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2014 Tech Trends

GAME ON!
PS4 Rated

REVIEWED:

- ▶ Sony Alpha 7R
- ▶ Pentax K-3
- ▶ Canon G16
- ▶ HTC One mini
- ▶ Apple iPhone 5s
- ▶ Parrot Asteroid Mini

REVEALED:
COSPLAY
COVERS!



FX

D800

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David Oliver
Nature Photographer



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Cosplay cover (and calendar) is a GO!

If you were at our stand last year at the rAge gaming festival, you would have hopefully had a close encounter with one of our three cosplay models. The amazing response we got from TechSmart fans bodes well for the theme of our covers for 2014. Starting this month we will feature cosplay models, covering some of the hottest series and movies of the new year. Please put your hands together for Miss January – Daenerys “I will take what is mine” Targaryen from *Game of Thrones*.

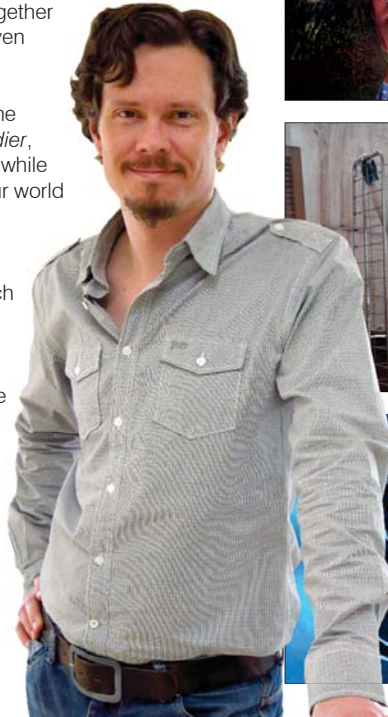
So who do you have to look forward to? In March you have the amazing Black Widow from *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*, Alice from the *Resident Evil* franchise pops up in September, while Nancy Callahan from *Sin City: A Dame to Kill For* will rock your world in November.

My personal favourite? Catwoman, who you will see on our Feb cover. Going to do the shoot on a rooftop close to Church Square in Pretoria city centre was simply superb.

But what to do when you can't wait for the rest of the year for all the girls? Drop by The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop (see p.37) where you will be able to buy our first ever Cosplay Calendar. Yep, all twelve girls are available to accompany you month-by-month, all thanks to The G.A.D.G.E.T. Shop who sponsored it.

I'm quite sure you'll enjoy the next year with us and our cosplay girls. As always, your feedback is very important, so please drop me a mail – mike@techsmart.co.za.

Live long and prosper,
Mike Joubert



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ABOUT THE COVER GIRL

DAENERYS TARGARYEN - GAME OF THRONES

Also known as: Daenerys Stormborn, The Unburnt, Mother of Dragons, The Silver Queen, Child of Three, The Dragon Queen

Quick Facts:

Daenerys's mom died while giving birth, during a massive storm that laid waste to the Targaryen fleet. This earned her the nickname Daenerys Stormborn.

Her brother, Viserys, traded her hand in marriage to Drogo, in exchange for an army of 40 000 men of Drogo's tribe.

Her title, Khaleesi, is given to the wife of the khal, a Dothraki warlord.

There is debate regarding the pronunciation of her name, with the official guide noting it should be "ka-LEE-see," while the professional linguist that developed the Dothraki language prefers "KHAH-lay-see."

In 2012, there were 146 American babies named Khaleesi in the United States, even though it's simply a title and not a name.

Emilia Clarke, who plays Daenerys in the series, is set to play Sarah Connor in the 2015 reboot of *The Terminator*.

Famous Daenerys quotes:

"I am Daenerys Stormborn of House Targaryen, of the blood of Old Valyria. I am the dragon's daughter, and I swear to you that those who would harm you will die screaming."

"When my dragons are grown, we will take back what was stolen from me and destroy those who wronged me! We will lay waste to armies and burn cities to the ground!"

Sources:

www.gameofthrones.wikia.com
www.huffingtonpost.com,
www.imdb.com



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Anodized Carbon
Edition

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HOT STUFF

2014 SRT VIPER GTS

Chrysler has made the amazing Viper's bite more potent via a special edition Anodized Carbon Package.

ANODIZED CARBON EDITION

Below the sculpted bonnet resides a normally aspirated 8.4-litre V10 cranking out 477 kW and enough torque (813 Nm) to reverse SANRAL's stance on e-Tolling.



The Nappa leather and Alcantara covered racing seats feature orange stitching accents, whilst the sportiness of the steering wheel is accentuated by carbon fibre inserts.

A striking and stylish contrast is provided by the orange-painted brake calipers ominously glaring at envious onlookers from beneath this Viper's black Vapor Chrome Rattler wheels.

Distinguishing this SRT model from other Vipers is its unique metallic matte paint job, which is accentuated by the use of carbon fiber accents on the bodywork.

Chrysler will start producing a very limited run of 50 Viper GTS Anodized Carbon Edition models within January 2014. Pricing is yet to be determined.

Carbon fiber accents adorn the SRT's center stack and door panels, whilst a carbon GTS badge is placed on the dashboard in case you forget what model Viper you bought. **ts**



MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO'S THE RAREST SUPERCAR OF THEM ALL?

Lamborghini Veneno (pictured) – Only three manufactured world-wide.

- Lamborghini Veneno Roadster (cabriolet) – Nine vehicles.
- 2014 SRT Viper GTS Anodized Carbon Edition – 50 examples.
- McLaren P1 – 375 units.
- Ferrari LaFerrari – 499 prancing horses.
- Porsche 918 Spyder – A matching 918 supercars.

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- Share files via USB



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A DSL Filter/Splitter is required to connect your ADSL /VDSL Modem/Router and telephone on the same line. It is used to split data and analogue lines.



3G/LTE

3G/LTE Failover via USB

Plug a compatible 3G/LTE USB modem into the VMG1312-B10A's USB port and share your 3G/LTE connection wirelessly. 3G/LTE failover serves as a back-up for when your DSL connection fails or can be used as a primary connection.

File Sharing

File Sharing via USB

Simply connect an external storage device to the VMG1312-B10A and let users on your network access videos, music and documents stored on it.

*3G/LTE USB Modem not included, refer to www.zyxel.co.za for the complete list of compatible 3G/LTE Modems. **Speed and availability dependant on your region, network and service provider

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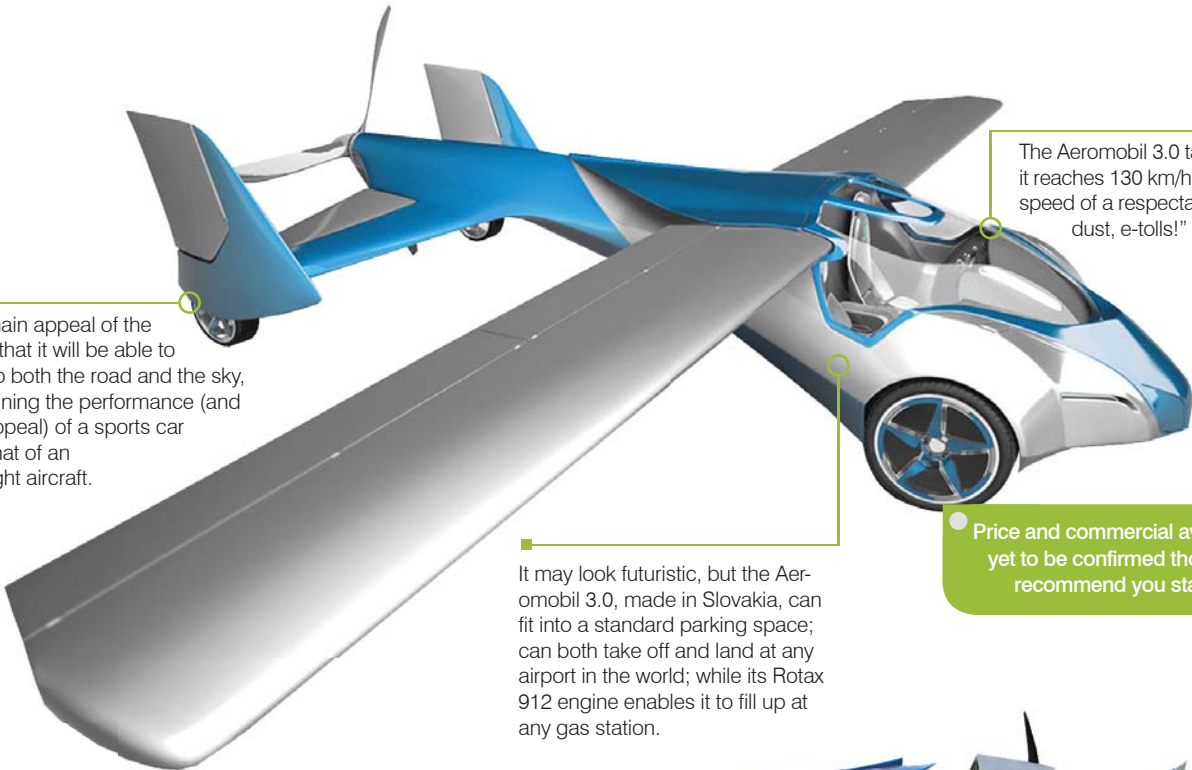
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HOT STUFF

AEROMOBIL 3.0

Forget e-tolls if you can line up for one of the Aeromobil 3.0 flying cars.



The main appeal of the car is that it will be able to take to both the road and the sky, combining the performance (and sex appeal) of a sports car with that of an ultralight aircraft.

The Aeromobil 3.0 takes off when it reaches 130 km/h and has a top speed of a respectable, "eat my dust, e-tolls!" 200 km/h.

Price and commercial availability have yet to be confirmed though, but we recommend you start saving.

It may look futuristic, but the Aeromobil 3.0, made in Slovakia, can fit into a standard parking space; can both take off and land at any airport in the world; while its Rotax 912 engine enables it to fill up at any gas station.

With a range of up to 700 km, the Aeromobil 3.0 looks set to be able to breeze through a trip from Joburg to Durban as well as a quick jaunt to the shops.

Don't expect to turn your flying car into a taxi though, the Aeromobil will only accommodate two passengers. No mile high club shenanigans please – someone needs to concentrate on the flying. **ts**

COME FLY WITH ME

Aeromobil isn't the only company with sky-high vehicular aspirations in the next two years. Terrafugia, based in Massachusetts in the US, is also developing its own flying car offerings, namely the Transition and the TF-X (pictured). The former has apparently been designed to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and comes with a full vehicle parachute. The TF-X meanwhile is a plug-in hybrid electric flying car with fly-by-wire vertical takeoff and landing capabilities and can carry up to four passengers.





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Mecer recommends Windows® 8



Mecer Xpress C22G

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- Embedded 802.11 b/g/n Wireless LAN and Bluetooth 4.0
- Built-in GPS and 3G

- Built-in 1.0M Pixel Front Camera / 2.0M Pixel Rear Camera
- Built-in Micro SD Card Reader / Built-in Sound, Speakers, Microphone
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- Keyboard with Touch Pad (Docking)
- Microsoft Security Essential Anti-Virus
- 1 Year Warranty

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Seven Top

TECH TRENDS FOR 2014

Another year, another bunch of improvements on the technological front. So, what are the tech trends to look forward to in 2014?

MOBILE ENTERS THE 64-BIT ERA

In 2013 Apple was the first to plant its flag into 64-bit system-on-chipset (SoC) territory by debuting its new dual-core A7 processor in devices like the iPhone 5s and iPad Air. Competitors initially labelled the A7 as a marketing gimmick, but were silenced after the chipset humbled every other flagship device in benchmark tests. Samsung quickly revealed that their next-gen smartphones (hopefully including the Galaxy S5) will boast a 64-bit CPU, whilst Intel also stated that it plans on launching 64-bit (Atom Bay Trail) Android-running mobile devices within 2014. What about the midrange and low-end market? Qualcomm is bringing 64-bit processing power to budget devices, courtesy of its Snapdragon 410 SoC that will do duty in sub-R1 500 mobile devices targeted at the developing world.



2 IN-VEHICLE INFOTAINMENT SYSTEMS TO GO MAINSTREAM

In-vehicle infotainment systems (IVIS), such as Audi's MMI, BMW's iDrive, and Mercedes-Benz's Command Online, have featured in luxury sedans for over 10 years now. These systems have already made the class leap into more mainstream cars thanks to IVIS platforms the likes of Ford's Sync and Fiat/Alfa Romeo's Blue&Me. These enable drivers to use voice commands and steering-wheel or dashboard mounted buttons to access functions such as making- or answering incoming calls, and accessing cloud-based apps like checking into a destination on Facebook as soon as you arrive.

Market research firm ABI Research forecasts that shipments of IVIS-equipped cars will grow substantially over the next few years to reach 35.1 million units by 2018. This rapid growth is directly linked to the rabid worldwide adoption of mobile devices, with consumers craving the same level of connectivity whilst on the road as they have access to in the office or at home. Also contributing to the adoption of IVI systems is regulation within countries like the European Union, making it mandatory for cars to be able to contact emergency services automatically in the event of an accident.



TABLET GAMING INFRINGING ON CONSOLE TURF

Watch out consoles, tablet games appear to be quickly increasing in their gameplay complexity and graphical fidelity. This year, we expect games made for tablets to only become more sophisticated and further rival that found on the consoles. Helping matters is the increasing processing power and screen resolutions of tablets themselves, turning them into portable gaming consoles to be reckoned with. Additionally, look out for more indie developers seeking to make a name for themselves and secure their own game franchises on tablets, such as may well be the case with Cornfox and Brothers' *Oceanhorn: Monster of Uncharted Seas*. This iOS only exclusive is particularly notable not only for the fact that it pays direct homage to *The Legend of Zelda*, but also proved that indie developers could well win over a large, and profitable, audience.



4 WEARABLE TECH:

Wearable technology (smart glasses, smartwatches, fitness bands) has been hyped as the next big thing for quite a while now. Despite big players like Samsung entering the fray with its Galaxy Gear smartwatch, the trend has yet to really take off. The reason? Currently these gadgets are nice things to have for early adopters, as opposed to must-have devices for general consumers. Will this change in 2014? Data analytics company Juniper research asserts that the adoption of wearable tech will receive a drastic boost due to heightened consumer awareness; fitness bands and tech being adopted by the health sector; plus new devices entering the market such as Apple's much rumoured iWatch. Google Glass shows the biggest potential for enhancing users' day-to-day productivity, however, via features like providing walking directions to the nearest Gauthrain station and removing the need for a dedicated GPS by providing turn-by-turn, voice-guided navigation.



WI-FI NETWORKS HIT USAIN BOLT PACE VIA 802.11AC

Snappier downloads over the Wi-Fi network is in our futures thanks to the 5th generation of Wi-Fi, namely 802.11ac. Some of the benefits of the new Wi-Fi standard includes longer range efficacy; faster download as well as upload speeds and backwards compatibility with all the previous standards. Whereas 802.11n had a theoretical maximum speed of 450 Mbps, 802.11ac ups the ante (at least on paper) to 1.3 gigabits per second (Gbps). Although a number of routers, computers (2013 MacBook Air and Pros) and mobile devices (HTC One max and Galaxy S4) supporting this new standard were released in 2013, mass rollout will only occur this year.

5



WI-FI OFLOADING BEGINS TO GAIN TRACTION

6

Another trend we only expect to grow in the year ahead is Wi-Fi offloading. Put simply this means that cellular networks are starting to make a concerted effort to be able to push some of their 2G, 3G and 4G traffic over to nearby Wi-Fi hotspots. In order for this to happen though, Wi-Fi hotspots would need to become considerably more ubiquitous throughout the country as a whole. This trend would not just relieve the current strain and stress on mobile networks of an only increasing number of mobile users. It would also mean that connectivity could become considerably more pervasive in the next few years, with the Wi-Fi on offer being of high quality as well. The vision is that general users would be able to more seamlessly switch between Wi-Fi connectivity and cellular connectivity when they are out and about, in which case, everyone wins.

HIGH END ULTRA-ZOOMS VIE FOR YOUR CASH

Another trend we expect to see more of in 2014 is high-end, high-priced ultra-zooms. One of the more notable examples of this last year was Canon's EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM Lens with Internal 1.4x Extender. A beast of a lens in every respect, this uncompromising zoom brought with it a formidable price, in the region of R140 000. Rumours have it that we may well see a 300-600 with Internal 1.4x Extender from the company in the near future as well. Canon, however, are not alone in the trend towards no compromise ultra-zooms. Sigma also brought out its 120-300mm F2.8 DG OS HSM telephoto zoom lens, coming in close to the R50 000 mark. Notably, this was the first in its new Sport range and considering Sigma's lack of shyness around ultra-zooms (its 150-500mm is a case in point), we expect it won't be the last. Your move, Nikon.



7

Predictions FOR 2013

HOW WE FARED



KING APPLE LOSES ITS CROWN

No matter what, it seems as if nothing can persuade Apple to up the 4" screen real-estate on offer with its iPhones. As such the iPhone brand is simply not keeping up with the 5" full HD luxuries on offer from competitors. When it comes to tablets though, Apple still reigns supreme.

CAMERAS: MORE FULL FRAME ACTION

With Sony sticking a full frame into everything it can (see p16), and Nikon releasing both the D610 and Df in 2013, full frame photography certainly received a fair bit of attention in 2013. Unfortunately high costs make it an expensive reality for most.



PHABLETS FIND THEIR FOOTING

Samsung's Note 3 lost some weight, while Sony, HTC and LG jumped on the phablet bandwagon with the Z Ultra, One max and Optimus G Pro respectively. Phablets aren't going away anytime soon, with research company IDC actually cutting tablet growth because of better than expected phablet sales.

LTE IS HERE, AND BURGEONING

While LTE certainly pushed internet download speeds up, not all devices can access this faster network. And with availability of the LTE network restricted to major city centres, it certainly wasn't meant for everyone. **ts**



Internet security roundup

2014

Looking for more than just a regular anti-virus solution? Here are five packages that will keep viruses at bay and your data safe.



Eset Smart Security 2014

www.eset.co.za

R450 for one PC, one year package

Modern internet security packages have to be a jack of all security trades (anti-virus, anti-spam, anti-spyware, privacy protector, etc.) plus a master of these too. Beyond covering all these bases, Eset further offers an anti-theft online interface for when a user loses their device or have it stolen. Using this, users are able to track their notebook using GPS, activate the webcam to capture photos of the thief, or send a message to the person who found your lost device. There is also a dedicated gamer mode that enables apps and games to run full screen sans any scan notification intrusions.

McAfee Internet Security Suite 2014

www.mcafeestore.com

R300 for one PC

Intel-owned McAfee offers users a number of novel features aimed at keeping their data safe. These include the Digital data shredder that permanently destroys sensitive files on a computer so that no-one is able to retrieve these. It's ideal for when you sell your PC or have to hand back a company owned device. Unlike most rival packages, McAfee Internet Security claims that it can remove infections when being installed, which can make all the difference in salvaging your system if it is already infected by the time you acquire the security software.

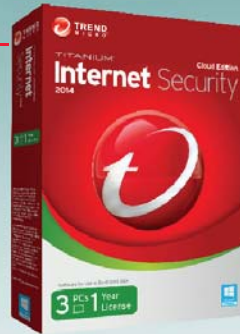


Trend Micro Titanium Internet Security

www.trendmicro.ae

R570 for three PCs, one-year license

Trend Micro's Titanium Internet Security package does not only protect up to three computers from online threats such as viruses, email phishing scams and spyware, but also boasts features that makes it ideal for socially savvy users. The software enables users to limit access to their private data by managing the privacy settings on popular social networking sites the likes of Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. Parents will appreciate the package's child safeguard functionality, enabling them to restrict or filter websites that their kids can access.



AVG Internet Security 2014

www.avg.com/za

R350 for one year, one PC or R550 for two years, one PC

Since we are all sharing an ever-increasing amount of info about ourselves with big tech companies such as Google, Facebook, and

Microsoft, the latest effort from AVG puts a greater feature emphasis on privacy. Feature inclusions the likes of 'Do Not Track', 'Identity Protection', as well as 'Wi-Fi Guard' aimed to encrypt private files, prevent hackers from obtaining your personal data, and enable users to choose which websites may collect data on their online activities. Also onboard is a File Shredder that allows users to securely delete files, making these irretrievable.

P.S. If money's too tight to mention, try Microsoft Security Essentials for Mahala, Free, Gratis and Verniet from bit.ly/msemw2



Kaspersky Lab Internet Security multi-device 2014

www.kaspersky.co.za

R530 for one device, one-year or R612 for three devices, one-year

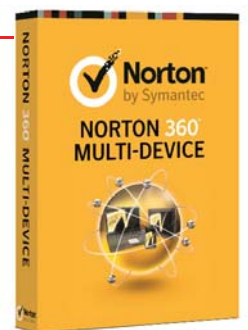
Users who require a singular internet security package to cover a range of devices (PCs, Macs, tablets, smartphones) can consider Kaspersky's multi-device offering. It delivers optimised protection for Windows and Mac OS powered computers, as well as Android-running mobile devices. In addition, this software also packs a Safe Money feature that adds a layer of security for users who do a lot of their shopping or banking online. Anti-theft protection also ensures that a user's data remains inaccessible when their device is stolen.

Norton 360 multi-device

<http://za.norton.com>

R900 for one year protection for up to five devices

Another multi-device option for users who want to keep all their platform bases covered, is Norton's 360 multi-device software package. Like Kaspersky's offering, Norton 360 protects devices running Windows, Mac OS, and Android, with this multi-device package also adding support for iOS. If a user loses their device, they will be able to utilise the 'scream alert' feature to assist them in locating the misplaced mobile, and if their device is stolen 'remote locate' will pinpoint the location of the smartphone/tablet on a map. Facebook addicts will appreciate the ability to scan for URLs containing security threats. **ts**



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GEFORCE® GTX Gaming Laptops


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GEFORCE® GTX 765M
3D Mark Vantage Scores > P17,000



P25W 15.6"

GEFORCE® GTX 770M
3D Mark Vantage Scores > P22,000



P35K 15.6"

GEFORCE® GTX 765M
3D Mark Vantage Scores > P17,000

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SONY PLAYSTATION 4

For a console that sold out locally in its first 24 hours, it's fair to call the PS4's launch a resounding success. Is this Sony's best console ever?

At the risk of sounding like a fanboy, it's only when you go hands on with Sony's newest next gen console that you realise just how good it actually is. From a design perspective, it certainly looks much sleeker and more futuristic than Sony's seven year old PS3, and is also considerably less conspicuous than that vaunted device. Aesthetics aside though, the PS4 reassuringly touts a massive 8 GB of GDDR5 RAM, while a 500 GB (replaceable) hard drive is also onboard.

THE PS4 OFFERS PLENTY TO LIKE RIGHT NOW AND EVEN MORE TO LOOK FORWARD TO.

However it is what the PS4 delivers from a gameplay perspective that really impressed. To start with, even just looking at the launch titles, graphics are a significant step up from the PS3, which was no slouch in its own right. For example, Call of Duty: Ghosts on the PS4 looked crisper and more detailed than on its Xbox 360 counterpart, while Killzone: Shadow Fall had our eyes drooling at the sumptuousness on the display. We suspect however that we are far from seeing the console being pushed to its maximum though, something no doubt developers will attempt as this generation unfolds.

Take it easy

Also winning us over was the general ease of use offered by the PS4's interface. This makes it simple to jump from playing a game to accessing the console's settings, or heading to the PSN and then

seamlessly resuming gameplay. Additionally, recent games played are similarly more accessible when logging into the console.

The no less important controller, the DualShock 4, has also benefited from some refinements and improvements. We found this to be particularly comfortable when playing for long stretches, thanks to its spacious layout and concave analog sticks, which ensured our thumbs enjoyed greater grip on the controller. Furthermore, a convenient headphones jack meant we were able to continue playing in the wee hours without disturbing our neighbours.

Dare to share

New to the controller is the Share button, which enables players to, at the press of a button, upload a video clip or screenshot, or even broadcast their gameplay to their friends on Facebook or followers on Twitter. Suffice to say, the social sharing implications here are enticing. In practice, we found this to work well, although if you plan on being a serial sharer and games commentator, we suggest investing in a Bluetooth keyboard to accompany your PS4.

If you are one of the fortunate players to own a PS Vita, you may well be wondering whether Sony's handheld and the PS4 play nicely together. Indeed, they do. The Vita can either be used as another controller, as a second screen or to remotely play whatever game happens to be on the PS4 at the time.

Hold on or jump in?

Finally, you may be wondering whether you should hold off for a while or whether the PS4 merits a purchase now. In this case we veer towards the latter. In short, the PS4 offers plenty to like right now, even more to look forward to and, we dare say, appears to be Sony's best console to date. RRP: R6 500. [RN] **ts**

QUICK SPECS

Processor
8 core x86-64 AMD Jaguar

Memory & Storage
8 GB GDDR5 | 500 GB

GPU
1.84 TFLOPS, AMD Radeon Graphics Core Next engine

NOKIA Lumia 1020

While its hardware arsenal is lacking against flagship Android smartphones, the 41 MP camera of the Lumia 1020 is a spec weapon of mass destruction. Does this make it a compelling buy?



Nokia's Lumia 1020 measures in at 10.4 mm and tips the smartphone scales at a beefy 158 g, making it both thicker (8.5 mm) and heavier (139 g) than the sleekest design Windows Phone to grace our palms – the Lumia 925.

The main reason for the added bulk can be found protruding from the back of the smartphone – its 41 megapixel rear-facing camera with Zeiss optics. Using the camera's dual capture feature enables you to simultaneously take a 38 megapixel photo for advanced editing via Photoshop or on the device itself, as well as a 5 MP version of the image for sharing across social networking sites. Espoo's Lumia 1020 delivers unsurpassed photo and video quality within the smartphone arena, with users being able to zoom into stills or videos without the image quality suffering as a result.

Beyond the camera

Media is reviewed on a 4.5" (768 x 1280; 334 ppi) PureMotion HD+ AMOLED display, which does not match the increasingly common 1080p panels on high-end smartphones these days. Where the PureMotion HD+ screen strikes back though, is with its class-leading readability outdoors and the fact that it can be used whilst wearing gloves.



THE LUMIA 1020 DELIVERS UNSURPASSED PHOTO AND VIDEO QUALITY WITHIN THE SMARTPHONE ARENA.

The smartphone is powered by a 1.5 GHz dual-core Qualcomm Snapdragon S4 processor and boasts 2 GB of RAM, meaning that navigation of its Windows Phone 8 operating system and running multiple apps remains smooth and snappy. Also onboard is 32 GB worth of internal storage (no microSD card to expand upon this); a 1.2 MP wide-angle selfie-shooter; enhanced stereo sound recording via Nokia Rich Recording; a full day's worth of usage thanks to a 2000 mAh battery; and quicker downloads via LTE (4G) connectivity.

Refocusing in on its appeal

Nokia's Lumia 1020 is a capable smartphone that delivers unrivalled camera performance. Will this see a lot of Android or iPhone users make the switch to Windows Phone? We don't think so, since the App Store wallops the Windows Phone Store when it comes to number of quality apps, whilst Android users can get higher specced devices for less than the R9 150 recommended retail price of the Lumia 1020.

Nokia- and Windows Phone fans, anyone looking for an alternative OS to the main platforms, or buyers in the market for a smartphone offering a great photo capturing experience will all be happy snappers should they opt for the Lumia 1020. [HD] **TS**

QUICK SPECS

Processor
Dual-core 1.5 GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon MSM8960

Memory & Storage
32 GB worth of non-expandable storage

Display
4.5" (768 x 1280, 332 ppi) PureMotion HD+ AMOLED

Operating System
Windows Phone 8

SONY Alpha 7R

Sony has once again pushed the boundaries with the Alpha 7R mirrorless camera. Is it a game-changer?

Sony has experimented quite a bit with different camera technologies, and in many ways has been pushing the boundaries by not just focusing on DSLR. We've seen it with their NEX range of mirrorless cameras, but also with the full frame sensor placed in the RX1's compact camera body. Although the inclusion of a full frame sensor (24 x 35.9 mm) in a mirrorless body could have been seen as the obvious next step, the announcement of the Alpha 7 and 7R was still met with exclamations of "Did Sony just do that?" They did indeed, bringing forth what might just be the start of a major rumble in the market. The main difference between the a7R and the a7 is more megapixels on the 36 megapixel a7R, which also doesn't contain an anti-aliasing filter. This while the 24 megapixel a7 provides better hybrid autofocus capabilities (not that the 7R was slow).

Look at that body

So why the excitement? Usually full frame sensors are associated with big, fat cameras, which alongside an appropriate lens, will do a lot to better acquaint you with the forces of gravity. The Sony a7 and a7R are no larger than entry level DSLRs, with the 7R weighing 465 g, a whole 300 g lighter than Nikon's new Df full-frame that already spent some time on the Weigh-Less programme.

BEFORE THE a7R BECOMES A GAME CHANGER, IT NEEDS TO DROP IN PRICE.

The a7R's weight makes you simply forget that you're shooting full-frame. That's not to say that Sony skimped with cheap plastics in the design. You will find a dust/moisture-re-

sistant magnesium alloy body that gives the distinct impression that it can take a couple of knocks in its lifetime.

Electronic viewing

For many professional photographers the question is whether the a7R's

on manual focus, while the ability to instantly see what you've captured on the EVF saves time while shooting. Then again we don't shoot professionally, and we can imagine that for some the 786 432 dots on the 1/2" EVF OLED display might not suffice.

It's the image that counts

When it comes to image quality the a7R simply cannot be faulted. With a massive 36.4 megapixels on a full frame sensor to work with, we heavily cropped photos and still ended up with better details than what certain APS-C sensor cameras could produce. Granted, the 55 mm f1.8 Zeiss lens (new E-mount) that was provided is also a piece of work and we can seriously recommend it for portrait photography. Those looking for a zippy sport shooter will be disappointed with the a7R's 1.5 frames per second (fps) shooting ability (can be bumped to 4 fps), while the camera is also very noisy when triggered.

But the price

Despite its smaller body, the Sony Alpha 7R still commands a respectable R27 000 for the body only (the a7 is a more accommodating R20k). So, despite all its abilities in such a small body, we won't go as far to call the a7R a game changer. Not yet, since it will only be if its price drops below R17k to start competing against the top of the range APS-C sized cameras, that Sony will really rock the photographic industry's boat. [MJ] **ts**



QUICK SPECS

Sensor	Effective megapixels	ISO	Continuous Shooting
35.9 x 24 mm full frame, Exmor CMOS	Approx. 36.4 megapixels	100 - 25 600	1.5 fps, 4 fps in Speed Priority

PENTAX K-3



We recently had Pentax's new flagship, the 24 megapixel K-3, to shoot with. Here are four features we liked best (and a few we didn't).

1 Great weatherproof body

Pick up the K-3 and you know you're dealing with a well-made machine, since it comes complete with a stainless steel chassis and a magnesium alloy body, weather-sealed to deal with the odd Highveld shower. We like the lock on the battery slot, while the latch on the dual SD-card slot feels solid. Importantly the contoured grip of the K-3 made its 800 g body feel solid in hand, especially with the supportive ridge above the middle finger.

2 Good layout

In general we had no qualms about the layout of the buttons on the K-3. This is mainly due to the usefulness of the INFO button, which allows you with one press to access items that are usually buried away in the menu system (much like Fujifilm's Q-button). These include highlight and shadow correction, digital filters, different HDR shooting modes, anti-aliasing filter simulator (see point 3) and file format. On the top mode dial

there are three handy custom settings, via which to store your preferences, for example for portraits, action and children. You also have three buttons which can be re-programmed, but only one offered a proper range of options to choose from.

3 Anti-aliasing filter no moiré

A number of higher-end cameras have been released that forsake the anti-aliasing filter. This was traditionally used to counter the moiré pattern effect, but at a cost to image quality.

TEAMED UP WITH THE 55 MM F1.4 SDM LENS, THE K-3 CAN TAKE ON ANY OF ITS COMPETITORS.

The K-3 does the same, but offers an anti-aliasing simulator that actually uses microscopic vibrations to the 24 MP APS-C sensor to counter moiré. We were pretty comfortable with shooting without the anti-aliasing simulator, but it's good to know that you do have options.

4 Quality as standard

From such a high-end camera one expects decent image quality, and the K-3 delivers. Images were crisp, with solid low-light performance thanks to in-body shake reduction and ISO that stretches all the way up to an in-case-of-emergency 51 200. Add to this fast 8.3 frames per shooting and a 27 point AF-system (although not class leading, 25 of these are the more sensitive cross type). Teamed up with the 55 mm f1.4 SDM lens, the K-3 can take on any of its competitors.

But what's lacking?

Pentax does not equip the K-3 with either Wi-Fi or GPS. Having said that, neither did Nikon with the D7100, although Canon's 70D includes Wi-Fi. Although by no means essential, both these are useful functionality, while we would also have liked better performance from the battery.

The K-3 retails for R18 000 (body only) or R19 000 with the 18-55WR lens. [MJ] **ts**

QUICK SPECS

Sensor	Monitor	Weight	ISO	Shutterspeed
24 MP CMOS APS-C sized	3.2" TFT LCD, 1037 dots	799 g with battery and memory card	100 - 51200	1/8000 sec

HTC One mini

Users who love the HTC One, but find its size a bit too daunting can opt for the bonsai-sized iteration in the One mini.

Like the HTC One, this mini-me version offers a metal aesthetic but in a more compact, iPhone 5-sized package. It boasts a 4.3" (720 x 1280; 342 ppi) screen that delivers clear images with nicely saturated colours. Backing up the stunning visuals is some excellent sound via HTC's BoomSound front-facing stereo speakers that deliver a higher quality, louder sound, also coming with the Beats Audio enhancement for a discernable audio quality improvement whilst listening to music via a headset.

Beneath the stylish metal bonnet

Powering the Android 4.2.2 (Jelly Bean) operating smartphone is Qualcomm's dual-core Snapdragon 400 CPU running at 1.4 GHz, which is coupled with 1 GB of RAM. Although the One mini plays second fiddle to the Galaxy S4 mini during benchmark tests, users will not notice any performance differences between these smartphones during day-to-day usage.

HTC'S ONE MINI BOASTS A PREMIUM LOOK AND FEEL, BEAUTIFUL DISPLAY AND EXCELLENT SOUND.

Also onboard is LTE (4G) connectivity for blistering downloads, a non-removable 1800 mAh battery delivering over 10½



hours of usage from a single charge on average, plus 16 GB worth of non-expandable internal storage.

In terms of optics, users get the same 'Ultrapixel' 4 MP rear-facing camera as found on the One, except without optical image stabilisation. Despite being able to capture good looking images, even in low lighting conditions, the overall image quality is not as sharp as photos captured by the One mini's 8 MP sensor boasting rivals. When it comes to taking selfies though, the One mini delivers class-leading optics performance as its 1.6 MP front-facing snapper captures surprisingly good and detailed photos.

The one midrange device to have?

HTC's One mini boasts a premium look and feel, beautiful display and excellent sound, but we just wished that its other features, such as the main camera and RAM, were a bit better to allow it to properly top its rivals. This smartphone's RRP of R5 500 also means that our midranger of choice – Huawei's Ascend P6 – offers more spec bang (2 GB RAM; quad-core CPU) for less bucks. [HD] **ts**
Full review: bit.ly/HTCOneMin

APPLE iPhone 5s

Apple's latest iPhone is the company's fastest, most advanced model ever, but does that make it the best high-end smartphone on the market?

At first glance users will find it hard to differentiate between the 5s and its predecessor, as both devices appear to be identical save for one thing – the new home button. This lacks the familiar square icon in the middle and is a lot less indented than before. The reason for this is of course that it integrates Apple's new Touch ID fingerprint scanner. Once set up during the smartphone's very first boot-up (takes around 20 seconds), you can utilise your chosen digit to unlock the device and approve iTunes Store and App Store purchases.

Incredible Hulk of a SoC underneath

Even though the external design of the iPhone 5s hardly changed at all, the internals did receive a noticeable update in the form of Cupertino's new A7 system-on-a-chip (SoC). The real benefits of having a 64-bit dual-core CPU, clocked at 1.3 GHz, will only be experienced in future, as developers churn out applications that will make use of the power of this new chipset. At present, however, the processor has managed to humble its 32-bit quad-core and Octacore CPU rivals during benchmarking tests, and also keep things buttery smooth no matter how many demanding games or apps you run.



THE IPHONE 5s MAY LOOK LIKE THE IPHONE 5, BUT IS ACTUALLY A DIFFERENT ANIMAL.

Despite Apple not upgrading the megapixel count of the main shooter of the new iPhone, the company did tinker with the cameras. The eight megapixel iSight camera boasts a larger f2.2 aperture, plus a bigger sensor, allowing us to capture better looking photos in low-light and overcast conditions.

Don't call me a 5

Apple's iPhone 5s may look like the iPhone 5, but is actually a different animal thanks to the improvements made to the camera; the processing beast that is the new A7 CPU; as well as the fingerprint scanner. It goes for an expensive RRP of R10 500 for the 16 GB version from Vodacom, which makes it an upgrade more suited for iPhone 4s users. iPhone 5 owners can opt for cheaper rivals with bigger, higher resolution displays including the Galaxy S4 (R8 500), Galaxy Note 3 (R9 000), and LG G2 (R8 000). [HD] **ts**



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SAMSUNG Galaxy S4 Active

While the Galaxy S4 has won much acclaim, Samsung has now produced a more ruggedized version that is tougher and more up to a jaunt in the great outdoors.

By this point, it could be argued that little still needs to be said about the exceedingly well adopted Galaxy S4, which has spawned a couple of iterations of its own, such as the S4 Mini and S4 Zoom. With the Galaxy S4 Active, particular attention has been paid to how the phone fares with the elements.

THE S4 ACTIVE'S EIGHT MEGAPIXEL CAMERA EVEN BOASTS A NEW AQUA MODE FOR CAPTURING SHOTS UNDERWATER.

The first noticeable difference between the Galaxy S4 Active and its sire is the device's thickness and reassuring heft (153 g compared to the S4's 130 g). This is augmented by the fact that the phone can withstand spending up to 30 minutes in up to one metre of water, should it find its way to the bottom of that stream. What's more, the phone can wittingly be dunked – its 8 megapixel camera even boasts a new Aqua mode for capturing shots underwater. More importantly, the S4 Active appears to be able to endure a few inadvertent drops and hard knocks.

The new and the familiar

Specs wise, there are a few differences as compared to the S4, such as the 1.9 GHz quad-core processor v.s. the S4's Octacore

CPU, though you'll still find 2 GB of memory and expandable storage up to 64 GB thanks to the microSD card slot. Another difference is in the screen – the S4 Active's 5" screen isn't graced by Super AMOLED, but its 1920 x 1080 LCD display, with 443 ppi, is still striking nonetheless. According to Samsung, the screen is also more receptive to accessing when wearing gloves, a nice touch for those heading to colder climates, if you will pardon the pun. A welcome addition are the firm and quite raised keys at the bottom of the screen, and nicely textured volume keys, for accessing the phone's functions and sound controls respectively.



Heading out the door

In many ways the S4 Active is much of what we loved from the S4 itself, including blistering performance. However, it is also a better option for those who want to tote their device on their outdoor adventures.

R8 500. [RN] **ts**

PARROT Asteroid Mini

Not everyone is blessed with the latest in-car infotainment system. Parrot's Asteroid Mini is an elegant solution that fills this gap.

How do you get the tunes on your smartphone to play properly in your car? We have tried different solutions with varying success, including three different types of hands-free kits, plus an FM-transmitter. In all cases decent audio quality was lacking.

THE ASTEROID MINI IS CERTAINLY THE BEST WAY TO STREAM CALLS AND MUSIC FROM YOUR PHONE TO YOUR CAR STEREO.

Parrot's Asteroid Mini has provided the best solution by far*. The Mini can be installed in any vehicle (an hour long process) and can be described as a Bluetooth multimedia system that comes with a 3.2" non-touch colour screen and a remote control.

Taking calls, playing music

First and foremost the Mini is a wonderful hands-free kit, with voice dialling and answering also enabled. Two microphones are mounted above your rear-view mirror, in order for your passenger to also take part in the conversation. Because calls are streamed through your car's stereo system, call quality is top-notch, and since installation we've yet to have someone complain that they cannot hear us properly.

The Bluetooth music streaming of the Asteroid Mini means that music and podcasts in high quality is now no more than a few clicks away. It's not only your phone that would be able to use the car stereo system, since an iPod/iPad/iPhone adapter is also provided (not the newer lightning connector), while an auxiliary-in can also be utilised, and USB and SD card inputs.



Apps forgettable

Parrot punts the Asteroid App market from which you can download apps for the Mini, but it was here that our experience turned slightly sour. We had trouble signing up for the service, with the app market also not well populated with apps for the Mini. Using the scroll wheel on your remote to sign in or enter any type of text on the device is an absolute pain.

But still...

Parrot's Asteroid Mini is certainly the best way to stream calls and music from your phone to your car stereo via Bluetooth. For these reasons alone it is worth its R3 400 price (installation is R500-R700). If you would like to make better use of the apps, our recommendation would be to rather go for the larger touch-based Asteroid Tablet or Smart. [MJ] **ts**
*Received as a seeding unit

ACER Iconia A3

Make no mistake, budget and midrange tablets certainly have their place, and Acer's latest 10" Iconia A3 proves this without a doubt.

While premium tablets that also carry a premium price gobble up headlines, there is certainly a market for budget and mid-market offerings, as the likes of the Iconia B1 and the Nexus 7 handily proved. Following on from Acer's 8" Iconia A1 debut last year, the company has now launched a 10" mid-market tablet offering, running on Android 4.2. From a design perspective the tablet looks like a bigger A1. It is certainly pleasant to hold and light (560 g) in hand, while still feeling sturdy and durable enough.

Grips and gripes

Roomy, but not overly wide, bezels surround the screen, which offers a serviceable enough, resolution of 1280 x 800 (149 ppi). Despite this, we still enjoyed watching videos on the device. However, the one area that we were less impressed with was the sound on offer, which while sufficiently loud, lacked bass and verged on sounding a bit tinny.

Furthermore, the placement of the speakers on the bottom left and right hand corners when held in landscape mode meant that



our hands ended up covering the speaker grills, and necessitated us actually turning the device upside down (with screen orientation on, obviously) for the best audio experience. Speaking of screen orientation, Acer has packed the Iconia A3 with a particularly intelligent accelerom-eter technology called IntelliSpin, which results in the screen rotating according to the user's needs, and not seemingly on a whim.

On the up side...

On the performance front, we had no complaints, as the tablet makes excellent use of a 1.2 GHz Cortex-A7 quad-core processor and 1 GB of memory to offer up speedy and responsive performance across the board. In its favour, and not something the vaunted Nexus 7 can claim, the Iconia A3 not only sports a microSD card slot for expanding storage, but also boasts handy onboard cellular connectivity and brings a microHDMI port to the mix as well.

THE A3 IS CERTAINLY PLEASANT TO HOLD AND LIGHT IN HAND, WHILE STILL FEELING STURDY AND DURABLE ENOUGH.

In the final analysis, the Iconia A3 is certainly worth a look for those seeking a 10" tablet (with cellular) without breaking the bank. RRP: R5 000. [RN] **ts**

MECER C22G tablet

Mecer's C22G tablet is very well built and offers powerful performance, but its heavy weight might work against it.

The 11.6" C22G tablet is certainly well built, and feels not just very solid, but also durable and fairly rugged. To its credit, the C22G tablet does boast full PC specifications and power – under the hood is a Core i5 3337U processor with 4 GB of memory, Intel HD Graphics 4000 and a 64 GB solid state drive. In effect, from a performance point of view, this makes it comparable to an 11.6" ultrabook, albeit with a detachable keyboard.

THIS MAKES IT COMPARABLE TO AN 11.6" ULTRABOOK, ALBEIT WITH A DETACHABLE KEYBOARD.

Its ruggedness however comes with a drawback, because it is also weighty in the hand (1066 g without the keyboard, and 1.3 kg with it) and not a device you would likely hold for long stretches without looking for some way to prop it up. In tablet terms this is heavy, but not as a notebook.

With keyboard too

The C22G's 11.6" screen, which is sharp and offers rich colours, boasts a decent 1366 x 768 resolution, while the back of the tablet itself plays host to a kickstand. The latter is meant to work in conjunction with the rather nice keyboard cover (which includes a trackpad



and lovely, springy mouse buttons as well). The keyboard is similarly very good, with a surprising amount of keypress depth considering how thin it is. However, typing as one would on a notebook on your lap is out of the question, a firm surface is required.

Say what?

The tablet does have its issues though, such as far too soft audio, even when the sound is cranked to maximum, and slightly sluggish screen orientation sensitivity. Our experience with Windows 8 on tablets is that it is simply not at all as elegant as Android or iOS. That being said, to its credit the smart looking C22G does offer two USB 3.0 ports, an SD card slot, and a microHDMI, on the tablet itself.

We wouldn't rule Mecer out too quickly, especially if they are able to trim down the burdensome weight and improve the audio of the next iteration of the tablet. Its RRP is a pricey R11 550. [RN] **ts**

ASUS ROG Orion gaming headset

A quality headset helps immerse gamers deeper within their virtual world. Does Asus' Republic of Gamers Orion headphones level up players gaming experience?

The Orion gaming headset sits comfortably on your head during extended gaming sessions thanks to a lightweight (268 g) design and large padded over-ear cushions. You can easily adjust the size of the padded headband to fit various head shapes and sizes. Also lending itself to a more comfortable listening experience is the lengthy (2.5 m) braided cable. It allows users to plug the headset into their gaming rig that is placed under a desk, without having to worry about getting whiplash from a cable that is too short.

Audio performance

Thanks to the large padded earcups of the Orion, the headset packs some degree of passive noise isolation technology which helps to drown out any auditory distractions from your nearby vicinity. Along with a decent sound volume (adjustable using the inline controls) and relatively good audio quality, the noise isolation helps keep gamers focused on the onscreen action, rather than the theme song of the soap opera in the room next door.

ASUS' ORION HEADPHONES PACK A DECENT SOUND VOLUME AND QUALITY, AND A HANDY RETRACTABLE MIC, ALL WITHIN A VERY COMFORTABLE PACKAGE.

When switching to music, the Orion won't challenge higher priced,



dedicated music headsets from Monster or Beats, but it does deliver a good overall sound performance. The stars of its audio quality cast are a slightly better than average dollop of bass and some accentuated treble levels. Also aboard the Orion is a retractable noise-filtering microphone, with voice quality remaining clear whether you're issuing commands via TeamSpeak 3 within Battlefield 3 or video calling an overseas-based family member using Skype.

A comfortable package

Asus' ROG Orion gaming headphones pack a decent sound volume and quality, and a handy retractable mic, all within a very comfortable package. It goes for an RRP of R900, meaning it's not cheap since you can spend just a little more (R250) to get the full 7.1 surround sound experience with Logitech's G430 headphones. [HD] **ts**

LOGITECH G430 7.1 channel headset

Logitech has managed to impress us of late with both their G500S gaming mouse and G19S gaming keyboard. How does its 7.1 channel gaming headset fare?

To start with these are certainly headphones that you will not misplace in a hurry, being both quite large and noticeable thanks to its blue and black aesthetic. There is also an ample amount of blue foam employed on the headband and the large, swiveling earcups.

THE G430 FAITHFULLY REPRODUCES THE 7.1 SURROUND SOUND EFFECT EERILY WELL IN SUPPORTING GAMES.

That being said, once we put them on, we were pleasantly surprised to discover that the weight (255 g) and size belied the comfort they offer. The G430 were most noticeable around our ears, as foam around the cups effectively cut out a good amount of ambient noise in our environment. However, the downside is that the cushioning wasn't quite as soft as we would have liked.

Small touches

As has become a staple on gaming headsets, the



G430 boasts a rather nice, retractable and flexible microphone, which you can pull down and curve towards your mouth when you feel the need to scream commands (or just as likely, obscenities) to your mates during a heated session. The G430 headphones do sport nice touches, such as the inclusion of inline controls on the cord. Here, you can adjust the volume and enable/disable the microphone.

The G430 faithfully reproduces the 7.1 surround sound effect eerily well in supporting games; which goes a long way to creating a more immersive experience overall.

For first person shooter games in particular, we loved being able to identify our opponents with greater accuracy merely by the direction of their incoming fire. In another segment, water realistically sounded as if it was splattering on the floor nearby, while a seagull's cry echoed seemingly behind us in the distance.

For the game

Suffice to say, all of this certainly enhanced our gameplay experience several fold. In the final analysis, we were actually very impressed with the G430 headphones especially with regards to the sound they delivered, in games in particular. They have a RRP of R1 150. [RN] **ts**

CANON PowerShot G16

How is this for a complaint – the new G16 is just too fast. In fact, thanks to the new Digic 6 image processor it can take as many as 12.2 frames per second (9.3 fps from the 6th shot) and it will just keep on going since there's virtually no buffer time. Hence, if you photograph in continuous shooting mode you'll soon be looking for more memory cards.

IF YOU PHOTOGRAPH IN CONTINUOUS SHOOTING MODE YOU'LL SOON BE LOOKING FOR MORE MEMORY CARDS.

With regards to many other features the G16 and the older G15 are basically identical – same zoom (5x), same size LCD (3", 922 k dots), the same fast lens (a treasure at f1.8), and the same resolution (12 MP, although reports claim the G16 contains a new backside illuminated sensor – better for low-light performance).

Jettisoned and on-board

Although Canon dropped the panorama shooting mode, they improved on the in-camera HDR (you don't need a tripod anymore), while also on offer is a Star Trails mode. With this you can capture those beautiful pictures of stars forming streaks in the sky. Although bad cloud cover hampered our testing of this, images on the web shows that this works remarkably well.

Canon has also decided to at long last grace the G-series with Wi-Fi functionality. This can be utilised to easily share photos on the trot



with your smartphone or at home on the network, although controlling the camera, as with their EOS DSLRs, is still not possible.

Still missing

From our perspective there are still a few things missing. GPS should be built in since the G16 is the perfect travel companion. Seeing how much we like the touchscreen capabilities on Canon's other cameras, it's sorely missed on here. Finally, it would be great if Canon could simply drop the inadequate optical tunnel viewfinder for an electronic one as its rivals at Nikon did on the new P7800.

Regrets, I have a few

The Canon PowerShot G16 is enough of an upgrade to have made us regret our decision to buy the G15 just a few months prior. More specifically, it's the attraction of the faster shooting speed that is the G16's real trump card. At R7 300 the G16 is quite a bit pricier than its older brother. [MJ] **ts**

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY MASTERCLASS

2nd Edition, Tom Ang

R365. Published by Dorling Kindersley, Penguin South Africa

For photographers seeking to hone their skills across a broad array of photographic disciplines, Tom Ang's *Digital Photography Masterclass* is certainly worth studying.

The hardcover 350 page book is certainly crammed to the hilt with practical advice and observations about a myriad of images, with everything from portraiture, landscape, nature, travel, architecture, sports and documentary photography being covered within its pages.

Additionally, an entire section is devoted to the digital darkroom, and techniques for digitally post-processing of an image. As befitting a book claiming to be a masterclass, each topic offers up an assignment, which readers can follow along and try their hand at, and these are accompanied by helpful tips, such as what focal length lens to try.

It's a fact

What we particularly appreciated though, were the scattering of fact boxes throughout every chapter, which should help both new and experienced photographers alike acquaint (or reacquaint) themselves with photographic essentials. Another nice touch is that each topic also offers a heads up tip for old masters of that field, for further research and inspiration.

While there is a wealth of information on offer, it is well presented, with Ang avoiding text-heavy explanations in favour of many bite sized pieces of information. Naturally, a book about photography would be

inadequate with great images, and these are plentiful, although they are used more for instructional purposes

rather than for the sake of showing the photographer's prowess. In a nutshell, the title is well worth adding to your library.

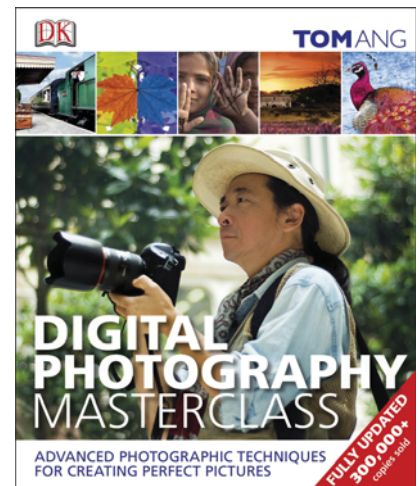
R365. [RN] **ts**

WIN
with TechSmart
and Penguin
South Africa

We're giving away a copy of *Digital Photography Masterclass* to one lucky reader!

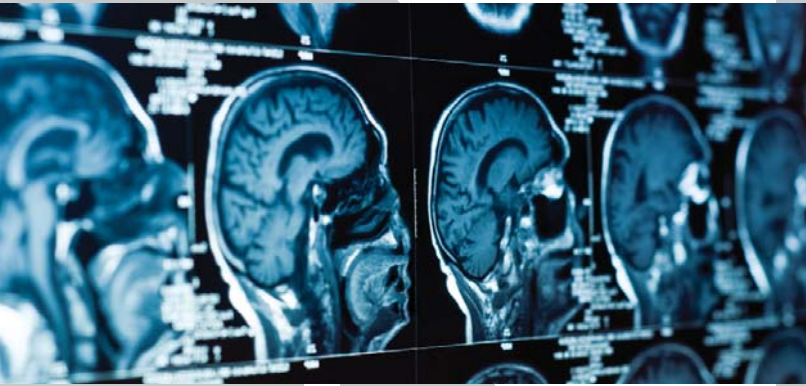
To enter simply email the name of the author of the book to competition@techsmart.co.za.

Competition runs from 1 January to 31 January 2014. Only entries from people living in SA will be considered. The judges' decision is final. Terms and conditions apply. The winner will be announced during the second week of February.



Hard headed or big headed?¹

It's official. Women are more hard headed than men. Literally. CT scans of live human brains showed that women's skulls are, on average, 0.9 mm thicker in the front and 0.6 mm thicker at the back than men's. But men's heads are bigger by about 5 mm, both along the length and across the width.

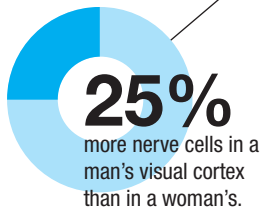
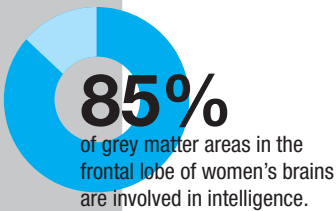


Grey or white?²

When it comes to general intelligence, brain images have shown that women generally have 10 times more white matter in certain brain areas, while men have about 6.5 times more grey matter. The distribution of two types of brain matter also differs between the sexes. Women show more centralised intellectual processing patterns, while men's are more distributed. Despite these differences, men and women seem to score similarly on general intelligence tests.

What are you looking at?³

Does men and women's brains differ when it comes to visual acuity? A recent study showed that men are better at seeing fine visual detail and fast-moving stimuli than women, but less sensitive to spotting subtle colour differences.



3000

CT scans analysed in the study.

In the battle of the sexes, it seems you win some and you lose some. Here's how men's and women's heads are so very different, yet oh so similar.

His & Hers

Dealing with feeling⁴

Men are quite emotional, perhaps even more so than women. A study showed that in a relaxed state, the amygdala, which is tasked with processing emotional memories, is more active in men than in women.

86 billion

nerve cells likely in a human brain, 14 billion fewer than previously estimated.

8 min.

allowed for completing three tasks while other distractions were present in the study.

Task Masters⁵

Women do seem to be slightly better and faster at getting their heads around several things at once. A recent study showed that when people have to do more than one task simultaneously, both sexes slow down, but women slightly less so than men. In the study women also seemed to be better at devising a strategy for solving a search problem amidst several other tasks. **ts**

SOURCES: 1 bit.ly/19ykn9U
International Journal of Vehicle Safety, 2008.

2 bit.ly/1f3mh6o
NeuroImage, 2005

3 bit.ly/1cxUYk0
Biology of Sex Differences, 2012

4 bit.ly/1bTd2ay
NeuroImage, 2006

5 bit.ly/IN9zxi
BMC Psychology, 2013



SCIENCE

PIC OF THE MONTH



Image Credit:
NASA/ESA/
Hubble

Oh how thankful we are for the Hubble Space Telescope, since without it we would not have been able to see recent supernova SN 2013ek. Located in spiral galaxy NGC 6984, the bright supernova is the result of a star's core collapsing after losing its outer layers of hydrogen. It is thought to be linked to another supernova that exploded very close by in 2012.

SMART ANSWERS

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



The size of men's noses

Is it linked to the size of something else? Yes, but it's not what you think...

What's the deal then? Researchers found that the size of our noses is correlated to the amount of muscle mass of our bodies. As men have more muscle than women, they tend to have bigger noses too.

So size matters? Indeed. Maintaining muscle tissue needs a lot of oxygen. Having a bigger nose means you can get more oxygen into your lungs in a single breath.

How did they figure this out? Nose size was measured in 38 volunteers over about 20 years, starting at the age of three. Girls and boys had similar nose sizes until puberty, after which boys' noses started to grow more. It is known that at puberty guys gain more muscle mass than girls do.

Source: bit.ly/1b3WfRU



How to stop HIV in its tracks

What's the new intel? Scientists found that HIV manipulates our immune cells to hide from the body's defence mechanism.

So there are double agents at work? Yup. Usually, when our immune system detects any body-foreign material, it launches an attack and immediately warns other cells of the invasion. But when HIV enters the body, it recruits molecules within the host cells that stop the virus from reproducing its genetic material for a while. This means that the immune system is unaware of the infection.

Can the villains be exposed? Yes. A modified version of an antiretroviral drug prevents the virus from recruiting the traitor molecules.

Does this mean better treatment is possible? Yes. Targeting the hiding mechanism rather than the virus itself could help to clear HIV from the body before it gets a foothold.

Source: bit.ly/1iOCEnr




The meaning of 'Huh?'

Huh? Exactly. It's shorthand for 'I didn't quite get that. Please repeat.'

In any language? Yup, it seems to be used universally, although the pronunciation differs slightly across languages.

Why should it be part of our vocab? Researchers suggest that without 'Huh?' our conversations would likely be fraught with communication mishaps. A short, easy-to-say word with rising intonation signals both that the message wasn't received and that it should be repeated. It's a quick fix to solve a complex communication problem.

But is it even a word? Definitely. Phonetic comparisons showed it's not an innate sound, like sneezing or crying. We learn to say it based on the context of the conversation.

But my mom always said only monkeys say 'Huh?' She's wrong. The sound does not feature in our primate relatives' communication. 

Source: bit.ly/19M2Myq



With the GT version of the popular 3-Series, BMW is providing 3-Series buyers with more interior- and luggage space, but does the Kim Kardashian-rivalling derriere of the GT weigh down its driving appeal?

The 3-Series GT is BMW's second attempt at delivering a vehicle that delivers a best-of-both driving experience. This, as it is tasked with combining the dynamic performance of the standard 3-Series with the practicality of the 3-Series Touring (a station wagon version that is not available locally).

In order to deliver on that practicality promise, the 3-Series GT is bigger than your run-of-the-mill 3-Series. In fact, it is 81 mm loftier, 16 mm wider and 200 mm longer than the standard 3-Series, translating to more head- and legroom for rear passengers. Backseat occupants actually get more space than they have access to in the 5-Series, and the boot also swallows 25 more litres of luggage space compared to the station wagon iteration of the 3-Series. A fly in the styling ointment is the fact that the mammoth sloping rear windscreen does not feature a wiper, meaning that you can't see any approaching traffic during thunderstorms.

The 320i GT is a super-sized 3-Series for buyers prioritising interior space and a bigger boot, above driving dynamics and the best possible fuel efficiency.

It's all fun 'til the 3-Series loses its mojo

Practicality is then clearly king in this executive saloon. But does this mean that the driving dynamics – the reason why BMW sell more 3-Series vehicles than Audi does A4s or Mercedes-Benz can C-class cars - is a secondary concern? This question is addressed by peeking under the bonnet of the 320i GT where you'll find a 2-litre four-cylinder engine that churns out 135 kW at 5 000 RPM and 270 Nm of torque between 1250 and 4500 RPM. This is enough to call up 100 km/h on the GT's fancy head-up display (HUD) in less than 8 seconds, up to a catch-me-if-you-can 230 km/h.

The lively powerplant shows no regard for the added heft of the GT in a straight line then, but unfortunately the same is not true in the twisties.

BMW 320i Gran Turismo



Thanks to being 155 kg heavier than a normal 3-Series, the 2-litre engine of this entry-level GT feels way too underpowered for this bulky vehicle as it's nowhere near as sharp as its run-of-the-mill series stablemates.

You can counter this a bit by opting for the Sport or Sport+ modes via the Driving Experience Control button next to the gear lever. Amongst other features this results in the throttle- and steering response sharpening, for a sportier driving experience. What you cannot counter though is the hit your average fuel consumption takes whilst driving in these modes, as we managed 9.3 litres per 100 km, worlds apart from the claimed 6.7 litres per 100 km combined-cycle (town and highway driving usage). Driving around in Eco Pro mode did drop the average consumption to around 8.5 litres per 100 km, but this mode takes all the fun out of being in the driver's seat of a BMW.

It all comes down to the options

At the end of the day, the 320i GT is a super-sized 3-Series for buyers prioritising interior space and a bigger boot, above driving dynamics and the best possible fuel efficiency. Luckily, all the effort that went into allowing drivers to put more junk in the trunk of the 3 GT has not resulted in this executive carriage turning into an eyesore of a pumpkin.

The cost of sliding into the driver's seat of the most practical and spacious of all 3-Series vehicles comes to R439 000 for the entry-level 320i guise with the smooth as silk 8-speed Steptronic gearbox. However, our test model came standard with a generous amount of optional kit (see Check

The Tech) pushing up the asking price to an eye-watering R649 965.

Our advice: Skip the tech fluff and get the M Sport package (R23 100), on a more powerful model like the range topping (R610 000) 335i GT, and you'll have the perfect blend of practicality and performance. The 335i GT packs a 3 litre V6 that delivers 225 kW and 400 Nm for a 0-100 km/h sprint time of 5.4 seconds and top speed of 250 km/h. [HD] **ts**

→ CHECK THE TECH

If you are also looking to purchase a BMW 320i GT (R439 000), but want to provide your next ride with the TechSmart treatment for a grand total of R649 965, here's some of the extras you'll need to have ticked off on the options list.

First up is the parking package (parking sensors and cameras) at R10 400, and then add another R9 800 for the Harman Kardon surround sound system. The remaining R190 765 might go a long way to covering your e-toll bills for the next few years, but rather spend it on options such as Adaptive M suspension plus variable sport steering; Xenon headlights; Bluetooth telephony with extended smartphone connectivity; heated seats for the driver and front passenger; electrically operated panorama glass sunroof; Head-up display (HUD); and lane change warning.



JEEP Patriot 2.4 Limited

Jeep's Patriot is aimed at outdoorsy drivers who prioritises off road performance and rugged looks over on-road comfort and crossover aesthetic.

Whilst Jeep likes to use the word "classic" as a description for the styling of the Patriot, boxy would serve as a better adjective for the design of this utilitarian SUV (sports utility vehicle). Unlike the Jeep favoured by metrosexuals, the Compass, the rugged Patriot actually looks capable of reaching the top of a mountain, even though it shares the same platform and mechanicals as the Compass. Still the Jeep boasts a good ground clearance (205 mm) level plus full-time four-wheel drive (4WD), which makes it more capable compared to the run-of-the-mill crossover.

THE RUGGED PATRIOT ACTUALLY LOOKS CAPABLE OF REACHING THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN.

On the inside the old-school theme is continued, with the practical and spacious interior feeling a bit dated when compared to rivals like the Hyundai iX35. You do get a lot of features though, including electronically adjustable leather seats and a Uconnect 235 audio system that sports a 6CD/DVD/MP3 changer.

Lazy Sunday cruiser

Under the bonnet of the Patriot resides a 2.4 litre four-cylinder petrol engine that delivers 125 kW at 6000 RPM and 220 Nm of

torque at 4 500 RPM. This powerplant is mated to a 6-speed automatic Powertech transmission, which ensures that the car unhurriedly wafts about town and on the highway.

If you are craving a more involving driving experience or simply want to put some extra skip in the sedate pace provided by the auto, then you can manually push the gear lever either right (to shift up) or left (to shift down) whilst it is in drive. Just be aware that the car won't go back into auto mode if you stop changing gears.

Calling all patriotic Jeep fans

If the most extreme form of off-roading you are likely to encounter are dirt roads, or you were a fan of the original Jeep Cherokee, then the Patriot is right up your alley. It costs R328 990, making the Patriot a tough sell against competitors the likes of the Hyundai iX35 2.0 Executive Automatic (R339 900), Toyota's RAV4 2.0 CVT GX (R300 300), and Ford's Kuga Ambiente (R303 300). [HD] **ts**

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Corné 082 312 8846, Thabiso 083 670 7762,
Jacques 072 317 9763

Top 5 C segment hatchbacks

The C-segment hatchback division is one of the most hotly contested segments in SA, with many pretenders looking to knock VW's Golf off its cushy throne.



5

Toyota Auris Xs

97 kW; 160 Nm

Toyota's trump cards have always been reliability and a good resale value, while its achilles heel has been bland styling. This changed in 2013 with the likes of the Auris exhibiting some much needed design flair. Where the hatchback still lacks though is in the drive that is not as exciting as a Golf or Focus. The well-specced Xs variant offers a Bluetooth cellphone interface as standard for R239 400, and its 1.6 litre four cylinder engine uses 6.2 litres per 100 km.



4

Alfa Romeo Giulietta 1.4 Turbo Petrol

88 kW; 206 Nm

Alfa has a reputation for making beautiful cars that are fun to drive and the Giulietta is no exception. The company worked its design magic on the exterior and also employed its powerplant ingenuity beneath that pretty face. All this styling and performance bark does pack a considerable price bite though, with a not-so-competitive price of R278 015. This RRP does translate into lots of standard features, including Blue&Me in-vehicle infotainment system and start-stop engine technology.



2

Ford Focus 1.6 Trend 5-door

92 kW; 159 Nm

Ford aims to put smiles on drivers' faces thanks to Torque Vectoring Control, which eliminates understeer whilst cornering, making the drive safer and more entertaining. Beyond performance, fuel efficiency is also high on the Blue Oval's practicality manifesto, as the Focus delivers a combined usage cycle of 6 litres per 100 km. As with the Auris, the Focus comes standard with plenty of kit for R247 300, including Bluetooth audio streaming and telephony via its Sync infotainment system.



3

Honda Civic 1.8 Elegance

104 kW; 174 Nm

The Civic is no slouch in the head-turning department thanks to packing the most futuristic styling both outside and through the interior. Despite being powered by a larger and relatively more powerful engine than the rest of the cars in this comparison, the Civic still won't have you on a first name basis with the petrol pump attendant thanks to its combined cycle fuel usage figure of 6.1 litres per 100 km. The cost of slipping behind the wheel comes to R265 200.



1

VW Golf 1.4 TSI Comfortline

90kW; 200 Nm



Under the beautifully sculpted bonnet of generation 7 of the world's most famous hatchback resides a turbocharged 1.4 litre four cylinder engine that delivers class leading fuel consumption at 5.2 litres per 100 km. An RRP of R279 000 nets buyers stunning (albeit not groundbreaking) styling, excellent on road comfort levels, and a posh interior that looks and feels more premium hatchback than C-segment. The feature list is also fleshed out by plenty tech such as an audio system with 5" touchscreen. VW's solid all-round package that is the Golf 7 means its not yet time to proclaim "The King is dead." [HD] **ts**

SUMMER

by Mynhardt van Pletsen

STYLE

At a time and season when looking hot and being cool can confusingly mean the same thing, we can help you navigate the slippery slope of summer style. Here's your ticket to mid-season mastery and summer style superiority.



Fine stripe & check shirt, R375. Old Khaki.

R375



Grey deep vee tee, Jay Jays.

R120

FROM THE TOP

Rising to the challenges of our unique sub-saharan climate begs for some sort of cover from the elements. Whether you opt for the übercool all-round rim of the naturally weaved trilby, or would rather prefer the occasional cooling spritz from Diesel's Fuel For Life range, make sure your attire keeps you from feeling hot, not from looking it.

IN THE MIDDLE

Just because you're not collared and tie'd at the office all day, doesn't give you a license to spend the rest of the day parading the promenade in your decade old sweats and washed-out tee's. Keep a sense of sophisticated style about you with a cool and loose-fitting checked button-down shirt, layered over a natural colored v-neck tee. Tried and tested denim clamdigger shorts can double as both a beach volleyball and rainy-day-at-the-mall alternative.

TO THE BOTTOM

Donning appropriate footwear not only rounds everything off, but also defines your look. If you're still the rubberised aquatic shoe/sandal wearing type, head on over to toms.com and issue yourself the best mens footwear this side of the millennium. As part of their good giving business model, TOMS will also donate a pair of treads for every couple sold – so, New Year's resolution sorted!

If you're by any chance meeting the in-laws, or suddenly find yourself on a hot date, instantly dress up your look with a pair of sockless brown patent leather formals. **ts**

Diesel Fuel for Life 75ml, Truworths Elements.

R799



TOMS shoes, price varies according to style. www.toms.com

Natural weaved trilby, Woolworths.

R150



Dawson brown leather shoe, Old Khaki.

R699



Core leather belt, Mr Price Sport.

R99



Piz Buin sun spray, DisChem.

R179



RT denim clamdigger shorts, Mr Price.

R139



Top 5 most anticipated releases for 2014



Noah

The Bible has been a continual source of inspiration for Hollywood. Its universal truths, religious following and miraculous stories make for epic narratives. While Noah and the Ark may be regarded as a children's *Bible* story, everything is about to change with Darren 'Black Swan' Aronofsky's fantasy adventure starring Russell Crowe.

Quite possibly the most anticipated release of 2014, *Noah* is poised to steer film-makers back to the days of *Ben Hur* with a visually spectacular epic of Biblical proportions (pardon the pun). Starring greats such as Anthony Hopkins, Jennifer Connelly, and Emma Watson, *Noah* is set to line us up two by two at the cinema aisles.



Transformers: Age of Extinction

Love or hate him, Michael Bay has turned *Transformers* into an international box office sensation. The blockbuster juggernaut has just churned out his fourth *Transformers* movie. Instead of casting Shia LaBeouf again, the bigger-is-better film-maker has gone with a meatier actor in Mark Wahlberg.

After a complete overhaul, it makes sense that Wahlberg would play a mechanic. The *Contraband* star is supported by his conveniently hot daughter, Rosie Peltz, as they find themselves at the mercy of the Autobots, Decepticons and a paranoid government official. With *Transformers 5* already on the cards, expect more loud, air punch action and explosive visual effects.



X-Men: Days of future past

X-Men: First Class was so well-received that it prompted Bryan Singer to return to the franchise after passing on *The Last Stand*. If the very thought of hand-picking the best of both worlds and sending X-Men mascot, Wolverine, on an epic time-travelling mission to change their past and save our future isn't enough to give you goose bumps, its \$250 million price tag will.

Essentially, a best of X-Men, the cast comprises big names like Hugh Jackman, Ian McKellen, Patrick Stewart, Jennifer Lawrence, Michael Fassbender and James McAvoy. You'll be hard-pressed to find a more exciting line-up of actors with a more colossal storyline that isn't *The Avengers*.



The Amazing Spiderman 2

Many were understandably upset when they heard that Spider-Man was getting recycled just a few years after Sam Raimi's overblown *Spider-Man 3*. The irreverent decision spoke volumes about franchises and the overall lack of originality in Hollywood.

Yet, to their credit Marc Webb and lead actor Andrew Garfield refreshed the beloved superhero saga with just enough tweaks to make the second spin worth the admission price. Andrew Garfield brings a greater emotional depth to his portrayal of Peter Parker and Spider-Man than Tobey Maguire. This makes *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* a superhero blockbuster to look forward to as Spider-Man takes on a slew of new villains and OsCorp.



Guardians of the Galaxy

Dubbed "Space Avengers", it was only a matter of time before the lesser known Guardians of the Galaxy had their day. The superhero action-adventure is written and directed by James Gunn, known for his dark humour and edgy cult appeal in *Slither* and *Super*.

The ragtag team of space aliens must protect the galaxy, and is led by Star Lord, a hybrid alien-human. You also find Groot – a hulking tree; Gamora – a warrior assassin; Drax the Destroyer – a Titan killer; and Rocket Raccoon – which needs no further explanation. Onboard are Chris Pratt, Zoe Saldana and Dave Bautista, with the voice talents of Vin Diesel and Bradley Cooper adding extra drawing power. **ts**



The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (3 January)

Just when we thought Ben Stiller was quieting down, he directs and stars in this film, based on James Thurber's classic story, which was originally adapted into a film starring Danny Kaye (the other one) in 1947. Stiller is Walter Mitty, an indistinct kind of guy, whose daydreaming helps him escape his mundane job and anonymous life. Before you get any ideas, it's not *Ally McBeal*, but a red-blooded fantasy adventure with some offbeat comedy, in which Walter embarks on a real-world journey to restore balance. If you're a hardened cynic, you may want to skip this one.

NEW RELEASES - JANUARY



The Wolf of Wall Street (10 January)

Martin Scorsese's much-anticipated black comedy, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, is based on the memoirs of Jordan Belfort. It follows his rise to become a wealthy New York stockbroker living the high life, to

his inevitable fall involving crime, corruption and the federal government. After working together on *The Departed* and *Shutter Island*, Leonardo DiCaprio and Martin Scorsese are at it again, supported by Matthew McConaughey, Jonah Hill, Jon Favreau and Margot Robbie. At just under three hours, expectations will be high for this star-studded drama come awards season.



12 Years A Slave (17 January)

Steve McQueen is alive and well! We're not talking about the steely-eyed American actor known as "The King of Cool", but the British film director and screenwriter, best known for the films *Hunger*, *Shame* and now *12 Years A Slave*.

McQueen is making waves as a film director and if he continues on this trajectory will soon be challenging popular culture for the title of the real Steve McQueen. His acclaimed epic historical drama and adaptation of an 1853 autobiography by Solomon Northup stars Chiwetel Ejiofor (2012), and is already tipped to garner several nominations at the upcoming Academy Awards.



Don Jon (10 January)

Joseph Gordon-Levitt is a fine actor, who is gradually becoming a household name with a string of important roles. Who would have dreamed that the *Third Rock from the Sun* actor would be starring in Christopher Nolan's films and

sharing the screen with the likes of Bruce Willis? With *Don Jon* he takes this even further, as writer, director and lead actor in his film. Gordon-Levitt portrays a blue-blooded Jersey boy, who develops unrealistic expectations about love from watching porn, in this unconventional, yet charming comedy romance. Oh, did we mention it also stars Scarlett Johansson?

NEW DVDs



The Conjuring

James Wan's *The Conjuring* isn't just a slick horror movie; it's based on a real-life case, in which paranormal investigators tried to exorcise a dark presence from a home. The *Saw* and *Insidious*

director masters every horror cliché in the book, building tension with shadows and sounds, to deliver a spine-tingling atmosphere and plenty of scares. *The Conjuring* stars Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga, and look out for Ron Livingston, the guy from *Office Space*.



Anchorman 2 (10 January)

"News team ASSEMBLE!" From crying in a phone booth to Gladiator-style skirmishes with other news anchors, Ron Burgundy has carved a special place in our hearts with his brash

machismo and manly catchphrases. Just when we thought *Anchorman 2* would never happen, the moustache-brandishing man's man is back. Now with the 70s a hazy not-too-distant memory, San Diego's top newsman is at it again, taking on the Big Apple. Will Ferrell returns with his old team and a whole new host of over-the-top comedy acts to make sure we get the year off to a good start.



Ill Manors (27 January)

Riz Ahmed (*Four Lions*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) stars in this gritty British crime drama about the lives of four drug dealers, one

user and a prostitute. Ben Drew's hard-hitting and powerful gangster film debut trumps its modest budget and features solid performances from a relatively unknown cast with a gripping intersection of lives in a beautifully realised story. It's not easy-viewing, but it's riveting and surprising that it didn't get a cinematic run in South Africa. **ts**

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TOP Tweets!



Nick Stadler @Nickadoo

I feel like Twitter is like my family: I don't know who most of you are, many of you terrify me, and I desperately crave your approval.



Mbuso Maila @uMbuso_kaMaila

Adv. Thuli Madonsela deserves the entire Bells distillery.



46664 @MusaDiiso

Best Tech Mag and its FREE!! "[@TechSmartMag](#): Our December issue. FREE to download or read here: [buff.ly/190axAZ](#) #techsmart"



Tawii @Th1rt33n

[@TechSmartMag](#) why did y'all remove the stats on the spine of the mag? They were a reference point for my tech arguments!



Angeline Botha @franjipanji

Also checking out the latest articles on [@TechSmartMag](#) December issue!!! Makes me wish I had a super fat bonus for wicked stocking fillers!



Trevor Noah @Trevornoah

Ah I'm so glad I bought a PS4. Now the [@EASPORTSFIFA](#) servers are still bad but the error message graphics are better!



Thabisa @Darkkbeautie

I'm a girl but I'm in love with [@TechSmartMag](#) is this normal??



Deep Fried Man @DeepFriedMan

I wasn't aware that there was a political prisoner called Mielie Meal. But every week in The Star, the same headline: "Free Mielie Meal!"



Kim Dotcom @KimDotcom

Obama: "We will never see the likes of Nelson #Mandela again."

I see Edward #Snowden. US enemy today. US hero tomorrow.



Stephen King @StephenKing

My first tweet. No longer a virgin. Be gentle!



Khaya Dlanga @khayadlanga

Ladies, what's more romantic? Flowers or data bundles?



Justice Malala @justicemalala

What an honour, what a privilege, to have been alive in the time of Nelson Mandela. Have never been so proud to be South African.



Liz Buckley @liz_buckley

My office password's been hacked. That's the third time I've had to rename the cat.



Gus Silber @gussilber

Fake Sign-Language Guy epitomises the primal human fear of being found out in public to be not terribly good at your job.



Tebogo Malebana™ @tmalebana

Boo me again at the funeral I'll put e-tolls for pedestrians #Zuma



Max du Preez @MaxduPreez

I drove down Cape Town's N2 this morning making a beeping sound every 5km in solidarity with Gauteng's motorists



A Sea Point Jew @seapointJew

The Guptas have shown great generosity of spirit today, allowing so many to land at Sahara Waterkloof



Ricky Gervais @rickygervais

I'm not a psychiatrist, but I'm pretty sure a few of you are using Twitter as a sort of therapy. Trust me. It isn't working.

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Whether your firelighting skills range from forging an occasional braai all the way up to being able to show Bear Grylls a trick or two, technology is at hand to help you make a fire in a jiffy.

Looftlighter

Starting at the braaing end of the spectrum, the Looftlighter is ideal if the place where you most often need to create fire is near electricity. After plugging it in, you point the device at a pile of charcoal or briquettes and start it up. The Looftlighter works by shooting hot air out one end, much like a hairdryer (although we don't recommend trying to use it on your scalp, unless auditioning for Jackass) till it ignites the kindling. If you are in must-eat-now mode, the Looftlighter can also be used to get your coals braai-ready in minutes.

R600 from The GADGET Shop.

Swedish FireSteel

On the other end of the spectrum is a gadget you really would want on a camping trip or should your plane crash. The Swedish FireSteel is able to generate a spark that can reach temperatures up to 3 000°C by dragging the striker along the firestarter. This can then be used to ignite bonfires, camping stoves, kindling such as dry bark and grass, and yes, braai's as well. The gadget, which doesn't require anything other than a pair of hands, is good for up to 12 000 strikes and can also be used in inclement weather. R250 from Mantality.co.za.



Toollogic SL3 Firesteel Knife

In a similar, but more versatile vein as compared with the Swedish Firesteel, the SL3 knife also enables you to make a fire. It though, boasts a serrated blade as well, no doubt useful for when you are heading outdoors on a camping or hiking trip. It features a magnesium alloy fire starter, with the blade used to generate sparks with temperatures of 2 000°C. Additionally, the firestarter and blade combination can be used in wet weather as well. Differentiating itself, the SL3 is no one trick pony – it includes a loud emergency whistle too. R390 from Mantality.co.za.

Wicked Laser flashlight

Since every geek's ultimate gadget, the lightsaber, is not yet commonly available, here is one that comes fairly close. The Torch from Wicked Lasers is not only able to light up your life with 4100 lumens, the heat it emits can also render newspaper into a fiery pile of yesterday's news, bore into a Coke tin and even do unspeakable things to a BlackBerry. Granted, we didn't see it cut into the hull of General Grievous' spacecraft, but we half believe that it could. Don't believe us? See for yourselves here: bit.ly/15HX8vm or here bit.ly/OIMcq9. \$200 (R2 000) from WickedLasers.com [RN] **ts**



SUGGESTED FIRELIGHTING MUSIC

Ditch Billy Joel's *We didn't start the fire* from your smartphone, a better music accompaniment for your firestarting endeavours is The Prodigy's *Firestarter*, or, for if things go pear shaped, *Man on Fire* by Edward Sharpe.



LIVESCRIBE SMARTPEN 3

Designed to work and write like a premium ballpoint pen, the Livescribe 3 smartpen provides a balanced, smooth writing experience. Once you pair your smartpen with your tablet or smart-phone you'll really experience the magic it delivers.

OLLOCLIP 4-IN-1

The olloclip 4-IN-1 is a quick-connect lens solution for the iPhone that includes Fisheye, Wide-Angle and 2 Macro lenses in one small, convenient package that easily fits in your pocket – and the palm of your hand. It connects to the iPhone within seconds so you'll be sure to capture the image you want.



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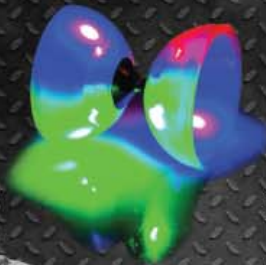
FIRST TIME CLOCK PUZZLE CLOCK

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METAL EARTH 3D METAL MODEL KITS

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



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The diabolo is a compound of rubber and plastic. Thanks to its low weight this diabolo is perfect for high-speed performances.

NANOBLOCK

Nanoblocks are a construction product which allows the most intricate of model making with unique tiny-sized blocks. Highly collectable, these miniature building block sets appeal to a wide range of tastes and ages.



LENMAR HELIX PORTABLE BATTERY PACK

This portable pack comes with 11,000mAh battery that can recharge iPhone up to seven times, and iPad once. We have to point out that Lenmar Helix comes with three USB ports, so you can easily charge up to three devices at the same time. Regarding the USB ports, there is one 2.4A output USB port and two 1A ports. Lenmar Helix comes with LED indicator so you can easily check the battery level, and there's also micro USB port for recharging.



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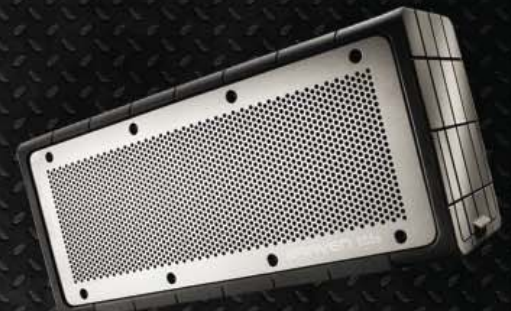
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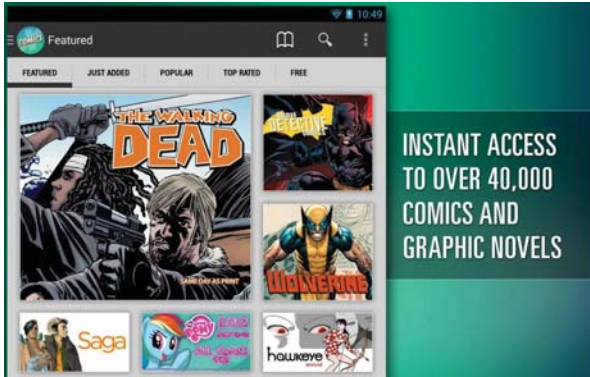
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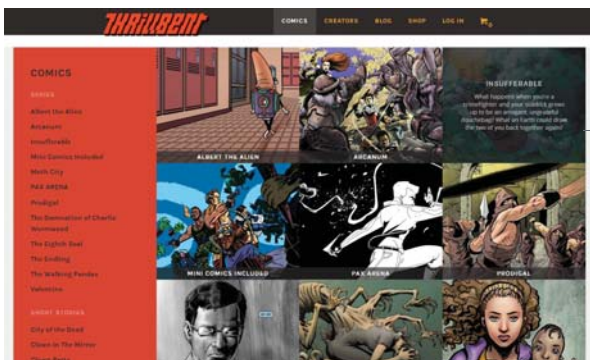
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www.marvel.com/motion_comics

As expected, this site provides comics from one of the biggest comic companies in the world.



THE GAMING CRYSTAL BALL

By Pippa Tshabalala. Picture courtesy of Adriaan Louw from we-are-awesome.com

One of the joys of being a gamer is listening to the ridiculous predictions that circulate at the start of the new year. Looking ahead to what 2014 has in-store for gamers, I'm not even going to go with the ridiculous, I'm simply pointing out things I see happening in the current gaming climate.

The return of virtual

With the success of the Oculus Rift 3D headset, at least from a critic and developer perspective, it seems that once again the concept of virtual reality in gaming is on the up and up. I have no doubt that the consumer version, which is touted as being affordable for gamers (and their parents) will trigger another gaming virtual reality revolution that may or may not be successful. As we head towards increasingly immersive experiences in games, on the one hand I'm excited and on the other hand this worries me ever so slightly. Do I actually want to feel like I'm IN the game?

There's an app for that

It seems that companion apps for pretty much every game are the order of the day. Skyrim had one (albeit unofficial but very useful when it came to maps and markers), GTA V has one, Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag has one.

DO I ACTUALLY WANT TO FEEL LIKE I'M IN THE GAME?

The increase in companion apps is no doubt linked directly to our reliance on smartphone/tablet technology, but they can be incredibly useful when it comes to tracking things, and of course developers are trying to get us to interact more with their products (like we don't do this enough?). I have no doubt that soon every game – from Watch Dogs (although how awesome would that app be?) to the latest LEGO game – will have a free companion app to go along with it (and I'm sure microtransactions will abound).

All the small things

On the subject of microtransactions however, this is the one point that I know I'm probably

2014 IS SET TO BECOME AN INTERESTING YEAR FOR GAMERS, SAYS PIPPA AS SHE STARES INTO HER CRYSTAL BALL.

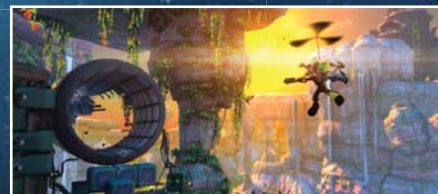
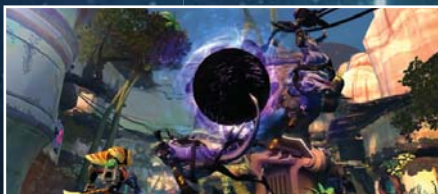
incorrect on. I would LIKE to see a decrease in microtransactions and the exploitation that goes along with those. I would LIKE to say that people will stop paying \$0.99 for extra lives in whatever mobile game it is that they're playing, but sadly I think there will only be an increase in these – the 'free' app that we all know will simply drain money from you in other ways. If I buy an app I want to know that that's all I'm going to spend on it.

Letting off a bit of Steam

Of course we all know that next gen is here (if not immediately in our vicinity), but what of the whole 'Steam Box' thing we've all heard so much about? People often forget about this as we are bombarded by press about the big players in the console war, but considering that many gamers are already attached to Steam through their PCs, it makes sense that they might want to keep that link and move in the direction of Valve's prototype Steam OS. I'm interested to see how it plays out, but I won't make any bets as to how successful it will be. **ts**



RATCHET & CLANK INTO THE NEXUS



Ratchet and Clank: Nexus is a superb epilogue to the Future saga, combining gameplay from preceding games while bringing its own distinctive elements to the mix.

We had high hopes for Ratchet and Clank: Nexus (R&C:N) when it was announced earlier this year. This was for good reason. The franchise has become one of those much beloved game series in our PS3 library, with most if not all of its entries delivering an assortment of weapons that are a joy to use and upgrade, ample doses of inventive and fun gameplay, along with snappy, often amusing dialogue and a sharp, at times satirical, sense of humour. The good news is that R&C:N delivers all of these in spades.

Tell me a story

The galaxy-saving duo find themselves escorting a particularly conniving and notorious criminal, Vendra Progg, to prison. Unfortunately her brutish brother, Neftin, assaults the ship and ultimately leaves Ratchet and Clank stranded in a seemingly haunted sector of the galaxy. It quickly becomes apparent that Vendra and Neftin intend to release an even greater threat into the galaxy, in the form of a Nether, a creature trapped in another universe called the Netherverse.

WE FINISHED THE GAME ONLY HUNGERING FOR MORE OF THE FUN GAMEPLAY THAT INSOMNIAC GAMES MANAGED TO NAIL HERE.

This then forms the basis for planet hopping, weapon and gadget acquisition and of course, a myriad of combat situations against alligator-like mercenaries for hire from Thugs-4-Less.

One of the trademarks of the series has been outlandish weapons, and on that front, R&C:N doesn't disappoint. Alongside the dual pistols, Omniblasters and Ratchet's ever-present wrench, players will also be able to add the shotgun-like Temporal Repulsor and the Netherblades, which emit rebounding sawblades. New and innovative additions include the Nightmare box, which distracts foes with their worst nightmare, and the Winteriser, which turns enemies into snowmen.

Superlative send off

Admittedly, like many of the Ratchet and Clank games that came before it, we finished the game only hungering for more of the fun gameplay that Insomniac Games managed to nail here. Not because R&C:N is lacking, but rather precisely because it is so enjoyable. Ultimately though, with R&C:N, Insomniac Games has done its franchise and us fans proud, with a fitting and fantastic send off to the franchise on the PS3. We will be waiting, with baited breath, for the duo's hopeful debut on the next gen PS4. In the meantime, play this. Available for a budget-conscious R270 [RN] **ts**





BATMAN

ARKHAM ORIGINS

Can the prequel to Arkham Asylum and Arkham City possibly match or even surpass its predecessors?



Arkham Origins' timeframe takes place several years before the events of Batman: Arkham Asylum and Batman: Arkham City, and puts players in the boots of a young and aggressive Caped Crusader. Adding fuel to the fire that will forge the Dark Knight of Gotham is mob boss Black Mask, who hires eight assassins to clip Batman's wings once and for all.

If the Batmobile ain't broke, why fix it?

The game's new developer team – WB Games Montréal – opted to stick with the Arkham program by employing the tried-and-tested fighting system. This involves the usual pattern of hits and counters, remaining as fluid as before, with some minor changes involving new kinds of gangsters who can counter your moves. Some of the bossfights are very enjoyable as these pose different challenges for players, particularly the physically impressive Bane or Deathstroke who will test your Bruce Lee-like reflexes to the max.

New gadgets in Batman's utility belt includes a remote claw to bring down walls or help pull yourself across water-filled areas, whilst Detective Vision also counts amongst your arsenal this time around. It involves

events untold to uncover new clues and help move the investigation along. This works quite well and fits into the assertion that Batman is the world's best detective.



BATMAN: ARKHAM ORIGINS PACKS A BIG WORLD THAT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE A TRUE CRIME FIGHTER.

At the end of the day though, anyone who has played any one of the preceding games will have no trouble switching to the latest chapter in the series thanks to the familiarity of the combat system and the few new gameplay features.

A must buy?

Batman: Arkham Origins packs a big world that makes you feel like a true crime fighter as you roam the streets in search of ongoing criminal activities. Also part of Arkham Origins' appeal is competent graphics, an engrossing storyline and highly enjoyable gameplay. What is lacking though are new elements that help it stand out from its already excellent predecessors. RRP: R600. [HD] **ts**

Top games

of the first quarter 2014

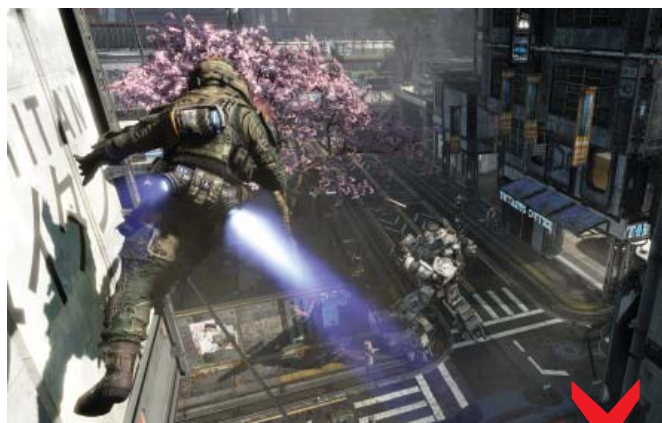
If the titles on offer for the start of 2014 are any indication, gamers have another bumper year to look forward to.



inFamous: Second Son

21 March. PS4.

One of the smoking hot exclusives coming to the PS4 is inFamous: Second Son. Departing from the events of the previous two entries, the game sports a new superpowered protagonist, Delsin Rowe. Unlike Cole McGrath though, all indications are that Rowe gleefully revels in his smoke and fire-based abilities, as he contends with the Department of Unified Protection, which is dedicated to eliminating 'supers.' The setting has also changed, taking players to the picturesque Pacific Northwest of Seattle; what hasn't changed though is our anticipation for an open world environment in which to wreak mayhem.



Titanfall

14 March. Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC.

The Xbox 360, Xbox One and PC similarly have their own heavy hitter exclusive, with Titanfall smashing its way onto Microsoft's consoles and the PC early in the year. The game has a serious pedigree, coming from Respawn Entertainment and key developers behind Call of Duty. In it, players will engage in online multiplayer first person shooter action from within mech-like Titans. Instead of being clunky and slow, the gameplay is expected to be fast, agile, furious and quite possibly, a breakthrough for first person shooting action. If it pans out as hoped, our money is on it being the next Halo on the Xbox.



Castlevania Lords of Shadow 2

28 February. PS3, Xbox 360.

A title we are particularly looking forward to sinking our teeth into is Castlevania Lords of Shadow 2. The first point in its favour is that its vampires don't sparkle, or look like they raided their girlfriend's makeup bag. Instead Dracula is a dangerous, predatory but conflicted sort, aware of both his lambent humanity and the monstrous power he wields as one of the undead. This should set the stage for some fine drama and storytelling.



Thief 4

28 February. PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One, PC.

Another highly anticipated title sneaking its way into the early part of the year, intent on stealing away our leisure time, is Thief 4. After a too long absence, players will finally be able to reacquire themselves with Master Thief Garret, who is thrust into The City, a locale on boiling point that is ruled by the corrupt and controlling Baron. More importantly, and staying true to its roots, it looks as though stealth will rule supreme in Thief 4, with shadows and water being taken into account and made a part of the gameplay itself. Particularly interesting is the focus feature, which enables Garret to zoom in on enemies, and track their location through walls.



Final Fantasy XIII Lightning Returns

14 February. PS3, Xbox 360

Despite the fact that previous entries in Final Fantasy XIII haven't quite blown us away, we are still hoping that Lightning Returns will deliver some fine Final Fantasy fare and return the franchise to its almost forgotten glory. The premise looks interesting enough, with Lightning charged (no pun intended) with saving a world on the brink of its own destruction, and being given a mere thirteen hours to accomplish this (now that is what you call a deadline). Players' choices will either shorten or lengthen time depending on their actions.



Dark Souls 2

14 March. PS3, Xbox 360, PC

If you like your games visceral and daunting, in which death waits around every corner, and taunts and sneers you at every turn, then Dark Souls 2 is definitely up your alley. Known for dispensing with hand-holding or mercy, the Demon- and Dark Souls franchise could be personified as a beautiful dominatrix who is strangely alluring, ensuring players keep coming back and begging for more. The reason for this is that when you do prevail, the victory is all the sweeter for being hard earned. The game will see you playing a character who has been cursed and is desperately seeking a cure. [RN] **ts**



I'M WITH
STUPID



Photo: GA Goodman

own what JVC likes to refer to as a Smart TV. It is, theoretically, a splendid device. It is, theoretically, very smart indeed. It can, theoretically, perform a number of functions that a regular television cannot. It, theoretically, allows its user to watch, as well as regular television, online interactive media, streaming media, internet TV, and over-the-top content (which, Google tells me, is not just the term for OTT reality TV shows such as Here Comes Honey Boo Boo). My Smart TV provides countless hours of theoretical entertainment.

The missing link

The only problem is that I am currently unable to make use of my Smart TV at all, because it has a broken remote control. While trying to switch from PC mode to USB input using the four buttons that are provided in the event of the tragic occurrence of its remote control breaking, I somehow managed to make the menu that allows one to switch between different modes disappear, leaving only a menu allowing brightness and contrast to be adjusted.

SAY WHAT YOU WANT ABOUT OLD SCHOOL TVS. AT LEAST THEY DIDN'T MAKE US FEEL DUMB.

What makes matters worse is that my television is now somehow stuck in 'I don't know what' mode, a mode I had no idea existed before 'black Tuesday' (the name we have given from us), as it doesn't seem to do anything

DEEP FRIED MAN IS FORCED TO ADMIT THAT HIS TELEVISION IS SMARTER THAN HIM.

at all. You cannot watch TV on it, nor can you connect to your external hard drive, notebook or PC. You certainly can't use it to watch online interactive media, streaming media, Internet TV or in fact any content, over-the-top or otherwise. In summary, our Smart TV is currently a rather smart looking ornament. It is the centerpiece of our lounge, but I still liked it better back when it was a working television.

We are fortunate to live on a planet so advanced that we can boast of having mastered remote technology to the point that its inhabitants are spared the indignity of ever having to leave the couch. My Smart TV's remote is no exception. It can do a variety of impressive things, things that one sadly becomes reliant upon. Modern remote controls are designed to make us dependent on them. Which is all good and well until 'Black Tuesday' comes around and you are left with nothing but a manual badly translated from Japanese and a screen that's, well, black.

Not so Smart are we now?

I wish I could claim superiority over my Smart TV. I wish I could make fun of it and say "Smart TV? More like a stupid TV if you ask me!" But the truth is that I'm the stupid one. My television is smarter than me. I can almost see it grinning smugly and muttering "idiot" under its breath as it watches me driving myself within inches of having to be admitted into a mental institution just trying to get it to function without its remote.

Say what you want about old school TVs. At least they didn't make us feel dumb. **ts**

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