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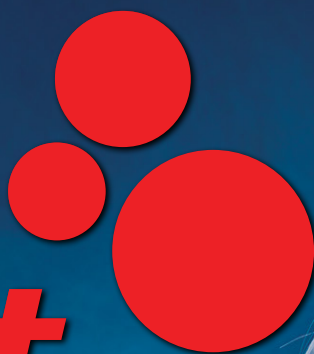
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### OPEN TO FIND:

- Hovercraft!
- Winter Wear!
- Best Directors!
- World Cup Boots!
- Top Concept Cars!

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Core Office applications: Word, Excel, PowerPoint, OneNote <sup>3</sup>						
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<sup>2</sup> Current Office application versions for Office 365 are Office 2013 for Windows and Office 2011 for Mac. Customers with an active subscription will be entitled to the newest versions when available.

<sup>3</sup> Application availability and features vary by platform and device. OneNote, Publisher and Access available for PC only.

<sup>4</sup> Office Mobile comes pre-installed on Windows Phones and is also available on Android phones and iPhones. See [www.office.com/information](http://www.office.com/information).

<sup>5</sup> Compatible only with Windows 7, Windows 8 and later. Office 365 is compatible only with Windows 7, Windows 8 Mac OS X 10.6 and later.

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# Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin

I've recently heard of the 'lightweight living' trend where, in order to be more mobile, young people are getting rid of all their 'stuff', instead opting for a life more digital. Gone are the CDs, books, excessive clothes and shelves full of decoration, now only a notebook, tablet and smartphone remain. This does of course make making judgement calls much more difficult. Since now, how is it possible to determine the future of the relationship if there is no collection of CDs to quickly scan through when visiting her house for the first time? The absence of a well-laden book rack also doesn't necessarily mean a lack of the love of reading (plus asking to go through her Kindle library could also be considered rude on a first date).

I'm too much of a lightweight to embrace lightweight living, since my love of stuff is just too strong. But there are a few things I could definitely get rid of, not the least being some old drum-and-bass CDs which at the time was awesome, but now sounds like an oil drum rolling down a hill filled with cutlery. All those books that I've bought and never read can also go, since they've long been replaced by Kindle books I've bought and never read. Who knows, I might yet get into this lightweight living trend.

Enjoy the issue,

Mike Joubert  
mike@techsmart.co.za.

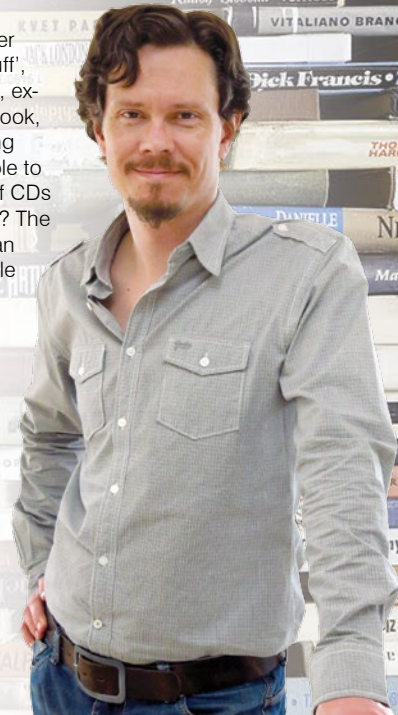


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06



## ABOUT THE COVER GIRL

### STORM

**Model: Maria from Spotlight Agency**

Real Name: Ororo Munroe

#### Quick Facts:

The daughter of a Kenyan princess who was herself the descendent of African witch-priestesses, Ororo is orphaned at a young age, and becomes a skilled thief in Cairo.

As with many superheroes, Ororo has a weakness – severe claustrophobia – due to being buried under the rubble of the attack that killed her parents.

Ororo's abilities – the power to control the weather – first emerge when she is compelled to venture into the Serengeti.

Her initial meeting with Charles Xavier (Professor X) was a less than auspicious one, with Ororo targeting the professor as a mark and attempting to steal from him, a move which leads to Xavier recognising Ororo as a fellow mutant.

One of the mutants that Storm apparently feels particularly maternal towards is a thirteen-year-old Kitty Pryde.

#### Famous Storm quotes:

"I am a woman, a mutant, a thief, an X-Men, a lover, a wife, a queen. I am all these things. I am Storm, and for me, there are no such things as limits."

"Kurt, it's about to get very cold in here."

"Do you know what happens to a toad when it's struck by lightning? The same thing that happens to everything else."

"I'm a weatherwitch, not a snowplow." **ts**



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# GREAT GEAR!

## VW GOLF R400

The Golf has always been a South African favourite, with its mix of responsive performance and multi-functional use, placing it atop all the hatchback models currently available. The recently unveiled R400 is Volkswagen's purebred racer built to dominate the road.

The Golf R400 is now set for mass production, with a release date scheduled for the early part of 2016. Although unconfirmed, Volkswagen's Golf R400 is estimated to retail for \$40 000 (R416 000).

The Golf R400 made its debut at this year's Beijing Auto Show, and is designed to offer its driver one thing – unbridled speed. It makes use of the same 2.0 litre 4-cylinder turbocharged engine found in the Golf R, but produces 295 kW and 450 Nm of torque – a higher engine size to power output ratio than that of the Bugatti Veyron.



The modifications made by the Wolfsburg-based manufacturer extends beyond the engine, with aerodynamic additions to the front and rear wings, as well as a large dual-exhaust setup, reminiscent of the R32 model.

All this finely tuned power means it goes 0-100 km/h in 3.9 seconds, electronically limited to a top speed of 280 km/h. This places it in direct competition with the Mercedes-Benz A45 AMG – the reigning king of supercharged hatchbacks.



## MINI PACEMAN ADVENTURE

The Mini Paceman Adventure models hinge off the original design of the Mini Paceman S, which has been retro-fitted into a two seater all-terrain vehicle with a bakkie-style cargo area. Key integrations to the Adventure, include the roof-mounted tyre rack and four manually adjustable spot lamps, modified chassis for extended ground clearance as well as snorkel air intake and unique Jungle Green metallic paintwork. To date, the Paceman Adventure remains a concept. **ts**

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# GREAT GEAR!

## AERO-X HOVERCRAFT

Man has always had an insatiable desire to take to the air, building all manner of machines to do so. The Aero-X hovercraft from Aerofex won't have you flying sky high, but can you get you floating a few feet off the ground.

The Aero-X hovercraft is aiming to make low-altitude flight both safe and affordable, according to its developers Aerofex, with the ability to move up to 10 feet from the ground with a maximum speed of 72 km/h.

It's designed to offer a similar riding experience and seating position to that of a motorbike, with the added benefit of carrying a passenger as well. The Aero-X weighs a total of 356 kg and is able to bear a load of 145 kg.

Those interested in purchasing an Aero-X will have to fork out at least R875 000, with a non-refundable initial deposit of R51 000 and delivery in 2017. We wonder, does it qualify for e-tolls?

Aerofex say the Aero-X hovercraft has multiple applications across various industries, the most interesting of which is as a crop duster in the agricultural environment.

The Aero-X's lift comes courtesy of two fixed-pitch carbon fibre fans and an aspirated three-rotor rotary engine. These are controlled by two separate position control bars and motorbike-style gestures to manoeuvre the hovercraft while mid-air.



## PARROT BEBOP DRONE

The Bebop Drone is the small, lightweight (380 g) smart device controlled flyer from manufacturer, Parrot, which is well known for designing similar high-tech gadgets. Parrot have retained its usual quadcopter rotating blade setup, to ensure maximum stability while controlling the Bebop Drone via the Freeflight 3.0 app. The Bebop Drones key feature however, is its 14 megapixel fisheye camera, which is able to capture pictures and record video, with a 180° viewing angle. With no confirmed pricing yet, the Bebop Drone is available for pre-order and will be on every DIY-spy's (or is that Peeping Tom's?) wishlist. **ts**



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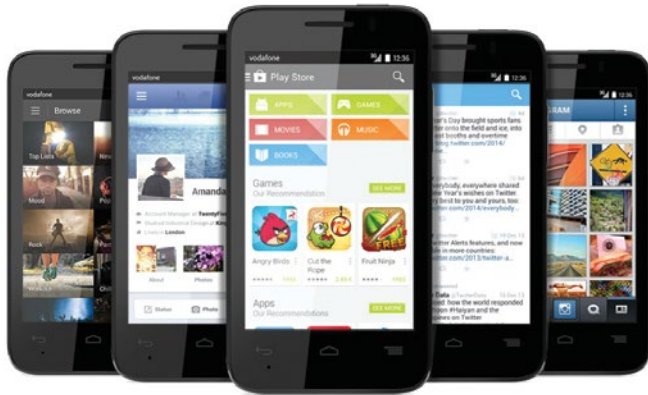
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# TOP 3 Entry-Level SMARTPHONES under R1000

At TechSmart we're well aware that flagship smartphones are not always feasible options for South African consumers. So we put together a list of the best budget smartphones for the more cost savvy among us.



## Vodafone Smart 4 Mini (R900)

The Smart 4 Mini was unveiled less than a month ago by Vodafone, and is already garnering a fair bit of interest given its strong specs for a unit that comes in at under R1 000. For your moolah you receive a smartphone powered by a dual-core 1.3 GHz Mediatek chipset, and supported by 4 GB of internal memory, 512 MB of RAM, as well as Android 4.2.2 (Jellybean) to deliver a relatively solid overall performance.

The key feature of this smartphone is its 4" (480x800) touchscreen and 233 pixel per inch density. Added to this, is all the integrations that a user would typically need from a smartphone, including a microSD slot for up to 32 GB worth of expandable storage, and a three megapixel camera.

## MTN Steppa (R500)

The MTN Steppa is hands-down the cheapest Android-based smartphone experience you can get in South Africa, and at R500 it may also be the best value for money as well. When

we recently reviewed this unit from MTN, we were pleasantly surprised with just how many features it possessed, giving us unhindered access to a bevy of apps in the Google Play Store.

Like the Smart 4 Mini, the MTN Steppa also runs an Android-based OS, 2.3.5 (Gingerbread), which may no longer be Google's top OS, but is well suited to the Steppa's 3.5" HVGA display. Internally, the Steppa is powered by a single-core 1 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon processor, as well as 1 GB RAM and 512 MB of storage capacity, expandable to 32 GB via microSD slot.



## Nokia Asha 230 (R750)

Next on the list is the exceptionally well-priced Nokia Asha 230, which is the Finnish manufacturer's most affordable smartphone to date at R750. The Asha 230 also carries the title of being the smallest and lightest budget device on our list, with a 2.8" QVGA display (320x240) and weighing in at 89.3 g. Nokia has also touted the Asha 230's durability, with a reinforced back cover to handle robust use.

The 230 sports Asha's Software Platform 1.4, specially designed for smaller devices from Nokia. This is further supported by 7 GB worth of free cloud storage and 1.3 megapixel camera capable of capturing up to 1280x960 pixel content. The Asha 230 also features social media feed integration with Nokia's Fastlane application which collates all information, notifications and calendar entries into one seamless view. **ts**





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# LENOVO

## ThinkPad X1 Carbon



**It's not so often anymore that an ultrabook inspires tech lust at first sight. It is the first point in Lenovo's ThinkPad X1 Carbon's favour, but far from the last.**

There is a combination of factors that lift an ultrabook, or any device for that matter, from being ho-hum or even merely terrific, to an almost sublime level of achievement that instantly inspires desirability. Indeed, it is seldom that manufacturers manage to nail this synergy, in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, but the ThinkPad X1 Carbon is a perfect case in point of when it all comes together.

**MOST NOTABLE THOUGH IS THE ADAPTIVE KEYBOARD STRIP, WHICH CHANGES THE FUNCTIONS ON OFFER ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING ON THE NOTEBOOK.**

To start with, the ultrabook manages to beautifully balance a light and sleek chassis with a quickly apparent superb build quality. The ultrabook, whose chassis comprises of the tough carbon fibre, right away feels like a premium product, and thus makes a very favourable first impression.

### Think thin

Beyond this though, other key components continue on this note. The notebook is exceptionally thin (19 mm) and light (1.3 kg), which means that mobile users will have no qualms about carrying it just about anywhere. Indeed, it could easily compete with some of our favourite 13" ultrabooks on this front, while adding the extra inch of space to the screen. Additionally, the screen's resolution is a luscious 2560x1440, which means everything looks beautiful. Despite the fact that the bright (300 nits) 14" screen is matte, colours are deep and rich and viewing angles are superb.

ThinkPad notebooks have long been hailed for hosting superb keyboards, and here, this certainly holds true, as the backlit, chiclet keyboard is a pleasure to type on. Gently curved keys feel like they are rising up to meet your fingers, and greet your touch with just the right amount of depth and springiness to be satisfying. Furthermore, a nice, generously sized touchpad – and the ThinkPad's all too familiar red touchnib – is also present here.

### Beyond skin deep

While all the apparent features are exemplary, what about the internals that power the performance, you may be asking? Well, on this front, things are no less rosy. The ThinkPad X1 Carbon boasts a no-holds-bar fourth generation Core i7 processor (4550U) clocked at 1.5 GHz, 8 GB of memory and a 256 GB SSD (not much, with only 218 GB usable). What this means is that performance wise, for most tasks, the ultrabook simply flies.

Most notable though is the Adaptive Keyboard strip, which changes the functions on offer according to what you are doing on the notebook. Web browsing, for example, brings up a different set of touch buttons as opposed to when you are watching videos. This works well, not just to save space where the Function keys would otherwise lie, but to more fully cater the notebook to the task at hand. The touch sensitivity of these is delicate, and it can take a while to get used to their responsiveness, particularly if you are used to the firm press of conventional Function press affirming your choice. Add to this a battery life of nine hours (rechargeable up to 80% in an hour), the usual smattering of one USB 2.0, one USB 3.0 and HDMI ports, as well as catering for 3G connectivity, and you have that rare phenomena – a genuine ultrabook contender, that you don't want to let go of. RRP: R22 000. [RN] **ts**

## QUICK SPECS

**Processor**  
Intel Core i7 (4550U) @ 1.5 GHz

**Memory**  
8 GB

**Screen resolution**  
2560x1440

**Storage**  
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# SONY

## Xperia Z2

**Another year, another flagship, as Sony unveiled its larger Xperia Z2 offering for Android-loving smartphone users to fawn over. Apart from its size, we find out what makes the Xperia Z2 better than its predecessor.**

It only takes a moment's glance at the Z2 to know that Sony has kept the Xperia design trend alive and well, as the device features the same aluminium frame and glass backing that we've come to expect from Sony's Xperia lineup. As with previous flagship models, the Z2 is exceedingly beautiful, with very clean lines and a glossy, reflective face and back. The one downside to this however, as we've also experienced with previous iterations, is that this mirrored glass and aluminium combination makes the Z2 highly susceptible to fingerprints and dust. The Z2 also retains the waterproof (IP55, IP58) and dust-resistant (IP55) features that have become synonymous with Xperia.

### Specs aplenty

The display in question similarly features Sony's Full HD Triluminos with X-Reality technology designed specifically for mobile device use. In this regard, the Z2 performs adequately, as we noticed some very slight dullness around the edges of display, which was a little disconcerting given the Z2's new larger 5.2" display. In spite of this, the Xperia Z2 still retains a solid degree of vibrancy and brightness to make watching content enjoyable.

**THE Z2 IS EXCEEDINGLY BEAUTIFUL, WITH VERY CLEAN LINES AND A GLOSSY, REFLECTIVE FACE AND BACK.**

Sony fitted the Xperia Z2 with a 20.7 megapixel primary camera on the rear, the same version found on the previous Z1. As a result, the Z2 is also capable of capturing 5248x3936 pixel content, as well as recording 2160p video at 30 fps. The image quality itself is crisp and captures all the nuanced detail that users would wish for, this high level of detail is retained in both darker and high light conditions and makes the Z2 fantastic for photographing on the fly.



### Supercharged engine

The face is not the only area to receive a redesign, with Sony making some drastic changes to the Z2's chipset and battery setup to ensure that there's no compromise in performance between the two flagship iterations. The Xperia Z2 now boasts a Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 quad-core processor which clocks at 2.3 GHz, supported by a very healthy 3 GB of RAM. This makes the Xperia Z2 an supremely powerful device perfectly suited to multitasking. The battery of benchmark tests we put the Z2 through also seemed to reinforce this belief, scoring well across the board on all processing capability aspects.

The one major issue we experienced with the Xperia Z2, was the amount of heat it emits during heavy use. An example of this was when we were running the benchmark tests, as the device felt noticeably hot after the tests completed. This was also the case during the initial setup of the device, and downloading of multiple applications. The reason for this is unknown and diminished the enjoyable experience we had with the Xperia Z2.

### Hot, hot, hot?

Listed for retail at R9 900, the Sony Xperia Z2 falls in the lower-end of the price range for similarly specced Android flagships such as the Galaxy S5 and HTC One (M8), costing an estimated R10 500 to R11 000 respectively. This makes the Z2 an even more enticing prospect given its premium feel and build quality; well worth considering for users looking for something outside the normal confines of the galaxy. [RC] **ts**

## QUICK SPECS

Size	Display	Processor	Camera	OS	Battery
146 x 73 x 8 mm	5.2", 424 ppi	Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 @2.3 GHz	20.7 Megapixel	Android 4.4.2 (Kit-Kat)	3200 mAh (19 hours talk time)

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# EPSON

## EH-TW9200

### Home Cinema Projector

The TW9200 is one of Epson's top of the range home cinema projectors, and a large one at that. Boasting class leading colour quality as well as 2D and 3D capability, we see how it measures up.

On initial inspection, Epson's EH-TW9200 looks pretty formidable, measuring 466 mm wide. Its hulking size is down to the newly fitted 3LCD touting lens that Epson says, produces three times brighter display quality than similarly specced models.

#### Multidimensional

The TW9200 can proudly boast some of the best image clarity we've ever seen on a household consumer unit. The projection is powered by a 230 watt UHE lamp that generates an impressive 2400 Lumens for both Colour Light and White Light Output. This is integral to Epson's specially designed 3LCD system, as it results in a richer, more dynamic colour palette for your projected image. This aspect performs particularly well when viewing movies or playing games, as vibrancy is retained for users with a contrast ratio of 600 000:1. This translates to an extremely high level of luminescence that registers twice as high as most other projectors in the same price range.



The TW9200 also touts a native display resolution of 1080p (full HD), with an aspect ratio of 16:9.

**We cannot overstate the marked difference that the new UHE lamp and 3LCD colour display combination make.**

Also on board is a 3D conversion mode, which converts ordinary 2D content into a 3D format. This process is a bit more of a novelty, as the conversion is not as strong as 3D-specific content. Epson has also included two 3D glasses, with a mini-USB charging port for an estimated 40 hour's worth of battery life.

#### Hot under the collar

There is very little we can identify as glaring issues with the TW9200, however the amount of heat it produces as well as noise generated during powering up and shutting down is a little disconcerting. Taking everything into account, we understand that R47 000 is by no means a small amount of money to be shelling out for a home cinema projector. But we cannot overstate the marked difference that the new UHE lamp and 3LCD colour display combination make, when comparing the TW9200 to other top end units. Further added to this, is 3D functionality which is a fantastic feature. [RC] **ts**

# MICROLAB

## H20 Speakers

A relatively unknown brand locally, our first encounter with Microlab is with its specially designed bookshelf speaker, the H20. Beautifully encased in faux-leather, we test it out and see if its more than just style over substance.

The H20 speakers' most defining feature is its faux-leather finish, with our review unit encased in a rather striking deep red leather, with black speaker and control components. This is complemented by Bluetooth functionality to make it an ideal bookshelf speaker.

#### Easy Listening

On top of the right speaker, is the control panel, with source selection, music playing buttons and volume dial. The most important button, allows users to toggle between playing music from an in-line device or Bluetooth connected one. We did however encounter one issue with Bluetooth, as attempting to sync new devices could only be done once the H20 speakers have been reset. This was quite frustrating, especially considering the fact that the H20's Bluetooth functionality is one of its defining features. We were however pleasantly surprised by the fact that there was no difference in sound quality between the in-line and Bluetooth modes.

**The H20 speakers most defining feature is its faux-leather finish.**

The H20's generate a solid sound range, when the dial is turned all the way up the H20 speakers perform adequately, as a slight blurring of



the sounds occur, particularly in music with multiple elements such as drum and bass or hip-hop. This lack of true top-end sound clarity is understandable considering the H20 is fitted with two 3.5" subwoofer drivers, which produce 25 Watts worth of power respectively.

#### But the price...

For setup in a room as freestanding bookshelf speakers, the H20's are ideal, and are similarly suited alongside a PC. One aspect that bothered was its price, as Microlab has slapped a R2 270 price tag on this pair. As enticing as the leather bound speakers may look, it may ward off a couple of would-be buyers. Should that price not deter you however, you'll be getting a reliable set of speakers that would be welcome additions to any lounge or small living room setup. [RC] **ts**

# SONY

## Walkman WH303

**The WH303 is Sony's new 3-in-1 Walkman headphones, packing more than enough technology but lacking any real aesthetic appeal. Is the Japanese manufacturer's assault doomed to fail?**

The first and most obvious mode for Sony's NWZ-WH303, is as a wired pair of headphones. In this mode, the Walkman performs well with crisp, sharp sound quality that has a strong enough balance of treble and bass, with hardly any noticeable distortion when turned to full volume. Next up is the NWZ's party piece, as Sony has fitted 4 GB (roughly 1000 songs) of internal storage. This is ideal for listening to music on the fly, without having to worry about pairing it with another device or unruly cables. The final playing mode turns the NWZ-WH303 into a personal speaker. When in use, these speakers offer adequate listening quality, with enough power for its user to enjoy.

### But no Bluetooth!

Unfortunately there is a downside to Sony's latest offering. We were quite surprised and similarly disappointed to find out that these headphones cannot connect wirelessly via Bluetooth to other devices. Especially when you factor in Sony's Bluetooth enabled range of

headphones, like the MDR-10RBT, which supports wireless connectivity without compromising on sound quality.

### The final playing mode turns the NWZ-WH303 into a personal speaker.

This feels like a step backwards, considering Sony has packed so much technology and functionality into the WH303 headphones. As a result the Walkman feel a little limited from a technology standpoint.

### Final say

At R2 500, the WH303 has plenty of functionality to make it stand out from the crowd, providing fantastic comfort thanks to its cushioned earpieces with solid build quality and attention to detail maintained throughout. Its overall design however is a little bland, appearing far less enticing than other similarly priced models currently available. In many regards, the WH303 delivers fantastic value for money, but the lack of true wireless functionality seems to tarnish an otherwise well polished product. For that reason alone, we expect it will struggle in a market brimming with svelte alternatives. [RC] **ts**



# PHILIPS

## Sound Shooter portable speaker

**Dynamite comes in small packages, and it appears that Philips has taken it to heart when designing the Sound Shooter portable speaker.**

As far as small portable speakers go, the Sound Shooter from Philips is certainly one of the more uniquely styled ones that we've come across. This is due to its barrel-shaped design, which offers a pleasant change from the circular tube or pebble shaped offerings like the Shox Mini or Audiomotion Mighty Dwarf. The other key design feature is the rubberised shell used to cover and protect the central core and speaker unit of the Sound Shooter.

### For R500 the Sound Shooter is an absolute steal for users who enjoy taking their music on the go.

Standing a mere 82 mm high, 67 mm wide and weighing 38 g, the Sound Shooter is extremely compact, which makes handling quite easy, an essential requisite for any good portable speaker. Philips has integrated three different speaker functions into the Sound Shooter, with the first two affording users either in-line device setup or Bluetooth connectivity. The in-line playing mode is facilitated via a micro USB port on the Sound Shooter and a dual-cable with a 3.5 mm headphone jack and USB connection. The latter is also used to charge the portable speaker which gives it up to 8 hours of playtime.

The Bluetooth function is similarly quick and easy to use, and allows

the Sound Shooter to be paired with a range of Bluetooth 2.1 or higher sporting iOS and Android devices. The third function turns the Sound Shooter into a loudspeaker to answer calls, thanks to its built-in microphone and illuminated button located atop the speaker. The sound quality in all three playing functions is supremely crisp in low to medium range volume levels. When turned to full volume however, the Sound Shooter does struggle, as a slight amount of tinny and static becomes noticeable in bass heavy music.

On the whole, the Philips Sound Shooter is immensely impressive and produces fantastic sound quality relative to its speaker setup and size. Given the fact that it will only set you back R500, the Sound Shooter is an absolute steal for users who enjoy taking their music on the go. [RC] **ts**



# XTOUCH WAVE

## Smartwatch

### Waves goodbye to convention

**More than a year ago, issuing voice commands right from your wrist seemed a bit far-fetched, but now this is no longer the case.**

The XTOUCH WAVE, which is a comprehensive hi-tech water-resistant timepiece, ushers in a new generation of XTOUCH smartwatches. The watch has impressive specs, as it is powered by an MTK Dual Core 1.2 GHz Cortex A7 processor, which makes it both speedy and versatile in use. The WAVE boasts a variety of features, including the ability to make calls and dish up helpful notifications, also offering up sports data via a pedometer app, and onboard FM radio.

Much like a smartphone, a smartwatch similarly lives or dies by how easy its user interface is to use. Thankfully, the accurate five-point capacitive touch panel makes it easy to navigate through its interface. Users can type their emails, chat or send SMSs without the annoyance of having to continuously hit the backspace to retype and correct their mistakes.

#### Now that's handy

Granted, smartwatches are in vogue right now, with many a manufacturer dipping their hand into the wearables waters. However, many of these are intended as complementary

devices to the manufacturers' smartphone, which is still given centre stage. Unlike the Samsung Gear, for example, the XTOUCH WAVE operates independently and takes a micro-SIM as well as a microSD card (max 32 GB) for extra storage. This obviates the need to carry an extra device to sync with the smartwatch while jogging, cycling or at the gym.

**The XTOUCH WAVE operates independently and takes a micro-SIM as well as a microSD card.**

One similarity that the XTOUCH WAVE does share with the current crop of smartwatches is that it too runs Android 4.2. Along with the fact that you can download a variety of apps to the device, it comes preloaded with some of the most often used, and essential apps such as Google Maps, Google Search, Twitter, Facebook, WeChat, WhatsApp, BBM, YouTube, Gmail and Google Play. Thankfully, these are catered to with a good dollop of 4 GB of onboard storage.

Finally, the 73 g black WAVE comes with a built-in 3 MP camera for snapping pics and video-recording. For more information visit: [www.xtouchdevice.com](http://www.xtouchdevice.com). **ts**



# EVETECH sends its Console Killer

## Gaming PC into the ring

**Evetech set out to create a console killer at the same pricing as the PS4 to show why it believes PC gaming still reigns supreme.**

Now that the dust has settled after the release of next-gen console systems, with many considering the PS4 the victor (at least for the time

being), Evetech has touted its gaming PC as trumping both console offerings. The company's fighter in the gaming ring includes an Intel Pentium (@3.0 GHz) dual-core processor, AMD Radeon R7 260X 2 GB Graphics card, 8 GB 1866 MHz RAM, 1 TB HDD, 500W PSU, NZXT Tempest 410 Case and DVD Writer.

#### Graphic uppercut

The first point made in the PC's favour is the option available to customise gaming experiences through graphical settings in games. The R7 260X found in Evetech's PC easily pulls off full-HD resolution when dialing down a few of the more elaborate eye candy effects, such as multi-sample anti-aliasing (MSAA), which the PS4 doesn't employ anyway.

**The Evetech Console Killer gaming PC is priced at R6 800 – equal to the RRP of the PS4.**

Evetech claimed that the resolution of 1920x1080 provides a clear boost in image clarity as compared with the PS4. Nevertheless, if it's a solid 60 FPS you're after, the options to dial back resolution are always available. Additionally, while it concedes that controllers have advanced well over the years, it asserted that they still can't touch on the precision allowed with the use of a keyboard and mouse.

#### Cost considerations

Then, bringing out the big guns (price), Evetech pointed out that PC games are generally a lot cheaper than their console counterparts, adding that cross-platform titles are often hundreds of Rands cheaper than console games and often the better of the few versions available. Furthermore, PC game modders offer a consistent supply of user-generated content, usually for free, to enhance the overall experience. Steam's online store has frequent discounts on popular PC games that make game prices even more alluring and affordable. The Evetech Console Killer gaming PC is priced at R6 800 – equal to the RRP of the PS4.

For more information contact them on 010-786-0044 or visit [www.evetech.co.za](http://www.evetech.co.za). **ts**

ADVERTORIAL

# MSI GE70

## Apache Pro



**Gaming notebooks may well be the luxury sedans of the notebook world, but with its Apache Pro, MSI aims to ensure its latest could be just as easily likened to a Ferrari without the hefty pricetag.**

For any gaming notebooks hoping to compete for a PC gamer on the go's hard earned cash – and even more highly taxed attention, the machine better have serious power under its hood. The good news is that the GE70 Apache Pro does, boasting the latest 4th generation (Haswell) Intel Core i7-4700HQ processor (up to 3.4 GHz) and GeForce GTX 860M, which should make short order of even the most demanding of games (yes, Crysis 3, or anything from Crytek for that matter). The Haswell gains don't stop performance; the architecture is also admirably energy efficient, which has a positive knock-on effect on that other important consideration for mobile gamers, namely battery life and a machine's staying power.

### On the bleeding edge

Additionally, depending on how much you are willing to spend, MSI's offering comes laden either with 8 GB or a make your LAN-buddies go green with envy 16 GB RAM. Either way, the graphics solution is no slouch on the 17.3" behemoth, as the GeForce GTX 860M matches the cutting edge delivered by the CPU. Indeed, GeForce (a company that knows a thing or ten about graphics cards) asserts that its Maxwell architecture similarly offers terrific performance (a 20% increase versus previous iterations) balanced with better power consumption and less heat. As for the screen, gamers can anticipate playing their latest titles in full HD (1920x1080), or alternatively,

connecting up to three monitors simultaneously and diving into the virtual world.

### No ticket required for this light show

To its credit, and obviating the need to connect an external keyboard, the GE70 Apache Pro further boasts a SteelSeries gaming keyboard. Naturally, a gaming keyboard wouldn't be quite the same without the option to light the rig up in a light show to rival the Las Vegas strip at night, as the multi-colour, backlit (of course) keys can be customised to the user's content, with in excess of 1 000 colour combinations. Furthermore, the SteelSeries Engine will automatically recognise the game running and load the saved, appropriate keyboard profile. Another feature worth mentioning is the inclusion of XSplit Gamecaster, which enables players to record their gaming moments and broadcast their live gameplay sessions on the likes of Twitch, YouTube and UStream.

**BOASTING THE LATEST 4TH GEN INTEL CORE I7 AND GEFORCE GTX 860M, IT SHOULD MAKE SHORT ORDER OF EVEN THE MOST DEMANDING OF GAMES.**

Finally, the GE70 Apache Pro also boasts hefty available storage features. Along with 1 TB of storage space, there is the option to include a RAID setup inside the machine's chassis on the high-end GE70 Apache PRO 2PE-212 iteration, which accommodates a 128 GB SSD.

The GE70 Apache Pro comes in two versions; the 2PE-213, which sports 8 GB of memory and costs R18 000, and the GE70 Apache PRO 2PE-212, which doubles the amount of memory (16 GB), adds a 128 GB SSD in RAID and will cost serious gamers R20 400. Both notebooks are available from Evetech's website ([www.evetech.co.za](http://www.evetech.co.za)) or by calling them on 010-786-0044. **ts**

## QUICK SPECS

CPU	Graphics	Screen	Hard Drive	OS
Intel Core i7 4700HQ (up to 3.4 GHz)	GeForce GTX 860M	17.3" Full HD Anti-glare	1 TB 7200 RPM	Windows 8.1 64-bit



## CANON EOS 1200D

**Canon tries to entice first-time DSLR buyers with a solid offering that comes with its own app.**

While smartphone photography might have hit the compact camera market for a six, it also enticed many to take photography that one step further into the realm of DSLRs. Canon's EOS 1200D is a no-frills entry-level camera, retailing for R6 000 with its 18-55mm lens.

### A solid offering

This is pretty much as cheap as you're going to get in the market these days, unless you opt for second-hand. Canon's 18 megapixel camera is a solid start for anyone wanting to know more about photography, while once again proving that you don't need an expensive camera to get good shots.

Entry-level is called such for a reason, and in most cases it boils down to restrictions on handling- and shooting abilities. While the 1200D is very capable when it comes to imaging, shooting in low-light can become a hassle since the ISO (6400, expanded to 12 800) should not really be pushed past 1600. Also, the 3" LCD screen at the back carries a low 460k dot resolution, making it difficult to see in playback if images are in focus.

### There's an app for that

Another thing we were disappointed with is the absence of an info button to expand on what for example 'Auto Lighting Optimizer' means, while scrolling through the camera's menu structure. But, the 1200D is the first camera from Canon to come with a free smartphone companion app (iOS, Android only), which is an excellent addition. The app shows what all of the buttons and dials do, while also taking you through tutorials on how to get a shallow depth of field, amongst others. You can also download the instruction manual PDF directly to your phone, handy for finding out what 'Auto Lighting Optimizer' actually means.

### The 1200D proves that you don't need an expensive camera to get good shots.

The 1200D does exactly what you expect a R6000 entry-level camera to do, providing one with solid image quality and a handy companion app. Having said that, it hardly pushes the limits, and if you have a R1 000 or so extra, rather go for the smaller and slightly better specced 100D with touchscreen, which we thought was brilliant. [MJ] **ts**

## HI-TEC Felix daypack

**One of our travel secrets is to pack an empty daypack into our luggage, ready to greet a new city and its shops, for the first time. Rising to the occasion is the 25 litre Felix daypack from Hi-tec.**

Granted, you can't turn around without seeing at least ten daypacks that could do the job, but, as constant travels quickly prove, not all daypacks are created equal. Ideally, these should be light and compact enough to practically disappear on your back, but also roomy enough to hold plenty of gear. More importantly, like their larger counterparts, it's essential that they are sufficiently comfortable to ensure you don't get back to your hotel room with your shoulder blades screaming in protest and your back aching.

### The Felix is a very capable, comfortable and full featured daypack.

The good news is that the Felix, which, in yellow-green and grey, looks sporty, checks all the above boxes. Much like the larger 35 litre technical pack from Hi-tec, the Asila, the Felix similarly boasts wide, comfortable shoulder straps, its own handle on the top and both chest and waist straps for ensuring it stays put.

### Features a-plenty

Also onboard are two very nice stretchable pockets for water bottles (again, thankfully not mesh, which tend to tear), while hidden away in a zippable compartment is a bright green waterproof cover. Not only will this keep your bag dry in a deluge, it could, we suspect, conceivably also attract the attention of passing helicopters if you ever find yourself stranded on the mountain. In terms of compartments, the pack's compactness belies how capacious it is, we could quite easily get a weekend's worth of clothing and gear in it. Expanding its space is a secondary compartment, which also hosts a key fob.

The daypack could further do duty on short hikes as well – on both of its sides are two adjustable loops for securing hiking poles or a monopod. In a nutshell, the Felix is a very capable, comfortable and full featured daypack that will likely well serve those who are heading to the hills for a weekend or further afield alike. RRP: R500. [RN] **ts**

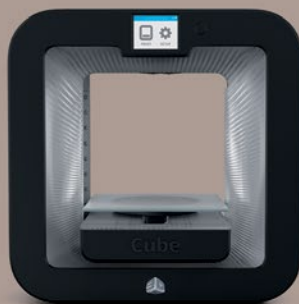




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## Sony SmartBand

The Sony SmartBand is designed to be a peripheral companion to those users touting an Android smart device. As with most fitness bands and activity trackers, Sony has opted for a relatively refined design aesthetic. The only embellishments are a silver circular tag and diagonal ridges on the wristband itself. The latter offers a tactile feel to the SmartBand, but ultimately attracts a fair amount of dirt and dust.

The key to the SmartBand lies in its intuitive Lifelog application available across all Android 4.4 devices with NFC and Bluetooth 4.0, giving users the ability to view their activity throughout the day. Keeping in line with Sony's Xperia lineup, the SmartBand is dust resistant and waterproof (IP58) and enhances its level of durability. As strong as the SmartBand is, it's not ideally suited to be a fitness band, as information can only be accessed via a device and not the band itself. But compared to other activity trackers, the SmartBand is the best we've tested to date thanks to its information capturing accuracy.

RRP – R1 400

## Fitbit Flex

The Fitbit Flex is a band that is better categorised as an activity tracker than a fully fledged fitness wearable. On initial inspection, the Flex is rather innocuous looking with its single row of five LED lights being the only aspect to draw one's eye. As a result of its lack of true on-band interface, the Flex's functionality is heavily dependent upon the Fitbit app, available on both iOS and Android devices. As with the Sony Smartband and Jawbone UP24, the Fitbit's app gives its wearer an instant snapshot of their daily progress as well as the ability to log all daily food and water intake.

Its one major limiting factor however, is its lack of alternative data capturing modes, as it is only able to register steps taken and calories burned. For those users looking for a device to assist them in tracking the efficacy of their workouts, the Flex is not ideal. But if you are looking for a simple activity tracker to assist in living a healthier lifestyle, it's a sound mid-range offering worthy of consideration.

RRP – R1 390 from [www.store.orange.com/za/](http://www.store.orange.com/za/)



## Samsung Gear Fit

Out of this batch, the Gear Fit from Samsung is the most intriguing smartband, thanks to its 1.8" curved Super AMOLED display and touch interface. Compared to other bands, the Gear Fit is feature filled, with notifications for calls, emails and events, along with pedometer and calorie measuring functionality. There is however one major downfall to all this, as the Gear Fit is disappointingly only compatible with a selection of Galaxy S devices.

As fantastic as the Gear Fit's display is, it's also a little difficult to use when viewing longer messages or emails for example, as users only have 1.8" of real estate to work with. This makes having to tap multiple times to view a single email a little frustrating after a while. As with the Galaxy S5,

the Gear Fit also features a heart rate sensor and is water resistant, making it more versatile than the rest. As far as smart bands go, the Gear Fit is solid, but still has some kinks to iron out for follow-up iterations, specifically its price.

RRP – R2 500



## Jawbone UP24

The UP24 from American manufacturer Jawbone, offers users an activity tracker with a completely unique look and feel, courtesy of its wrap-around design. Like the Sony Smartband and Fitbit Flex, the UP24 provides little in the form of on-band interface. It makes it heavily dependant on the

Jawbone's specially designed UP app, available for iOS and Android devices exclusively. This is further supported by a range of useful third-party apps that complement the UP24's use as a health lifestyle companion.

From an accuracy standpoint, the UP24 is very precise, as a result of its tri-axis accelerometer and MotionX technology setup. This translates to a realistic capturing of information that allows wearers to gauge their progress more effectively. The one downside to the UP24 is its lack of water resistance when compared to other activity trackers. This should not present any trouble during sweat-inducing workout sessions, but takes swimming out of the equation. Another mark against the UP24 is its R1 990 price tag, which makes it more expensive than other offerings.

RRP – R1 990 **ts**



# WORLD CUP boot preview

The 2014 Fifa World Cup is the greatest footballing showpiece known to man, and while the players will garner plenty of attention, so will the boots they are wearing. We showcase three tools of the trade from the world's biggest sporting brands.

## Adidas adizero f50 Messi (Battle Pack)

Along with being the key sponsor for the 2014 Fifa World Cup, Adidas will also be kitting out one of the world's greatest footballers, Lionel Messi. The diminutive Argentine will be sporting a pair of adizero f50 boots as part of the German company's recently released Battle Pack design. In terms of appearance, the f50 Messi features the same black and white as the rest of the Battle Pack range, with its main difference the blue coloured accent running along the front of the boot, representative of Messi's Argentinian roots.

The boot is extremely light, weighing in at a mere 165 g, making it ideal for players who value speed while taking on the opposition. Its lightweight construction comes courtesy of Adidas' Hybridtouch synthetic leather material. Another key integration is the Dribble Tex raised 3D textures on the boot's upper, allowing for greater grip and control of the ball. For the f50 Messi's plate, Adidas makes use of Speedtraxion stud alignment, to offer better traction while making quick turns and weaving through defences. RRP: R2 200.



## Puma evoPower Tricks

If Adidas has opted for a monotone black and white look, Puma has taken a completely different approach for its evoPower Tricks World Cup boots, favouring a pink and blue colourway. What makes this colour choice so unique, is the fact that each boot is an independent colour – the right boot is pink and the left blue. The evoPower football lends itself perfectly to all-action midfield players and will be worn by the likes of Yaya Touré (Ivory Coast) and Cesc Fàbregas (Spain).

Some of the technologies Puma has integrated into the evoPower's design include an EverFit external cage to ensure optimal midsole stability for the wearer's foot. On the instep of the boot upper, Puma has utilised a stretchable material to allow a player's foot to bend more effectively while striking the ball. For the outsole plate, a highly flexible Pebax synthetic material is used for even distribution of weight during strides, and ensuring stability while playing. The distinctive pink/blue colourway is also available in Puma's far lighter evoSpeed boot model. RRP: R2 400.



## Nike Mercurial Superfly

If there's a player that viewers from around the world will be waiting to see at this year's Fifa World Cup, it's Portuguese phenom Cristiano Ronaldo, sporting Nike's new Mercurial Superfly boots. The Superfly features a similar Flyknit upper construction to the Magista, a boot we previewed in March's TechSmart issue. These new Mercurial's are designed for speed, featuring a specially knitted upper and streamlined carbon fibre footplate.

Nike believes that the three-knit weave design process used in constructing the Superfly, puts less material between the player's foot and the ball, resulting in an increased level of control. Just like the Magista, the Superfly has a Dynamic Fit Collar, designed to create a seamless fit and increased level of comfort. On either side of the boot's upper are Nike's specially designed Brio cables, to offer greater stability when making jinking runs on the field. The carbon fibre plate for the Superfly has been trimmed down from three layers to two, along with additional studs on the boot's heel. This has resulted in greater grip and propulsion in between strides. RRP: R2 800. **ts**



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**WE DELIVER**

# the alpha CHRONICLES

By Linda Pretorius

Knowing where we come from helps us to understand where we're going. This month we look at how events billions of years ago shaped where we are today.

## 1 TIME ZERO

### 14 billion years ago: The Big Bang occurs

A study just out lets us watch how the universe likely unfolded. Scientists simulated a large chunk of space, divided it into billions of smaller units and then let a computer network run calculations for 16 million hours combined. The resulting simulation shows how, just after the Big Bang, dark matter forms a cosmic web, followed by the formation of galaxies around stars and massive black holes. When the stars eventually explode, elements from their cores are blasted into the gassy intergalactic space. Judging from comparison with real-world space images, the simulation is remarkably accurate. There are, however, a few glitches, which the researchers say will help them rethink specific aspects of the universe's evolution. Watch how it all unfolds: [bit.ly/billion14](http://bit.ly/billion14)

## 3 ROCKY ROADS

### 4.54 billion years ago: Earth developed

In the aftermath of the Big Bang, dust and gas swirled around young stars, gradually thinning out into a flat, disc-like shape. As the disc spun around the star, the dust particles gradually started to clump together, growing progressively bigger to form the beginnings of a planet. Many of these early planets form at the same time and often collide with each other, causing the objects either to break up or to merge. Over millions of years and after many such collisions, the objects have become big enough to have cleared most of the rubble in their paths and a sparsely populated disc matures into a planetary system.

## 5 AIR SUPPLY

### 2.3 billion years ago: The Earth's atmosphere becomes oxygen rich

With everything set for biological reactions to occur on Earth, the planet became rife with early photosynthetic cyanobacteria. Although they had appeared much earlier already, the iron-rich oceans of early Earth absorbed all the oxygen they produced. But because of their prolific population growth, they eventually released more oxygen than could be absorbed. The excess accumulated in the atmosphere, causing the cyanobacteria to die and setting the stage for aerobic life forms to evolve. **ts**

## ELEMENTARY STUFF 2

### 20 minutes later: The first chemical elements are present in space

In less than half an hour after the Big Bang, space had been seeded mostly with hydrogen and helium, and a little bit of lithium and beryllium. Anything heavier – from nitrogen to iron – forms in stars through an atomic fusion chain reaction. But by the time a star's core is mostly iron, it weighs so much that it collapses onto itself. This blows the whole star apart and spews the elements into interstellar space. And in a brief few moments after this explosion, temperature and pressure conditions are just right for heavier elements to form in the gas and dust.

## LEADING UP TO LIFE 4

### 3.8 billion years ago: The first life appears on Earth

A recent study suggests that the hot, iron-rich oceans of early Earth may have been just the push that set the wheels of life rolling. Scientists added the known starting points for modern metabolic pathways to solutions similar to those early oceans. After the solutions had simmered for a few hours, the same metabolites were found as formed through two metabolic pathways found in all modern cells. The difference, though, is that enzymes catalyse these metabolic reactions in modern cells. Yet they were not available 4 billion years ago. The findings therefore suggest that the iron-rich oceans supplied suitable inorganic catalysts to allow carbon metabolism.

#### Sources

Snippet 1: [bit.ly/1JPSCIE](http://bit.ly/1JPSCIE) • [bit.ly/1jm5Vpm](http://bit.ly/1jm5Vpm)  
 Snippet 2: <http://1.usa.gov/1h4kTWC> • [bit.ly/1kh5wJW](http://bit.ly/1kh5wJW)  
 Snippet 3: [bit.ly/1jo2N7](http://bit.ly/1jo2N7) • [bit.ly/TMdllh](http://bit.ly/TMdllh)  
 Snippet 4: [bit.ly/1k8m8i1](http://bit.ly/1k8m8i1) • [bit.ly/1kh5QbE](http://bit.ly/1kh5QbE)  
 Snippet 5: <http://bbc.in/1JGc3V>

## SCIENCE

## PIC OF THE MONTH

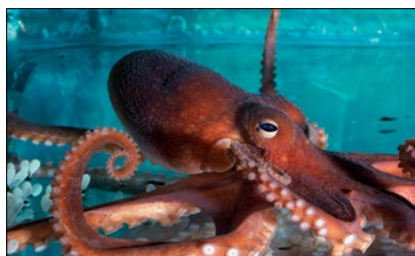


It seems as if your smartphone carries more than just a cellular signal. As part of a Practical and Biomedical Bacteriology course, University of Surrey students imprint their phones onto bacteriological growth media, to see what it might carry. The results are quite surprising, as seen on the photo of what can only be the outlines of an iPhone formed by bacteria. Unfortunately, no anti-virus app will help in combating this form of infection.

Image: The Smart Phone As Vector 2014.  
<http://exploringtheinvisible.com>

# SMART ANSWERS

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



## STRAIGHT EIGHTS

**Why does an octopus not tangle itself up?** Because the suckers don't like touching themselves.

**Serious now?** Really. The skin of an octopus reflexively inhibits the arm suckers from attaching to their own body.

**How do we know this?** Researchers looked at how amputated octopus arms behave. The suckers attached strongly to objects for about an hour after being separated from the brain, which shows that attachment is a reflex action. But anything covered in octopus skin was avoided or touched very gingerly, without any attachment. This suggests that the skin likely releases a chemical signal that says 'Hands off!'.

**What's next?** If the chemical substance can be identified, the findings may contribute to refining the control system of a flexible surgical robot arm.

Source: [bit.ly/1ta57cN](http://bit.ly/1ta57cN)



## JELLY BONES

**What's new in the world of gel?** Scientists recently developed a water-based gel that is a liquid at room temperature, sets at body temperature, and later decays spontaneously.

**Why is this useful?** The gel can be used as a temporary scaffold for bone regrowth.

**How so?** When the gel is injected into a space where new bone has to form, it sets and becomes a framework to which new bone cells can attach. Gradually, as the bone grows, the jelly starts to decay and then leaves the body.

**Why all the fuss?** Similar existing biogels start to shrink once they've set. This means that they don't fill the space where the new tissue has to grow for long enough to let the bone cells take root.

Source: [bit.ly/1kLRHjH](http://bit.ly/1kLRHjH)



## THE CATCHING ROBOT

**Can a robot play catch?** Yes, if you show it how.

**OK, so how?** Scientists lobbed things like empty bottles, half-filled bottles, hammers and tennis rackets at a three-jointed arm with a sophisticated hand. But instead of programming it with set movements, they guided the robot arm towards the objects as they came flying.

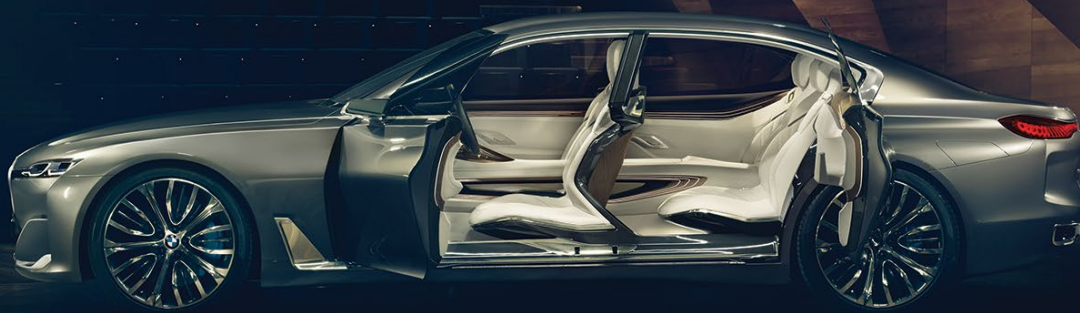
**Why?** This showed the 'bot various possible trajectories of the objects, which it could then use to build predictive models about the movements. So, when faced with something new, the robot could guess the path based on what it already knows. This is similar to how humans learn.

**Will these 'bots be useful?** Yup, they can be really handy to help clean up space junk, of which the trajectories are unknown. **ts**

Source: [bit.ly/1nEObui](http://bit.ly/1nEObui)

# 6 Best Concept Cars OF 2014 ... so far

Concept Cars are not just awesome eye-candy, they also offer hints at the design aesthetic a manufacturer will be using in years to come. With a number of major motoring and automotive shows completed for this year, we've put together a list of 2014's six best concept cars to date.



## BMW Vision Future Luxury

The BMW Vision Future Luxury may not be the most radically styled of all the concepts on this list, but it may just be the most important. This is because the Vision Future's design as well as technological integrations are cues that we will undoubtedly be seeing in upcoming high-end vehicles from the Bavarian manufacturer.

Such technological innovations are the newly designed user interface, utilising BMW's ConnectedDrive in-vehicle services. These include a wraparound cluster with three intermeshing information displays for the driver to interact with. Next is the Heads Up Display (HUD), which will now integrate information like road signs, historical landmarks and buildings, in addition to real-time information for traffic light phasing. Lastly is the front and backend light setup, which will feature Laserlight and OLED technology respectively.

## Volkswagen Beetle Dune

The Beetle Dune is Volkswagen's attempt to make the female-friendly Beetle look a tad more rugged, much in the same way that the Countryman did for Mini. A sand-ready vehicle is something that Volkswagen has played around with in the past, such as the Volkswagen Buggy Up.

The Dune is based off the shape of the Beetle R Line, and boasts a 157 kW TSI engine with a six-speed DSG dual-clutch automatic transmission. It's also wider and taller than the R Line Beetle with an additional two inches of ground clearance for negotiating difficult terrain. Other enhancements include a ski rack incorporated into the roof's design, 19" alloy wheels and 7.7" touchscreen in the cabin. At this stage, the Beetle Dune remains a concept, but may make its way to showroom floors as a limited edition release.





## Audi A3 Clubsport Quattro Concept

The A3 Clubsport Quattro from Audi showcases the possibilities of customisation within the A3 range for performance- and tuning enthusiasts. Built from the design of the A3 Sedan, the Clubsport Quattro forms the basis for a range of similarly high spec'd vehicles the manufacturer plans to showcase later in the year.

With one of Audi's top of the line engines aboard, the 2.5 litre TFSI which produces a mammoth 386 kW of power, the Clubsport is no slouch. This is supported by 600Nm of torque and a car that's been stripped down to weigh a mere 1 527 kilograms. All of this translates to a 0-100 km/h time of 3.6 seconds and top speed of 310 km/h, making it one of the quickest non-racing vehicles that Audi can produce.

## Mercedes-Benz Concept Coupé SUV

The Concept Coupé SUV from Mercedes-Benz is inspired by the range of high-end crossover vehicles currently dominating the luxury market, including the Range Rover Evoque and BMW X6. The design of this concept combines muscular side panels and sweeping lines into one awesome hybrid vehicle.

Under the bonnet, Mercedes-Benz has incorporated a V6 engine that produces 248 kW of power and 480 Nm of torque. Other key integrations include a 4Matic all-wheel drive system, 9G-Tronic Plus nine speed automatic transmission, 22" alloy wheels, as well as an "Alu Beam" paint finish reminiscent of the Silver Arrow racing cars of the 1930s and 1950s.

We actually expect the Coupé SUV to make its way to showroom floors in the not too distant future, and hopefully shake up the crossover market.



## Maserati Alfieri

The Maserati Alfieri was designed to celebrate the Italian manufacturer's centenary, as well as previewing the look of its sports cars moving forward. It borrows its name from one of the company's chief automotive engineers and co-founders, Alfieri Maserati.

The Alfieri itself is partly inspired by the iconic 1954 Maserati A6 GCS, and adds some modern design flourishes to produce an exceptionally beautiful looking vehicle. It also features a 4.7 litre V8 engine that produces 343 kW and six speed electro-actuated transmission to allow for seamless gear changes. Other modern touches include TFT displays for the in-car instrument panel, bi-xenon and LED headlamps, 3 dimensional taillights and 21" alloy wheels with Maserati blue coloured accents.

## Volvo Concept XC Coupé

Swedish automotive manufacturer Volvo, is going through a design renaissance of late, debuting three new concept vehicles earlier in the year. The most striking of which is the Concept XC Coupé, designed to be a multi-purpose vehicle for people with active lifestyles. The concept itself is said to be inspired by high-tech, modern sporting equipment, according to Volvo.

Its design team has incorporated traditional SUV elements such as the side mouldings and ski plates, with more robust aspects like the accentuated wheel arches which house 21" wheels, as well as an angular backend. The front of the XC Coupé features a new layout, with a 'floating grille', flanked on either side by T-shaped Daytime Running Lamp lights. The rear light setup is also a unique reinterpretation as Volvo looks to change its once plain, box-like aesthetic into something uniquely engaging. **ts**



# OFFICE TO..... SOCIAL STYLE

by Mynhardt van Pletsen

One of the worst cases of mistaken identity that comes with the geek lifestyle, is the one that exists between work and, well... the rest of our non-work lives. Being able to seamlessly transition between the two, without selling your soul or coming up short, is probably the most sought after superpower of this conflicting and complicated age.

To accompany you on this noble quest to find yourself in all your settings, we've assembled the perfect collection of assuming attire. These gentlemanly garments distinguish themselves not only in being highly appropriate in their original function but, not unlike yourself, also possess the power to shift gears and change with whatever the circumstances require.

With the coldest months 2014 has to offer just around the corner, make sure you include at least one pair of high quality boots, a button up shirt that goes well with jeans, and a pair of pants that can double up as both business wear and social slacks. Add some knitted woollies for those chilly mornings, and round it off with a chunky leather strapped timepiece that's both functional and fashionable.

So whether you're pairing your Levi Sta-Prest pants with your oh-so-edgy Steve Madden treads for a night on the town, or you're inverting your Capestorm Entrada jacket to go from office ensemble straight to adventure apparel, know we've covered all the bases, setting you up to be the freakishly fantastic fashion chameleon that you are.

Mix and match these items to create probably the most flexible set of fundamentals this side of the work/life barrier, so that the next time you feel the pressure to adjust your appearance to fit another's expectations, know that you've already ticked that box ages ago. **ts**

Blue and white checked button up shirt.  
Tom Taylor at Edgars, R500.

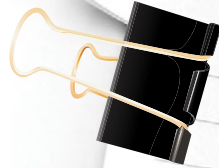


Broad leather strap chronograph watch.  
Fossil, R2 700.





Knitted beanie with peak.  
Markhams, R100.



Steve Madden Troopa boots.  
Edgars, R1 300.



Capestorm Entrada Adventure jacket.  
Sportman's Warehouse, R1 800.



Knitted fingerless gloves.  
Mr Price, R60.



Levi/Stussy Sta-Prest pants.  
Levi Store, R750.

# Top 5 MODERN DIRECTORS

They are the creators of modern dreams (or nightmares), pushing the boundaries of cinema and taking our thoughts in new directions. Movie fundi Spling picks the Top 5 modern directors.



## Christopher Nolan

Christopher Nolan has become a household name thanks to a string of consistently dark, beautifully crafted, thought-provoking and meticulous films. The director's work ethic, high standards and incredible talents make his films cultural events. In his quest for perfection, Nolan has delivered films that are both commercial and critical successes, appealing to the masses and appeasing film critics simultaneously.

What makes the cinematic magician's portfolio all the more impressive is his work rate, averaging a first-class film every two years. From the jagged timeline of *Memento* to the mind heist in *Inception*, Nolan has carved out a niche for himself as a filmmaker extraordinaire.

**Filmography:** *Memento* (2000), *Insomnia* (2002), *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Prestige* (2006), *The Dark Knight* (2008), *Inception* (2010), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012).

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## Alexander Payne

Alexander Payne's profoundly human, emotionally taut and poignant comedy dramas challenge audiences and actors to dig deep. The director manages to tap into the human spirit with subtle cinema that evokes a powerful range of emotion. Through laughter and tears, we're able to engage with an honest and real depiction of human nature in simple yet meaningful stories.

From the bittersweet soul-searching in *About Schmidt* to celebrating love in *Sideways*, Payne never fails to draw on universal themes and characters that resonate with his audience. With regular award ceremony nods and an excellent strike rate, his comedy dramas are always entertaining, heartfelt and on point.

**Filmography:** *Election* (1999), *About Schmidt* (2002), *Sideways* (2004), *The Descendants* (2011) and *Nebraska* (2013).



## Darren Aronofsky

Darren Aronofsky is an ambitious and fearless film-maker, whose work is challenging, terrifying and thought-provoking. His collection of dark visions are bold, mesmerising and psychologically enchanting, taking us out of our comfort zones and into the dream or nightmare of someone else's existence.

While *The Fountain* and *Noah* received mixed reviews, their layered themes and flashes of brilliance still warrant our full attention. Aronofsky's films make great conversation starters and the director always manages to create art that is evocative and exciting. He may not be a crowd-pleaser, but dares you to go into the deepest, darkest reaches of the mind.

**Filmography:** *Pi* (1998), *Requiem for a Dream* (2000), *The Fountain* (2006), *The Wrestler* (2008), *Black Swan* (2010) and *Noah* (2014).



## Paul Thomas Anderson

Paul Thomas Anderson is a true auteur. The writer-director may only deliver a film every few years, but this philosophy seems to have worked for the late Stanley Kubrick. While his films tend to divide audiences, there's no doubting the depths of his talent for creating layered, original and spellbinding films that deserve repeat viewings.

From reimagining Adam Sandler in *Punch-Drunk Love* to transforming Dracula into an oil tycoon in *There Will Be Blood*, his distinctive, versatile and holistic film-making is well-respected and attracts the greatest acting talent. This is a director who truly immerses himself in every aspect of the film-making process.

**Filmography:** *Boogie Nights* (1997), *Magnolia* (1999), *Punch-Drunk Love* (2002), *There Will Be Blood* (2007) and *The Master* (2012).



## David Fincher

David Fincher has established himself as a savvy director with a slick and sinister body of films that feature in most people's movie collections. With a penchant for crime thrillers, Fincher has become a modern master of suspense, turning his films into tense, vivid and imaginative guessing games.

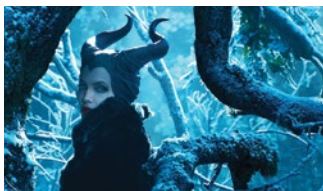
The director is the epitome of cool, emerging from a music video background and regularly collaborating with cutting edge talent like Brad Pitt and Trent Reznor. He's best known for his gripping narratives and epic twists, with each film emblazoned with his trademark techniques. Just like Nolan, his films also carry both art house and commercial appeal.

**Filmography:** *Alien 3* (1992), *Se7en* (1995), *The Game* (1997), *Fight Club* (1999), *Panic Room* (2002), *Zodiac* (2007), *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), *The Social Network* (2010) and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011). **ts**

Close but no cigar: Steve McQueen, Wes Anderson, Danny Boyle, Spike Jonze, Quentin Tarantino and David O. Russell.

# NEW Cinema

## RELEASES



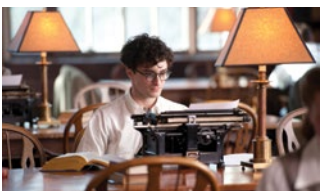
### Maleficent

Thor dropped his mighty hammer to co-star alongside an armour-clad Kristen Stewart as *Snow White and the Huntsman* so there's no reason why you shouldn't see *Maleficent*, Disney's latest fantasy adventure. Angelina Jolie's dark majesty

as *Maleficent* echoes her role in *Beowulf*, while Charlize Theron stars as Ravenna. If you've seen the movie trailer, you'll know the parallels with *Snow White & the Huntsman* don't end there.

*Maleficent* is bound to be spectacular thanks to Robert Stromberg. While a directorial debut, the Oscar-winning visual effects supervisor is responsible for the magic at the heart of *Pan's Labyrinth*, *The Hunger Games*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Avatar*.

**Why watch?** To put an end to the nightmares after watching *Maleficent* in *Sleeping Beauty*.



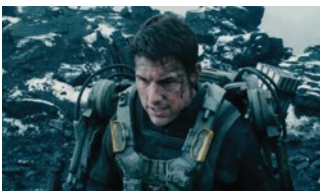
### Kill Your Darlings

Daniel Radcliffe is trying to shake *Harry Potter*. Just like Connery's lingering bond with *Bond*, it's something that no amount of shadow boxing is going to jilt. That doesn't stop him from trying though, since *Kill Your Darlings* stars Radcliffe as

young American poet, Allen Ginsberg. The story follows a murder in 1944, in which Beat Generation poets Ginsberg, Kerouac and Burroughs were united.

Potter's not alone, supported by a notable cast including the Leonardo DiCaprio lookalike Dane DeHaan (*The Amazing Spider-Man 2*). As funny as that combination sounds, this one's dead serious, dealing with the forces that shaped Ginsberg's sexuality, identity and art.

**Why watch?** So that you don't think the Beat Generation is a 90s Eurodance project.



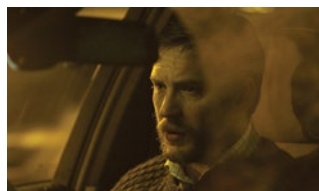
### Edge of Tomorrow

If *Groundhog Day* made an impression and *Source Code* blew you away, you've got to see *Edge of Tomorrow*, starring Tom Cruise and Emily Blunt. This live-action adaptation is based on Hiroshi Sakurazaka's light novel, *All You*

*Need Is Kill*. The story follows a military officer, inexperienced in combat, yet stuck in a time loop repeating the same mission.

Doug Liman directs a thought-provoking sci-fi actioner with a strong dose of dark comedy. He's a great choice considering he's best known for *The Bourne Identity*, *Swingers* and *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, and he's already primed to direct *Splinter Cell* with Tom Hardy in 2015.

**Why watch?** To erase your memory of the awful *Oblivion*...



### Locke

A dedicated family man and construction manager is pushed to the edge after a phone call seems poised to destroy everything he's worked so hard to achieve. If you've seen *Phone Booth*, *Buried* or *Brake*... you'll know what *Locke* is

all about: one man, one phone, a claustrophobic scenario and escalating tension.

This is an edgy night ride that works thanks to a compelling performance from Tom Hardy and nail-biting tension from writer-director Steven Knight. We saw some glimmers of greatness from Knight with Jason Statham in *Redemption*. By zooming in and leveraging an actor like Tom Hardy, *Locke* ironically unlocks mystery and suspense.

**Why watch?** For the price of a movie ticket, you get to ride shotgun with Tom Hardy.



### Transformers: Age of Extinction

Michael Bay doesn't care if you liked *Revenge of the Fallen* or not. He's cashing Transformer-sized cheques and still getting a \$165 million budget to make movies about a line of toys. Now that he's got Mark

Wahlberg's sequel virginity, it seems as though Bay is unstoppable.

In *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, he's out of control... arming Optimus Prime with a sword, shield and saddling a Dinobot. Needless to say, the CGI and sound effects are going to be out-of-this-world and the story actually looks quite promising now that they've stopped relying on Sam Witwicky to save the world.

**Why watch?** If this sequel makes it big, there's a good chance we'll see a live-action Dino-Riders movie.

## MOVIE NEWS

### Arrow, meet The Flash...



Can lightning strike twice? The Flash, DC's spin-off to *Arrow* looks promising after they released a five minute trailer for the pilot episode. From *X-Men: Days of Future Past*'s treatment of Quicksilver, there are obviously a lot of creative

ways to keep the speedster fresh and exciting. Grant Gustin plays the scarlet superhero and with some strong parallels with Peter Parker and *Spider-Man*, there's potential for greatness. Expect an avalanche of 'Flash in the Pan' jokes if it fails.

### Blade Runner 2 looking to move Ford

While a financial flop at the time of its 1982 release, *Blade Runner* has developed a loyal cult following and more traction with time. While it may contravene aspects of the original, Alcon Entertainment wants Harrison Ford and Ridley Scott back for the sequel. The 71-year-old Ford reprised his role as Indiana Jones, is set to return as Han Solo, and will probably be persuaded to return as Rick Deckard, after a series of box office misfires. **ts**

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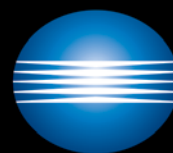
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IMAGE:  
MORAY RHODA

# STORM

## in a d-cup

the view of women in

# POP culture

It's undeniable that pop culture has become mainstream culture as evidenced by Hollywood's strip-mining of comics and electronic gaming. This is not to say that prevalent misogynist views have been eradicated. Instead the past few years have seen many festering issues brought to the fore. Comic book guru Moray Rhoda investigates.

One of the most obvious problems in pop culture is the hypothetical audience that female characters are created for. Laura Mulvey, a British feminist film theorist, introduced the concept of the male gaze as a symptom of gender power bias in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, but it applies equally to fine art, comics and gaming. Male gaze is art that forces the viewer to regard the action and characters through the perspective of a heterosexual man where women are presented in a sexualised context. The gaming industry especially excels at this with games like *Tera Online* where there is a stark contrast between male and female character creation and costuming. The worst offender in comics is DC's *Power Girl*, an unrealistically proportioned character who has a 'boob window' as part of her costume. One official explanation is that she intended to put a symbol in the space but could not settle on one, so instead cut a hole in her costume as a placeholder. Which obviously makes more sense than admitting she is some male artist/writer's sexual wish-fulfilment material for teen boys.

The internet domain of the 'serious gamer'

is a rank, smelly pit of teen angst where every discussion about consoles or pixels or HD re-releases quickly degenerates into flame-wars as attested by the amount of built-up bile and racism that is spewed every time another gamer has a differing opinion.

**The biggest stumbling block is the prevailing 'us versus them' mentality that seems to almost be a badge of honour for some geeks.**

In this perfect storm of name-calling, your-mama jokes and infantile behaviour, it's still frightening to see the amount of hate so-called 'fake' woman gamers get. It seldom or never happens that when a doctor states her medical opinion that she gets threatened with rape, but when movie, gaming and comic industry professionals do the same in their industry, it seems that these kinds of threats are seen as a valid expression of 'nerd rage'. It's the kind of sexist harassment that happened recently to comic pro Janelle Asselin when she commented on a DC Comics *New Teen Titans* cover (see image). Asselin called attention to Wonder Girl's breasts, noting "Those are implants. On a teenaged superheroine." This harassment happens on

a regular basis to media critic Anita Sarkeesian whenever she posts a video in the series *Tropes vs Women in Video Games*.

Threats of physical violence or sexually offensive comments seem to be the automatic fall-back position, and though one can argue that generally this is expected behaviour from males who are emotional (and sometimes physical) 12-year olds, it's certainly not acceptable.

### Get the girl, kill the baddies

In electronic gaming it seems that female characters mostly exist as victims; a narrative crutch for revenge themes for the main male character; or are generally marginalized and/or violently disposed of. Lara Croft is another unrealistically-proportioned, yet allegedly incredibly intelligent character, and the *Tomb Raider* reboot recently (deservedly) got some online flack after executive producer Ron Rosenberg said: "When people play Lara, they don't really project themselves into the character, they're more like, 'I want to protect her.' There's this sort of dynamic of, 'I'm going to this adventure with her and trying to protect her.'"

This is the kind of thinking that is completely absent when creating a Nathan Drake character (from the hit-series of Uncharted PS3 games), who let's face it, is really just Lara Croft in drag. It is the kind of thinking that seriously undermines the creation of good characters, who happen to be female. Which is how fictional characters should be created, as opposed to having their gender define them first.

Movies are no exception. As an industry, it sometimes comes across that Hollywood still believes that audiences don't want to see strong female leads portraying well-written characters or that these actors won't deliver the kind of box-office gold of their male counterparts. Of all the pop culture industries, this is probably the most disheartening, as female creatives are extremely well-represented in all spheres from screen-writing, to acting, to directing, to producing, and yet that has not translated into most movies passing the Bechdel test for strong female characters. Named after American cartoonist Alison Bechdel, it tests whether a movie contains:

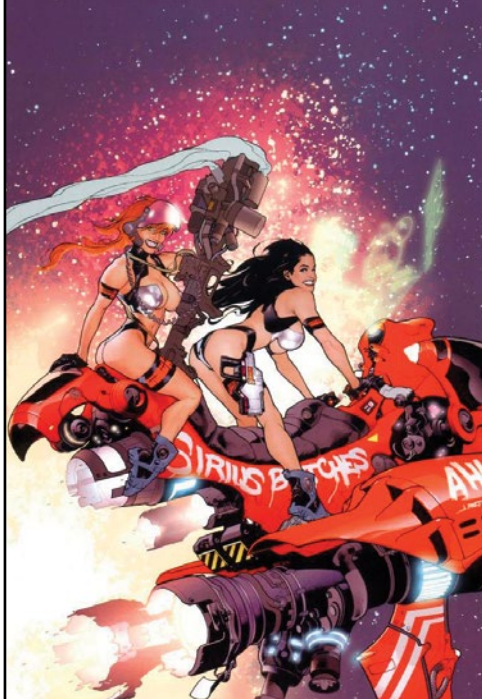
- 1) Two named female characters,
- 2) who talk to each other,
- 3) about something other than a man.

It's not much to ask for and yet most movies (including rom-coms) tend to fail this test.

New Teen Titans' #1



*It does not take much to notice that something is out of proportion on this New Teen Titans cover.*



**Question:** What do you get when you make male heroes pose like female ones?  
**Answer:** The Hawkeye Initiative at [www.thehawkeyeinitiative.com](http://www.thehawkeyeinitiative.com).

exit-the-king:  
The Dirty Pair: Run from the Future #1 (Adam Hughes variant)  
Dark Horse



### It's the end of the world as we know it

Changing current entrenched attitudes won't be easy. The biggest stumbling block is the prevailing 'us versus them' mentality that seems to almost be a badge of honour for some geeks. 'Them' being anyone who did not grow up in a petri dish of geek culture or gained their power through years of being exposed to comics, TV, PC or console radiation. Pop culture has become popular culture and for those who spent years as outsiders finding meaning in their lives in gaming, movies or comics, this has translated into the co-opting or outright stealing of their childhood obsessions. These 'original fans' have to realise that the new fans and women won't go away and they are not the enemy, so sooner or later 'they' will need to become 'us'.

On the other side of the argument, eradicating gender-biased art is treated as the be-all and end-all, mostly proving true current fanboy fears of outsiders destroying geek culture. However, the Feminazi approach of public warfare through social media with every real or imagined piece of male gaze art is counter-productive. A much more impactful way of dealing with the attitudes and perceptions in pop culture is to address the issue more creatively. For instance, comic book creator Noelle Stevenson (<http://gingerhaze.com/nimona>) suggested a formula to draw attention to the hyper-

sexualised and unrealistic way women are drawn in comics, namely: "How to fix every Strong Female Character pose in superhero comics: replace the character with Hawkeye doing the same thing." This led to the creation of The Hawkeye initiative (<http://thehawkeyeinitiative.com>) which, thanks to the electronic age, swept the world and created some amusing art and more importantly, a serious dialogue around male gaze art.

### The End?

Ultimately creators of popular culture should strive to be more informed and to stop perpetuating stereotypes when creating characters, just like fans of geek culture should realise that a differing opinion of their favourite thing doesn't give one the right to make threats aimed at the critic. There's simply no excuse for it. **ts**



Artist:  
Rosa Middleton, for  
GEEKED  
magazine Issue 3

# TOP Tweets!

- Best Darth Vader** @mdarthvaderm · 3h  
That awkward moment when you ask your son to rule the galaxy with you and he jumps off a cliff instead.
- Matt Roller** @rolldiggity · 14h  
TV Show Idea: A "Fresh Prince" where he doesn't have relatives in Bel Air, so every episode is him getting in bigger and bigger fights.
- The • Steve** @DarthCoffeeus · 16h  
If only mosquitos sucked "stupid" instead of blood.
- Shari VanderWerf** @shariv67 · 23h  
Salvador Dali walks into a bar. But it's not a bar. It's your grave. Why the long face? The bartender melts. \*buzz of 1000 locusts\* ENTROPY!
- Deep Fried Man** @DeepFriedMan · May 26  
I wonder how much time will pass between swearing in our ministers and swearing at our ministers.
- I'M KEEN** @KEENANMULVANEY · May 26  
BE THE ANIMAL YOUR DOG THINKS YOU ARE.
- Liana Maeby** @lianamaeby · May 26  
At this point, reading 140 characters seems like a lot to ask.
- PieGuy** @ilovepie84 · May 25  
I don't mean to brag but I got invited to play candy crush on Facebook by a person with 400+ friends
- Champagne Puppy** @AndiePuppy · May 24  
I bet baby perlemoen dream of becoming so much more than just an ashtray

- The Dark Lord** @Lord\_Voldemort7 · May 23  
There are two types of people in this world: people you can trust to help hide a body and people who are the body.
- Elon Musk** @elonmusk · May 23  
The next Dragon mission to the Space Station will carry our first live mammals: 40 mousetronauts! [nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/...](http://nasa.gov/mission_pages/...)
- Bogey** @nikijayb · May 23  
I wonder whether I'll ever be prepared to spend R80 on a 500ml tub of Haagen Dazs.
- Chester Missing** @chestermissing · May 22  
Just once I would like a politician to be honest and stand up and say: 'Screw the people, I am here for the bucks, the buffet and the booty'
- Wile E. Quixote** @ScottLinnen · May 22  
I'd like a job that involves me being in Southeast Asia and two guys on a motorcycle zoom by and steal my briefcase.
- Sara** @sara\_ashlynn · May 21  
People who are "drunk on life," don't know about alcohol.
- Gus Silber** @gussilber · May 14  
Posters of politicians still clinging to their lamp-posts, like guests too hungover to leave in the wake of the party.
- IG : kwakil** @Kwakil · May 14  
#notstupidbut as a kid I used to think hitchhikers were giving drivers a thumbs up or down in relation to how good they were driving...
- JT** @JT\_IV\_ · May 18  
\*takes flight to Tokyo to see where Godzilla really happened, and meet the survivors.
- Alain de Botton** @alaindebotton · May 12  
For paranoia about 'what other people think' : remember that only some hate, a very few love - and almost all just don't care.

## TechSmart's Horoscope

TechSmart's astrologer, Merlin Mendacium, predicts the month ahead.



### GEMINI

Annoying, bossy, know-it-all. Do you see yourself in this description Gemini? Of course you don't, instead please feel free this birthday month of yours to continue acting in this manner.

### CANCER

In Close Encounters of a Third Kind, Richard Dreyfuss's character is strangely attracted to a mountain. You Cancerian is strangely attracted to the Voortrekker Monument. Why? Capital Craft beer festival come 14 June. Be there.

### LEO

A recent study found less gray matter in the brains of men who watched large amounts of porn. The fact that you need to tighten your cap's strap every time you put it on might point to something, does it not Mr. Leo?

### VIRGO

You've only recently bought a flying drone, only to hear about the ban of all drones with cameras by the Civil Aviation Authority. Serves you right for using it to spy on your neighbours.

### LIBRA

With Jupiter entering Gemini, it is becoming imperative to invest in a retro gaming console this month Libran. May we recommend the awesome Atari 2600?

### SCORPIO

Dr Dre, Dr Seuss, Dr Phil. Not one of them is a real physician. It shows that sometimes, thinking a bit more of yourself can pay off. So how about doing that this month, Dr Scorpio?

### SAGITTARIUS

Born under the ninth sign Jupiter, it is said that all Sagittari have an affinity to sandalwood, yellow sapphire and Pauly Shore movies. And that's why none of your friends are joining your marathon movie weekends.

### CAPRICORN

"Don't you want me baby?," The Human League famously asked. This month the answer is unfortunately no. No I don't want you. And don't call me baby.

### AQUARIUS

Did you know Aquarius, that you often would be able to get comics cheaper through Amazon Kindle than through Comixology? The funny thing is, Amazon owns Comixology. Why the price discrepancy then? I don't know either.

### PISCES

Scientists in the Netherlands have recently been able to teleport information between two quantum bits, separated by three metres. It could just prove that information can be communicated faster than the speed of light, Mr Fish. Your love life will pick up in the final week of June.

### ARIES

The stars have noted your scepticism and have decided not to talk to you anymore.

### TAURUS

Your suspicions that Tom Cruise is undercover, slowly taking down Scientology from the inside, will prove correct this month. But does it really matter? No, nothing matters. And everything matters. **ts**

JUNE 2014

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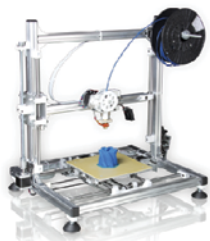
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# What's in store on the floor?

By Pippa Tshabalala

Picture: Adriaan Louw from we-are-awesome.com

**PIPPA WILL BE FOLLOWING THIS YEAR'S E3 GAMING EXPO CLOSELY, BUT FROM THE COMFORT OF HER DESK.**

With E3 (10-12 June) fast approaching, the sense of anticipation that always rears its head at this time is at its absolute pinnacle. Interestingly, I'm not (too) sad that I'm not attending this year. I managed to attend an absolute epic E3 in 2013, with new consoles on show and announcements flying back and forth like there was no tomorrow. It was exhausting and exhilarating, and exhausting and... did I mention exhausting? This is not to say that I wasn't excited about attending – E3 is the kind of experience that every games journalist should have at least once in their lifetime, especially if they belong to foreign media, because one thing that can be said for Americans – they know how to put on a show!

## In-your-face

That said, there's a very in-your-face quality about it that is, by the end of the third day, utterly overwhelming and the thought of being bombarded by yet another stage show is honestly quite off-putting. The queues to play the games on show (remember this is a trade show, journalists only, not members of the public) are insanely long, and even if you're lucky enough

(as I was) to have a series of one-on-one interviews lined-up with developers, you'll still find that their answers are mostly stock standard PR talk. By contrast the indie developer corner of the floor was a hub of open, friendly people who couldn't wait to show off all the aspects of their game, talk about the problems they had getting things to work and hand out their business cards.

## And now for 2014

Although I don't think E3 2014 has quite the same air of anticipation about it (last year was about hardware, this year there's a software focus), there are still some big announcements, and of course the usual predictions floating around that many of us are looking forward to. Microsoft for example has some big ground to cover in the race to match Sony and the PS4. Sales of the Xbox One, not yet even released in South Africa, aren't doing nearly as well as they anticipated, and Sony is sitting with a comfortable lead in that regard. No doubt Sony will be showing off plenty of pretty PS4 titles, and the big question is whether Microsoft will be able to present anything that is likely to draw gamers towards them.

**THERE ARE STILL SOME BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND OF COURSE THE USUAL PREDICTIONS FLOATING AROUND THAT MANY OF US ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO.**

Nintendo isn't even holding a press conference this year and rumours are flying thick and fast as to what this means for the brand. Will they work on improving the experience of their existing market? Or are they finally admitting they need to undergo significant changes in order to be able to compete? If so what will those changes be? There are projections that Zelda Wii U will be making its debut, but again, we work only on conjecture.

All this combined with a whole host of titles from EA (more Dragon Age Inquisition I hope!) and Ubisoft, Bethesda, Activision... the list goes on. No I'm not going, but I'll be keeping an eye on my news feeds from the comfort of my desk. **ts**



**Bethesda is widely regarded as the masters of single player storytelling. Now, with the The Elder Scrolls: Online, their first foray into the world of MMORPGs begins.**

As is the norm for Elder Scrolls titles, ESO: Online sees players starting their journey in chains. As a prisoner of the Daedric prince Malog Bal, we find ourselves in a damp prison cell, the distant sound of battle reverberating through the cavernous fortress. It's clear that a mass escape is in progress, and we are soon freed by a passing prisoner. The story opens up from here, but in the interest of not spoiling anything, let's move along.

#### **I name thee...**

As RPG custom dictates, our first task is creating our character. Choosing your hero's race, class, and physical appearance is pretty standard, the only notable change comes when choosing political allegiance. And no, this isn't an ANC/DA thing as much as a "players from opposing factions will hunt you down and sell your scalp to roving gypsies" arrangement.

**Unfortunately, ESO: Online sports the same Achilles heel as most MMOs out there: lag.**

As far as the controls are concerned, they are well-mapped, while moving around the environment feels nice and smooth, and the visuals are rather impressive for an MMO. Unfortunately, ESO: Online sports the same Achilles heel as most MMOs out there: lag. Whether your sword slashes are landing behind your enemy's head, or traps activate after you've passed, at times things simply aren't as reactive as single player RPG fans might want. The combat system in the game is quite immersive though. Instead of simply spamming hotkeys, players have to dodge, time their strikes, and cycle through abilities on the fly.

The most important part of an MMORPG is obviously the multiplayer part. While ESO: Online is playable solo, those wishing for a Skyrim-style romp

will be disappointed. Playing with friends though, especially in PvP areas, is where the game truly shines. Whether in a small band or a massive army, players can wage epic battles against other factions. It requires a hefty time investment, but can also provide immense multiplayer joy.

#### **Let the updates begin**

The hardest part about reviewing an MMO is that it's constantly evolving. Updates are rolled out regularly, some of which may dramatically change things. In its current state however, we would only recommend ESO: Online to MMO or hardcore Elder Scrolls fans. Potential players must also note that the game is subscription based, meaning after buying the (full priced) game, you will need to pay a monthly fee of \$15 (R150) to keep playing. [JK] **ts**





# THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2™

We love Spider-Man and we love games, but we can't help feeling like there is a fly in the ointment with this one.



**S**uperheroes. Spider-Man. Games. Mashing those three rich imaginative pieces of goodness together should spell sweet entertainment heaven, and yet this combination is not necessarily a guarantee of instant interactive success. The Amazing Spider-Man 2's problem isn't that it is a bad game, but rather feels like an uninspired one from the first scene.

Part of the problem is that the game's story takes a step back, to Uncle Ben's death and Spider-Man's current pursuit of his killer two years down the line. That's not necessarily a bad setup for the game's story, but pursuing bland gangsters, only to meet dead ends is disappointing, and quite simply is not enticing enough on its own to hook one into wanting to play further. Exacerbating matters is that the sidequests feel mundane, sort of like the superhero version of doing the dishes. Ignore these for too long though, and you will automatically be considered a menace by the populace, and even saving citizens and completing side quests isn't a guarantee that you will retain your hero status in their eyes.

## The other kind of web

Granted, developer Beenox has clearly paid attention to trying to replicate the feel of zipping through a city as Spider-Man would – web swinging from one building to another, gathering momentum and soaring through the air for aerial traversal – and for the most part, this works very well. Unfortunately though, sometimes the camera can too quickly get lost in the action, which stymies the fluidity of movement.

The Amazing Spider-Man 2's problem isn't that it is a bad game, but rather feels like an uninspired one from the first scene.

The Amazing Spider-Man 2 is clearly meant to be played a certain way; once you get into the rhythm of its demands, then it has its moments of fun. Indeed swinging from one building to the next (with webs attaching to actual buildings and left and right triggers controlling Spidey's respective arms), crawling up or running on walls provide some of the most fun. Spidey sense is also put to good use, both to anticipate opponent's attacks and to locate current objectives.

## To fly or fall

Alas, it is when you are grounded that the fun diminishes. While The Amazing Spider-Man 2 tries to emulate the combat scheme found in the Batman: Arkham Asylum/City games, it instead feels diluted to the point of being repetitive after a while. Not helping matters is that the thugs-for-hire type that you face off against are as dumb as wet cement, although it is amusing to hear them chortle "I think we have an intruder!" while you are demolishing their compatriots five metres in front of their nose. Thank you, Captain Obvious. Thankfully, the game's Peter Parker/Spidey (voiced by Sam Riegel) does come with the requisite brash humour and snark that made Andrew Garfield so likable in the movie, which at least livens up the fights, and the interactions with the thugs and bosses, considerably. To its credit you will face off against more distinctive opponents, including Electro, Green Goblin, Kingpin and Black Cat (no, not the peanut butter).

The game also has its gems, such as nifty allusions to the comics, and a tongue-in-cheek appearance by Stan Lee. In a nutshell, The Amazing Spider-Man 2 feels like two steps forward and one step back, and leaves one still waiting for that ultimate, defining Spider-Man game RRP: R600. [RN] **ts**

# are you a headphoney?



**DEEP FRIED MAN**  
WONDERS WHAT KIND OF MAGIC  
**SOUND SURGERY**  
DR DRE PERFORMED  
IN ORDER TO MAKE HIS  
**HEADPHONES**  
WORTH \$3.2 BILLION.

I love a good pair of headphones. They are just the thing when you want to hear something without anyone else hearing it. This is very useful, especially when you happen to be watching or listening to something that may embarrass you in front of your colleagues at work, for example One Direction, or clown porn.

Sadly my knowledge when it comes to the dynamics of sound ends there. Having been brought up in Johannesburg, I haven't managed to avoid ending-up in the cars of friends who have sub-woofers worth twice that of the vehicle. These are the kind of people who are generous enough not to stingily keep their music to themselves. They share this music with people in traffic and at petrol stations and even in their complexes at three in the morning. Because, really, what would be the point of going into massive debt over a sound system without sharing its power with the rest of the world? When I am going for a ride with such people they will talk about the clarity of the mids, or how the tweeters (and by this they mean a form of speaker, not the folks on Twitter) really bring out every detail of the top section. I wish I could agree but, to be honest, all I hear is booming bass.

This is why I struggle to understand exactly what revolutionary developments in sound technology Dr Dre has achieved that make his headphone company Beats By Dre worth \$3.2 billion dollars,

which is what Apple is allegedly offering him for it. Beats By Dre, is, according to its website, a "high-performance headphone and sound transmission company intent on recapturing the fidelity of the studio in an age of ear buds and tiny laptop speakers". If this is what the company is achieving, I wouldn't know. I'm a bit of a sound-retard. To me, all sounds are divided into two categories, which are: 1) Stuff only my dog can hear and 2) Stuff I can hear too.

**I HOPE HE MAKES ENOUGH MONEY TO RETIRE TO THE COUNTRYSIDE WHERE HE CAN WORK ON HIS NEXT PROJECT, BEETS BY DRE.**

I'm similar when it comes to wine. I love wine, I really do. But if you ask me what aromas and tasting notes I pick up, I must be honest and admit I'm picking up fermented grapes, which give off a winery flavour with an entirely wine-like aftertaste. Either, my olfactory senses and sense of taste are not up to scratch. Or, almost every other person in the wine tasting industry is too afraid to admit that they too are not picking up a hint of Orange Blossom followed by a lingering that gives way to a spicy aftertaste redolent of black pepper and liquorice.

I think the world of sound is similar in a way. People are willing to believe anything about how amazing a pair of headphones are, especially if it is being exclaimed by the OG, straight-out-of-Compton production genius that is Dre. I'm not hating. I hope he does become hip-hop's first billionaire. I hope he makes enough money to retire to the countryside where he can work on his next project, Beets By Dre.

But if you want to know why Dr Dre's headphones are worth 3.2 billion, ask someone else. It beats me. **ts**

Deep Fried Man Photo by: GA Goodman

## Intelligence takes many forms



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### X2



Android 4.2  
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854\*480 FWVGA  
Bluetooth 3.0  
Dual Sim  
Storage: 4GB, Memory:  
512MB  
Camera: 5MP rear -  
0.3MP front  
Supports up to 32GB -  
Micro SD Card

### OCEAN



Android 4.2  
Dual - Core  
3.5 inch Screen -  
320 \* 480 HVGA  
Dual Sim  
Bluetooth 3.0  
Storage: 512MB +4GB TF  
Card  
Camera: 0.3MP rear -  
0.3MP front  
Supports up to 32GB -  
Micro SD Card

### OCEAN 2



Android 4.2  
Dual - Core  
4 inch Screen -  
800\*480 WVGA  
Dual Sim  
Bluetooth 3.0  
4GB  
Camera: 0.3MP rear -  
0.3MP front  
Supports up to 32GB -  
Micro SD Card

### QF72



Android 4.2.2  
Phone Tab, 7 inch  
1024 \* 600 Screen  
Dual-core Cortex-A7,1.3 GHz  
512 DDR / Storage: 8 GB / T-Flash (MAX 32GB)  
Dual Sim Cards  
FM Radio  
Bluetooth 4.0  
HDR, Front Camera 0.3MP, Back Camera 2MP

### X3 mini



Android 4.2 / Dual - Core  
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Camera: 2MP rear, 0.3MP front  
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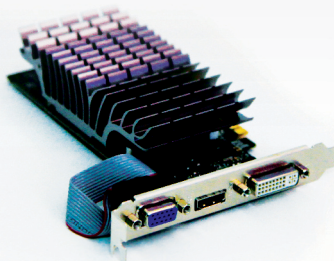
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