Included in the set will be the iconic car and miniature figurines; sadly though, it looks like the *Ghostbusters*' headquarters building will not be manifesting, ectoplasmically or otherwise.

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TOP Tweets!



Don Packett @donpackett · Feb 7

Overheard at the gym: "Totes protes, boet." - Which I assume means "Yes I believe protein is beneficial after a workout."

Nadia @NadiaChameleon · Feb 6

"@TechSmartMag: Catwoman! Download your free Feb issue of TechSmart now. buff.ly/1ncdNwf #freemag #geek" I'm a cover girl ☐

Nkabo @Phystoz · Feb 4

Just read this months issue & i have to say i loved it especially the article about the hand of God, its actually mind blowing" @TechSmartMag

Brendan Jack @brendanjack · Feb 3

Karaoke is the gateway drug to Idols.

Wes Blackmore @wezzo · 3h ago

So to change my MWEB password they need to fax me a form I need to fill it out and fax it back. Which I'll do gladly, in my hammer pants.

Deep Fried Man @DeepFriedMan · 22h ago

Cell C is the COPE of cellular networks. It promised to provide an alternative to the big players but ended up being even more inept.

holhozaD @LholhozaD · Feb 22

@TechSmartMag the science article I love it , every month I learn something new thank you guys. Keep up the good work #besiTechMag emzantsi

Craig Wilson @craigwilson · Feb 21

No, I'm not going to Eminem. If I want a middle-aged white man to shout obscenities at me I'll just cut off a BMW driver in traffic.

Hot Will Ferrell @itsWillyFerrell · Feb 20

Video games don't make kids violent, lag does.

Chester Missing @chestermissing · Feb 18

Minister of Transport has admitted there are problems with etoll billing system. And the award for stating the obvious goes to...

Gus Silber @gussilber · Feb 14

Whenever I hear an SA accent while abroad, I feel a surge of kindred spirit, followed by embarrassment that I sound like that.

obram chihuahua @obrainchihuahua · Feb 12

the best magazine on the #planet @TechSmartMag

No eeing Toils @NoToils1 · Feb 12

DA versus ANC Joburg clash is a planned part of the Hollywood filming of the new Avengers? #DAMarch

Bright Mokome @neon_theone · Feb 12

@techsmartmag @deepfriedman Viva to free Wi-Fi

Dean Hutton @2point8photo · Feb 21

Dear autocorrect, when I say lekker please don't change it to leaker. I. Don't want to get moered. Xoxo

Ntuki mashile @ntukzela · Feb 21

Best free tech magazine ever @techsmartmag I'd still buy it even if it went on sale, from cars to pcs to fones u name it techsmartmag has it

MARCH 2014

techsmart's Horoscope

As above, so below – how will your tech month go?



PISCES

March is looking amazing for you Pisces, since you are bound to join a ragtag bunch of alien outcasts set to save not just our planet, but the whole solar system! Sorry, that is the plot of *Guardians of the Galaxy*. You have nothing special lined up Pisces, and your birthday will be a disappointment.

ARIES

No rest for the wicked they say Aries, and you have been a bad, bad boy. So expect a bout of insomnia during the second half of March.

TAURUS

Have a careful look at your old comic book collection this month Mr. Bull. Some of those old classics might just be worth something! It has a tear in the cover you say? Worthless then – you should have been more careful as a child.

GEMINI

Don't think your boss hasn't notice your browsing habits at work, Gemini. Rather head over to Pnet and Bizcommunity, since a new job might just be forced upon you soon.

CANCER

The stars are aligning during March just for you Mr Crab! Jennifer Lawrence has noticed your crush and is heading to your doorstep for a date! No wait. That's Martin Lawrence. Martin Lawrence as Big Momma.

LEO

Always wanted to be on TV? Well Leo, with your latest addiction to parkour you might soon be a YouTube celebrity! Watch FailArmy during the course of the month, and don't say we didn't warn you.

VIRGO

Money matters takes centre stage this month Virgo, since with Mercury in retrograde, SARS has put you in its crosshair. Expect to be audited.

LIBRA

Just face it Libra, your time-travel machine still needs a bit of work. If it wasn't for that well timed lightning strike you would have never made it back to the future. Now for the sake of mankind, please bring us a working hoverboard.

SCORPIO

This month Earth will be the third closest planet to the sun, and that can only mean one thing Scorpio – bacon! Rindless, Shoulder, Diced, Round Cut, Minced – the stars are saying indulge yourself.

SAGITTARIUS

Don't feel so bad that your Super Rugby team is underperforming, Sagi. According to the stars they are at least doing better than they're going to do in 2015.

CAPRICORN

Best would be not to even try and venture out of the house this month Capricorn. March suffers from a glitch in the Matrix, which means only 25% of friends and family will remember you. On the plus side every Coke you drink will have your name on it.

AQUARIUS

All conspiracies are true, and what you've been reading on Infowars.com is the truth and nothing but the truth. So how is that working out for you? Not good hey? Rather bookmark www.cutethingsfallingasleep.org this month. **ts**

MOBILE conundrum

By Pippa Tshabalala.
Photographer: Tim Hulme.
Makeup artist: Natasha Carstens.

**PIPPA'S PHONE
WAS STOLEN,
WHICH RESULTED
IN A SMARTPHONE
HEADACHE.**

I have had a number of different mobile phones in my life. I got my first phone in 1999: a Nokia 5110, and at the time you could basically just make calls and send texts. Even the latter was new and out there at the time! In the last five years I've had an iPhone 3GS, an iPhone 4, a Sony Xperia U, a Motorola Razr, a Huawei Ascend P1 and a Samsung Galaxy S3. To be fair I ended up with a couple of these phones because of my job, I didn't buy all of them, but of the six, two of them were purchases, most recently my Galaxy S3.

I DO MISS MY GALAXY – IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG TIME TILL OCTOBER.

And then it was stolen. A somewhat traumatic smash and grab left me without my phone and, weirdly, the charging cable for my TomTom GPS device (the thief thought he was stealing the charger for my phone no doubt). I was forced to revert back to my old iPhone 4 (yes, not even a 4S), and it is painfully, agonisingly slow. It doesn't respond well to new iOS updates, it lags, the camera is horrible and basically I'm counting the months until I can upgrade my contract.

Sure you might argue that I made the mistake of not insuring my phone, and that's a fair criticism. If it had been insured I would have walked out of the shop with a new Galaxy, a smile on my face and a spring in my step. That said, at the time I bought the contract, my service provider wanted to charge me some obscene amount for insurance. I had also never had a phone stolen before,

so I couldn't really have considered the impact this would have on my day-to-day life. #FirstWorldProblems right?

It doesn't help that I've attended a number of new phone launches in the past couple of weeks, so I have an insane amount of phone jealousy right about now. I don't even mind that one of them is a Windows Phone – I would take it. The iPhone 4 looks minuscule by comparison, plus it's surprisingly heavy.

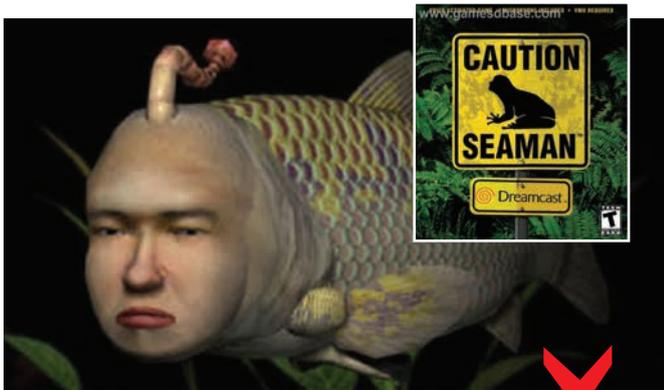
Of course everything is merely about adjusting to change. My transition from iOS to Android gave me a better-rounded understanding of the differences between them, but it also highlighted the limitations. I might even learn to learn to use Windows Phone comprehensively given the chance. I made the smooth transition from iOS to Android and couldn't have been happier. Granted it took me a bit of time to stop pressing the button at the bottom of the phone and to figure out that I needed to kill apps all the time (I'm not accepting this, it's really annoying and every "auto kill background processes" app I tried never really worked properly), but I adjusted and learned to live with it.

Sure, none of these operating systems are perfect. But I do miss my Galaxy – it's going to be a long time till October. **ts**

Top 6 Weirdest Games ever

A game developer requires many skills, the ability to tell a story, design innovative gameplay and drum up original content. Sometimes however, the idea behind a game is so original, it borders on lunacy. Here's our list of the oddest, craziest, outlandish and weirdest gaming titles spanning the gaming world, crammed full of WTF moments.

ever



Seaman

Vivarium/Jellyvision, 1999

Anyone who has played a pet-oriented game can safely say that there is very little in terms of original gameplay or edge. The same cannot be said for the first entry on our list, Seaman, released on Sega Dreamcast in Japan in December 1999. The premise of the game sees users drive the responsibility of caring for and interacting with a genetically altered species of fish known as 'Seaman'. Your pet goes through multiple stages of development, its final stage resembling a mix of an Anglerfish body and human face.

What makes Seaman particularly weird is the pithy and often rude dialogue it has with players, all in a somber, monotone voice. Seaman was able to garner a small cult following, receiving the Original Game Character of the Year Award at the 2002 Game Developers Conference. It is Seaman's behaviour and mannerisms that place this title head and shoulders above many others, making it one of the weirdest games ever.



The Graveyard

Tale of Tales, 2008

Conjuring up equal parts beauty and melancholy, The Graveyard may just be one of the saddest games ever. Thankfully, an average game's length is only around ten minutes. This title from Belgian game developer Tale of Tales, chronicles the last few moments of an elderly woman's life as she walks through, you guessed it, a graveyard. The objective of the game being to reach a bench located somewhere in the graveyard. Once there a subtitled song plays and then the elderly woman leaves. From time to time, the elderly woman does not make it out of the graveyard, dying from natural causes.

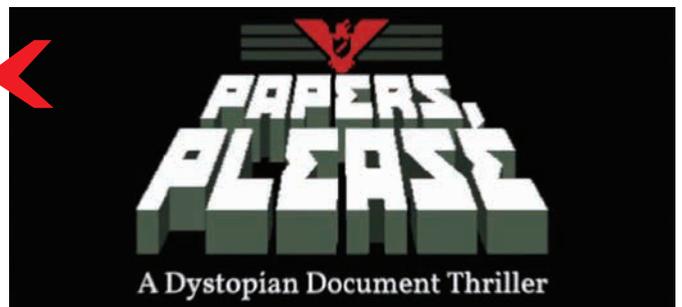
The game was released on both PC and smartphone platforms in March 2008, receiving a nomination for the Innovation Award at the Independent Games Festival. What makes this game so weird is its dark, depressing undertones set against the stark black and white design, leaving players with a lot of unanswered questions and a bit depressed.

Papers, Please

Lucas Pope, 2013

Xenophobia and stereotypes abound as Papers, Please taps into Eastern Bloc paranoia and fear. This game centres around the daily exploits of a border checkpoint immigration officer, who has to follow a rigorous in-game rulebook with instructions of screening procedures and practices. Each day, players are given a different set of criteria to carry out when checking the information of people looking to enter the fictional state of Arstotzka during the Cold War in 1982. Players have the additional objective of successfully processing as many individuals as possible, in order to earn enough money to feed their family.

Added to the peculiar gameplay and strange game concept, Papers, Please has a 8-bit style look and feel which is in keeping with the 1980s overtones and issues. Billed as dystopian thriller, Papers, Please should offer a grim, bleak outlook on life... if that is what you are into.



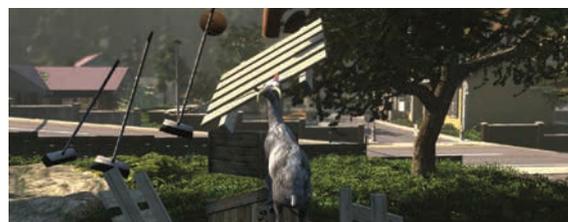
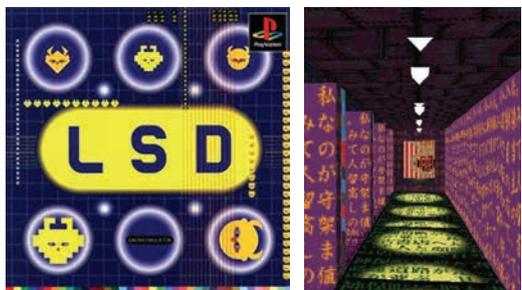


LSD: Dream Emulator

OutSide Directors Company, 1998

As the name would lend you to believe, this game is a pretty surreal experience, as players are made to navigate through a psychedelic, trance-like dream world filled with abstract objects and images. If that sounds like someone's hallucinogen-induced dream, it kind of is. Hiroko Nishikawa, an employee of Asmik Ace Entertainment, who published the title, got the idea for the game from the dream journal she had been keeping for a year.

The game was released alongside a CD and the journal itself in Japan in 1998 on PlayStation. The purpose of the game is to simply explore and interact with objects in the dream, being transported into deeper layers of the dream, one more stranger than the other and lasting up to ten minutes at a time. The wild and crazy visuals of this game made it a cult classic and is definitely hard to top in the weirdness stakes. We were not surprised to find out that this game stemmed from someone's deep subconscious, the jury is still out however, on whether any LSD was actually used in the production of this game.



Goat Simulator Coffee Stain Studios, 2014

Goat Simulator is hands down, the craziest sandbox-style game. It features a goat with a penchant for trampolines, licking, dry humping and complete destruction of anything out there. Said to draw inspiration from skateboarding titles like Tony Hawk Pro Skater, this game sees players assume the role of a rampant goat with the objective of exploring the utopian suburbia you find yourself in. The other, far more gratifying objective, is to create as much havoc and chaos as is 'goatly' possible. Players can also interact with objects, thanks to their trusty tongue. Yes ... tongue, with the ability to wield objects like axes and picnic tables.

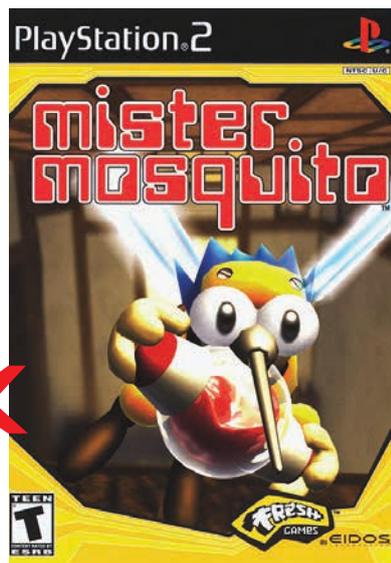
This game is best described as utter insane randomness, and is currently available on Steam pre-order come this March. We haven't gotten our hands on this title yet, but by all accounts, it will top our game of the year list in the category of best goat game you can buy for \$10. Coffee Stain Studios has thrown the gauntlet down, so it's up to other indie developers to step it up.

Mister Mosquito

ZOOM Inc, 2001

Perhaps a bit of a PG-rated version of any games involving blood sucking vampires, Mister Mosquito involves a blood sucker of a different variety. Players assume the role of a mosquito, with the objective of sucking blood from every member of the Yamada family, who are Mister Mosquito's only source of food. Gameplay involves sucking blood from specific body parts of different family members in an effort to collect enough blood to last winter. Players also need to avoid detection, running the risk of being swatted by flailing limbs.

Released on June 2001 on PlayStation 2, the game deals with a rather sensitive subject, considering millions of people die from malaria each year. That did not hamper sales as the game sold roughly 160 000 copies by the end of 2001. Mister Mosquito will go down as one of the weirdest games of all time and even spawned a sequel in 2003, as players once again targeted the Yamada family, as they moved to Hawaii. [RC] **ts**





WhatsApp, Doc?



DEEP FRIED MAN REFLECTS ON FACEBOOK'S DECISION TO PAY \$19 BILLION FOR AN APP THAT COST HIM \$1

Sometimes, when I go onto my iPhone's App Store, I am about to buy some sort of extremely useful app, like the one that turns pictures of your loved ones into fat people, or the one that turns pictures of your loved ones into old people, or the one that turns pictures of your loved ones into zombies. But just before buying said useful app, I realise that it costs a whole 99 American cents. That's a bit expensive for an app, I think, before changing my mind and not downloading it. It seems, though, that I have an unrealistic idea of what an app is worth. Mark Zuckerberg has paid \$19 billion for one.

I'm talking, of course, about WhatsApp; the most expensive app in history and Facebook's latest acquisition. Don't get me wrong. WhatsApp is an extremely useful tool. It has 450 million users. I am one of them, and so is my dad, which is amazing when you consider that my dad owns and regularly uses a fax machine – which he considers to be among the world's most innovative tech gadgets.

The emoticon for you

WhatsApp came onto the scene and made BBM obsolete, when people realised they could

message each other for free and with the amazing added bonus of not having to own a BlackBerry. Later, when WhatsApp decided to stop being free and start charging a dollar, I paid that dollar without any fuss, because WhatsApp is easy to use and, most impressively of all, it has every emoticon ever. Just thinking about those WhatsApp emoticons makes me want to weep tears of pure joy. If you ever feel the need to express the fact that that aliens took a poo next to your tent and set your koala alight, WhatsApp has the emoticons for you.

I WILL DOWNLOAD THE 'PUNCH MARK ZUCKERBERG IN THE FACE' APP WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.

So I can see the appeal of WhatsApp, and why you'd want to own it, and by that I mean the way Facebook owns it (for \$19 billion), of course, as opposed to the way I own it (for \$1). Many people are shocked at how much was spent on the chat app, but I wasn't. If I were Mark Zuckerberg I'd probably just buy the whole internet, even if it cost gazillion dollars. I'm sure he can afford it.

What Facebook?

What I'm more concerned about is whether WhatsApp will remain the app we know and love. Facebook can go ahead and buy it, but they must resist the temptation to Facebook-ize it. If I am ever using WhatsApp and start getting Farmville requests, people notifying me that they think it would be a brilliant idea for me to 'Try Birthdays', or, worst of all, people 'poking' me, whatever that means, I will download the 'Punch Mark Zuckerberg In The Face' app with immediate effect, 99 cents or not.

Until such atrocities occur, I will continue to make daily use of the app I know and love. *Smiley face* *Dragon* *Cable Car* **ts**

Photo: GA Goodman

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