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THE FOG OF WAR

During battle they often talk about the 'fog of war' descending, meaning that there is a large amount of uncertainty involved in the heat of the moment. This clouds not only the different parties' perception of the situation, but also a clear judgement of what to do next.

During our conversations with business leaders for TechSmart Business, our ICT publication, it is clear that due to changes in technology, such as the rise in cloud computing, many companies are trying to make decisions affected by a type of 'fog of tech'. It's simple – the technological changes are happening so fast, that deciding what to do next can become almost paralysing.

One thing is clear though, companies which don't embrace change and hold out too long to scope out the situation, are being left behind. I have to admit that with all the changes in the publishing industry, maybe TechSmart is guilty of this too. So, here's to change, challenges and chaos, and meeting all of them head-on.

Enjoy the issue,
Mike

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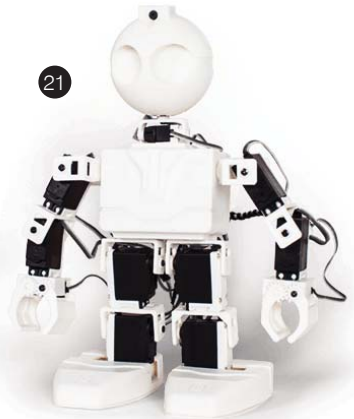
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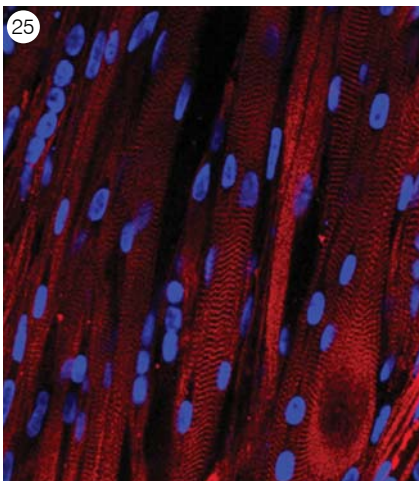
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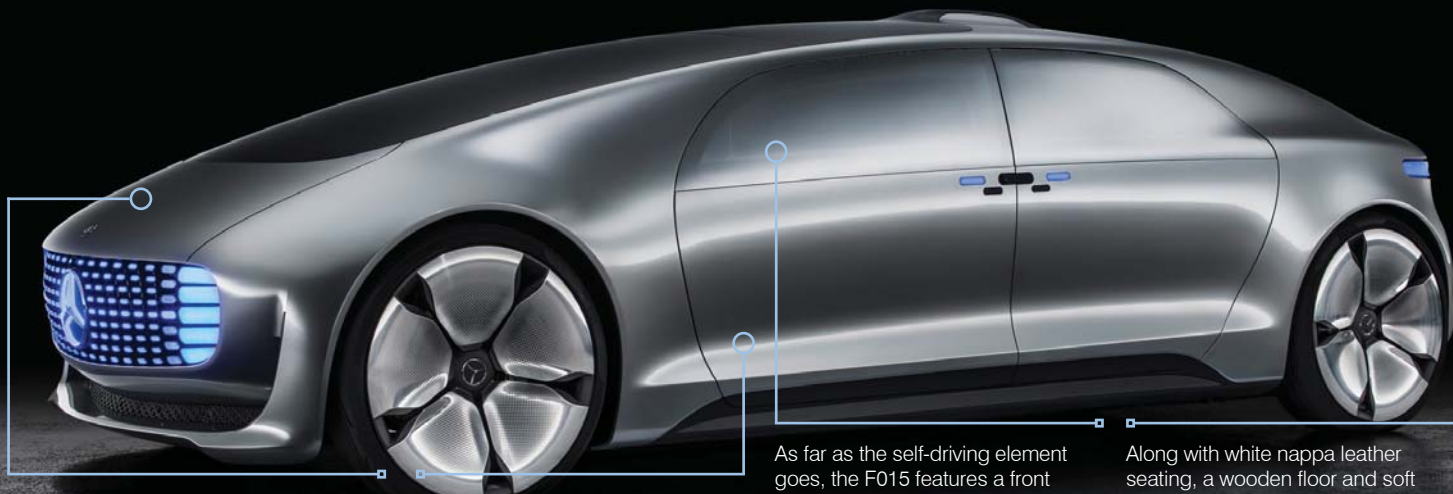
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GREAT GEAR!

MERCEDES-BENZ F015 AUTONOMOUS CONCEPT

Self-driving cars are by no means a new concept, with Google in particular throwing its full weight behind the technology. Now German powerhouse Mercedes-Benz has entered the fray with its offering: the F015 Autonomous Concept.



Sometimes, innovative vehicles can be a little underwhelming in the looks department, but the same cannot be said of the F015, which carries all the drama and new-age appeal one would expect from a car of the future.

Featuring suicide doors and four chairs facing one another, the F015's in-cabin experience is clearly designed to make passengers feel as if they're riding in a high-tech bullet train or the most luxurious first class airplane in the world.

Still very much in the concept phase, Mercedes-Benz says the F015 will be powered by a hybrid-electric motor. As far as pricing and availability goes, the Stuttgart-based manufacturer has not outlined any production plans for this glimpse into the automotive future.

As far as the self-driving element goes, the F015 features a front mounted laser projection system that senses and instantaneously reacts to traffic, which is paired with an extensive GPS system. For those who enjoy the sensation of driving, there's a manual mode should you wish to get behind the wheel.

Along with white nappa leather seating, a wooden floor and soft blue LED lighting throughout, the interior of the F015 is described as a digital living space by Mercedes-Benz. This is evidenced by the six interactive displays littered throughout the interior for full vehicle in-cabin control.



LAND ROVER DEFENDER CELEBRATION SERIES

For Land Rover connoisseurs, 2015 will mark the end of an era. More specifically, that of the company's iconic Defender 4x4. After serving 67 years as the British manufacturer's most trusted and reliable offroader, the Defender series will be coming to a close. In order to celebrate an almost seven-decade long life, Land Rover has designed three limited edition celebration series vehicles. The Heritage (Grasmere Green), Adventure (Vesuvius Orange) and Autobiography (Corris Grey/Santorini Black) all mark specific milestones in the Defender lineage. From the first Series I Land Rover being rolled in 1948 to becoming the go-to choice for colonial explorers in the 60s, and more recently as a luxury 4x4 brand for urban adventurers. Pricing remains a mystery, but all three limited edition Defenders will be available as of August 2015. **ts**



GREAT GEAR!

KURATAS

MECH ROBOT

Any anime fanboy's dream, the Kuratas rideable mech robot is four metre tall toy that just went up on Amazon Japan.


The Japanese obsession with robots has finally jumped from anime into the real world, as Suidobashi Heavy Industry along with blacksmith by trade, Kogoro Kurata designed his own life-sized mech.

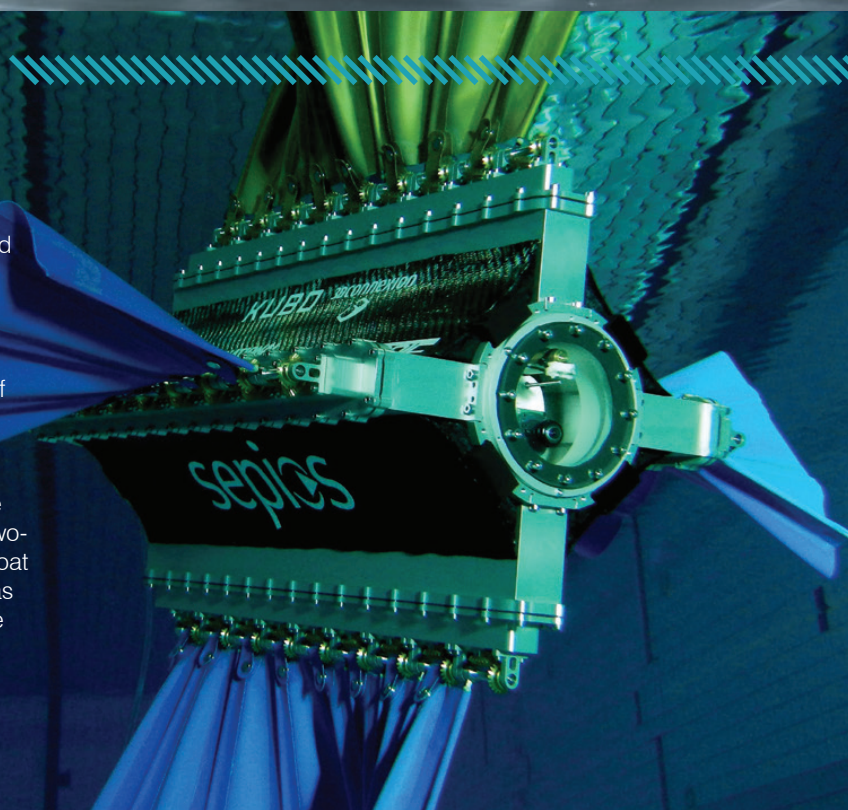
Standing close to 13-feet tall, the Kuratas (the name of the mech) weighs in at just over four tonnes, which means that the shed in your backyard is not gonna cut it. If its sizes impresses, than the price tag attached to this mech is even more so, with Amazon Japan listing it at ¥120 million, roughly R12 million.

The Kuratas itself was inspired by the miniature models from a popular 80s anime series titled *VOTOMS*. Just like the mechs featured in the series, the Kuratas has incorporated some high powered artillery in the form of a BB gatling gun that can fire 6000 rounds per minute (BB pellets). Strangely though, this gun is triggered by the pilot's smile.

At this stage, the R12 million asking price will get you the Kuratas frame, with the arms (and gatling gun) sold separately, not to mention those often inflated import and shipping costs. But then again, if you're shelling out that much for a giant mech, the added costs shouldn't matter too much.

SEPIOS ROBOT CUTTLEFISH

Now for something a little smaller and wetter - the Sepios Robot Cuttlefish from designers at Zürich's Federal Institute of Technology. You could be forgiven for thinking that it looks more like a V8 engine with a series of fins, but the Sepios' four fins can be controlled individually, allowing it to move in virtually any direction, much like the real fish it tries to imitate. The purpose of the Sepios Cuttlefish is two-fold: to aid in the design of quieter boat motors which often disturb sea life, as well as to create more manoeuvrable underwater cameras. 



CES®

THE GOOD STUFF

What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas... or so they say. CES 2015 however bucks this notion as tech's big players all vie to get the year off to a great start. Here's what stood out.

The international CES showcase is a three-day long smorgasbord of gadgets, enough to leave any tech fiend more than satisfied. Apart from using the Las Vegas strip as a playground, it affords both the large corporations and independent start-ups a chance to get some eyeballs on their latest innovations. We've compiled the best that CES 2015 had to offer, with everything from smartwatches to smart cars and everything in between.

Jumping on the VR bandwagon

2014 may have been a big year for Virtual Reality headsets, with Sony's Project Morpheus and Samsung's Gear VR joining Oculus with its Rift headsets, but 2015 looks set to be the year when VR really blows up. A number of manufacturers at CES 2015 are throwing their headset into the VR ring, with a focus on targeting the cost-savvy user being a clear direction.

One such company is Razer and its **OSVR**, an open source peripheral described by Razer as being the Android of VR headsets. What we do know is that the OSVR is compatible with multiple gaming engines, heads-up displays and control schemes. As the images would indicate, it hinges heavily off the design of Oculus' headsets and features a 1920x1080 display and head tracking. Razer have slapped a tentative June 2015 release date on the OSVR, with a \$200 (R2 300) price tag, \$150 (R1 700) less than Oculus' Developer Kit offering.

Also debuting at CES 2015 was an augmented reality visor prototype called Seer from Caputer Labs. The interface for this offering works entirely off one's smartphone, similar to the Samsung Gear VR. Added to this is a 100-degree field of view, with an on-display cursor that users can control by clenching their jaw.



Automotive influence grows

Cars stole much of the limelight at CES 2015, with automakers showing off their best infotainment offerings, as well as a few wearables to pair with one's ride. Mercedes-Benz may have made the biggest splash in Las Vegas, with its self-driving F 015 Autonomous Concept (see p6), serving as a glimpse into what driverless, connected cars of the future may look like.

Sticking with connected vehicles, Google had a number of cars on display with **Android Auto** running on the dashboard. Although not available at the moment, Google say it will be on showroom floors in a couple of weeks in the US, and is compatible with smartphones running Android Lollipop. Android Auto will allow drivers to sync up their smartphones and have access to contacts, music and specific apps, providing Google an in-car rival to Microsoft and Apple's infotainment offerings.

Everyone's into Smartwatches

We predicted an even greater focus on wearables and smartwatches in particular at the beginning of the year. With Apple set to debut its smartwatch later in the year, manufacturers are clamouring to give their products some face time before Apple undoubtedly steals all the attention.

One company aiming to do so is Garmin, whose fitness-focused wearables have proved real winners of late. The GPS specialist is set to debut three different wrist-bound offerings over the next few months, our interest however was piqued by the fitness-enabled **Vivoactive**. Perhaps not the first name

that springs to mind when it comes to smartwatches, Garmin's new product does look quite rugged and certainly fits in with the active lifestyle user they'll be targeting, especially as the Vivoactive is one of the first smartwatches to include built-in GPS.

Modular smartphones are one of the innovations expected to target



entry level users in coming years. At CES, startup company Blocks Wearables applied the same principle to smartwatches, giving a glimpse at some early prototypes of its own modular smartwatch. The proposed plan is to launch the **Block smartwatch** on Kickstarter in June this year, with the basic watch costing an estimated \$150 (R1 700) and \$20 (R230) for additional components so wearers can mix and match to create their own unique smartwatch.

Moving onto more expensive smartwatches, wearables manufacturer Withings also used CES as a platform to debut a new product, namely its sleek and simple **Activité Pop** smartwatch. If its refined stylings will have you make a second glance, then its price tag will have you making thirds. Withings have placed a hefty \$450 (R5 200) on the Activité Pop, which give buyers a time telling device that discreetly tracks one's steps, sleep and activity in general.

Audi also made a significant impression at CES, inviting attendees to try out their new smartwatch, designed in conjunction with LG and sporting a WebOS operating system. To be fair though, LG is doing much of the heavy lifting with respect to the smartwatches functionality. Audi's contribution is some vorsprung branding and an app that allows wearers to unlock their car from their wrist.

South Korean automaker **Hyundai** weren't going to be left out of the action, and touted their own Android Wear-powered app, which along with unlocking/locking car doors can also activate headlights, indicator lights and even honk the horn.



Audio

It wasn't all wearables and self-driving cars at CES 2015 though, there were still plenty of gadgets on display to get one's wallet eager with anticipation. Audiophiles for one were well catered for, with Sony unveiling the updated Sony Walkman ZX2, as well as musician Neil Young's **Pono** hi-res music player also making an appearance. Both devices are pure bred music players designed to deliver an unparalleled listening experience, with very little added functionality, making you wonder if this isn't 2005 perhaps.

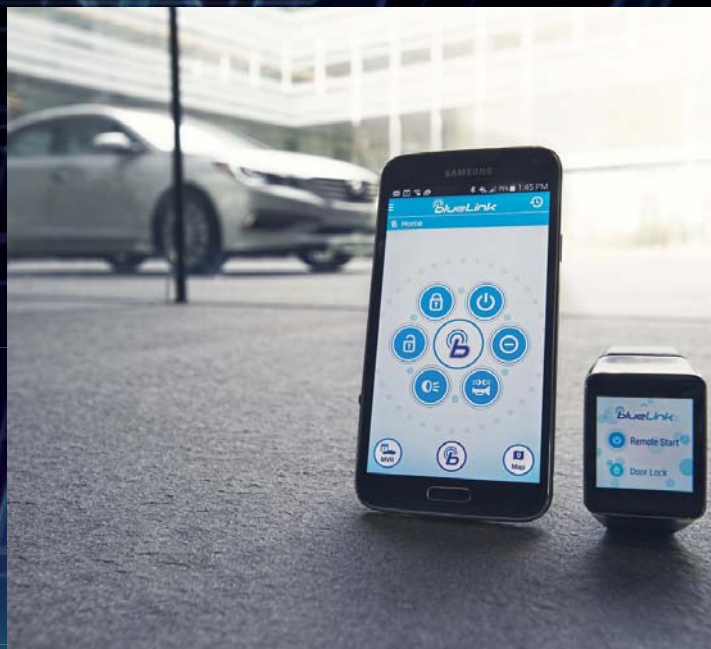
For users who pride themselves on the best quality audio equipment the Walkman ZX2 and Pono seem to hit the right marks. There is however one significant consideration - price. The Pono for one commands a \$400 (R4 600), which is on the expensive side, but gauging by the overwhelming response from backers on Kickstarter, we feel the Pono should fare just fine. The ZX2 however may have a harder time convincing users to part with their hard earned cash, \$1 200 (R13 800) to be more precise, which is R4 000 more than Sony's Xperia Z3 smartphone.



Smartphones

Although most smartphones reveals will come at next month's Mobile World Congress event, two devices at CES stood out. The first was a dual-edged prototype (à la the Note Edge) on show courtesy of LG, beating Samsung to the punch, who are rumoured to be working on a similar concept for the Galaxy S6. The other came from Blu Products who debuted the 5.1 mm thin **Vivo Air** smartphone. Not just thin, the Vivo Air is quite the looker, resembling a combination of the iPhone 6 and Huawei Ascend P7, only much thinner. What makes this design feat even more spectacular is the fact that Blu Products have crammed a MediaTek MT6592 processor, 1 GB of RAM and an 8MP camera for the retail price of \$200 (R2 300). [RLC] **ts**

Vivo Air



THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL AT CES 2015

Las Vegas is home to all manner of oddity. It proves a fitting venue then, for the weird and wonderful tech offerings on show at CES 2015.

Money, Money, Money

When it comes to buying smartphones, we're sometimes guilty of overpaying. While some don't even take a second look at the iPhone 6 (64 GB) thanks to its R11k asking price, others happily pay that price for the latest and greatest. With that in mind, we give you the Lamborghini 88 Tauri, a gold-plated and genuine leather sporting Android device that induces envy in Vertu smartphone owners. So how much will it cost you? Only a cool \$6 000 (R69 000). What does R70k buy you exactly? Well apart from the gold and leather, Lamborghini says the 88 Tauri's 5" 1080p display is scratch and shatterproof. It also features a 20 MP camera, 2.3 GHz quad-core processor and 3 GB of RAM. Don't expect to get it on contract soon.



Little Wonder

Now for something a little more wallet friendly, and small enough to fit in your pocket, although it would result in a rather odd looking bulge. We are of course talking about the Zuta pocket printer, which retails for \$200 (R2 300) on pre-order. This isn't our first encounter with the Zuta, which debuted late last year on Kickstarter. After a successful campaign, production for this pocket printer is in full swing. The Zuta features a proprietary ink cartridge and connects to one's computer/mobile device via Wi-Fi. Once connected, bottom-mounted wheels allow it to scroll about a piece of paper to print almost any image.



Smart Laundry

Connected household appliances was a major trend at CES 2015, and South Korean manufacturer LG had plenty on display. The most interesting product was Twin Wash smart washing machine. The machine itself features two separate loading compartments, allowing users to wash smaller batches of clothes and ultimately save some cash. What we're more interested in, is the companion ThinQ app that alerts users when loads are done, as well as allowing cycle and wash settings to be made remotely via one's NFC-enabled smartphone/tablet. We expect to see similar connected appliances in months to come, with LG setting the early pace.

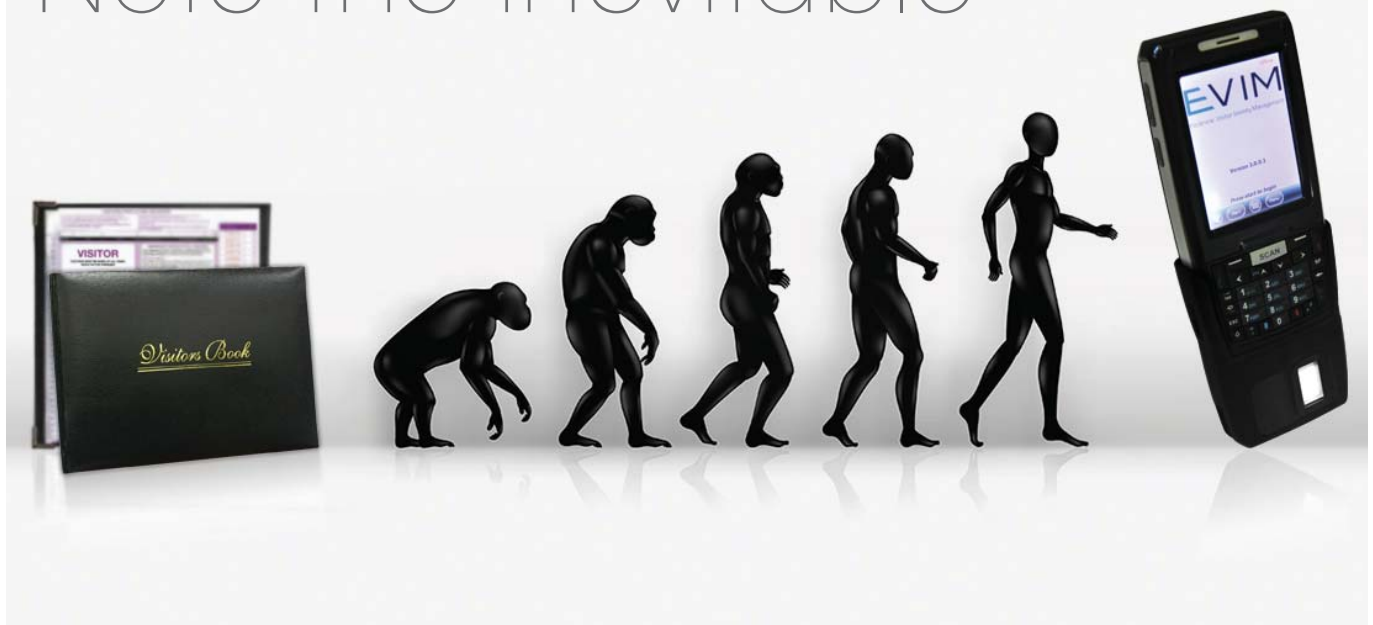


Third World Problem Solving

During CES, we heard a rather worrying statistic - that nearly 4.3 million people die each year from the fumes created by burning solid fuels like kerosene and paraffin. As such, any technological development that can assist in this regard is more than welcome. That's where the MPOWERD solar Luci lamp comes into play, offering a clean energy light source alternative for an estimated 1.2 billion people without access to electricity. The Luci lamp costs \$15 (R170), which is no small sum for family's struggling to survive from month to month unfortunately. However, it provides 12 hours' worth of light for a 3 m² space, requiring eight hours of sunlight to fully charge and no associated operational costs after purchase. [RLC] **ts**



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Ford GT

The clear fan favorite and showstopper from the Detroit Auto Show was the newly styled Ford GT. An icon in American racing lore, the Ford GT has proved more than capable of taking on its European Grand Touring competitors, and this new 2017-slatted version is no different. In the looks department Ford designers have not held back, with deep vents being integrated into the bonnet, and angular side panels to make it look like every inch the exotic supercar.

Reading the Ford GT's engine specs, one might be forgiven for thinking it is underpowered compared to the Ferrari 458 or McLaren 650S. Surprisingly though, Ford has been able to squeeze out 447 kW worth of power from the GT's 3.5 litre V6 EcoBoost engine. With its 2017 release date still two years away, little is known about the GT's top speed or 0-100 km/h time. We do however expect a massive amount of pre-orders for the Ford GT when it goes into production in mid-2016. If you can't wait till 2016, the Ford GT will be featured in Forza Motorsport 6.



Acura NSX

Just like the Ford GT, another automotive icon made a return at Detroit, in the form of the Acura NSX. Unlike the GT however, the Acura NSX carved a name for itself on the street racing scene, and this updated version looks equally street ready. For those unfamiliar, Acura is the luxury car division of Honda, and the NSX carries the unique distinction of being the first supercar designed by a female (Michelle Christensen). Acura has slapped a 2016 release date for their new supercar, with pre-orders already being taken by the American manufacturer.

Acura were also quick to talk up its custom built hybrid engine. In the rear, the NSX will incorporate a DOHC twin-turbocharged V6 petrol engine, with a pair of electric motors doing duty up front. The combined output from this setup is said to be in excess of 410 kW, making the new NSX a formidable racer. As far as how much this beauty will cost you, experts say the NSX will be in the \$150 000 range (R1.7 million).



Volkswagen Cross Coupe GTE

Now for something a little different, in the form of Volkswagen's crossover SUV, the Cross Coupe GTE. As far as SUVs go, VW already has the Touareg and Touran. The Cross Coupe will therefore be thrown into the luxury small SUV market, and go up against the likes of the Range Rover Evoque. Those familiar with VW's models will know the GTE in the title alludes to its hybrid engine.

As is consistent with the vast majority of larger hybrid vehicles, the Cross Coupe will feature a 3.6 litre V6 and twin-electric motor setup. This adds up to a pretty solid all-round performer, despite its hybrid status. 0-100 km/h is handled in approximately six seconds, with

a 210 km/h top speed and 302 km battery driving range. Strangely though, the Cross Coupe on display at Detroit is not the same size as the one which will go into production late next year. The current version being showcased seats five, whereas the go-to-production version will seat an additional two.



Chevrolet Bolt EV Concept

Supercars and crossovers weren't the only things receiving attention in Detroit, as could be expected, electric cars too got their fair share. Chevrolet's Bolt EV Concept was the frontrunner in that regard. What makes it such an enticing prospect, is the \$30 000 (R350 000) price tag that Chevrolet has given it, as well as a 322 km battery range. As a result, it would be one of the best value for money electric cars out there. Oh, and did we mention it can sit four comfortably, which is sure to give the Nissan LEAF a run for its money.

Along with an appealing price, the Bolt EV has a distinct futuristic look about it, with uniquely designed light clusters and a panoramic sunroof. The interior too looks the part, with plenty of white and light inhabiting the cabin, plus LCD display interfaces for the centre console control panel and instrument cluster. Chevrolet is already taking orders for the Bolt EV Stateside, with an expected release late in the third quarter this year.



Local Motors Strati

We've covered the advent of 3D printing in previous issues, and the applications within the automotive space have yet to be fully realised. Hoping to push things further along is the Strati 3D printed car from US-based Local Motors. At first look, the Strati appears to be a pimped out golf cart, but a closer inspection will reveal a far more interesting vehicle all together. Much like the Bolt EV, the Strati features a fully electric motor, which is good for 100 km in between charges.

Don't expect the Strati to be littering city streets though. Instead, Local Motors want it to showcase the possibilities of 3D printing to the automotive industry. Parts would be cheaper to produce, and the potential for customisations would be endless. The Strati has already garnered plenty of attention in the tech industry, so we'll have to wait and see how the auto world responds. [RLC] **ts**



CANON EOS 7D MARK II

At the risk of succumbing to superlatives, in all honesty, the EOS 7D Mark II is simply a brilliant camera. It doesn't just live up to expectations but exceeds them.



TECH SPECS



20MP Dual-Pixel AF CMOS sensor



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Blazingly fast and unnervingly responsive, the EOS 7D Mark II takes the old maxim that the importance of a camera body matters less than the lens and turns it on its head before nailing it to the wall.

Slightly lighter in the hand and a little less bulky than its full frame counterpart, the excellent EOS 5D Mark III, the camera feels less cumbersome to carry around, and thus a bit quicker on the draw. For my review, in light of the fact that the camera is first and foremost aimed at sports and wildlife photographers, I paired it with the aging but still very capable 100-400 L lens, enjoying the reach offered by an APS-C body (1.6x magnification), making it an effective 160-640mm.

What is quite clear is that Canon certainly has not skimped on build quality, as the EOS 7D Mark II feels quite able to endure some rough handling, plus the odd bout of rain thanks to its weather sealing. To those who have used the likes of the 70D or 5D Mark III, the control layout will seem instantly recognisable, with the buttons reassuringly in familiar places. This means you seldom need to lift your eye from the viewfinder to change ISO, metering or autofocus modes.

Chance to shine

However, it is what lies within the body that really impresses and where the EOS 7D II comes into its own. Its 65 point (all cross point) focusing system is simply superb, surpassing that of the aforementioned EOS 5D Mark III by a small margin. What was particularly impressive is how fast and responsive the 20 megapixel Dual-Pixel AF CMOS sensor is, locking focus without complaint in small, dark nooks and crannies. However, it is in its speed where the 7D Mark II will most appeal; at 10 fps I found myself, much to my delight, capturing moments I otherwise would have routinely missed.

One of the big complaints leveraged at its predecessor was visible noise at high ISOs, which subsequently limited the camera's flexibility in low light. No, I wouldn't recommend pushing the 7D Mark II quite as high as on a full frame camera, but it certainly seems to perform admirably well under more difficult lighting. (I, for one, had few qualms shooting at 5000 ISO, and pushing that to 6000 ISO, on occasion).

One strong recommendation is that new users take the time to learn the various autofocus modes at their disposal, which determines how the autofocus system tracks the subject and how it deals with fast moving or erratic subjects, or those suddenly entering focusing points. Doing so is rewarded with unnervingly sharp images of the subject in full motion; failure to do so results in missed opportunities.

A minor miss

Is the EOS 7D II perfect? Well no. It doesn't offer onboard Wi-Fi, which the EOS 70D does, and for those in favour of reticulated screens, the 3.0", 1036 800 dots LCD screen is fixed. A more disappointing omission in my mind is that spot metering is confined to the centre point, and does not follow along with one's tracking points as on the EOS 1D X.

This though, is the only niggling concern that I had with the camera; in all other respects, it's a dream to use and such a temptation to buy. What's more its price is a very reasonable R23 000. [RN]. **ts**

BLAZINGLY FAST AND UNNERVINGLY RESPONSIVE, THE EOS 7D MARK II TAKES THE OLD MAXIM THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF A CAMERA BODY MATTERS LESS THAN THE LENS AND TURNS IT ON ITS HEAD.

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SONY XPERIA Z3

Sony's lineup of flagship devices have always proved consistent performers, with the Xperia Z3 being no exception.

In the smartphone world consistency is hard to achieve. Sony is one company which has been able to manage this, as each flagship Xperia device has proved as good as the previous one.

Consistent performer



The first change you'll notice on the Z3 is superficial, with newly rounded edges to the Xperia's unmistakable aluminium frame and glass combination. This gives it a sleeker profile, and bares a certain resemblance to the iPhone 6 in many regards. As with previous iterations, the glass back cover limits tactileness somewhat, and ever so often I felt like the Z3 would slip out my hands. This fear is somewhat lessened by Sony's flagship-standard IP65/68 rated waterproofness and dust resistance (not as unique as before since Samsung also started incorporated something similar on the S5). On the display side the Z3 sports the same 5.2" (1920x1080)

full HD screen that retains all the clarity and crispness experienced on the Xperia Z2.

Setting the benchmark

Improvements are seen internally however, with a new 2.5 GHz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 processor doing the leg work. This is married with 3 GB of RAM, 16 GB of onboard storage (with a microSD slot for up to 128 GB) that results in a solid performing smartphone capable of handling any high level multitasking. There's also a 20.7 MP camera taking care of the imaging, which produces crisp photos, although the auto focus proved a little slow for quick snapping. PS4 Remote Play is the new gaming feature integrated into the Z3, which is a handy little aid when the living room TV is otherwise occupied, as you can play console games via the Z3's screen.

As an all round performer, there is very little fault to find in the Xperia Z3. That being said, the Z2 was equally solid, leaving a lingering question of whether or not upgrading is truly worthwhile. For users still touting the Z2, there is really no need to shell out the R8 500 that the Z3 commands. RRP: R8 500. [RLC] **ts**

AS AN ALL ROUND PERFORMER, THERE IS VERY LITTLE FAULT TO FIND IN THE XPERIA Z3.

MTN STEPPA 2

Updated and upgraded, the Steppa 2 is MTN's second crack at a budget smartphone. Unlike its predecessor however, it does not serve up the same level of value for money.

Budget smartphones have gotten as much attention as their flagship counterparts from manufacturers of late, with the untapped potential of markets in the African and Asian continents proving a luring prospect. To that end, MTN has thrown their hat in the ring, with the budget friendly Steppa smartphone debuting late 2013 for R500. A year later, the second iteration Steppa 2 landed on my review desk, carrying with it some significant updates and upgrades, along with a R1 000 price tag. As a result, the Steppa 2 is a completely different beast to its low end forbearer and goes up against a greater number of competitors.

Minor enhancements

From a design perspective, MTN has made some enhancements, chief among which is a sturdier frame and 4" WVGA (480x800) display which is a marked improvement over the original Steppa's granier version. Along with a new screen comes an Android 4.3 (Jelly Bean) OS in the background (upgradable to 4.4 KitKat). Handling the processing portion for the Steppa 2 is a dual-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 200 chipset, clocked at a modest 1.2 GHz. This paired with 512 MB of RAM, a 1500 mAh battery and 5 MP rear camera, all of which are industry standard for entry-level fare. The phone proved a little slow while multitasking, but takes care of the basics.

Something missing

When weighed up against similarly priced competition, the Steppa 2 is slightly lacking, and has a heavy plastic feel in hand. It's more

expensive than Vodafone's Smart 4 mini and on par with Samsung Galaxy Grand Neo, both of which feature more of a premium quality experience than the Steppa 2. Although an improvement in the specs department over its predecessor, the Steppa 2 does not present the same value for money prospect that the first Steppa does. All in all, the the upgrade has yielded a better specced phone, but not necessarily a better experience. RRP: R1 000 [RLC] **ts**

ALL IN ALL, THE THE UPGRADE HAS YIELDED A BETTER SPECCED PHONE, BUT NOT NECESSARILY A BETTER EXPERIENCE.



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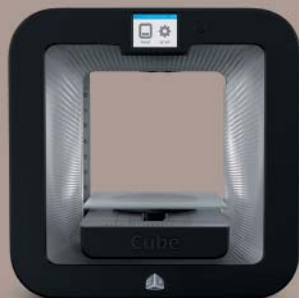
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LOGITECH G910 ORION SPARK

Logitech's G910 Orion Spark mechanical keyboard is not just impressive from a visual point of view; it's also mightily so when it comes to features.

For writers and gamers alike, a good keyboard is like a trusty companion, with a rapport being developed over hundreds of hours of writing or playing games. Over time, key placements, their tactile sensation under one's fingers, the depth of their press and access to familiar features become almost second nature. Thus, new keyboards often have some steep shoes to fill if they intend displacing the old and the familiar with the new and untried. However, in my experience, the G910 may just be the first keyboard I have come across which could actually replace my old faithful.

Light her up

For starters, the corded G910 is impeccably built – solid, sleek, modern and clearly thoughtfully designed to be as accessible as possible. The mechanical keyboard was also satisfyingly responsive (Logitech claims up to 25% faster actuations); and indeed I found my response time to be noticeably improved. This was so, even as the key presses were deeper than your average keyboard.

THE CORDED G910 IS IMPECCABLY BUILT – SOLID, SLEEK, MODERN AND CLEARLY THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED TO BE AS ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE.



Also winning favour is the beautiful, fully customisable backlighting, which sends a virtual light show rippling across its keys upon startup. Users can either go for an attractive uniform backlighting across the board, or make their keyboard look like the lovechild between a Christmas tree and wayward neon signs on the Vegas strip. Along with highlighted WASD keys, gamers are well served by nine customisable macro 'G' keys, judiciously spaced on the left hand side and top of the keyboard.

Back for seconds

Another nifty trick up the G910's figurative sleeve, is its integration for a second screen. Using a built in docking station, users can rest their smartphone on the keyboard and then, with the Arx Control app installed on their iOS or Android device, view in-game information on that display.

As for small wishes, I would have liked to have seen the two back feet propping the keyboard up at a slightly more elevated angle. This aside, there is little to find fault with on the keyboard otherwise, which in all other respects, is a winner. RRP: Not yet known. [RN] **ts**

SAMSUNG S34E790C CURVED MONITOR

Curved displays are on the rise, and with having put Samsung's S34E790C offering to use, the appeal is clear to see.

It seems like wherever you turn, curved displays are on the up. From flagship smartphones to Ultra HD televisions, everyone is embracing the bend. So too has Samsung, and up until now I've remained on the fence as far as curved displays appeal. That was until the S34E790C WQHD display sporting curved monitor from Samsung crossed my path. Having used it for work and play alike, the curve makes a far greater degree of sense.

Grading on a Curve

Having taken the box knife to the Samsung's packaging, you're pleasantly greeted by a monitor that's ready to go, with absolutely no assembly required. A thorough inspection of the monitor reveals a sleekly styled device that keeps things simple. The 34" display itself is sharp and bright, thanks to its WQHD feature, which integrates 2.5x the number of pixels (3440x1440) compared to full HD according to the South Korean manufacturer. The curvature itself is noticeable but never distracting, and ensures that images are at their optimal. Added too is -20 to 20° of vertical tilt to orientate the screen into prime position.

In terms of use, this curved monitor is ideally suited for media viewing or gaming. The curves keep the on-screen action tight, particularly if you ply



your gaming trade on First Person Shooters like COD: Advanced Warfare. When it comes office life however, it makes slightly less sense. The curved screen can leave content on the sides of the screen a little distorted. In this regard, Samsung's smaller 27" offering may prove better suited to the demands of document creation and graphic design.

Got you covered

When it comes to connections, Samsung's got you covered. On it's faux-brushed aluminium back, you'll find four USB 3.0 ports, as well as two HDMI and one Display Port. Samsung has also packed in a pair of seven watt speakers. On the whole, they get the job done, with a slightly echoey sound being produced when the volume's turned up. If you're in the market for a high end monitor, the S34E790C should be near the top of your list, provided you can handle the R21 000 price tag. [RLC] **ts**

HAVING USED IT FOR WORK AND PLAY ALIKE, THE CURVE MAKES A FAR GREATER DEGREE OF SENSE.

COUGAR 200K SCISSOR-SWITCH KEYBOARD

German company Cougar impressed mightily with their beautifully designed and speedy 700M gaming mouse, so news that its Scissor-Switch keyboard was incoming for review was met with its fair share of curiosity and anticipation. At first glance, the keyboard looks somewhat inconspicuous, particularly for a gaming orientated device. Nonetheless, its minimalist design is supported by a strong build quality and exhibited no signs of creak.

Sometimes less is more

While it is neither adorned with macro keys, nor does it sport a LCD display or many apparent bells and whistles, plugging the corded (but not mechanical) keyboard in dispels allusions about it being run-of-the-mill.



At first glance, the 200K Scissor Switch looks fairly standard, but delve a little deeper and you quickly uncover a number of nifty innovations.

Rather, there are a number of noteworthy features onboard. For starters, the Scissor-Switch technology referred to in the keyboard's name is Cougar's implementation of ensuring both quieter, and more responsive key presses. Speaking of this, the key press is neither overly shallow, nor especially deep, but typing on it felt noticeably smooth and comfortable. A particularly nice touch is that the WASD and arrow keys are interchangeable, thus catering to left hand players who prefer to control their WASD navigation with their right hand and their mouse with their left (or vice versa).

Lighter side of life

While the 200K doesn't put on quite a spectacular light show as Logitech's G910 offering, it's no shrinking violet. Tapping one dedicated key instantly cycles the keyboard's adjustable backlighting between seven colours, or alternatively, the keyboard can be set to pulse through each of the different colours in turn, creating a heartbeat effect. A dedicated and lockable Windows key (which summons the Start menu in Windows 7) and media controls are also onboard.

What I was really impressed by on the 200K is its ease of use; for those who don't need too many bells and whistles, and are watching their budget, Cougar's 200K is a very solid alternative. RRP: R377. [RN] **ts**

FOR THOSE WHO DON'T NEED A TOO MANY BELLS AND WHISTLES, AND ARE WATCHING THEIR BUDGET, COUGAR'S 200K IS A VERY SOLID ALTERNATIVE.

5X COUGAR 200K Gaming Keyboards!!!

TechSmart has five awesome Cougar 200K gaming keyboards to give-away all the way from Germany! If you like your gaming fast and furious then this is the keyboard for you. New features include:

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- **BREATHING EFFECT**
FN key combo to turn on the backlight breathing
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19 Anti-ghosting keys allows you press simultaneously without fear of missing in specific key area
- **REPEAT RATE ACCELERATION**
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- **WASD & ARROW KEY EXCHANGE**
FN key combo to switch WASD and arrow key function for the left-hander

HOW TO WIN

Answer this easy question: **Where does the Cougar gaming brand come from?**

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Competition runs until 28 February 2014. Only entries from people living in South Africa will be considered. The judges' decision is final. Terms and conditions apply (bit.ly/tsterms). The winners will be announced during the second week of March 2015.

ROCKY RAMIN

Shoe manufacturers seem to be clamouring to find the perfect shoe to fit the SA summer. South African company Rocky might just have a winner.

What does the perfect summer holiday shoe look like? Ideally you want something that is not heavy, can breathe sufficiently, and is also rugged, all at the same time being comfortable enough to not be a bother. It's a tall ask, but the Rocky Ramin might be it. The Ramin sandal proves a perfect fit for the bushveld, berg, sea and surf, in fact it proved as much out and about on a recent trip to Dullstroom. The sandals took light hiking in its stride, since the formed rubber sole is stable and thick enough to handle rocky terrain.



An easy fit

The soles deal with wet conditions well, i.e. walks through streams and slippery rocks, while providing ample traction when clambering up rocks. There's luckily also a bit of toe protection on the front, enough to ensure you don't bump your precious digits while hiking.

To make sure your foot does not slip inside the sandal, a strap on the back locks it in, while the top lacing system can be used for a tighter fit. Luckily the canvas material is lined on the inside, so I experience no chafing, even from the get-go.

One of the things to look for in these types of 'holiday' sandals, is the ability to put them on and kick them off without hassle. With the Ramins this is easy enough, since they walk comfortably without the strap at the back fastened, meaning you can simply slip into the shoes without having to bend down to do so.

A solid good

If there is one bit of critique, it's the little piece of hard rubber at the back of the soles that can sometimes nip your heel if the strap is not secured. Some will also find the canvas material used less stylish than say leather, but I can vouch for it drying quickly, while also not becoming smelly after use. In all, if you are heading to an out and about holiday, the Rocky Ramin sandals come highly recommended. RRP: R500. Available from shoe shops. [MJ] **ts**

THE RAMIN SANDAL PROVES A PERFECT FIT FOR THE BUSHVELD, BERG, SEA AND SURF.

MOTOROLA MOTO X

Motorola may be a forgotten cellphone icon here at home, but the second generation Moto X proves a welcome return, serving up a beautifully undistilled version of Android unlike any other.

Remember the good old days of flip phones, when the Motorola Razr was on top? Nearly a decade after, Motorola's powers have waned dramatically, but looking at the second generation Moto X you would not necessarily say that.

Pure Android

A thorough inspection of the Moto X's UI revealed no frustrating bloatware to speak of, unlike the Samsung Galaxy S5 and Sony Xperia Z3. Its design too is a welcome surprise, with a distinctly styled aluminium frame that features an accentuated downward curve located just above its 13 MP camera. The back cover is a soft-to-the-touch matte grey, and makes the Moto X one of the better looking devices I've tested in recent months.

Up front, the Moto X is equally well adorned, with a 5.2" AMOLED display (1080x1920) that produces a 424 ppi pixel density, exactly the same ppi as found on the Z3. The Moto X's native Android OS is 4.4.2 (KitKat), however an upgrade to 5.0 (Lollipop) is readily available. It also happens to be my first encounter with Google's interface design (flatter icons and

bolder colours for more modern OS design aesthetic), which feels like an expanded version of Google Now in many respects. Overall the UI feels sharp and intuitive, giving Android fanboys the ultimate mobile OS experience.

Well composed

Internally, Motorola has made every effort to ensure the Moto X stays technologically relevant for the next 12 months. Doing the hard graft is a quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 processor, clocked at a quick 2.5 GHz. Added to this is 2 GB of RAM to provide a snappy experience while multitasking and switching between apps. On the whole, most Android users will be left more than satisfied by the Moto X's processing performance.

Overall however, the Moto X is well positioned within the lower end of the flagship smartphone bracket, especially given its R6 600 (16 GB) price tag. The Moto X is currently available locally at Orange Store (bit.ly/motox222). [RLC] **ts**



OVERALL, THE MOTO X IS WELL PLACED WITHIN THE LOWER END OF THE FLAGSHIP SMARTPHONE BRACKET, ESPECIALLY GIVEN ITS R6 600 PRICE TAG.

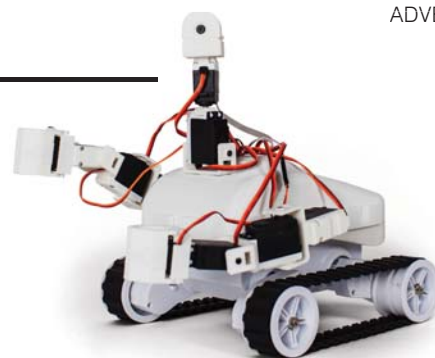
EZ ROBOT LANDS IN THE GADGET SHOP

More than toys, the new range of EZ Robot offerings are now available in SA through The Gadget Shop, giving enthusiasts the chance to get creative.

Robots have always held a sacred spot in sci-fi lore, providing a glimpse into the future, and used as a sign of progress. Although the cutting edge of robotics may not be on our immediate doorstep, a series of small to medium size gizmos from EZ Robot are, bringing with them an avenue for enthusiasts to create all manner of robot. EZ Robot currently has three different robots in their roster, all of which are available from local suppliers, The Gadget Shop.

A robot for you

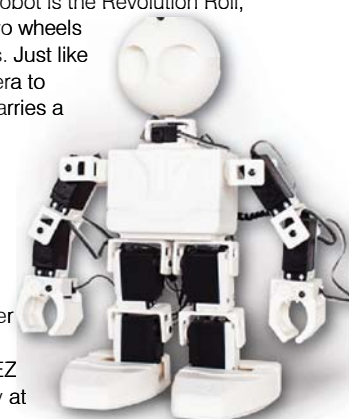
Each of the three EZ Robots offers something a little different. First on the list is the Revolution JD, a humanoid robot that buyers can build themselves with the EZ Bits kit. Capable of 16 degrees of movement, the JD can register programmable voice commands. Another key feature is its 18 LED lights for eyes (nine per eye) which can track colours and motion. If a humanoid robot to interact with interests you, the JD goes for R5 999.



Next up is the Revolution Six, which as the name would indicate, is a six-legged robot that moves like an insect. Along with a greater degree of movement compared to the JD, the Six features a top-mounted camera that can interact with objects, identify faces and read QR codes. The Six is listed at R5 999. The final robot is the Revolution Roli, which resembles a Mars Rover, fitted with two wheels and treads to slowly traverse difficult terrains. Just like the Six, the Roli utilises a top-mounted camera to perform the same features as the Six, and carries a R5 999 price tag.

In your hands

If you're feeling slightly more creative and want to try your hand at some robotic tinkering, the Dev Kit is what you want. Priced at R2 999.00, the EZ Robot developer kit packs in the key elements needed to build a mid-sized robot of your own. All of EZ Robot's kits and robots are available locally at www.thegadgetshop.co.za. **ts**



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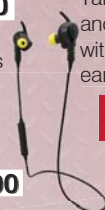
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With content growing at an exponential rate, there has never been a better time to consider employing a media server. Trendnet's TN-200 steps up to the task.

Aimed at becoming the entertainment and storage hub of a digital network, the 2-Bay NAS Media Server Enclosure from Trendnet enables users to access their media from one central hub, whether via their smart TV, game consoles or media players. Additionally, the product enables users to enjoy multiple HD videos and music simultaneously, while an iTunes server provides the ability to share a massive iTunes library across the network, without having to contend with duplicate files taking up more space.

Give me space

To this end, users can slot in two 3.5" SATA I/II hard drives (sold separately) for a whopping total storage capacity of up to 8 TB. Just in case that isn't enough, further storage can be added by using the convenient USB share port, while a Gigabit Ethernet port maintains a high speed connection to the network. Anyone who has tried to set up network-based products may be aware with what a complicated

headache it can become. However, Trendnet has obviated this by ensuring that setup is as intuitive as possible, with its setup wizard ensuring the TN-200 is up and running quickly.

The TN-200 is also tablet and smartphone friendly; and with a DLNA app on their tablet or smartphone, users can stream both music and movies. Additionally, the TN-200 supports simultaneous HD streams to different devices, a boon for multi-user households who may want to access different content at the same time.



From a distance

Advanced features offered by the device include remote access, whereby one can safely share content over the internet using the FTP server or create login profiles with restricted remote access. Supported Dynamic DNS service providers include dyndns.com, freedns.afraid.org, zoneedit.com, and no-ip.com. Furthermore, precious content can be safeguarded via the device's Backup Center, which provides easy local, remote, and cloud backup options.

The TN-200 is currently available from Incredible Connection or directly from Phoenix Distribution (0861-746-3649) for R2 000. **ts**

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IDECO'S EVIM BRINGS SECURITY LOGBOOKS INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

Every business is a digital business and as such, a security solution that empowers users to work more effectively presents a distinct advantage. Ideco's EVIM is therefore an obvious choice for digitally savvy companies.

The current nature of doing business is very different than it was five years ago. For a company to remain stagnant in their solution development and service delivery, is tantamount to committing enterprise suicide. Along with back office operations, digitally savvy business owners also need to worry about the front of house, and more specifically the way in which it manages visitors and provides a secure working environment. As such, the traditional security logbook should be seen as a relic of the past, ready for a significant update.

That's where Ideco's new EVIM (Electronic Visitor Identity Management) system comes to the fore. Ideco is a pioneer in the identity control field, with a wealth of experience in biometrics, and EVIM can be seen as a logbook for the digital age.

Managing risk

Ideco recently launched its EVIM eBook solution, which carries several distinct advantages for business owners, all of which assist in ensuring one's company is up to snuff. The first advantage holds particular sway with company executives, who are often concerned with ensuring their business meets all the stringent rules from regulatory bodies. More specifically relating to the recent amendments made to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS), in which companies are obliged to register all entries and exits from their business' premises. These entries and exits must also be made available for inspection if need be. This is where the EVIM eBook outperforms its competitors, as all information captured can be pulled up and referenced instantly.

From a recorded data standpoint, the EVIM eBook too shines, as visitor name, surname and vehicle registration information are captured electronically, removing any mistakes that can occur with hand written logbooks. More importantly however, the information recorded can be verified via the EVIM eBook's on-device ID scanner. This is one of the significant benefits that Ideco's product offers, as fraudulent information from visitors is one of the highest concerns for companies from a security standpoint. It also brings into focus the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI), which forces companies to rethink how they handle visitor information, as well as how access to their premises is controlled.

Full spectrum visitor control

One of the lesser thought of aspects when it comes to eBooks, is how all this information is accessed. This carries a particular concern for visitors, who are often unaware of which people within the company they are visiting have access to their information. Ideco has put these concerns to rest, as information is stored securely. Access to set information is only available to registered site managers, ensuring that prying eyes are kept at bay. Those utilising Ideco's EVIM eBook can also extend its functionality beyond simply recording information. Lists can be created, which can be used to alert guards or receptionists of VIPs expected on any given day, as well as barring any unauthorised personnel from

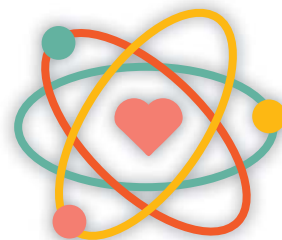
entering the premises, holding particular value when dealing with any disgruntled former employees. Apart from Ideco utilising FBI biometric certified fingerprint technology, EVIM also includes Guard Login and Attendance View, and it actually links ID data with time and dates of entry.

When it comes to visitor control and biometrically powered solutions, the EVIM eBook from Ideco sets the bar high, and as such should be the first port of call for any company aiming to bring their security operations into the digital age. With the added benefit of meeting the latest regulatory body acts, as well as security protocols and procedures, the EVIM eBook is a full spectrum solution. For more information, contact Ideco on 086-10-43326 (IDECO) or visit www.ideco.co.za. **ts**



For the *Love* of it

As we get ready for a tizzy of romance this month, science helps us navigate through the maze that is being in love.



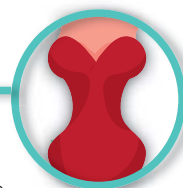
QUICK PICK

Falling in love is a bit of body and a lot of brain. In a study, volunteers were asked to view photographs of people from the opposite sex for four seconds and then rate them as potential dates. Brain scans showed that two areas in the prefrontal cortex known to be involved in weighing up options were activated as the viewers decided whether a photo deserved a thumbs-up or not. When they then later met the people from the photographs at a speed-dating event, the decisions based on those first impressions held.

200 MS: The time needed for your brain to fall in love

Sources: bit.ly/1yv8tgP; bit.ly/1ICLQd8

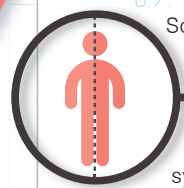
BODY BASICS



OK, so for your brain to decide whether someone is date material it needs to get some info from your eyes. But what do you look at? Based on a study that tracked the eye movements of men looking at a frontal photo of a woman, it seems that a woman's breasts and waist are viewed first, more often and for longer than her face or lower body. And the waist measurement seems to trump breast size: an hourglass body – a slim waist and wider hips – is considered super attractive, irrespective of breast size.

0.7: The waist-to-hip ratio that men find most attractive in women

Source: 1.usa.gov/1CSAyhV



SYMMETRY IS SEXY

Studies have shown that we consider symmetrical bodies attractive. Symmetry further seems to be linked to the level of masculinity we perceive in someone's appearance. In men, the more masculine the features, the more symmetrical the body appears and hence the more attractive to women. In women, though the opposite holds: the more masculine the features, the more asymmetrical the body is thought to be and the less attractive to men.

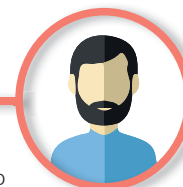
Yet why symmetry is attractive is unclear. Previous theories suggested that symmetry signals good health and immune function in a potential mate. But that assumption has now gone out the window. Scientists rated photographs of more than 4000 teenagers for symmetry and then considered the medical history of each participant. Those with symmetrical faces were no less susceptible to health problems than those with more asymmetrical faces.

ONE THIRD OF TOTAL FACE LENGTH: The distance between the eyes and mouth in an ideal female face.

ONE HALF OF TOTAL FACE WIDTH: The distance between the pupils in an ideal female face.

Sources: bit.ly/1JjWMLz; bit.ly/1pzF6VS; bbc.in/1JbDV7o

FACE VALUE



A recent study shows that women find men with wide faces attractive prospects for short-term relationships, probably because it signals dominant traits. And they made this decision after a mere three minutes' conversation at a speed-dating event. A high facial width-to-height ratio seems to be linked to testosterone levels, which may explain the stronger expression of attractive qualities.

244 MILLION: The estimated number of roses grown for Valentine's Day in 2013.

Sources: http://bit.ly/1Jk041r; US Census Bureau



HAPPY EVER AFTER

The brain really does know what the heart wants. In a recent study, scientists recorded brain scans of people who have been married for many years (and are still madly in love with their spouses), while looking at photographs of their better halves. They then compared brain scans of a comparable group of people who fell in love only recently. The two sets of images showed similar activation patterns in brain areas associated with the sense of motivation, reward and desire. This suggests that our brains are hard wired to want the giddiness of early-stage love to last for a long time. [LP] **ts**

5% The drop in risk for heart disease in married people compared with single people.

29.0 The median age for first marriage among US men in 2013

26.6 The median age for first marriage among US women in 2013

Sources: bit.ly/1y14PWW; bit.ly/1gY8UJ0; US Census Bureau

SCIENCE

PIC OF THE MONTH



When Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 AD, it devastated the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Charred ancient scrolls were discovered in a library in Herculaneum, but due to the brittleness it could never be read. Until now. Using X-ray phase-contrast tomography (XPCT), scientists are now scanning the scrolls and constructing a higher definition image by detecting the slight difference in height between letters and the papyrus (about One hundred microns). Unfortunately it will take a while still before the scrolls are completely interpreted.

Image: One of the ancient scrolls being scanned.

Image courtesy University of Kentucky.

SMART ANSWERS

LIFE IS FULL OF QUESTIONS THAT NEED SMART ANSWERS. WE CAN HELP.



WATER-REPELLENT METALS

What's the best thing since non-stick pans? Making super non-sticky metal surfaces.

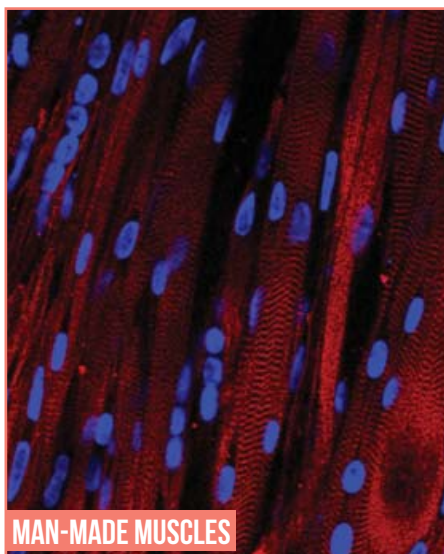
Why? For starters, water simply bounces off, which means it remains completely dry. And with the new technique, there's no need for a coating to be applied separately.

How is the surface prepared? Scientists used short, powerful laser pulses to create an engrained pattern at the microscale structure on a metal surface.

Any useful applications? The technique could be used to create metal surfaces that won't rust or ice up and can even be used for efficient water collection in rain-scarce regions.

What's next? Researchers are working on making the process faster to allow commercial use. There are also efforts to apply the technique to semiconductor materials to develop water-repellent electronics.

Source: bit.ly/1xRydir



MAN-MADE MUSCLES

So did scientists create artificial muscle? Nope. Scientists recently reported that they have grown real human muscle tissue in the lab.

How? A sample of muscle precursor cells was seeded onto a 3D scaffold filled with a nutrient-rich gel, which allowed the cells to align into fibres as the tissue grew.

How does the tissue respond? Exactly like skeletal muscle tissue does in the body. The tissue contracted perfectly when stimulated electrically and the pathways for nerve activation were fully functional. The responses to various drugs also matched those seen clinically.

Why is this useful? Having samples of live, real human muscle in the lab means more accurate and faster clinical trials, without having to source tissue samples via biopsy.

Source: bit.ly/1BoNzRu



SAFE GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Can genetically modified organisms be used safely? Yes, by building multiple biological fail-safes into the system.

How? First, you find something without which the organism can't survive and that can't be found in nature. As an example, scientists changed the genetic make-up of a strain of *Escherichia coli* bacteria so that it couldn't produce functional proteins without using a synthetic amino acid as building block.

And as back-up? You spread the code changes across the entire genetic make-up, thereby greatly reducing the odds of random mutations overriding the constraint. In this study, 49 genetic changes were used to make the bacteria need the synthetic nutrient.

And the success rate? Of a trillion of these modified bacteria, none were able to survive without access to the lab-grown nutrient. [LP] **ts**

Source: bit.ly/1CmFXQ1

TOP 5 NEW GRAN TURISMO Concept Cars 6

Gran Turismo 6's Vision Concept series features the most dynamic and radical cars around. With a new barrage of vehicles recently added, we've listed the Top 5 that get our nod.

Nissan Concept 2020

The good people at Polyphony Digital, the studio behind the Gran Turismo series, added the Nissan Concept 2020 to the game's Vision stable at the midway point of 2014. Ever since then it has proved one of the more striking concept additions, with its angular lines and muscular build looking rather menacing on the virtual road. The Japanese manufacturer has been around for the past 80 years, in that time producing many memorable Grand Tourers, with 2007's GT-R (affectionately nicknamed Godzilla) being the pinnacle. The Concept 2020 is the hypercar-esque incarnation of the GT-R, and provides an awe-inspiring design we'd love to see in future.

Although existing in the digital world for now, the Concept 2020 still carries some impressive specs, enough to entice any GT6 gamer to add it to their garage. Under the bonnet is a twin-turbocharged V6 engine, paired with a hybrid FR-4WD system bringing the in-game top speed to an estimated 300 km/h. Added to this is an active rear wing, which helps hunker the car down when reaching the aforementioned 300 km/h top speed. Other key design features are the unique front and rear fender sported on the Concept 2020, all of which are intended to create an airflow setup similar to that of a Le Mans race car.



Volkswagen GTI Roadster

For many hot hatch enthusiasts, the Volkswagen GTI still reigns supreme, but in recent years its claim to the throne has come into question, with Mercedes-Benz' immensely powerful A45 AMG and Ford's raw and intuitive Fiesta ST making massive strides. Perhaps then the Volkswagen GTI Roadster unveiled in Gran Turismo 6 is a reminder for challengers to tread lightly, as it embodies all the key elements of a hot hatch and then some. The GTI Roadster's drop top stylings, as well as a low and wide design certainly make it a head-turner. Added to this is a range of in-game specs to make competitors do double takes on the starting grid.

Taking care of business is a 3.0 litre twin turbo VR6 TSI engine, although we would have liked to see Volkswagen's legendary W12 engine (as featured in the Bugatti Veyron) behind the scenes. That being said, the GTI Roadster still develops a sizeable 375 kW of power, with 665 Nm of torque thrown in for good measure. Although the top speed and 0-100 time remains uncertain, this VW hot hatch should certainly stand you in good stead when going up against other high octane roadsters. Whether or not elements of this concept will feature in future real-world GTIs is still a mystery, but we hope VW takes a gamble in this regard.



Aston Martin DP-100

Aston Martin may have unveiled the DB10 for the upcoming James Bond flick, but we'd have to opt for the DP-100 Gran Turismo concept if it were sitting in our garage. Created by Aston's very own design team, the DP-100 is sleekly put together and achingly beautiful to look at, making it highly deserving of Gran Turismo 6's Vision label. Not just a digital creation, fans of the British manufacturer were fortunate enough to see the DP-100 in the flesh at 2014's Goodwood Festival of Speed in Sussex, England.

Aston Martin has listed an array of features to make rivals' Dualshock controllers rattle in fear. This mid-engined twin turbo racer will pack an imposing 597 kW of power, which should make for a blistering lap on its native Silverstone racetrack. Along with an envy inducing engine setup, Aston Martin has also incorporated some other noteworthy elements, chief among which are the distinct active wheel blades, which open and close independently to aid cooling while braking. Whether or not 007 will be getting behind the wheel of the DP-100 in future films is unclear, but at least you can try it out in GT6 should you be skilled enough to earn it.



Chevrolet Chaparral 2X

Part of concept cars' appeal is their thinking-outside-the-box designs, which often challenge the normal conventions of car design. Chevrolet's Chaparral 2X is testament to that, looking more like a space age fighter jet than a race car. Whether that's a good or bad thing is up for debate, but we are totally enamoured by the Chaparral 2X. Much like the Aston Martin DP-100, Chevrolet has created a real-life version of the car, which the Texas-based manufacturer says is its most revolutionary one to date, and we'd tend to agree. Along with its looks, it also makes use of some space age technology, the most intriguing of which is a combination laser and air powered engine (yes,

you read correctly... lasers).

The car's laser propulsion system focuses a beam of light to create specific shockwaves to propel the car forward. The laser system is measured at 671 kW, which coupled with the Chaparral 2X's lightweight design brings the top speed to 384 km/h. Its real party trick is an estimated 0-100 km/h time of 1.5 seconds, although real world evidence is yet to be seen. Chevrolet were quick to state that the Chaparral 2X was designed in a no-rules environment, which leads us to believe that it will not be hitting the road any time soon.



Mazda LM55

The newest of all the concept cars featured on our list, the Mazda LM55 is a return to the Le Mans style vehicles that Gran Turismo's Vision series is famed for. Unveiled by the Japanese manufacturer on Christmas Day during 2014, the LM55 is quite the stocking stuffer, with Polyphony Digital's own Kaz Yamauchi issuing a challenge to Mazda to design a car to rival those of Mercedes-Benz and Audi. If we had to weigh in with our opinion, it's pretty safe to say that they hit the mark perfectly. The LM55 also draws inspiration from Mazda's 1991 Le Mans win, which remains the solitary victory that they

have mustered during the iconic French race's storied history.

Apart from its Le Mans inspired heritage, very little is known about the LM55, with Mazda simply stating that this racer is extremely lightweight and consists primarily of carbon fibre elements to make it one of the lightest cars in its category for Gran Turismo 6. Although the LM55 will not making a lap of Le Mans racetrack any time soon, GT6 gamers can still get their hands on it and put it to the test. We'll certainly be doing so. [RLC] **ts**



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WE DELIVER

COLOUR, SPORTS AND TAILORING: AUTUMN WINTER 2015 TRENDS

We might be in the heart of summer but winter is fast approaching, and the seasonal change will reflect in the fashion retailers soon. Monde Mtsi of Renaissance Men SA (bit.ly/RENMENSA) will help you stay on trend with three simple wardrobe adjustments, the focus areas for winter being colour, tailoring and sports luxe.

Photographs by Simon Deiner/SDR Photos



Colour

Colour is always at play in fashion and this coming winter won't be any different. The trick is to balance the darker shades we enjoy wearing during colder times with a pop or two of colour, with the idea to lighten the mood a bit.

Choosing the right colour does not need to be a difficult task, simply look at your dark colours and select a colour lighter in the

same family. Keep colour in winter restricted to jackets, jerseys and blazers – just to be safe.

Where to shop:

Naked Ape (011-268-0989)

M4S (072-950-7454)

House of Olé (082-298-9169)



Palse Homme



Meistre House of Design



Palse Homme

Tailoring

In this coming winter, the silhouette takes on a much more defined shape, the cut becomes harder in some areas and softer in others. Be on the lookout for carefully considered design details, collars with interesting stitching, sleeves with double-volume cuffs, even jacket closures that give the body a new shape.

Tailoring this winter will cut close to the body. Expect to find office shirts with double collars or extra length bodies that makes for a

statement round the water cooler. If you're not that adventurous, stick to small details, such as stitching patterns.

Where to shop:

Meistre House of Design (071-796-4800)

Palse Homme (072-227-6048)



Plumbum Engineering



Kim Gush

Plumbum Engineering



Sports Luxe

Active wear is not leaving any time soon. Even more so now that designers have turned it into a trend to wear your sweats to work. Sports Luxe is the next step up from that, being that segment in active wear that hits the 'fashionable' sweet spot.

Key items include tracksuit pants in luxurious fabrics and

tops overlaid with mesh. Sports luxe can be dressed up with a fur overcoat – giving you the extra edge

Where to shop:

Plumbum Engineering (072-161-2379)

Kim Gush (082-431-1109)

The trick to trends is to avoid looking like a trend. Buy individual pieces and mix and match with what you already have. Have fun with it, explore your options and work towards pushing your own boundaries without making yourself uncomfortable. **ts**

GUIDE TO MANBAGS

Whether you call it a body bag, manbag, utility bag or just the best way to carry and access your important gear, one of these bags may just be your new best friend.

THE ON-THE-RUN BAG

Nike Heritage Messenger Bag

When a company that shares its namesake with the Greek goddess of victory gets in on the bag carrying action, then surely lesser mortals have no cause to scoff. Nike's offering is simple and straightforward with two compartments and a simple, unpadded strap. It is however, the most cost conscious of the lot, coming in at only R289 from www.zando.co.za. Still on the fence about donning a manbag? Heed Nike's advice: Just do it.



THE TOUGHEN UP BAG

Thule 13" MacBook Pro and iPad attaché

If the only bag likely to cross your body is one dedicated to your MacBook, but you still enjoy a rough and tumble lifestyle, where you are as likely to be meeting deadlines as just trying to stay alive, then consider Thule's attaché. The semi rigid bag houses up to 13" notebooks, including iPads, and has a dedicated pocket for your smartphone. R1 000, also from www.ibags.co.za.



THE LOCAL IS LEKKER BAG

Bergen Messenger

The first point in its favour is that this messenger bag comes out of Dark Horse's stable, a local company created by interior design and architect duo, Lise du Plessis and Jarrad Nelson, and not to be confused with the comics publishers of the same name. Apart from its proudly South African origins, the bag also looks beautiful, is crafted from genuine leather, and while being compact and slim, can still house up to 13" notebooks. Expect to pay R1 950 from www.dark-horse.co.za.



THE TRAVEL IN STYLE BAG

The Bobby Bag

For something a little more capacious, that can carry your gear plus a change of clothes (and still looks the business), the Bobby bag from Freedom of Movement fits the bill. Crafted from leather, it still looks attractive, but has easily accessible side pockets alongside the main one, a leather strap and solid brass buckles. R1 650 from Spree.co.za.



THE MONEY IS NO OBJECT BAG

Jekyll & Hyde Oxford Leather Cross-Body Tablet Holder Bag

If your tablet is close to your heart and never leaves your side, and money is no object when it comes to purchases, then the Oxford Leather Cross-Body Tablet Holder Bag might just be up your alley. Owing its premium appearance to hand crafted, full grained leather, the bag boasts three exterior pockets, while the tablet holder compartment is fully protected. R2 890 from www.ibags.co.za.



THE IT'S JUST BUSINESS BAG

Jekyll & Hyde Oxford Leather Business Case

Apparently business bags need not be as staid as they sound, as Jekyll & Hyde's offering for those men who have to contend with the corporate jungle ably proves. The leather notebook bag looks sharp and modern, and blends casual style with a more suitable for business aesthetic. Able to house up to 15" notebooks, it can either be carried by a roomy handle or more casually slung over your shoulder with the removable shoulder strap. It's not cheap though, at R3 700 from www.ibags.co.za. [RN] **ts**



NEW

CINEMA RELEASES

JUPITER ASCENDING 6 FEBRUARY

A young toilet cleaner predestined for greatness gets targeted for assassination by the Queen of the Universe. While it sounds like a video game plot for a *Space Quest* sequel, this is The Wachowski Starship's latest endeavour. Mila Kunis plays the titular star, Jupiter Jones, opposite Channing Tatum, a genetically engineered ex-military hunter and *Terminator* style catalyst.



While the Wachowskis managed to shave hundreds of pages off the original script, no one's sure what to make of their latest effort. *Cloud Atlas* was incredibly ambitious and while they may never live up to *The Matrix*, we must admire their quest to stretch filmic possibilities.

KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE 13 FEBRUARY

Colin Firth is not an action man. He's distinctly British and you'd imagine him going for a spot of tea over a Martini. He did however play an agent in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* and he's doing it all over again for Matthew Vaughn (*X-Men: First Class*) in the adaptation of the acclaimed comic book, *Kingsman: The Secret Service*.

This action-adventure and espionage comedy will undoubtedly expose us to a different side of Firth, who is supported by Samuel L. Jackson, Michael Caine and Mark Strong. We're just hoping it's fresh and funny enough to avoid turning into a half-baked *Bond* film or half-witted *Johnny English*.



WHIPLASH 20 FEBRUARY

Whiplash focuses on the complex relationship between a promising young drummer and a respected professor at a prestigious music academy. Miles Teller stars opposite J.K. Simmons in this intense music drama. The young actor has stolen the spotlight with solid performances in *The Spectacular Now*, *Divergent* and now *Whiplash* with a starring role as Mr. Fantastic in the *Fantastic Four* reboot.



Critics and audiences are raving about this electrifying film from writer-director, Damien Chazelle. *Whiplash* is already a hot favourite this awards season, racking up numerous accolades with J.K. Simmons garnering much acclaim for his supporting role.

AMERICAN SNIPER 20 FEBRUARY

Clint Eastwood and Bradley Cooper are two respected names in Hollywood. While Cooper hasn't become part of the furniture just yet, their collaboration is promising as they tackle the true story of legendary pinpoint-accurate Navy SEAL sniper, Chris Kyle.

Eastwood introduces us to the most lethal sniper in U.S. history, who after four tours of duty returns home to his family. From the outset, *American Sniper* echoes aspects from the marksman actioner, *Shooter* and war drama *The Hurt Locker*. While you may feel as though you've seen this film before, it's bound to break new ground and with Eastwood we should be in safe hands.



THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING 27 FEBRUARY

The Theory of Everything is an adaptation of Jane Hawking's book, *Travelling to Infinity: My Life with Stephen*, which deals with her relationship with the famous physicist. *Man on Wire* director, James Marsh has composed an intimate and quietly powerful account on the back of outstanding performances from Eddie Redmayne and Felicity Jones.

Marsh brings great depth and beauty to this biographical romance drama, which deals with life before Hawking was confined to a wheelchair and the ensuing physical and relational difficulties. The *Theory of Everything* elicited genuine heartfelt emotion from Hawking himself and is a strong contender this awards season.

MOVIE NEWS



EVIL DEAD TV SERIES IS ALIVE

Good news for fans of the original cult flick, *Ash vs. Evil Dead* is the name of the TV series set to hit Starz, the home of *Black Sails* and *Spartacus*. Bruce Campbell is reprising his role as Ash, the episodes are set to clock in at 30 minutes and it's being shot in New Zealand. While the horror comedy is primed to take on a sitcom time frame, as opposed to a *Walking Dead* format, the producers insist "it's going to be a chock-full half hour".



GONE GIRL SEQUEL IS A HITCHCOCK REMAKE

David Fincher's biggest box office success is *Gone Girl*, a thriller that generated equally thrilling takings, grossing \$350 million worldwide. Just as questions surrounding a possible sequel have started pouring in, the Fincher, Affleck and Flynn trio have announced a slanted remake of Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*, currently named *Strangers*, and set to take place on a plane. The million dollar question is... will we be seeing more of Nick and Amy Dunne? **ts**

TOP 5 BUDDY MOVIES

Seeing that February is all about loooooove, we don't want to forget those special bromances captured on celluloid. Movie connoisseur Spling goes searching for love, but not in that way.



BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID 1969

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid is based on real events, but the buddy chemistry between Robert Redford and Paul Newman is so electric, you tend to think that it could not have gone that well in real life. George Roy Hill's Western took four Oscars home in 1969 to cement its classic stature while the duo rekindled their magic in 73's *The Sting*.

The action comedy adventure was a defining buddy movie that probably would have been a success based on the co-lead bank robber chemistry alone. The pairing - Butch is all ideas and Sundance is all about the action - probably inspired Jackie Chan movies like *Shanghai Noon* and *Rush Hour*.

TRUE BROMANCE: When Butch and Sundance take a leap of faith together.



HOT FUZZ 2007

It'll come as no surprise that that Simon Pegg and Nick Frost are friends in real-life. The comedy duo have teamed up in a number of films, but their send-up of buddy cop movies in *Hot Fuzz* is probably the best showcase of their glowing on-screen chemistry.

Pegg plays a hot-shot police officer from London, who relocates to a sleepy village to pair up with an action film junkie wannabe in Frost. While the focus is on their odd couple exploits and a slow-boiling mystery, they're given a third dimension by their invisible partner-in-crime, director Edgar Wright.

TRUE BROMANCE: When Nicholas and Danny finally get to fire two guns whilst jumping through the air... together.



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LETHAL WEAPON 1987

Lethal Weapon took a page from *48 Hrs.* and stole the buddy cop show. The 80s was an age when everyone still loved Mel Gibson and 'moonlight butt walks' were used to appease tag-a-long girlfriends. The blend of action and comedy was pitch perfect, delivering loads of fractious buddy movie comedy as the 'no 1 in TEAM' partners learn to get along while busting a drug smuggling syndicate.

Gibson and Glover were terrific as a suicidal loose cannon and the "I'm too old for this sh*t" guy. This quintessential buddy movie spawned three sequels and a respectable spoof with Emilio Estevez in *Loaded Weapon 1*.

TRUE BROMANCE: Every moment in which Riggs puts Murtaugh in a situation that forces him to realise his age.



THE ODD COUPLE 1968

Before they were *Grumpy Old Men*, Lemmon and Matthau launched what was to become a staple opposites-attract situational comedy dynamic. Their celebrated journey started with 1968's *The Odd Couple*, a comedy about two friends who try to share an apartment, only to discover they get along about as well as Zuma and Malema.

There's a bittersweet edge to the comedy after suicidal neat freak, Felix moves in with the couch potato, Oscar. Their odd couple chemistry and comedy was magical, allowing us to enjoy hilarious moments between two pals who behave like they're married unhappily ever after.

TRUE BROMANCE: When Felix starts clearing his sinuses opposite Oscar in the diner.



WAYNE'S WORLD 1992

Mike Myers and Dana Carvey turned their *Saturday Night Live* sketch into a film of totally epic proportions when they made *Wayne's World*. Apart from serving as a 90s time capsule, the playful and inseparable spirit of Wayne and Garth's buddy chemistry comedy sent up the slacker subculture perfectly.

Where would we be without their catchy catchphrases, stick-it-to-the-man philosophy, inside joke wink-wink and that epic *Bohemian Rhapsody* rendition? This bromance was real and while you always got the impression Wayne was cooler, Garth was a worthy imitator. The duo went on to rehash their chemistry in *Wayne's World 2*, which while recycled still had its charms. **ts**

TRUE BROMANCE: When Wayne and Garth lie on the hood of their car to enjoy the rush of a flyover.

CLOSE BUT NO CIGAR! *48 Hrs.*, *Thelma & Louise*, *Dumb & Dumber*, *Swingers*, *Bad Boys*, *Sideways*, *Rush Hour* and *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*.

COMICS: THE GOOD NEW STUFF

Comic book guru Moray Rhoda picks the best and most accessible comics launched in the past few months.

STAR WARS ISSUE 1

BY JASON AARON, JOHN CASSADAY, LAURA MARTIN
(Marvel Comics)

It's not surprising that this first issue of the *Star Wars* return to Marvel Comics is already predicted to be the best-selling comic of the year. It is set in the time period following the destruction of the Galactic Empire's deadliest weapon, the Death Star, at the hand of Luke Skywalker. The Rebel Alliance is at an all time high and Han Solo leads a daring infiltration mission to Cymoon 1 in an attempt to destroy the Empire's biggest weapons facility.

Things go predictably wrong, but Jason Aaron (*Scalped*) gets everything right, delivering a thrilling adventure and characters that fit perfectly within the *Star Wars* universe. The artstyle flags in some places as Cassaday struggles to maintain the realistic depiction of Luke Skywalker and company, but generally scenes are well illustrated and exciting, including the cliffhanger ending.

TOOTH & CLAW ISSUE 1

BY KURT BUSIEK, BENJAMIN DEWEY, JORDIE BELLAIRE
(Image Comics)

A fantasy comic with anthropomorphic characters, *Tooth & Claw* reads more like the best European fiction than typical American fare. Set in Keneil, the Seventh City in the clouds and home to the most powerful mages on the world, the story is the coming of age tale of Dunstan, the son of one of the most formidable magelords. These cities in the sky are the (sometimes) harsh overlords of the lesser creatures that are earthbound below and the cloud-dwellers have known for a while that the magic which keeps their cities afloat is fading, which endangers their position of privilege and power.

Ghartha the Seeker, a lower level wizard proposes a desperate and forbidden quest to save their world, ultimately risking the lives of all the denizens of the Seventeen Cities. Writing, artwork, colour and the charming characters all fit together seamlessly to create a massive, exquisitely detailed and fascinating world in a truly incredible story.

CONAN RED SONJA ISSUE 1

BY JIM ZUB, GAIL SIMONE, DAN PANOSIAN, DAVE STEWART
(Dark Horse & Dynamite Entertainment)

Ushering in a new age for Red Sonja and Conan, the story is cleverly written and beautifully paced to deliver a fantastic first meeting and adventure for the characters. The plot is suitably epic, with an evil wizard manipulating the world for conquest, with our heroes pitted against a cruel and ruthless king. Conan and Red Sonja are both on a mission to steal a great treasure from the king, which sets them on a collision course as ultimately only one of them can claim the prize.

The characters are wittily written and well-developed, the world is exciting and the artwork and colour are incredible. Wrapping up the story with a satisfying ending that is completely in character for our heroes, there are still enough tantalizing threads left for the reader to explore in future issues. **ts**

CLOSE BUT NO DONUT: *Wayward* (Image Comics), *Ant-Man* (Marvel Comics), *Bob's Burgers* (Dynamite Entertainment), *Wytches* (Image Comics), *Father's Day* (Dark Horse)

These comics are available digitally at Comixology.com, but why not support your local comic book shop for the real deal?



THE COMIC BOOK GUYS

DANIËL HUGO

Daniël Hugo has been called “the most prolific SA comic artist”, creating some of the most exciting work currently available. We tracked him down for an interview.

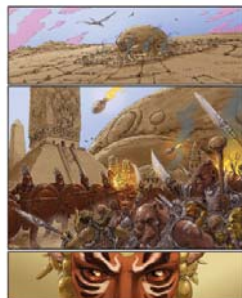


TechSmart: How did you learn to draw so well?

Daniël Hugo: I can't really say... I suppose there is an element of talent involved, but also encouragement from my family and a personal drive to be good at it! Other than that, I'm very lucky to have a day job that requires me to draw almost every day. That is probably the only way one gets good at anything, by constantly doing it

Where do you find inspiration? Is it a fluctuating matter, or like a constant stream?

Inspiration, of course, comes from everywhere and in my case it's more or less a constant stream. I try to capture most of these in my sketchbooks which then act as an “ideas catalogue”. Some are developed further and eventually find their way into some of the comics and art I make, but the large majority never gets any further than a scribbled sketch on a page.



What is your goal regarding your own comic book creation?

I don't really have a clear goal regarding my comic creations. I get bored quickly and because I have so many ideas for other possible projects, I tend to stick to shorter form stories so I can finish them and move on to the next one. The one thing I do try to stick to, is to finish a project once I've started.

Your art seems to tread that fine line between comic book illustration and actual fine art. Is there a difference for you?



Not really. With comics I feel it's about clear visual and sequential communication and narrative. With fine art it's sometimes more about conveying an atmosphere and a general emotional mood in a single picture. That said, the two are inter-linked in my mind in terms of storytelling.

What are some of the projects you are currently busy with?

I recently completed a collaborative project, *The Souvenir* with writer Jayson Geland and edited by Moray Rhoda.

This year I'll be doing my first long-form story of about 72 pages (quite a daunting prospect), set in the same alternative historic world we've created.



Favourite comic book artist?

Too many to single out just one... I'm a big fan of Moebius, Frank Quitely, Mike Mignola, Arthur Ranson, Simon Bisley, Enki Bilal and the list just grows!

Any advice for folks starting off in comic book creation?

I think it's important to experiment a little with different styles and types of stories. Other than that I think it's good to collaborate, become involved with the local comic scene and take part in

different independent comic projects. Also don't immediately jump into doing an epic graphic novel without a clear plan and completed script. Creating a graphic novel is a considerable investment in time and effort. You will become despondent. Rather concentrate on finishing shorter stories before attempting a long one.

Where do you believe the local comic book scene is right now, and what needs to happen to take it to the next level?



It is certainly an exciting time for local comics! There has been an explosion of new work in the last couple of years and in a way we are pioneering a new direction for comics in South Africa, moving away from heavy politics towards something else. An aspect of the local scene that frustrates me (and many others) is the lack of national distribution, with the result that the comics that are being created, are

not really getting any exposure apart from a few events in the major metropolitan centres. Another pet peeve is the tendency of major retailers (that are willing to stock local comics) to sell these at ridiculous marked-up prices that puts it out of reach of exactly the people you want to buy it. In their pursuit of profit, these shops are killing the local fledgling comic ‘industry’ before it even has a chance to get off the ground. It is incredibly short sighted. **ts**



All images courtesy of Daniël Hugo. For more of his work, visit www.oneironaut.co.za

THE BIG ISSUE: WINDOWS 10 + HOLOLENS

After the divisive OS that was Windows 8, Microsoft is betting big on the newly improved Windows 10 to woo back users. So what does Windows 10 have in store?

Has tech's prodigal son returned? Well, not quite, but Microsoft did have a strong showing at its Windows 10 event on 21 January. The company has adopted a different tact with this OS by sticking to its roots and integrating a cross-platform thinking.

Keeping in line with what CEO, Satya Nadella has stated publicly, Windows 10 shows a greater effort from Microsoft to make connectivity between devices more seamless. To that end, Office, Outlook and Microsoft's virtual assistant Cortana, are available across multiple platforms. Frustrated Windows 8 users will be happy to hear that the traditional start menu has returned in Windows 10. It also integrates a larger array of content compared to previous OS iterations, with a click on the start menu bringing up a live tile-esque setup.

Cross-platform appeal

Windows Phone too sees significant changes. Notifications are now designed to sync intuitively between PCs and mobile devices, while Microsoft-owned Skype will also bring notifications into the Windows Phone messaging app itself. Although not on display, Microsoft stated that their mobile experience will make a greater push to support third party apps such as Gmail and Instagram, a problem Windows Phone often suffers with.

One of the big talking points was the shift away from the much maligned Internet Explorer. It's to be replaced by Project Spartan, and as the name

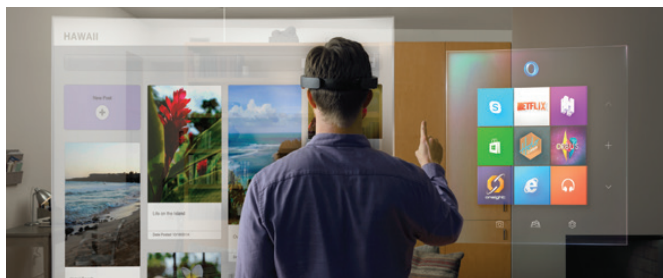
indicates, the browser features a far cleaner look than its predecessor, with added note taking and read-for-later features. Gamers were not forgotten either, with an Xbox app available to all Windows 10 owners. It will integrate the majority of Xbox One's gaming features, like messages and activity feeds.

Welcome surprise

Apart from Windows 10 a surprise came in the form of Microsoft's own augmented reality headset named HoloLens. It's a visor that can overlay holographic imagery to provide an augmented reality experience for wearers. Still in the prototype phase, the HoloLens developer kit will launch around the same time as Windows 10, with companies like Oculus and Magic Leap on board to further improve the headset.

All in all, Microsoft's Windows 10 event was deemed a success by most, as the company showed that it has learned from its mistakes and taken on user feedback. The Windows 10 preview kit trail for developers ends 15 April, with an expected release date later in the year come late September. **ts**

WINDOWS 10 SHOWS A GREATER EFFORT FROM MICROSOFT TO MAKE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN DEVICES MORE SEAMLESS.



TOP Tweets!

- Mojak Lehoko** @mojaklehoko · 40m
Whenever a rapper says "you know what time it is", I stop and look at my watch because at no point in life should Ja Rule know more than me
- Deep Fried Man** @DeepFriedMan · 3h
Xenophobia and load-shedding. Well done, South Africa, we have managed to travel back in time to 2008.
- Best Darth Vader** @mdarthvaderm · 3h
☐ Jedi.
☐ Sith.
☒ It's complicated.
- Swedish Canary** @SwedishCanary · 6h
How about a restaurant where the minute you walk in you lose cell service and your camera app is disabled.
- Matt Roller** @rolldiggity · 13h
Whenever I fill out a job application with a box for "Race," I add a question mark and then write, "Anytime. Anywhere."
- Rich Rosie Quan** @rosekotze · 14h
You think you know someone but then you see them commenting on a News 24 Facebook post
- banksy** @therealbanksy · 15h
Great things never came from comfort zones.
- Jerm Himselfish** @JermHimselfish · Jan 21
Sorry I never called you back, I broke my phone trying to click the play button of a video that turned out to be a screenshot.
- Rob Van Vuuren** @RobVanVuuren · Jan 20
At a casting with a bunch of models. The collective disdain in this waiting room could power a tractor.
- Shaka Sisulu** @shakasisulu · Jan 20
"True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring" #MLK

- Matt Roller** @rolldiggity · Jan 18
Hate when I ask Siri if I'm sinking into madness, and she refuses to tell me until I bring her more dead birds.
- Dani Fernandez** @msdanifernandez · Jan 17
I started dating someone and we're still in that really cute adorable phase where he hasn't realized yet that I'm crazy.
- Richard de Nooy** @RicharddeNooy · Jan 16
I'm not sure when I started measuring my lifespan in printer cartridges.
- OhNoSheTwitnt** @OhNoSheTwitnt · Jan 13
You wouldn't like me when I'm angry. Or sad. Or anxious. Or tired. Or bored. Basically any time I'm awake. Also I kick in my sleep.
- Chris Forrest** @ChrisForrestSA · Jan 13
You'd think with all the practice we get, South African drivers would be better at out-of-order-robots...
- Ben Trovato** @BTrovato · Jan 13
When I call myself an award-winning writer, please be aware that I am referring to the tennis trophy I won in grade seven.
- Neil deGrasse Tyson** @neiltyson · Jan 5
Wouldn't it be cool if Zombies & Vampires became human if we bit them first? Somebody needs to test that hypothesis.
- Dries Cronje** @dries139 · Dec 18
Well done Mike & team - good read RT "@TechSmartMag: All the latest #geek news and some hot movie trailers techsmart.co.za/news/Geek-News..."
- Fake** @FakeMe... · 3h
You don't fool me, but keep going I have nothing else to do.
- David O'Doherty** @phlaimeaux · Jan 10
saw two people kissing on the street today. Valentine's just gets earlier and earlier each year

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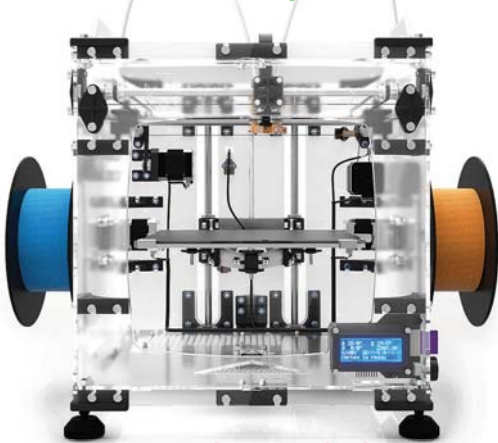
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In *Sunset Overdrive* the Xbox One has its outstanding exclusive, with the title taking fun/action to an eye-popping level.

Here's an experiment: put the developers of wacky, humorous platformers and unrelenting first person shooters in a room, give their creativity all the Red Bull and sugary snacks it can handle, and wait a couple of years. The result is surely a game like *Sunset Overdrive*, which pumps frenetic action and shooting gameplay full of steroids, feeds it a tiny dose of LSD and promptly launches it into the stratosphere.

Put another way, *Sunset Overdrive* is simply a blast of relentless action, a riot of colour and a festival of over the top ridiculousness, rolled into one.

Drink up

The game's story is simple enough – a nefarious corporation launches its new energy drink, *Overdrive*, at a massive party. Alas, those that imbibe it, instead of getting wings, receive mutations, becoming mindless, ravenous creatures. Fast forward a couple of weeks and your city has been overrun, with all semblance of order going up in flames.

The good news is that a petty thing like gainful employment no longer matters; the bad news (depending on perspective) is that you and a handful of oddballs are the only survivors of this Apocalypse. You have the grizzled mentor, the mad scientist who seems to perhaps have inhaled a few too many fumes from his experiments, and the overly cheery salesman who perkily encourages you to "enjoy your murder spree". However, eschewing the usual grim view of life going sideways, *Sunset Overdrive* asks what if the end of the world really was a funfest?

Are you feeling lucky, punk?

To this end, and borrowing from the *Ratchet and Clank* playbook, it gives you access to a slew of insanely weird, wacky and innovative weapons with which to deal with these mutants (called ODs). Yes,



there are the standard sidearm, shotgun and spear guns, but even these are creatively named, such as the *Dirty Harry*, *Flaming Compensator* and *Captain Ahab* (read *Moby Dick* for the reference) respectively. Then there are the likes of the *Acid Sprinkler*, *Freeze Bomb* and the gun that shoots explosive teddy bears (yes, really).

Things get a lot weirder from there, with Amps that modify one's weapons and one's moves in several ways adding a range of progressively devastating (and madcap) effects. The kicker is that in order to activate your Amps, you need to build up style, accomplished by bouncing, jumping and grinding (fortunately no twerking).

PUT SIMPLY, SUNSET OVERDRIVE BOASTS SOME OF THE ZANIEST, FUN GAMEPLAY AT PRESENT ON BOTH OF THE NEXT GEN PLATFORMS.

Keep moving

Whereas grinding on rails was a select segment in Insomniac Game's *Ratchet and Clank* series, *Sunset Overdrive* makes traversing the city by grinding an ever-present feature, that is when you are not bouncing off umbrellas or strangely buoyant cars and rooftop fans. Indeed, in *Sunset Overdrive*'s vibrantly colourful locale, mundane activities like walking or running around on the ground are great ways to get swarmed, eaten and then killed (in that order).

In essence, *Sunset Overdrive* is a major coup for the Xbox One, and is quite easily this platform's *Ratchet and Clank*. It's zany, ridiculous, over the top, but extremely well polished. *Sunset Overdrive*'s frequently unexpected flashes of well crafted humour to go along with its exhaustive action, make it possibly one of the outstanding new franchises to emerge from 2014. Put simply, *Sunset Overdrive* boasts some of the zaniest, fun gameplay at present on both of the next gen platforms. Highly recommended.
RRP: R740. [RN] **ts**

BEST BIT

Grinding around the city while simultaneously switching between multiple weapons on the fly and blasting hordes of monsters without allowing one's feet to touch the ground.



LORDS OF THE FALLEN

GAMES **ts**



Another game that largely tucked and rolled under the radar, *Lords of the Fallen* is nonetheless one which deserves a lot more than a passing glance.

Essentially, there are two breeds of games: those that are meant to first and foremost be fun and give you the sense of being the near invincible hero, and those that pit you as the underdog, where victory against your foes has to be more hard won. *Lords of the Fallen* falls into the latter camp. *Lords of the Fallen* has, and with good reason, been compared to the *Dark Souls* franchise, but whereas *Dark Souls* and its sequel were punishing in their difficulty, this action role playing game is a little more accessible.

Life after death

That's not to say *Lords of the Fallen* is a cakewalk. You will die, and you will die often, at least until you learn your enemies' particular patterns and how to exploit their weaknesses. On the plus side, this makes emerging victorious against them that much sweeter, where vanquishing one of the titular Lords feels like a victory actually worth celebrating.

The game is similarly set in a rather grim, gothic inspired world, threatened by the uprising of a god's army called the Rhogar, and its protagonist, Harkyn, is to put it bluntly, a brute. Convicted of a litany of unnamed sins, the Rhogar's return also offers Harkyn a chance at redemption, and all he has to do is defeat a few hundred demons and confront an even angrier god - a tough penance to say the least.

Unlike the *Dark Souls* saga, the game's mechanics aren't entirely stacked against you. Sure, you lose experience points gleaned when you die, but these can be retrieved, provided you do so within the time constraint. Additionally, some of the foes are easier to best than others, serving to wet your blade as well as bolster your confidence.

Pick a fight

You do have a little help in the form of a mentor, Kaslo, and a slew of weapons that look almost as formidable as Harkyn's face. There's also a smattering of magic, and armour which would make a Sherman tank seem svelte by comparison, at least should you choose the warrior class, at your disposal. Alternatively, you can opt to play as the rogue or cleric, which are faster and are more magically inclined, respectively, but on the down side, more vulnerable.

MUCH LIKE ITS PROTAGONIST, LORDS OF THE FALLEN HAS ITS ROUGH EDGES, BUT THERE IS STILL A RATHER GOOD GAME HERE THAT I ENJOYED PLAYING.



The game's primary dynamic is one of risk vs reward. Every successive victory increases your chances of reaping better gear the longer you survive, but this resets should you die or save your progress. Besides from some genuinely engaging fights, the game also offers up a rather enticing array of gear to find and craft (reminding of its RPG roots), which can be further enhanced by runes.

Winter is here

Lords of the Fallen is at times beautiful in its way, and was even a little reminiscent of *Game of Thrones* with its harsh landscapes, cold fortresses and castles, claustrophobic corridors and unforgiving denizens (your smaller foes look like Westeros' The Mountain). What this all adds up to is a rather compelling title that I must admit, did keep me coming back time and again to see if I could progress further without dying.

Much like its protagonist, *Lords of the Fallen* has its rough edges, but there is still a rather good game here that I enjoyed playing and can recommend giving a try. R700. [RN] **ts**

BEST BIT

Finally understanding how to defeat a particularly tough foe and exacting vengeance.





It's a sad fact that some gaming gems simply get lost or overlooked in the end of the year flurry of blockbuster releases. Such was the fate of Bayonetta 2, which was nonetheless one of finest recent action adventure titles.

While Bayonetta was first released on the Xbox 360 and PS3, its sequel was snapped up by Nintendo as a Wii U exclusive. This had the unfortunate by-product of making it more likely that the game would be missed by those who have shunned Nintendo's console in favour of the flashier next gen ones. However, if you didn't have enough of a reason to seriously consider the Wii U before, Bayonetta makes a compelling argument to do so now.

As with the previous entry, the game offers spectacular, over the top action as the titular witch takes on angelic and demonic foes alike. Granted, the game is stylized to the extreme, nearly making even the likes of DmC look almost as bland as the Department of Home Affairs by comparison. Nonetheless, this, like Bayonetta's gun (or chainsaw)-equipped stiletto heels and frequently present lollipop, gives it oodles of its own distinctive character.

As with its predecessor the story is as convoluted as they come, but in essence, Bayonetta's battles are motivated by having to trudge into Hell to rescue her friend and fellow witch, Jeanne.



right. This can, at opportune moments, be unleashed to summon massive, fearsome alter-demons to do Bayonetta's bidding. Furthermore, filling up your magic gauge also enables Bayonetta to conjure wicked medieval torture contraptions to gruesomely finish off foes.

Bayonetta lithely and lethally turns dealing death and mayhem into a graceful dance, and makes handling many of the huge, detailed and utterly bizarre enemies a sight to behold. However, the real genius of the game's combat is Witch Time. As in the first game, this is activated by dodging your enemy's attacks at just the right time, turns the screen briefly purple and slows down time around Bayonetta, giving her a distinct advantage. The rub is that you actually have to purposefully make yourself a target, which adds an additional element of edge of your seat anticipation to combat.

Naughty, naughty

If you were hoping that Platinum Games would have dialled down on Bayonetta's hypersexualisation, you are going to be disappointed. The camera still acts like a 15-year old adolescent in the throes of puberty, and often seems to be lasciviously obsessed with fanservice. This alas, does get tired really quickly, particularly if you find this obsessive leering crass.

Additionally, the writing does at times dip towards the puerile, although thankfully, never quite becomes unbearable. Despite this, Bayonetta 2 is a superlative action game, and manages to even surpass the original. Its small flaws aside, in many respects it's not just a trump card for the console, it's also a triumph in the genre. RRP: £600. [RN] **ts**

BEST BIT

Utterly insane combat, the game's bizarre and exquisitely detailed angelic enemies.



Hair today, gone tomorrow

The story doesn't really matter too much though, because actually playing Bayonetta 2 is a joy, thanks to the highly entertaining combat. If endless combinations of kicking, punching, slicing and dicing and blasting foes with with an array of weapons isn't enough, Bayonetta's spiky cropped hair, which transforms into a skintight bodysuit, becomes a weapon in its own

BAYONETTA LITHELY AND LETHALLY TURNS DEALING DEATH AND MAYHEM INTO A GRACEFUL DANCE.

PIPPA TSHABALALA

ON PERMANENCE

**PIPPA IS AT
LONG LAST CONSIDERING A
GAMING TATTOO.
BUT WHICH ONE
WILL IT BE?**

I have a rather substantial collection of tattoos. How does this relate to videogames? Well interestingly one of the questions I get asked most about my tattoos, apart from "did it hurt?" (yes) and "so, how much did it cost?" (if you want something big start saving) is "do you have any videogame tattoos?"

The answer is no. I know it might seem like an odd thing that I haven't had something from the medium that I love so very much etched on to my skin, but there's never been anything, even from games that I would list as part of my top 10, that I really loved enough to get tattooed on me.

I know people in the industry that have console symbols tattooed on them, indicating their fanboy status. I know a developer with a compilation of characters that each indicated a pivotal point in his gaming career. I know other people sporting tattoos of well-known gaming characters that we all love and recognise, but I still haven't felt any desire to have these things tattooed on me.

Until now. Perhaps it's that I've finally reached a point that I realise that what I get tattooed on me doesn't always have to be imbued with quite so much meaning. Maybe it's just an image that I think is kick-ass. Or perhaps it's that I've discovered games that over the years I still return to time and time again. Actually looking back at that list I think it might be all three. I've gone from not wanting any videogame tattoos, to a list of about three that I would quite like to get done at some stage.

What are they you ask? I'm not telling just yet. If I've taken this long to consider one then I need to mull it over in my head for a little longer before I share that with anyone.

But do you think you can guess? Well, let me help you by telling you what they're not.

Pacman, Mario, Kratos? None of these have ever even crossed my mind.

Anyone who has followed me on social media for an extended period of time will know that I am a huge fan of the GTA franchise, even with its gender controversy, and yet that is not a tattoo I'm interested in getting. Not even a little bit. Not the logo, not a character, nothing, so eliminate that from your list right away!

It's difficult because my "favourite" game is often quite fleeting. It's what I'm enjoying now, immersing myself in, but that doesn't mean it will always be that way. Ok, I won't deny that I am considering a Witcher tattoo of some kind, but not the wolf medallion. Every time I do a Google search on this topic, that is the tattoo that pops up the most. Sure it's awesome and looks amazing as a tattoo, but who wants something that everybody else has? Certainly not me. **ts**

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

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SCI-FI SHORT STORIES

This month we feature two more sci-fi stories that were entered in our competition. Enjoy!

Rain Queen

BY THOMAS KING

Illustration: Christina Rupp

“Just picture the rain.” Nomaledi lay on the white mattress as her handler fussed about her, attaching the electrodes to her temple and neck. She rolled her eyes – like she of all people needed to be told what to do. Pity she had to start so soon – the view of Solitaire from the tiny reinforced window had been beautiful, but so dry, as the convoy stopped on the dirt road next to the dried-up riverbed.

“Jislaaik. Tell that little girl to hurry up,” barked Pretorius from the van door, his hands shoved deep into dust-stained jeans. Nomaledi’s handler stopped fussing with her hair and went over to the surly man, wringing her hands and murmuring apologies. That was actually better – she didn’t need anyone interrupting. She closed her eyes and concentrated, relaxing all of her muscles one by one, the cool crisp sheets underneath her fading away.

The darkness behind her eyelids started changing. Instead of the red-static supernovae, she saw points of silver light, moving, leaving behind them glittering comet-contrails. She saw their complex Brownian topography, then reached out and tweaked it, pulling them closer...

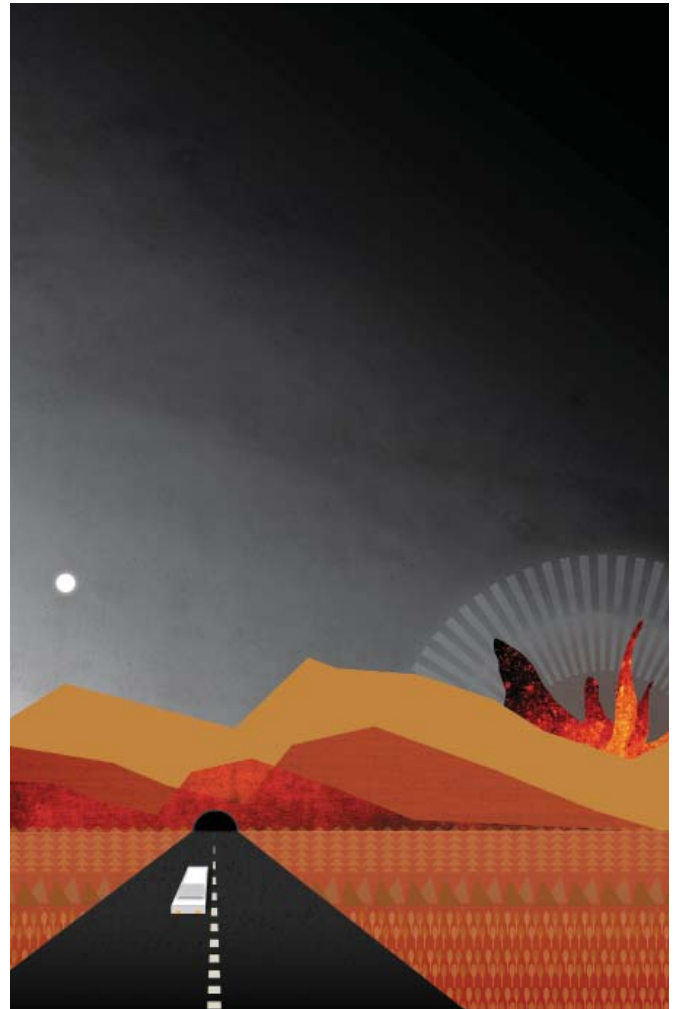
Outside the heavy armoured truck, the sky began to turn. The white glare of the sun faded as clouds began boiling in the west. For Nomaledi, it seemed to only take minutes. Outside, Pretorius complained for a good hour before falling silent, watching along with the convoy guards as the sky began to darken.

“Finally. This is blerrie expensive, you know,” said the farmer, turning to the guards. They stared back, stolid behind mirrored visors. He stuck out a hand, shoving it back awkwardly into his pocket after none of them took it.

Two booms sounded behind him and Pretorius turned to look at the oncoming storm front, frowning. “I didn’t see lightning... any of you ouens see any lightning?” He turned back, and yelled in shock.

Two of the men were slumped against the Casspir, helmets caved in, while the third screamed into a walkie-talkie and waved his rifle around in one hand. The barrel swung towards Pretorius and he yelled and threw himself to the ground, spitting red dust as the rifle barked over his head. From the corner of his eye he could see dark, ragged figures charging through his olive orchard, firing from the hip at the convoy vans and the shouting guards spilling from them.

Inside, Nomaledi frowned at the distant booms. She could feel the static building, but it was too early for lightning. Maybe one of the cloud-seeder drones? But they weren’t supposed to be going



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supersonic, not now... and what was that sound? She could feel herself drifting back to the ground, and fought to keep her focus on making the rain.

Her concentration was broken by a sudden thundering, far too close. She sat up and plucked off the electrodes, swinging her feet onto the cold sterile floor of the van. As she reached the door, a dark shape flashed in front of it, trailing smoke, and slammed into the next van along with a tortured metallic scream. She flinched and slumped against the side of the door, coughing.

The scene was utter chaos. The rocket had punched through the Caspar’s flank, blackening the white paint and blowing away most of the Department of Agriculture logo on the side. Three dead men lay sprawled on the ground, and a dirty balding farmer in a plaid shirt and jeans, covered in dust, was leopard crawling into the bushes on the side of the road, babbling in Afrikaans. Nomaledi ducked as another rocket came down from the hills and hit one of the vans further down the convoy, followed by screams.

Figures burst suddenly from the donga, waving AK-47s and shouting. She screamed and scrambled back into the van, but two women in camo pants and balaclavas grabbed her ankles and pulled her out, gripping her hands behind her back. She drew breath to scream, and a wad of cloth was shoved in her mouth, and a hood dropped over her head.

“All teams! We have the Rain Queen. Fall back after ten minutes. Repeat: We have the Rain Queen!” **ts**

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SHORT STORY COMPETITION

Goggles

BY SAM WILSON

Illustration: Stuart Ponton

It's summer in Cape Town and the sky above me is a clock. The centre of the dome of the sky is etched with geometric golden filigree, and huge black hands arch down to gothic numerals rising up between the buildings and hills on the horizon. The small hand is pointing at Devil's Peak, which means it's approaching six; only a few more minutes of jogging before I have to go home and start making a supper of Low-Carbonara pasta. I stop on the corner of Rondebosch Common to stretch out my muscles and take in the view.

I've set my Goggles to the ultraviolet spectrum. It makes the flowers far more interesting – they evolved to attract insects that see in UV, according to an info bubble hanging over them. They have patterns and colours that are completely invisible to the naked eye. Not that there are many of those any more.

Other than the clock in the sky, I've turned off most of my Goggles' overlays. There's some of boxes drifting down slowly, representing online purchases which will hit the ground the same time as the physical deliveries are made by drone. A couple of bombs are also hanging in the air to represent incoming deadlines. They look cartoony – my Corporate-Zen friend Xoli would call them tacky – but they help me handle my work stress.

A couple of other joggers run past; their public information hovers over them. A designer and an artisan baker, salaries in the hundred thousand plus bracket. Libertarian trance fans too, apparently. I wave at them, but they ignore me. Must have their social settings turned off.

I stare at their departing backs, and don't react in time to a growl from behind me. When I turn, my throat constricts. There's a creature crossing the street. Clawed legs and a slick black shell. It has a double row of teeth, and mucus runs from its carapace.

It's an overlay. My anti-mugging app is warning me that someone without Goggles is coming. Those without Goggles can't be tracked, and so can't be entirely trusted. My Goggles are giving me the shot of terror I need to run from the threat. Which is exactly what I'm about to do when the monster reaches out a claw.

"Hap!"

"I'm sorry," I say, backing away. I force myself to remember that there's a human under the image, and put on a smile. "I can't understand you." It waves its claw at me again. As I recoil, I see something glistening in its palm.

"Wazz? Hap. Gob. Bruk." it growls pitifully. It's holding a cracked set of Goggles.

I still can't understand it, and I don't know why. My Goggles can handle all the South African languages, and the top five hundred worldwide. It's been decades since I haven't heard an immediate translation, and been able to connect with someone.

"Hap," the creature says again. Its compound eyes glisten with tears. "Help?" I say. It nods.



www.behance.net/stuartponton

I look at the broken Goggles in its claw. They're for extreme immersion, with sound-cancelling earpieces. Whoever wore these would never see or hear the real world. Every word they heard would be mediated by the goggles.

It finally clicks. I've heard of serious Goggleheads who develop a personalised language, like a verbal shorthand, that's only understood by them and their Goggles. Whenever the Gogglehead talks to another person, the Goggles translate instantly, so no one notices. There's no reason for them to speak the same language as everyone else, after all. They are fully functioning members of society, with jobs, friends and families. And yet they're fundamentally alone. Whole cultures with a population of one. Until the Goggles break.

"Hap."

I want to stop seeing a monster. There's a toggle buried somewhere in my settings, but it'll take a while to find it, and right now there's a profoundly isolated person in front of me.

I tell myself I can do this. I reach up to take off my Goggles.

Before I can unhook them from my ears, I'm already picturing what I'll see. Black and middle class. Or an overweight teenaged basement dweller. Or an old white lady. An age, a gender, a clothing style, a wealth bracket, nothing more.

The thought calms me down, and I know I can handle this situation. Because in some ways, it's like the Goggles aren't coming off at all. **ts**

CLOUDED JUDGEMENT

WOULD YOU LIKE
THE CONCEPT OF
CLOUD COMPUTING
EXPLAINED TO YOU?
SO WOULD
DEEP FRIED MAN.

It's not normally advisable to write a tech column about something you know nothing about. Since the topic of this particular one is cloud computing you can bet your moonboots that I have decided to ignore this advice. In my defence, though, cloud computing is something that, whether they admit it or not, the vast majority of all humankind knows nothing about.

The basic gist of it is simple enough. To store your information, you can upload all of your data onto the cloud. After this, things get a little, um, cloudy. Where is the cloud? Who created the cloud? Who owns the cloud? Is it stratus, cumulus, cumulonimbus or cirrus? Should we be afraid of our data getting wet?

I needed answers, the kind of answers that only a repository of knowledge as vast as Wikipedia could provide. According to the encyclopedia that mercifully doesn't insist on taking up four shelves in your study, 'Cloud computing is a recently evolved computing terminology or metaphor based on utility and consumption of computing resources'. I can only assume that the evil geniuses who invented cloud computing came up with this definition to confuse people like me into submission.

Refusing to give up so easily, I kept rereading this definition until it started to make a limited amount of sense. I say a limited amount because according to this definition, cloud computing is a 'metaphor'. I must admit that I am confused as to why we are currently told that the safest thing to do with all your most valuable data is to upload it onto a metaphor.

I feel a bit better knowing that I'm not the only person in the world who is a little bit unclear about the finer details of cloud computing. Sure, I don't really understand it, but at least I understand it better than two men from Houston, Texas, who were arrested after deciding that it was a good idea to upload a video showing them boasting about stealing an iPhone onto the victim's iCloud (bit.ly/1AWWyWd).

As a dedicated Apple user, and by that I mean someone who has been using Apple products for long enough to have lost the ability to use a normal computer, I too use the iCloud. But, just as with Facebook, I have no idea who other than those intended to can access all the information I upload. I could always read the terms and conditions, but in the immortal words of that lady from the viral video "Ain't nobody got time for that".

In summary, ask me about cloud computing and I will explain to you that it's a way to access or store data that has been uploaded onto a remote server. An entire column later, including some extremely thorough research (thanks Wikipedia), and that's all I know. If you're reading this thinking "What an idiot, I mean who doesn't understand cloud computing", please feel free to explain it to me (@deepfriedman). I'm not proud. I would ask Steve Jobs but sadly, he's no longer with us.

At least he's in a better place now. The iCloud. **ts**



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