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Is VR going mainstream?

NOKIA LUMIA 1520

The BIG ONE reviewed

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Instant gratification (no more)

I've recently gone back to shooting film instead of digital. Apart from the fact that you need to know where to look for 35 mm film, it's also a completely different experience, both in approach and result.

With film you have to be much more deliberate, since there are only 36 frames to work with. There is no such thing as a spray-and-pray approach, rather in character it feels much more like a Japanese tea-ceremony with its deliberate steps. It goes something like this: Find the subject, take a separate lightmeter reading (yes, the camera is that old), adjust your speed and aperture accordingly, adjust your focus, shoot, and then try again because you forgot to wind the film from your last exposure. Here's the kicker though – you don't know if what you shot came out right, since there's no 3" LCD on the back to show that you overexposed, or that your focus was slightly off. Instead you need to have the film developed and scanned.

In the age of Twitter, Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook's News Feed, it's refreshing to have something that does not provide instant gratification. Well, refreshing up to a point, since having to wait for your photos is deeply frustrating. I might just have my digital camera packed away here somewhere...

Enjoy the issue,

Mike Joubert
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ABOUT THE COVER GIRL

WONDER WOMAN

Model: Ally from Spotlight Model Agency

Also known as: Diana, Diana Prince, Princess Diana of Themyscira

Quick Facts:

In her first origin story, Diana, an Amazon, disobeys her mother, Hippolyte, to enter a competition in order to determine who will return Captain Steve Trevor to the "world of men" and there, serve as a champion of justice. She wins the right to do so, and assumes the mantle of Wonder Woman.

Other origin stories are even more exotic, citing Wonder Woman as being formed from clay and brought to life by the Greek gods, or alternatively, the daughter of Zeus and Queen Hippolyta, and thus a demigod.

Wonder Woman's archetypal characteristics came from a series of blessings from the Greek gods – her beauty coming from Aphrodite, speed from Hermes, union with animals from Artemis, strength from Demeter and the capacity to know the truth from Hestia.

Wonder Woman also played a role in saving Superman and Batman, after the former fell victim to Maxwell Lord's mind control, but was forced to kill Lord – an event which ironically put her at odds with the other superheroes.

Famous Wonder Woman quotes:

"Of all people you know who I am. Who the world needs me to be, I'm Wonder Woman."

"I must thank the gods for the gifts they've given me today. This beautiful sunrise that could inspire tears in a poet. And even better, something to hit."

"Filthy, ill-begotten offal-spawn! You dare threaten a daughter of Themyscira?!? Tear your innards out and tie you to the tree of life with them, son of a motherless goat herder!!!" **ts**



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GREAT GEAR!

SONY PROJECT MORPHEUS VR HEADSET

Gamers may just be one step closer to their version of *Star Trek*'s holodeck, as virtual reality (VR) headsets are undeniably in vogue right now. The latest of these is Sony's VR headset prototype for its PS4.

Sony's venture is currently known as Project Morpheus, meant to be named after the god of dreams, but is just as likely to remind geek and pop-culture savvy users of Morpheus from *The Matrix*. Either reference work just as well.

The VR headset, which is still in prototype form, was unveiled at this year's Game Development Conference in San Francisco, so it comes as no surprise that it is pitted as being the next hottest gaming peripheral in the near future.



The Morpheus headset enables players to keep track of three dimensional sound – sound that comes not just from before, behind and to either side of them but from above and below them as well.

No word from Sony yet when the headset will hit mass production or its retail price.

Unlike the Oculus Rift, which is designed for a seated VR experience, Sony's offering will work in conjunction with its Move controllers, enabling players to get their body in on the action.

The VR headset's initial tech specs look promising, including a 5" LCD screen and 1080p resolution, while inertial sensors work together with the PlayStation camera to keep track of player's movement.



OCULUS RIFT DEVELOPMENT KIT 2

Just before being sold to Facebook for a cool \$2 billion, the Oculus Rift developers showed they are not resting on their virtual laurels. They unveiled their latest development kit version of the device, which boasts a 1080x960 per eye OLED display, 110° view (as compared with Project Morpheus' 90°), the Crystal Cove camera that was unveiled a few months ago, and reduced weight. The company also reported being "deep in development" on the consumer version. **ts**

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GREAT GEAR!

LOTUS C-01

Cutting a rather striking figure on the road, the C-01 is the very first motorcycle to come from British manufacturer Lotus and the mind of *Tron* designer Daniel Simon.

The silhouette and riding position of the C-01 will be familiar to many, mainly down to the fact that its designer, Daniel Simon, is famed for the iconic vehicles he created in *Tron: Legacy*. Simon has been able to expertly blend elements from his futuristic creations for the chassis and classic superbike features in the tyre and suspension setup, adding up to a true thing of beauty.

The C-01's unique chassis integrates a combination Aerotech steel, titanium and carbon steel frame that weighs in at a surprisingly light 181 kg while standing 71 cm off the ground.



There is currently no confirmed release date or price for the C-01, but Lotus is taking pre-orders for this limited run, one of a kind motorcycle.

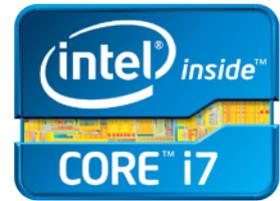
The engine is a modified two cylinder 4-stroke 75 degree V-style construction from a 195 cc KTM, with a six gear jaw-type shift transmission that produces an estimated 150 kW of power.

Lotus is responsible for the C-01's ancillary components, with a twin suspension strut at the rear. The British manufacturer has also incorporated twin and single disc settings for the front and back brake systems respectively as well as a hydraulic anti-hopping clutch.

AUDI NEXUS CONCEPT

The Audi Nexus is a four-wheeled concept hybrid, integrating elements of a motorcycle and car into one dynamic vehicle for urban commuters. This innovative hybrid comes from a creative partnership between design house KISKA and Audi's Design Concept Studio, in an effort to showcase the potential future of personal travel. The Nexus has been previewed around the world since its initial unveiling late last year, but no official dates have been outlined for a mainstream release. If mass produced, will travellers be enticed into purchasing this souped-up scooter? **ts**





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GREAT GEAR!

JAGUAR XFR-S SPORTBRAKE

There was once a time when station wagons were the go-to choice for the world's soccer moms. Jaguar's new supercharged hybrid is rapidly changing all that.

The Sportbrake model features the exact same engine as its saloon cousin the XFR: a 8-speed automatic, 5-litre supercharged V8 which is tuned to produce 410 kW and 680 Nm of torque. This potent combination means this super estate clocks a 0-100 km/h time of 4.8 seconds and is electronically limited to 300 km/h.

The expected release date for the XFR-S Sportbrake sees it hitting South African shores in the fourth quarter of this year. Perhaps now would be a good time to decide which one of your kids gets to go to private school, since this super estate carries an equally super price tag of approximately R1.2 million.

The XFR-S Sportbrake is the latest to compete in the growing super estate market, blending performance and practicality into one powerfully versatile machine.



Jaguar has looked to match the powerful engine of the Sportbrake with a similarly athletic styling to its body, with the added integration of carbon fibre aerodynamic front air intakes and engine cover as well as RS branded 20" Varuna alloy wheels available in three unique finishes.

The rear storage areas of the XFR-S Sportbrake has a 1 675 litre load capacity with the back seats folded down. Drivers and passengers can also change the seat setup to a 60:40 split division when required.

VOLVO CONCEPT ESTATE



The Swedish manufacturer has long been synonymous with station wagons, often described as boring boxes on wheels – but no longer. With its beautifully styled Concept Estate, the most important aspect is its interior which incorporates elements that will be utilised in future Volvo releases. Consumers got a preview of this at the recent Geneva Motor Show, where Volvo showcased Apple's CarPlay integration on its centre-mounted touch enabled tablet. The Concept Estate also features a mix of Scandinavian-inspired materials and high quality design elements, including woven wool carpets, a specially designed "Kubb" game set in the boot, an orange-illuminated crystal gear lever and LCD instrument panel. **ts**

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P35K



Whereas other Gigabyte gaming notebooks have been beasts, the P35K is a different animal. Like the panther of which it reminds, it too is sleek and seductive.

Like most of the other Gigabyte notebooks that have crossed our path, so too is the P35K a beautiful machine. This notebook is a solid slab of black from top to bottom, with the exception of a solitary silver power button above the keyboard.

However, one similarity that is apparent and welcome, is the same superb build quality that we have become accustomed to from Gigabyte of late. Neither the base nor the screen offered any flex or creaking, while the hinges held the 15.6" screen firmly in place. Like its smaller brother, the P34, this notebook is also part of Gigabyte's ultrablade gaming notebook range, which means that it is both thinner (21 mm) and lighter (2.1 kg) than some other gaming notebooks out there.

No holds barred

That being said, the P35K has certainly not been a victim of compromise, starting with the beautiful, luscious matte screen, which boasts full HD (1920x1080) and deep, rich colours as well as terrific viewing angles. The sound on offer is also amongst the best we have heard on a notebook to date – clear, loud (although it seemed to favour treble rather than bass) and without distortion at the top end. For games and movies this combination of a great screen and terrific sound is a boon.

THE P25 BOASTS THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS ON TWO FRONTS.

Moving on though, the P35K also boasts impressive specs as well. Beating beneath the machine's exterior is a 4th gen Core i7

processor (4700HQ) clocked at 2.4 GHz, and accompanied by an extremely healthy serving of 16 GB of DDR3 memory. This translates into fantastic performance across the board, whether gaming or doing other productivity-related tasks.

Much like what we loved about the P25, the notebook similarly boasts the best of both worlds on two fronts. An Nvidia Geforce 765 M (with an equally healthy dollop of 2 GB of memory) graphics card is onboard for when you are gaming, while users can switch over to the Intel HD Graphics 4600 when they want to save power. Storage meanwhile, is catered to via another combination we appreciate – a 128 GB SSD for fast boot ups and a 1 TB hard drive for everything else. Furthermore, those craving more space can swap out the optical drive for an additional hard drive.

Achilles heel

The backlit chiclet keyboard, which includes a full numpad, is rather nice, except for the fact that key-presses are considerably shallower than what we prefer. However, our real problem came from the trackpad, which though highly responsive, is set so level with the palmrest that it is difficult to ascertain by touch alone when your finger actually remains on the pad or ventures off course. Additionally, while the P35K is as quiet as a cat under general tasks, its fans all but roared when under load. Two USB 3.0, two USB 2.0, an HDMI port and an SD card reader round it off.

All issues aside, the P35K is still a lustworthy machine, particularly for those seeking above average gaming and general performance in a sleek package. It has a RRP of R17 400. [RN] **ts**

QUICK SPECS

Processor	Memory	Screen size and resolution	Graphics Card	Storage
Intel Core i7 @ 2.4 GHz	16 GB	1920x1080	Nvidia Geforce 765M with 2 GB RAM	128 GB SSD + 1 TB SATA



ACER TravelMate P645

Just when we were beginning to think that ultrabooks' glory days were behind them, Acer's TravelMate P645 arrives on our desk, proving that some old stars still shine.

Unwrapping Acer's P645 quickly makes two things apparent – the first is that the 14" ultrabook means business, with a reassuringly solid chassis that practically screams quality and durability. The reason for this is that the chassis is made not of hard plastic, but rather of the far superior carbon fibre and magnesium alloy. The second is that, to our mind, a well-built ultrabook still has the edge over tablet-notebook hybrids, particularly if predominantly productivity related work is its intended purpose.

Two steps forward, one step back

This is the same notebook that was showcased late last year at Acer's launch event in Amsterdam, and it impresses no less now than it did then.

A WELL-BUILT ULTRABOOK STILL HAS THE EDGE OVER TABLET-NOTEBOOK HYBRIDS.

Despite the fact that our review model's matte screen has only a 1366x768 resolution (middling by today's HD terms), text and images looked sharp nonetheless. This was aided by excellent contrast and colour saturation, while viewing angles were also quite impressive. Interestingly, while the ultrabook can support Windows 8, it doesn't have a touchscreen, and our review model had been downgraded to Windows 7. Performance on that OS was rock solid, and the P645's accommodation of the older OS, to our mind, was actually a point in its favour.

As far as performance went, we had no complaints. Onboard was the ever capable fourth generation dual Core i5 (4200U) clocked at 1.6 GHz, along with a serviceable, but not outstanding, 4 GB of memory and Intel HD Graphics 4400. While the system is up to some light gaming, a gaming ultrabook it is not. Having said that, the P645 boasts outstanding battery life (in the region of between 8 hours on the bottom end and 11 hours on the top end), also including 3G and a fingerprint scanner – business ready thus.

Typists, take note

As for the keyboard, we found ourselves in two minds. Traditionally, this has been the one area where the TravelMate series' had room for improvement, and that is the case here too. The chiclet keyboard is decent enough and certainly usable, but we felt key press could have been just a bit deeper, to move it from the realm of 'good enough' into that of 'great'. Also, there is not much separation between the keys, which meant that it was all too easy to hit the wrong key when typing up a storm. That aside, the backlighting was very nice; although you could turn it on and off using a function key, you cannot adjust the brightness.

In the final analysis, it was very easy to imagine the Acer P645 being every bit the reliable work mate as a travel companion. RRP: R17 000. [RN] **ts**

QUICK SPECS

Processor
Intel Core i5 @ 1.6 GHz

Memory
4 GB

Storage
500 GB

Screen Resolution
1366x768

Graphics
Intel HD Graphics 4400

NOKIA Lumia 1520



Nokia has entered the phablet fray with its massive Lumia 1520 offering. Fitted with a 6" display, is it too big for its own good? TechSmart puts this behemoth through its paces.

The first thing that hits you about Nokia's new Lumia 1520, is its sheer size. This smartphone is massive, even when it's placed alongside other phablet devices like the Galaxy Note 3 (5.7"). At 6" (diagonally), it is the Finnish company's largest smartphone to date, fitted with a full HD (1920x1080) display. Onboard is Qualcomm's excellent 2.2 GHz quad-core Snapdragon 800 processor along with 2 GB of RAM and 32 GB of internal memory. The use of this new chipset translates to Nokia's most powerful unit yet that simply breezes through Windows Phone 8 and multitasking.

WE CANNOT SHAKE THE FEELING THAT THE LUMIA 1520 FEELS MORE LIKE A VERY LARGE SMARTPHONE THAN A TRUE BRIDGE BETWEEN PHONE AND TABLET.

Nokia has made a concerted effort to ensure quality imaging is among the Lumia 1520's top attributes, with its PureView lens ensuring each photo has optimal lighting and focus. And it shows – the 20 megapixel camera takes awesome photos. It picks up nuanced details that you would want to see, while also being a star in low-light. One of the applications Nokia is looking to highlight with the Lumia 1520, is Storyteller, an app that collates all photo, video and location content into an interactive digital scrapbook. The potential for Storyteller is purely dependent on user generated content and this makes it a perfect tool for users that enjoy curating their lives and sharing experiences. If you travel a lot, or have an active social life, Storyteller will be your BFF.

Size has its downfalls

Although fitted with a larger display, it does not truly feel as though Nokia has made the most of the increased real estate. Tiles on the home screen appear oddly large, even with Nokia adding one more vertical row for tiles to the setup. It constantly feels as if the Live Tile interface was simply upscaled for the larger screen and not much thought was given after that. The phone's sheer size raises an important question about the Lumia 1520. Why is there no stylus? If the Galaxy Note 3 has one, keeping in mind that it is smaller than the Nokia, where is the 1520's? A stylus may not be the most essential

aspect of a phablet, but it does make interaction with the device sharper and easier.

Hit and Miss

The Lumia 1520 may have outdone competitors in the inches department, however, the 1520 does little to make full use of this added space, except for an extra row of tiles. In general use the phone also feels that tad too big, making for clumsy day-to-day usage. If you don't have a manbag or jacket pocket, good luck with this one.

We cannot shake the feeling that the Lumia 1520 feels more like a very large smartphone than a true bridge between phone and tablet, and it's difficult to fully justify Nokia's R9 000 asking price. When you add to the fact that Samsung has designed apps to specifically take advantage of the Note's screen size as well as the phenomenal S Pen, Nokia still has some way to go. We can only hope that a follow up iteration does not make the same mistake. [RC] **ts**



QUICK SPECS

OS
Windows Phone 8 with Lumia Black

Display Type
6" Full HD (1920 x 1080)

Processor
Qualcomm Snapdragon 800 Quad-core 2.2 GHz

RAM
2 GB

Camera
20 Megapixel PureView primary camera



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SONY XPERIA Z1 Compact

Although the other manufacturers might do it, when Sony makes its flagship smaller, it doesn't mean it's less powerful.

Sony has made a concerted effort to ensure that despite the Z1 Compact's diminished dimensions, it still retains all the key elements that made the Z1 a great flagship. It preserved the same design and overall feel of its bigger brother, complete with a water and dust proof 4.3" display. Despite the obvious size difference, Sony has also shaved some weight off with the Z1 Compact, coming in at 137 g compared to the Z1's 169 g.

WHEN COMPARED AGAINST ITS RIVALS, THE COMPACT COMES UP TRUMPS.

The Compact features the same aluminium frame and onyx, mirrored casing found in the rest of the Xperia lineup. Although painfully beautiful, the phone picks up a fair amount of dirt and marks as a result of its highly reflective surface. Handling is also not as tactile as one would think, considering it has just gone under the knife, with the aluminium frame having a propensity to slip out of hand and the glossy back cover offering very little traction.

No compromise, despite size

The Z1 Compact is powered by a 2.2 GHz quad-core Snapdragon 800 processor, 2 GB of RAM and Android 4.3 (Jellybean). This adds



up to an extremely fluid, responsive and intuitive unit, enhanced by the newly fitted IPS display (1280x780). A great display makes all the difference in this iteration, with smaller versions of flagships often fitted with lackluster screens, although Sony refrained from going full HD. As far as imaging goes, the Z1 Compact features the same 20.7 megapixel camera as its big brother, armed with a multitude of shooting options and solid image quality – even underwater.

Final Verdict

All in all, the Z1 Compact is a flagship in every regard but one – size. This is by no means a bad thing, as it will afford Android loving consumers the ability to opt for a device that still packs a considerable punch without eclipsing their palm. When compared against its rivals, such as the HTC One mini and Galaxy S4 mini, both of which skimp on specs, the Compact comes up trumps. At roughly R2 000 less than the phablet alternative, it may just be more tempting as well. RRP: R8 000. [RC] **ts**

LOGITECH G510s Gaming Keyboard

For PC gamers it's a toss-up between which is the more important input peripheral – the mouse or the keyboard. Making the argument for the latter is the G510s which boasts several nifty features.

To start with, the keyboard is attractively designed and solidly built but not excessively cumbersome. It's also particularly ergonomic and logically laid out. The keyboard is corded rather than wireless, and the cord was a decent enough length so that we didn't have any strain with it plugged into our rig.

THE TWIST HERE IS THAT USERS CAN DESIGNATE THREE MACROS PER KEY, AND SWITCH BETWEEN THESE ON THE FLY.

Along with a full numpad on the right hand side of the keyboard, the first thing you are likely to notice are the 18 'G' (customisable) keys on the left hand side. These are neatly arranged and separated into groupings of six keys each, and are intended to help players customise a slew of macros for use in MMORPGs for example. The twist here is that users can designate three macros per key, and switch between these on the fly using the



M1, M2 or M3 buttons that are conveniently located just up the G keys themselves. This gives players up to 54 different possibilities in total.

Key features

Moving on, it wouldn't be a gaming keyboard if there wasn't backlighting on the keys, and here, it was rather nice. Alas, it is either fully on or fully off; it cannot be dimmed down. As for usability, the keyboard was particularly good. The keys have a satisfyingly deep press and a fair amount of springiness. The all-important WASD keys and the directional arrows are not just a different colour from the rest of the keyboard, they also yield an entirely different tactile sensation, a bit like smooth rubber. We further appreciated the small, useful extras that adorned the G510s – such as a responsive audio scroll wheel, a mute sound button, media buttons onboard jacks for headphones and a mic.

In a nutshell, the G510s is a fantastic, if somewhat pricey, keyboard and certainly up to the usual high standard we have come to expect from Logitech's peripherals. RRP: R1 650. [RN] **ts**

NIKON

DF

Nikon's Df brings retro goodness to its full frame range, and with it a whole lot of opinions.

If there is one thing that Nikon's Df camera has done extremely well, it's to divide opinion, in part because it feels so out of place. Nikon has decided to test the retro waters with a full-frame camera and not with their smaller, cheaper Dx range (APS-C sensor). The Df is more expensive than other full-frame cameras that basically have the same functionality, and, much like its film-based older brothers, it also doesn't do video.

Retro goodness

As everyone else, we also have an opinion, but it's more split between really liking the camera, and feeling that it somehow falls short. The Df does elicit a number of stares and a certain amount of fawning, but for a retro camera it feels too big. Although it's the lightest of Nikon's full frame range (765 g vs the D610's 850 g) it is much bigger in size than most of Nikon's iconic 35 mm cameras on which it is modelled.

The Df does elicit a number of stares and a certain amount of fawning, but for a retro camera it feels too big.



Retro design also puts the controls in the right place and makes access to certain functionality easy, but Nikon didn't quite get it right with the Df. Two easy examples – the ISO control on top requires your full attention when you want to adjust it, while the front dial is quite stiff and its placement is a bit awkward.

Proof is in the pudding

The picture quality on the Df though, is without question spot on. It carries the same 16.2-megapixel sensor and EXPEED 3 processor found in the D4, which was only recently superseded as Nikon's flagship by the D4s. This might go some way to explain the camera's R37 000 price-tag, about R9k dearer than the D610 and R1k more than the excellent D800. With this Nikon has created a camera that will appeal only to a specific segment of photographers – those that still remember the good old days of film and with more than a couple of bucks lying around. What we would like to see though, is a refined retro design making its way to Nikon's more affordable (and smaller) Dx range. Now that would be an attention grabber. [MJ] **ts**

CASE LOGIC

SLR Camera/Laptop Backpack

For many photographers, having both a notebook and a camera present is of primary importance. Case Logic solves the travelling hassles usually associated with this.

From the get go, we can point out that the Case Logic SLR Camera/Laptop backpack is not going to satisfy the needs of pro photographers that would like to carry a lot of gear around – it's simply too small. But then again, not all photographers are pro. In our case, the backpack's size counted in its favour. It is not cumbersome, it fits nicely in the hand luggage compartment, while still retaining space for enough gear. How much is enough you might ask?

Enough is enough

The camera compartment provides removable shelves and flexible walls attached via Velcro to customise it according to your needs. We can easily see two DSLR bodies with lenses attached plus two more lenses fit in there, depending of course on zoom size. The compartments are deep enough to provide enough room between lenses and the exterior of the bag. At the back you will find the notebook compartment which will do the job, but it's not as high-end as for example Everki's Atlas notebook bag. It can take notebooks up to 16" in size (or a 17" Macbook Pro), while two strong

Velcro flaps on the side provides for the ever handy tripod or monopod.

It fits nicely in the hand luggage compartment, while still retaining space for enough gear.

The one aspect we found extremely useful is the water resistant EVA bottom on the bag. While regular material can get dinghy after a while and soaks up any liquid that is on the ground, the EVA plastic protects the bag while at the same time allows it to stand upright.

Good every day

There is no waist strap which, combined with the bag's relatively diminutive size, makes it difficult to recommend for pros or serious outdoor photographers that need a bag that can carry the weight. For the amateur or casual photographer that would simply like a compact bag that can fit both your DSLR and a notebook (or tablet), the Case Logic makes for the perfect addition. \$120, visit www.casellogic.com for more info. [MJ] **ts**

**Bag was received as a seeding unit.*



XTOUCH WAVE

Smartwatch

Waves goodbye to convention

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

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

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

Now that's handy

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

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

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

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

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



VICOVATION

Vico-SF2 dashcam

There are a number of dashcam videos from Russia doing the rounds on the internet*. This technology can now also be found here in SA, with the Vicovation Vico-SF2 ready for action.

The SF2 has the ability to record in 1080p (30 fps) video which allows for better quality and detail on playback. One of our concerns when we started using this dashcam was that our 16 GB SD card would fill up quite quickly when recording in HD (720p also available). Although an hour's worth of driving claimed 4 GB of space (compressed via H.264), it does not matter too much – what the SF2 does is record in five minute segments, then saves that file. When it runs out of space it circles to the oldest files and overwrites these. The unit also has what the company calls a 3 Axis G-sensor, which notes when you are involved in an accident, to automatically save the 30 seconds of video before impact and 30 seconds after so that the file cannot be overwritten.

No hassle setup

If you've mounted a GPS unit in your car, installation of the Vicovation should be familiar. The suction bracket provided works well, but the 4 m cable that comes along with the cigarette charger can become unruly.

The SF2 will start recording as soon as you switch on your car, requiring no input from your side.

The dashcam covers a 140° angle so it's not too difficult to find a position that records all that happens ahead of you. This is helped along with the 2.4" LCD screen at the back which displays what is being recorded, or can be used for playback. The SF2 will start recording as soon as you switch on your car, stopping once the vehicle is switched off again – there is no input needed from your side.

And audio too

One thing to remember that we think is important is that the SF2 also records audio. This can come in handy when dealing with traffic police, since the camera can be quickly turned to record what is happening on the driver's side. The SF2 retails for R2 899 (including 16 GB SD card and delivery) from www.dashcamera.co.za. Remember to ask for your 10% TechSmart discount. A cheaper TF1 model is available for R1 799. [MJ] **ts**

* In Russia, liability insurance is much cheaper than full-coverage insurance, but it depends on the driver to prove that he/she was not responsible for the accident. Hence the use of dashcams.



Oakley Bottle Rockets



We took Oakley's Bottle Rockets on a 21 km run and, unlike some other sunglasses, they stayed put even when sweaty. They also did not become uncomfortable nor fog up during the run, except when taking them off and putting them back on again. With an 8.75 base curvature on the open-edge lenses there was very little light leakage from the side, while we were surprised about their almost-not-there weight. The glasses are polarized, which means less glare from the road and that you can also use them while fly-fishing. Oakley sometimes gets criticized for their brash design, but the Bottle Rockets are more reserved, which suited us just fine. They go for a recommended R1 650. **ts**

Oral-B Trizone 500



If you've ever cleaned your teeth with an electric toothbrush, you know that you can actually feel the difference it makes. Oral-B's Trizone 500 does things slightly differently. Instead of the regular rotating round head, it offers a triple zone cleaning action. You receive a pulsating "Power Tip" that's for those hard to reach places, sweeping bristles that clean between the teeth, and then stationary shorter bristles that takes care of the surfaces. There are a couple of things that we liked about the Trizone. It is thinner than previous electric toothbrushes we've had, while the battery also lasts a long time. We managed close to two weeks before a recharge was needed. You also have a little timer that briefly stops the pulsations on the half minute to make sure you brush the two minutes that the dentist says. At 20 000 pulsations a minute, our teeth were sparkly pearls. It retails for R600. For even more cleaning action, try the Trizone 1000 (R1 000) that buzzes at a massive 40 000 pulsations a minute. **ts**

Jaybird Sportsband Bluetooth Headphones

Jaybird's wireless Sportsband headphones combine solid audio with sleek styling, and weighing in at a mere 103 grams it's an efficiently designed pair of headphones. Apart from the Sportsband's minimalist design, the other standout feature is its Bluetooth connectivity, making it easy to use as there are no wires in place to interfere during use. The headphones themselves offer adequate sound quality, but suffer from a worrying amount of external noise

impeding the listening experience, with a lot of sound escaping due to the cushioned speakers design. If you're looking

for a wireless headphone with excellent battery life, easy to setup and mid-range performance, the Sportsband is worth considering at R1725, available online at store.orange.com/za locally. **ts**



Audiomotion BT-205 Cube Speaker

Measuring 12x12 cm, the BT-205 is compact and extremely portable. The design of this speaker is best described as utilitarian, with no unnecessary embellishments to speak of. Setting up and pairing is effortless and one of the areas the BT-205 shines. It produces six hours of playtime, thanks to its 800 mAh lithium-ion battery making it ideal for use on short day trips. In terms of sound, the BT-205 is simply adequate, with some slight tinny distortion when the volume was put on full tilt. Audiomotion has also fitted it with noise-cancelling functionality in hands-free mode to make the BT-205 ideal for small room or office space use. It's currently available via Audiomotion's local online store, tieroneworldwide.com, listed at R799. **ts**



NIKE MAGISTA AND ADIDAS PRIMEKNIT FS

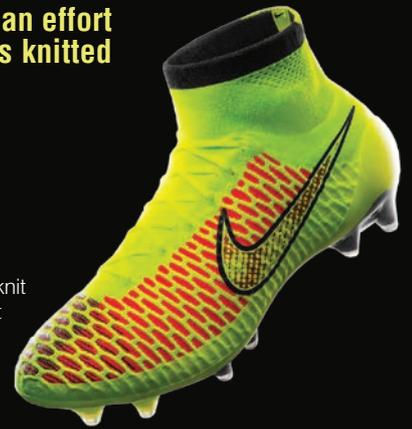
In a World Cup year, the battle for footwear supremacy is greater than ever. In an effort to innovate, both Nike and Adidas have launched hybrid sock/football boots. Is knitted footwear the sport's future?

Nike Magista



Ever since Nike debuted its Flyknit technology two years ago, it has garnered a large following among running enthusiasts and streetwear aficionados alike. The Nike Magista is aimed at bringing the same lightweight construction and innovation to the football field. Specifically designed for creative playmakers, the Magista offers improved touch, control and traction between the player's foot and the ball.

It features a 3D knit textured upper which is only 0.1 mm thin, thinner than a sheet of paper. Nike also integrated Brio cables that are knitted into the upper, maintaining the Magista's boot-like shape. The conical stud plate for the Magista is a combination Pebax/nylon construction, improving traction on a variety of surfaces. At this stage, no official release date or pricing is set for the Magista, but it should be making its way to South African shelves in the next few months, just in time for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.



Adidas Primeknit FS

To its credit, knitted technology in football boots is not a new concept for Adidas. The company unveiled the first mid-cut woven football boot, the Adidas Argentina in 1954, perhaps a little too revolutionary in its time, Adidas has used its design as inspiration for its new Primeknit FS.

The FS is essentially a mid-calf length, sock-like knitted football boot and apart from its second-skin design, the Primeknit FS features absolutely no traditional overlays, laces or edges whatsoever. Constructed from one piece of lightweight yarn, the FS is able to provide new levels of flexibility, comfort, stability and strength according to Adidas. Each piece of yarn is given a special water resistant coating to ensure optimum weather protection is ensured in most playing conditions. There is no word from Adidas on when these revolutionary boots will be made their way to consumers, but if they wish to challenge the Magista, it will be soon.



Nike Magista Hands-On



The first thing that struck us about Nike's Magista, is its styling, with Nike using the high-visibility colourway we've seen from its most recent boot models. The Magista's upper is surprisingly sturdy given its lightweight construction, with a silicon-type coating to ensure advanced protection on wet surfaces. The front of the boot features hundreds of oval shaped contours, which offers fantastic traction and greater control of the ball. When we slipped the Magista's on, we were impressed by the extremely snug fit, as the sock-like top of the boot retained its tightness around our ankles and the flyknit upper molded perfectly to the shape of our foot. When you add this to the lightweight design, you have a boot specifically created for trequartistas (attacking midfielders) to shine.

The one area we weren't sold on, was the amount of protection the Magista's will actually provide. When you're busy honing your skills on the practice pitch, there's nothing to worry about. But when you're surrounded by a host of hulking defenders making studs-up challenges, the lightweight materials may fall short. [RC] **ts**

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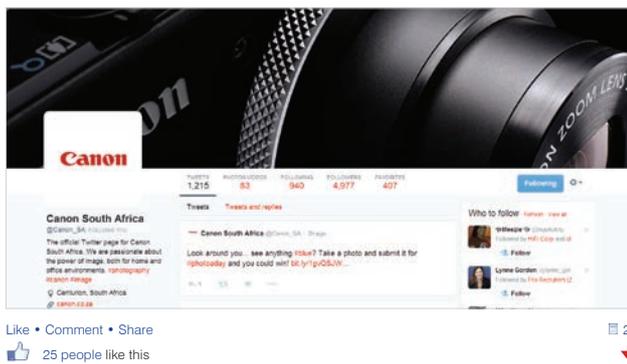
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For Canon, putting time and effort into its social media presence is already reaping benefits, with its Facebook and Twitter accounts garnering a rapid and constant increase in followers.

Since creating its Twitter account in August last year, Canon SA has racked up 5 000 followers, with its Facebook following triple that at present, coming in just under 15 000 likes. Part of the reason for the rapid growth has been word of mouth, another has been due to some clever campaigns. Most recently, the #photoaday competition was launched in March, which invited image lovers to submit their photos, on which the community would then vote for the best. As a viable enticement to enter, the winner would nab an EOS 100D.

Additionally, Canon's Facebook page also hosts a weekly theme, with the best photographs chosen every Friday, and the winner receiving recognition on the site for their work.



The real payoff of embracing social media for Canon SA is coming from greater community engagement.



Payoffs and purposes

The real payoff of embracing social media, explained Michelle Janse van Vuuren, marketing manager at Canon SA, is coming from greater community engagement. More specifically, the company's Facebook page has become a platform for Canon and its users to share their images, offer tips on photography as well as guide photographers in the right direction with regards to which cameras and lenses would be best suited to their needs.

Indeed, Janse van Vuuren noted that many people seem to come to the page for camera advice – and reported that a full 80% of Facebook and Twitter messaging focuses on photo and video products. This also created an opportunity for more visitors to be made aware that Canon offers an end-to-end solution, and make people alert of the printing options on offer as well. Canon SA's Facebook community fosters a wide variety of photographic genres, including wildlife and portraiture as just two examples, and thus is open to a broad array of photography enthusiasts. Refreshingly, the Canon social media initiatives do not rely on advertising.



Like • Comment • Share
25 people like this

Along with reaching out to users and offering those new to the craft a host of tips, the social media platforms also showcase Canon's focus on the environment, and how the company is aiming to be more environmentally friendly. It also links into Canon's yen for conservation, and its willingness to sponsor worthy ventures with camera gear. Canon SA stressed that interaction on its social media presence is not reliant on whether or not one owns a Canon product.

Planning ahead

As for the recent proposed changes by Facebook, that it would start charging businesses using the social network to promote their brand, or face only a fraction of its posts being seen, Canon isn't perturbed. While it is currently investing a great deal of time into its social efforts, Canon expects to be wherever its audience is at the end of the day.



While Facebook and Twitter remain Canon's primary social media platforms of choice, for the moment, this too could expand a little in the near future. The company has plans to incorporate Pinterest as well a little later this year. Ultimately though its goal is social – to get more people interested in and excited about the wonders of imaging. **ts**

Find Canon SA on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/canonRSA>
Twitter: @Canon_SA

The **BIG** issue

Smartphones: Where to from here?

All athletes reach their pinnacle, move past the golden age of their career and retire; but can the same be said for smartphones, and has the device in your hand already peaked? Ryan Noik investigates.

No doubt you remember when the newest, latest, supposedly greatest smartphone still generated tremendous buzz both online and in the world. Indeed, there was a time not too long ago when an impending iPhone would spark stories of people queuing for days to be the first to get their hands on the shiny new gadget. Even the rumour mill around both Android and iOS smartphones seemed to spin more furiously than it does now.

The beginning of the end?

Such anticipation seems to be a thing of the past. More recently, both the iPhone 5s and Samsung's S5 were met with a very muted "Well, that's nice." It begs the question: have smartphones in general reached their pinnacle, and are their golden days behind them? On a more practical level, it makes one wonder whether smartphones actually need any higher resolution displays or larger screens than they already have, and if the quad-core or

octa-core processors typically found within most devices aren't already more than sufficient for the functions for which a smartphone is intended.

Have smartphones reached their pinnacle, and are their golden days behind them?

However, another, more disturbing question lurks within this issue: Can manufacturers surprise us and entice us with their new devices anymore, or at this point, is it just a matter of trying to find something, anything, to capture their users' imagination?

Get creative!

Yes, we have seen some manufacturers try curved screens and biometric phone unlocking, but pardon me while that elicits a small yawn. Even as phone manufacturers explore complementing their device with a smartwatch, that doesn't really advance the smartphone as a device in its own right. At this point, smartphone manufacturers need to put their thinking caps on, stir their creative teams into action and come up with some genuinely innovative - and most importantly, exciting - ideas for what smartphones could become and can offer.

Either that, or they may want to bear in mind that for even the largest of technology titans, that ominous pasture of forgotten glory is ever looming. **ts**



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Glossary of the GALAXIES

PART II

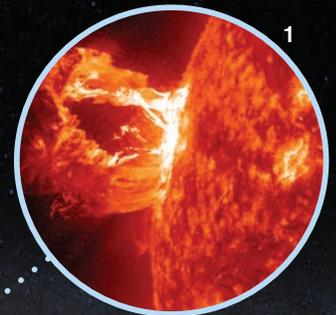
We had an amazing response to last month's Glossary, so it's only natural to explain some more galactic gobbledygook. Don't worry, we'll get you fluent in no time.

SUNSPOTS & SOLAR FLARES

What? Sunspots are coolish spots on the Sun's surface, which develop because of an increase in the magnetic field strength surrounding regions. Solar flares are powerful bursts of X-rays that escape from the Sun's surface close to sunspots.

So what? Solar activity caused by sunspots and flares affects radio transmission, satellite communication and power grids on Earth.

Say what?! The strongest ever solar flare was recorded in 1869. Spark discharges shocked telegraphers and set telegraph paper alight.



5 600°C

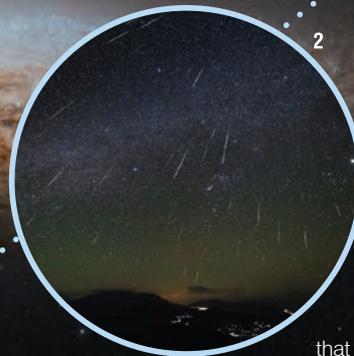
The surface temperature of the Sun

WHITE HOLES & WORMHOLES

What? Both these are only theoretical concepts. White holes are thought to be the time-reverse of black holes, so that matter would be expelled instead of sucked in. Wormholes are theoretical tunnels that create shortcuts through space-time.

So what? If they could exist, these holes would allow time travel. But our current understanding of physics says they're not possible.

Say what?! If we could create exotic matter – stuff that displays antigravity – we might make wormholes work.



METEORS & METEORITES

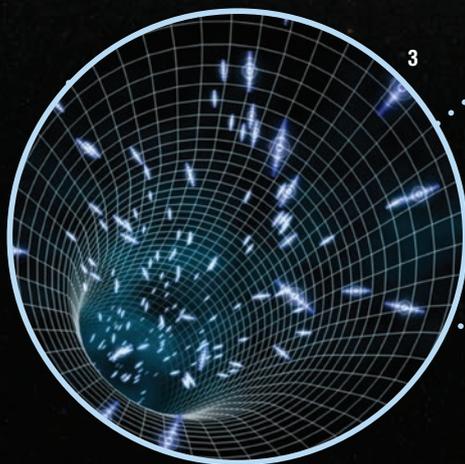
What? A meteor is a rocky object that enters the Earth's atmosphere at high speed and leaves a streak of light behind before it vaporises. But if it survives its journey through the sky and hits the ground, it's called a meteorite.

So what? The study of meteorites can help us understand how our solar system developed.

Say what?! On 15 February 2013, a meteor 20 m wide hit the Earth near Chelyabinsk in Russia.

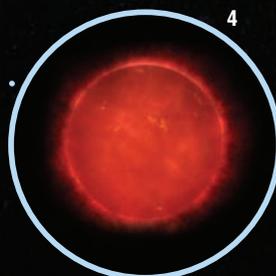
67 000 km/h

Approximate speed at which the Chelyabinsk meteor entered our atmosphere



1935

Albert Einstein and Nathan Rosen propose the theory behind the wormhole



88 light years

The distance to our nearest red giant, Gamma Crucis.

RED DWARFS & RED GIANTS

What? Fairly cool stars that emit little light. A red dwarf is a small, long-living star, no more than half the size our Sun. In contrast, a red giant is nearing the end of its life and has expanded to become hundreds of times larger than our Sun.

So what? Studies have shown that every red dwarf has at least one planet in orbit. And with almost three-quarters of the stars in the Universe being red dwarfs, this greatly ups the chances for finding habitable Earth-like planets.

Say what?! At least a quarter of the red dwarfs close to our solar system may have planets that could possibly support life. [LP] **ts**

Images

1. A coronal mass ejection often associated with solar flares. Image: NASA.

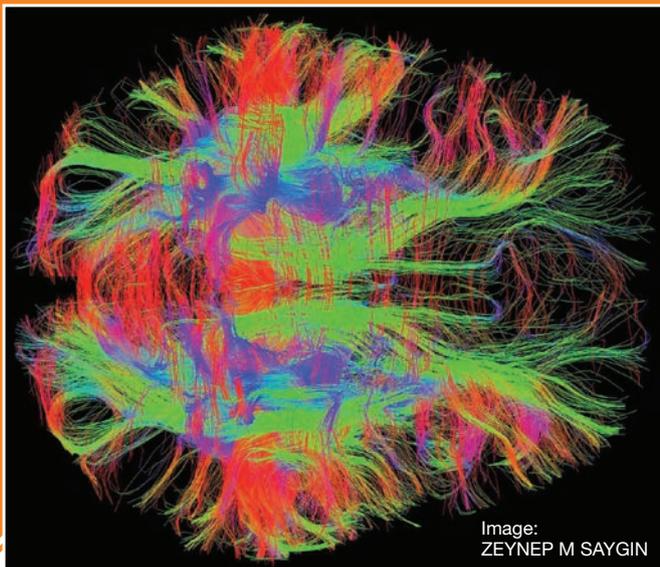
2. The annual Geminid meteor shower. Image: NASA

3. A theoretical wormhole. Image: picstopin.com

4. Artist's conception of red dwarf just about 12.6 light years from the sun. Image: NASA

SCIENCE

PIC OF THE MONTH



The 13th Wellcome Image Awards were announced last month, with this stunning and trippy image of the human brain one of the winners. It shows a bird's-eye view of white matter fibre tract in a healthy adult human brain, with the back of the brain on the left, and the front on the right.

Done via a particular type of MRI Scan (diffusion-weighted magnetic resonance imaging), this 3D image is colour coded. Blue notes the fibres travelling between the top of the head and the neck, red are those moving between the ears, while green logs those advancing between the front and the back. For more visit www.wellcomeimageawards.org.

SMART ANSWERS

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



ELEPHANT ALARM CALLS

Are elephants afraid of humans? It appears so, yes.

What are the tell-tale signs? When resting African elephants in the wild heard the (recorded) voices of a local Kenyan tribe, they became very vigilant, ran away and emitted a distinctive low rumble. When other elephants heard the recorded rumbles of their friends, they behaved in the same way.

But is it not just a general reaction to a threat? No. The frequency pattern of the rumble is different from that of the rumble in response to a scary swarm of oncoming bees.

So elephants can differentiate between threats? Yes, it's almost like changing vowels in words. Scientists think that elephants can manipulate the shape of their vocal tracts to produce various alarm calls for specific situations.

Source: bit.ly/1lIfGr9

Images: 1. Microsoft, 2. NASA, ESA, and D. Jewitt (UCLA), 3. Microsoft



HUBBLE WITNESSES NEVER BEFORE SEEN ASTEROID BREAK-UP

So how did that happen? The asteroid (P/2013 R3) fragmented in as many as 10 different pieces, but slowly not in a bang.

How do we know that? Images from the Hubble telescope showed a growing number of rocky fragments enveloped in a dusty cloud, drifting apart at about 1.5 km/h. A high-speed crash would have caused an immediate break-up and debris would have been hurled out much faster.

So what caused the break-up? The asteroid likely absorbed sunlight, which was then re-emitted as heat. But in an irregularly shaped object like this, more heat would be emitted from some regions than others and the spin rate would gradually increase. Eventually centrifugal force will let the core pull apart slowly.

Why the big fuss? It's the first reliable observation of an effect previously described only in theory.

Source: bit.ly/1nTcXKk



STUFF THAT GROWS IN YOUR MOUTH

That sounds alarming? No, don't worry. It's actually a good thing.

Why? The mix of micro-organisms found in our mouths help to keep bad microbes in check and so prevent oral diseases.

How so? Oral thrush, caused by the fungus *Candida*, commonly develops when the immune system is suppressed. Scientists compared the oral fungus populations in healthy people with those in HIV-infected people. They found that healthy mouths had little *Candida* but lots of the fungus *Pichia*, while it was just the reverse in the mouths of HIV-infected people.

What does the result mean? *Pichia* seems to prevent the growth of *Candida* and other disease-causing fungi, likely by releasing some kind of antifungal substance. Further research can help with the development of new treatments for oral fungal infections. [LP] 

Source: bit.ly/1gt4BFn

MEGASTORE

Mega Deals



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A new LEAF

The Nissan LEAF is the Japanese manufacturer's answer to the future of Zero Emission vehicles. Having debuted in 2010, it has sold more than 100 000 units to date, with 2013 being a record-breaking year.

The LEAF, which is now available in South African, is looking to leverage off its enticing cost-effective benefits to appeal to motorists who have to deal with massive fuel costs and e-Tolls. The added environmental advantages of the 100% electric powered Nissan LEAF means that there are no fuel costs and no CO₂ tailpipe emissions to speak of, which leads to a drastically diminished carbon footprint.

The Nissan LEAF is the benchmark for zero-emission cars in the future and possibly ushers in a new era in South African motoring.

Batteries Included

Nissan's research into on-board lithium-ion battery technology began in 1992, with its latest efforts culminating in the powerplant driving the Nissan LEAF. The system itself utilises two interdependent functions, with an electric powered motor in the vehicle's bonnet where one would usually find a traditional engine. This motor is coupled with an inverter, which in turn is linked to a series of lithium-ion batteries located below the LEAF's frame. This results in more space for passengers, as the space required for conventional fuel engines is no longer a concern. This ensures motorists and passengers have a spacious cabin to enjoy.

The 360 V electric motor produces 24 kWh, with the "h" denoting energy, which translates to 80 kW of power. This may not seem like much, but the Nissan LEAF generates 254 nM of torque which means that it registers a surprisingly responsive 0-100 km/h time of 11.5 seconds and a top speed of 144 km/h. This adds up to a vehicle that's as agile as it is economical.



To ensure reliability, the LEAF's large-capacity lithium-ion battery uses manganese positive electrode material; this is a plentiful resource that has a stable crystal structure according to Nissan, making it safe for use in motor vehicles.

Fully charged

Nissan promises LEAF drivers no more visits to the petrol station as it has two different charging modes. The first is a Normal mode which is designed for slower overnight charging so your LEAF is ready and raring to go in the morning for your daily commute. There is also the quick mode which features a different port where owners can charge up to 80% of their battery in 30 minutes, ideal for instances when you need a small amount of battery life for a grocery shopping or going out to dinner. While charging, LEAF owners can check the status of the vehicle with the aid of three LED lights located on the dashboard.

When fully charged the Nissan LEAF has a daily range of roughly 195 kilometres, which should offer more than enough for the everyday commuter, even those doing the long haul between Pretoria and Johannesburg.

It's an important consideration for interested consumers to note that if they wish to charge their LEAF at home, they will require a specialised charging point which is sold together with the Nissan LEAF. This is a cost to be aware of, when weighing up the options in purchasing a Nissan LEAF as these charging points can only be installed by registered contractors.

Uncharted territory

The Nissan LEAF is set to be a first for South African motorists and roads. This zero-emission five seater has all the elements to look for in

a versatile people carrier, with the added benefit of being less taxing on the environment. It does however require an outlay of R446,000 (excluding home charger) which means it is priced to target the middle to upper income South African households. With that being said, the potential savings down the line and low cost maintenance make the LEAF a worthwhile investment, not only in terms of money, but also to the world your children will inherit. The Nissan LEAF is the benchmark for zero-emission cars in the future and possibly ushers in a new era in South African motoring. **ts**

Present costs vs. future savings

Along with the significantly lower costs required to the LEAF, due to its non-dependence on petrol or diesel, Nissan has also been touting the drastic savings that motorists will make in the long run when compared with fluctuating fuel costs, expensive services and rapid car value depreciation associated with normal cars.

The amount of capital required to invest in the LEAF is substantial when weighed against that of the Nissan Tiida, a five-door petrol vehicle with a similar size and specifications to that of the LEAF. The top of the range Tiida (1.8 Acenta) costs R256 000, and the LEAF is a significantly more expensive at R446 000.

Putting the costs in perspective, the Nissan LEAF is said to cost an estimated R1 500 to maintain over a period of six years, with associated electricity costs over the same period being an approximate R22 500. The petrol powered alternative will set you back roughly R400 000 over six years, so it would appear that the initial outlay for a Nissan LEAF may be a little hefty, but it can not only make back money on your investment, but also save it over time.

The NEOPHYTE's guide to preparing for a

POWER CUT

It's every geek, no, every modern day native's worst nightmare – you wake up or get home from work to discover you are in the midst of a load shedding blackout, or power cut, with end time unknown. Here are some of our top measures you could take to ease the pain while waiting for the lights to come back on and civilisation to return.



LET THERE BE LIGHT

The first and admittedly most obvious gadget that is essential, particularly if your powercut comes in the evening or late afternoon, is a good torch, or better yet, more than one. The best of these are LED based, as they are last the longest and consume less batteries than their halogen-bulb sporting equivalents. We swear by LED Lenses – the P14 or, if you want something smaller but still almost as bright, L7 v2 works well – although, you can't go wrong with a good Maglite either. Just make sure you do not get a rechargeable flashlight though.

WIELD THE WEBER (OR GAS)

Now that you can see where you are walking, your next concern will likely be cooking. Here is where that trusty Weber or a good gas powered camping stove comes into its own, such as the Jetboil Sumo stove (R1 600 from Cape Union Mart). A 1.8 litre cooking cup caters to a small family, while it can boil a litre of water in just four minutes, meaning you can have your cup of coffee in no time.



KEEP YOUR COOL

Alas, it's not unheard of that load shedding, or worse, power cuts could last days. Forget about your fridge, in these instances what you need is a decent cooler. Enter the Coleman 58 Quart Xtreme 6-Day Cooler (R1 300 from Cape Union Mart), which can hold up to 75 cans worth in volume and keep the precious contents cool even when the temperatures soar up to 32° C, thanks to its extra ThermoZONE insulation. It's also readily transportable, with two-way handles, which means cold beer anywhere.

BATTERY ON DEMAND

With the essentials sorted, now your attention may well turn to business or pleasure. For either, you are probably going to want to power up your notebook/tablet/smartphone/favourite electronic 'toy' and try get at least something 21st century done. Firstly, it's essential to keep all devices' batteries charged before crises strike. In the inevitability of your device's battery running low, an extremely handy device to have at the ready is a decent portable power pack, such as the Powergorilla (for notebooks, R3 200), Minigorilla (for smaller gadgets, R1 800) or the Solargorilla (R2 800) from Powertraveller. Also, invest in a decent car-charger – in a pinch it can at least give your smartphone (which inexplicably drains its battery three to four times faster when the power is out) a little boost. [RN] ts





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GREAT STYLE OUTDOORS

This time of the year is not only about perfect weather, easter eggs and lazy lunches, it's also time for the first proper school holidays since we tanned ourselves to a crisp less than four months ago. April holidays will also hopefully involve some form of outdoorsy activity, whether it be camping, hiking, or fitnessing. Our job is not to dictate when and how you need to get some sun, it is however, to make sure you are dressed for the part. And as such, for this one time only, where putting function before form in bringing you the Easter holidays outdoors style guide.

INSULATION >

Let's not fool ourselves, seasonally we're much closer to winter than summer, so be prepared for some chilly moments out there. We're not saying it's finally time for that down jacket you went skiing in Afriski with four years ago, but we will encourage an extra layer or two – especially when you're out and about. The black gillet plus hoody is not only perfectly suited for this in-between season, but is also a well-crafted piece of kit. Pair it with a colourful sweater or checked shirt, and you're good to go.



**Utility Gillet,
Due South R700**



**Sweater with hoody,
Old Khaki R525**



**Cargo Pants, CU & Co,
Cape Union Mart R500**

STORAGE >

Although we're reluctant to admit it, 'tis true indeed: the cargo pants are making a terrific comeback. Here's the trick: although you're more than welcome to make use of the storage facility these awesome pants provide, always make sure that the pocket stuffs never end up in a desperate tug-of-war with your waist, the winner which gets to decide if your pants stay up or well, not. Also, as the eloquent Henry Ford may or may not have said, you can get your cargo pants in any colour you wish, as long as it is khaki.



STUFF >

If you're seriously considering leaving house and home behind to venture into the camposhere, we're suggesting a firm grip on at least the basics: food and lodging. The multi-oven-braai from Cobb is the business, and we can say from personal experience that this thing possesses the magical powers of bumping any chump up to chef-like status. The fact that it does it sans any familiar kitchen infrastructure, is an even greater testament to its genius. Combine that with the easy setup of the one minute spring-folded tent, and you're channeling Mr. Livingstone, long before anyone can presume anything.



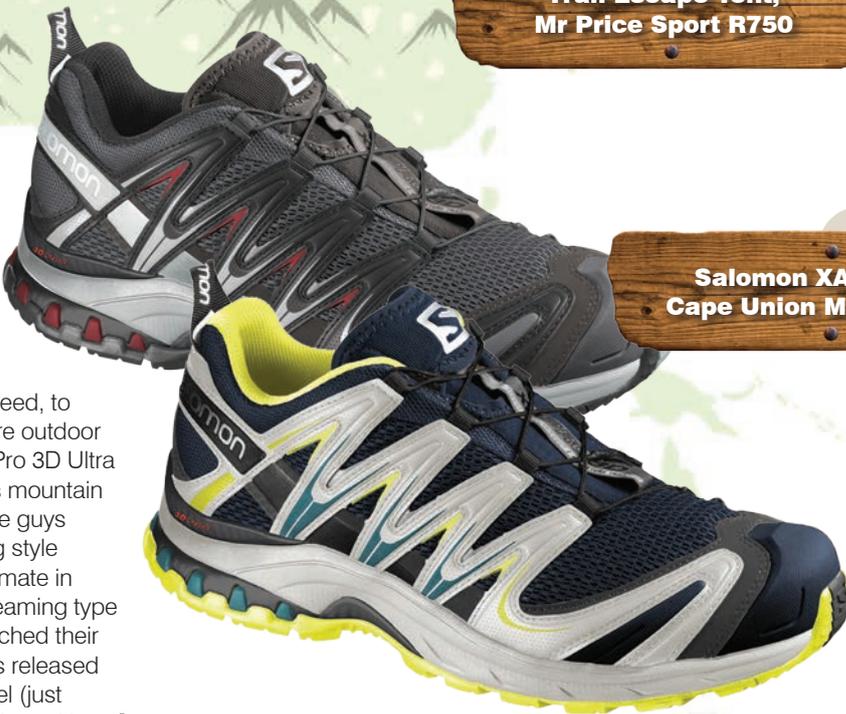
**Cobb Kettle Braai,
Makro R1 000**



**Suunto Ambit 2,
Cape Union Mart R8 000**



**Trail Escape Tent,
Mr Price Sport R750**



**Salomon XA Pro 3D,
Cape Union Mart R1 700**

TRACTION >

You will have to walk very far indeed, to find a product that provides more outdoor credibility than the timeless XA Pro 3D Ultra 2 GTX from Salomon. Known as mountain adventure gear specialists, these guys have perfected the art of searing style into strength, resulting in the ultimate in hiking, running, kicking and screaming type footwear. The fact that they launched their first SA concept store, as well as released version two of this specific model (just called the XA PRO 3D), doesn't hurt either. **ts**

Grooming: HANDS

They say your hands reveal your age before anything else, so how to keep them young and well groomed? Let us gently usher you into the direction of proper hand and nail care.

Seriously though, looking after the extremities at the end of your arms is seldom a priority for any guy, hand-models excluded. But also, not unlike your average guy, there's no activity that can't at least be made more or less enjoyable, by having the right tools at hand.

Salon Style Nail Clipper. Clicks R44.

Of course you've seen these laying around the house, but there's a massive difference in owning one and actually using it right. To prevent the ladies from thinking you own a luxury estate in upper Transylvania, and only come out at night, make sure these form part of your regular grooming routine. ▶



Cuticle Pusher & Trimmer. ▶

Clicks R18.

Painful to use? Yes. More painful than being treated for any kind of condition with the word 'in-grown' in it? Heavens, no. Get a couple of these and read the instructions, guaranteed to put the cute back in cuticles.



Nivea For Men Moisturizer and Liquid Wash. DisChem R66 and R25.

We know you're still keeping your soap on a rope since you felt too bad to re-gift that sucker, but for crying in a bucket, your skin is paying the price. Try these. They're really soft and moisturising, and it says 'for men' on the box. Double score.

Dettol Hand Sanitiser. DisChem R53.

Being gritty and dudely is one thing, but if she's ever going to allow your hands even in the farthest vicinity of those rosy cheeks, she's going to require them to look clean and smell fresh. Sanitize frequently or be single forever – don't say we didn't warn you. ts ▶



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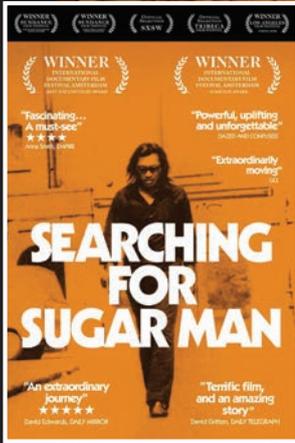
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Life-Changing DOCUMENTARIES

The past few years have seen a resurgence in quality documentaries. Here are some of the best ones.



Searching for Sugar Man

2012

Rodriguez was and is a household name in South Africa, a performer whose enigmatic persona brought with it a collection of music to rival the likes of Bob Dylan. The man's disappearing act became something of a legend, until two intrepid South Africans decided to find out what became of Sugar Man.

This documentary is part mystery, part fairy tale and flows like a detective story. Rodriguez's hauntingly beautiful music lights the way as we learn how one man's musical talent inspired a nation yet somehow failed to pay the bills. It's inspiring, deeply moving and will sink into your bones.

Why watch? It will change the way you support artists.

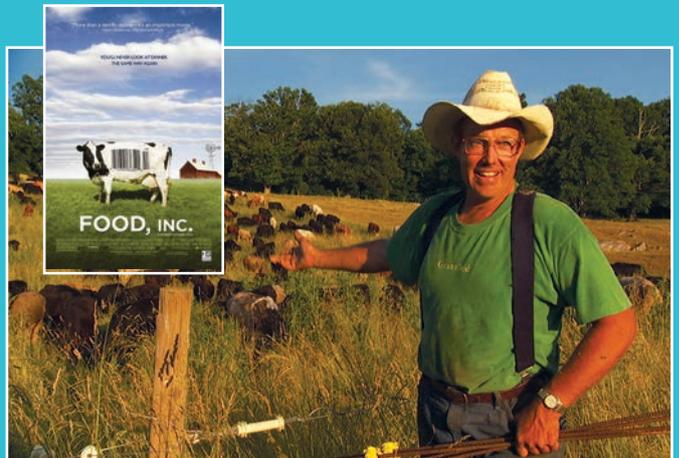
Food, Inc.

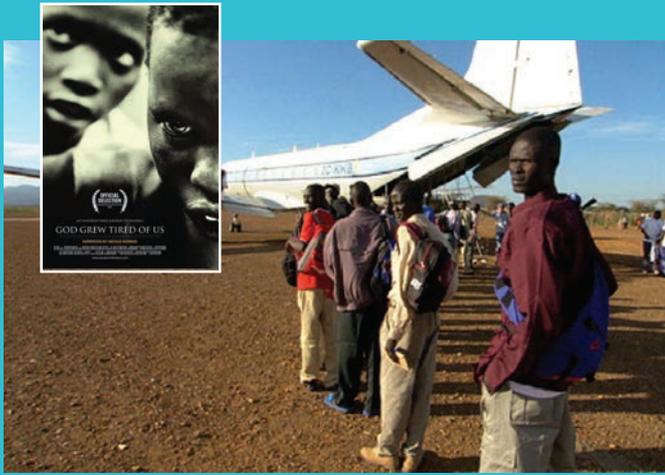
2008

This documentary deals with corporate America's control over the food industry and explains how international agribusinesses are trying to monopolise food production. The world's food chain is subsidised by and relies heavily on cheap corn. We eat corn in many forms, it's a primary source of food for animals and as such, many companies are trying to figure out how to manufacture it more efficiently.

Food, Inc. gives us an eye-opening and unflattering behind-the-scenes on America's food industry, from patenting genetically engineered seed, and corrupt government officials, to the severe effects this over-reliance on corn has on our health and environment.

Why watch? It will change your perspective on food.





God Grew Tired of Us

2006

In 1987, 27 000 boys fled from Sudan to Ethiopia on foot, after their Muslim government pronounced death to all males in the Christian South. Of these, 12 000 survived to find themselves in a U.N. camp in Kakuma, Kenya in 1991. *God Grew Tired of Us* documents the journey of three 'Lost Boys', who are repatriated to the United States.

From their humble integration, we discover refreshing innocence as the young men take their first flight out of Africa and try to acclimatise to Western culture. From a seemingly desperate situation, we learn that modern society presents its own equally detrimental challenges.

Why watch? It will change the way you view modern society.



Exit through the Gift Shop

2010

Banksy is a street artist turned global phenomenon. In his documentary, *Exit through the Gift Shop*, we discover how the eccentric Thierry Guetta, a former shop keeper and amateur film-maker, tried to locate and befriend the infamous Banksy, before inadvertently becoming the subject of the film.

This funny, graffiti-stained documentary gives us an inside look at Invader, Shepard Fairey and Banksy in action. It embodies the cheekiness of its central character, a Frenchman whose underground graffiti quest turned him into Mr. Brainwash. It has an Andy Warhol temperament – challenging, subversive and pushing the bounds of what constitutes art and fame.

Why watch? It will change the way you think about originality, ownership and passion.



Blackfish

2013

Following *The Cove's* harrowing revelation of dolphin-slaughter in Taijii, *Blackfish* seeks to expose a chain of marine theme parks. Tilikum is SeaWorld's notorious Orca bull that killed three people while in captivity. *Blackfish* builds a case against keeping creatures in captivity for human entertainment, arguing its point through shocking footage and a series of emotional interviews.

While truly horrific, *Blackfish* is an important documentary from writer, director and producer, Gabriela Cowperthwaite. She spends some time showing just how emotional and intelligent Orcas are, demonstrating the sometimes devastating effects of keeping them in captivity, and exposing SeaWorld's desperate attempts to cover this up.

Why watch? It will change your views on entertainment involving animal captivity. **ts**

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NEW Cinema RELEASES



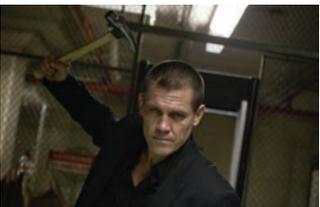
Noah (4 April)

Darren Aronofsky's much-anticipated *Noah* is finally on the horizon. This star-studded spectacle, based on the Biblical story, has been filmed so that it could be set in the past or the future. Aronofsky, who directed

Black Swan, has been fascinated by the "dark, complicated character" since childhood.

Russell Crowe plays the title character opposite a slew of high profile actors including Anthony Hopkins, Emma Watson, Nick Nolte, Jennifer Connelly and Frank Langella. While animals play an important part of the film, no real animals were used in the making of *Noah*, with Aronofsky opting for slightly 'tweaked' versions instead.

Why watch? If you don't, you're going to feel very alone at the water cooler.



Oldboy (4 April)

Before *Stoker*, South Korean director Chan-wook Park directed the critically acclaimed mystery thriller, *Oldboy*. The film follows a man who is released after 15 years of captivity, only to discover he must find his kidnapper in

five days. As expected, an Americanised remake has found its way to cinemas with the help of director, Spike Lee.

Josh Brolin stars in this somewhat unnecessary iteration a decade after the original. The only point of interest for South Africans is that our very own, Sharlto Copley, has a supporting role. The real question is does every great foreign film need to be star-spangled?

Why watch? To see if you think Spielberg's take starring Will Smith would've been any better.



Europa Report (4 April)

These days films require a pre-existing fan base of the source material, so it's refreshing to see a little indie sci-fi thriller defying the odds. The story follows an international crew of astronauts, who lead a privately funded expedition to explore one of Jupiter's largest moons for signs of life.

April must be Sharlto Copley month, because he also stars in *Europa Report* alongside a number of up-and-coming actors, including *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*'s Michael Nyqvist and Jack Black's "stunt double", Dan Fogler. The film-makers have gone to great lengths to ensure scientific accuracy, let's just hope they don't lose the plot.

Why watch? Will Sharlto Copley manage to slip in some South African-isms?



The Amazing Spider-Man 2: The Rise of Electro (25 April)

Andrew Garfield is a better Peter Parker than Tobey Maguire and that's the main reason you need to see this *The Amazing Spider-Man* series. The action sequences in the trailer make

it look like a video game at times, but this one happens to feature a Spider-Man you wouldn't mind your daughter dating.

He's got more soul, more humour and just seems more human than Maguire, which automatically scores more dopamine points. Yet, the balance of the sequel lies with the villains: Electro, The Rhino and The Green Goblin – played by Jamie Foxx, Paul Giamatti and Dane DeHaan respectively.

Why watch? Come on – it's Spidey.

NEW ON DVD



Last Vegas (7 April)

When Michael Douglas, Morgan Freeman, Kevin Kline and Robert De Niro's names headline a movie poster, you know you're in for a treat.

These Hollywood veterans, nay legends, have a wealth of experience between them

and throwing a *Hangover* style bachelor party in Vegas... well, it's bound to get interesting. They may have aged, but based on the feel good fun and chemistry at play, they've still got what it takes!



12 Years a Slave (7 April)

This Best Picture winner deserves your attention. Steve McQueen has composed a taut, emotionally-charged and important film that covers 12 years in the life of Solomon Northup, a man sold

into slavery. The knife-edge direction, powerful Oscar-winning performances and incredible true story make for riveting viewing. It's emotionally taxing, but will make you truly grateful for every little freedom you have. **ts**

STAR WARS: EPISODE VII – 6 FACTS

The latest instalment to the *Star Wars* saga, *Episode VII*, is slated to captivate audiences around the globe late next year. For those of you unfamiliar with the finer details, here's a list of things said to go down in the most hotly anticipated release of 2015.

ICONIC SCORE

Star Wars is revered for many reasons, the unique characters, amazing visuals and fantastic one-liners. But one element that audiences will immediately identify with, is the score. The opening sequence of any *Star Wars* movie is iconic in every regard and the original composer for the previous six instalments, John Williams, will also handle *Episode VII*'s score. **ts**

6.

IN FROM THE COLD

5.

One of the planets set to make a re-appearance is the Ice Planet Hoth. *Star Wars* fans will remember their first encounter with its ice tundras and snow storms from *The Empire Strikes Back*, as Luke Skywalker rode the iconic tauntaun.

RETRO CAMEOS

Just because we have a new lead cast, doesn't mean some fan favourites won't be making appearances. To date, Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) will be making a return as Grand Master Jedi, mentoring the young Padawan Solo twins. Other characters adding a nostalgia value include Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher), Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and Yoda.

4.

1. IN A GALAXY 18 MONTHS AWAY

Number VII will not be directed by George Lucas (he didn't do V or VI either), but it will be helmed by sci-fi movie and television veteran JJ Abrams, who just recently re-energised the *Star Trek* franchise. Cameras on the *Star Wars: Episode VII* set are set to begin rolling in May 2014, with an expected public release in mid-December 2015.

2. MÉNAGE À TROIS

Set thirty years after *Return of the Jedi*, Abrams' wanted to introduce a new trio of lead characters. Two of these three will be the twin children of Princess Leia and Han Solo, with the other rumoured to be the son of Luke Skywalker, Ben.

3. DARK SIDE'S NEW VICTIM

One of the Solo twins, Jacen Solo, is said to be lured over to the Dark Side to later become known as Darth Caedus. His twin sister Jaina remains a Jedi warrior and it should prove interesting to see what happens when these two are pitted against one another in the film.

Image: Fan made art for Episode VII. themadbutcher at bit.ly/1hh2lQl.

DISNEY
STAR WARS
EPISODE VII

KNOW YOUR ANIME:

VAMPIRES

We venture into the dark night through the mystery that is known as vampires to bring you two intriguing anime, a movie called *Blood: The Last Vampire* and a series called *Shiki*.

B L O O D
THE LAST VAMPIRE

Production I.G



S H I K I

Daume

Blood: *The Last Vampire* takes place in 1966, just before the Vietnam War begins. The movie opens in a subway, where we meet Saya, a mysterious sword-wielding teenage girl who happens to be a vampire. Saya hunts Chiropterans, demonic creatures that survive by feasting on the blood of humans, for a secret (aren't they always) American government organisation called Red Shield.



After she completes her mission on the subway, Saya's latest assignment takes her to the Yohkoto Air Base, a bustling American military installation busy celebrating Halloween. Posing as a student, Saya infiltrates the base and begins her search for the demonic creatures. Saya is a dark and mysterious character, hardly ever showing emotion, but is efficient in her vocation as she hunts the creatures across the airbase. She finds an unlikely and accidental sidekick in Mahiko, the airbase school nurse, and together they bring forth a memorable dynamic.

The animation is captivating, with realistic backdrops and the use of light and shadow expertly carried out with well-rounded characters.

ALSO CHECK OUT

If you liked *Blood: The Last Vampire* and want more, try the two spin-off series named *Blood+* and *Blood C*. There's also a 2009-released live action film, *Blood: The Last Vampire* which was directed by Chris Nahon (*Kiss of the Dragon*).



Shiki is based on the horror novel of the same name by Fuyumi Ono. The anime reminds you a little of Stephen King's brilliant vampire novel *Salem's Lot*, and it's easy to see why.

Imagine a hot summer in a quiet little village called Sotoba, a quaint 'normal' countryside hamlet. New neighbours move in and a series of mysterious deaths begin to spread throughout the community. The symptoms include the common cold, flu-like traits, tiredness and insect-like bites usually found on the victim's neck. Doctor Toshio Ozaki, dean of the clinic in town, at first suspects this disease to be an epidemic, but as his investigation into the deaths continue and the body count rises, he becomes sure that the disease is actually caused by a creature called a Shiki (Corpse Demon), a vampiric being. At the same time a teenager named Natsuno Yuuki also begins to piece together what is happening. It is up to them to try to save the village and eradicate the Shikis before well, you know...

Shiki is a must see for everyone that is tired of sparkling vampires that stare at women for half a movie. If you love classic vampire tales and looking for some originality, (oh you'll love the twists in the tale, we promise) we dare you to watch this anime. **ts**

ALSO CHECK OUT

Hungry for more Vampire anime? Have a look at *Rosario to Vampire*, *Vampire Hunter D* as well as *Vampire Knight*.



ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR

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

SUGO!

MUST-READ CURRENT SA

Comic book guru Moray Rhoda takes us through the current crop of local SA comics.

Read it or miss out.

COMICS

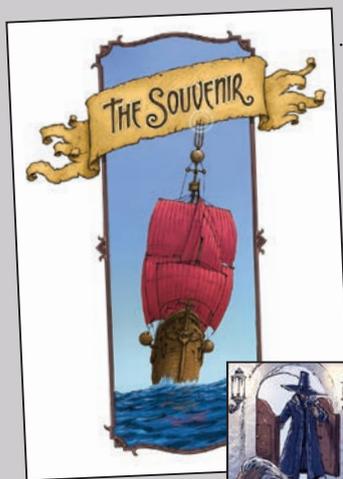
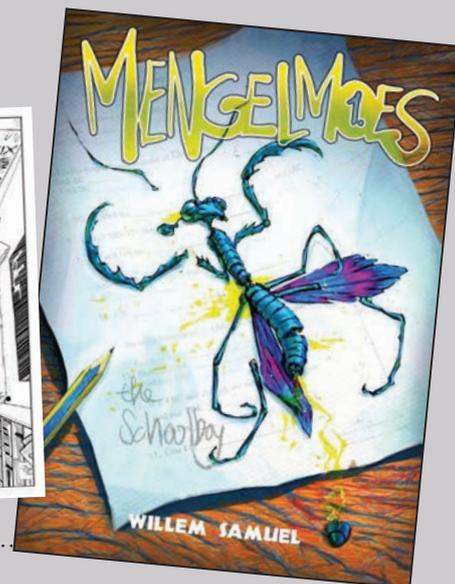
Mengelmoes

Willem Samuel (Soaring Penguin Press)

Quick info: A semi-autobiographical tale of self-discovery which shares a day in the life of the artist as a teenage schoolboy.

Mengelmoes effortlessly evokes living in Cape Town in the 90s but readers will also easily identify with the universal themes (family, smoking and girly mags, autocratic teachers and sex fantasies). The story combines equal parts of events from Willem's childhood and his daydreams with 'what if' scenarios which creates a personal and engrossing trip inside Willem's memories. The somewhat inconsistent art actually works very well within the story that transitions seamlessly between reality, dreams and a creative imagination.

www.soaringpenguinpress.com



the souvenir

Jayson Geland and Daniël Hugo

Quick info: A clever re-imagining of a South African myth, set in an alternate 17th century world.

A mysterious stranger comes to a coastal town in search of an old pirate to accompany him on a mysterious journey. There is a history between the two characters and events have converged to enable them to unlock a secret hidden deep beneath the mountain. *The Souvenir's* world feels like a living place, similar to our own but different in some key ways that are hinted at in the art, architecture fashion and inhabitants of this world. The story is very nicely paced and has some good turns away from the original tale to keep the reader interested throughout.

www.facebook.com/TheSouvenir2014



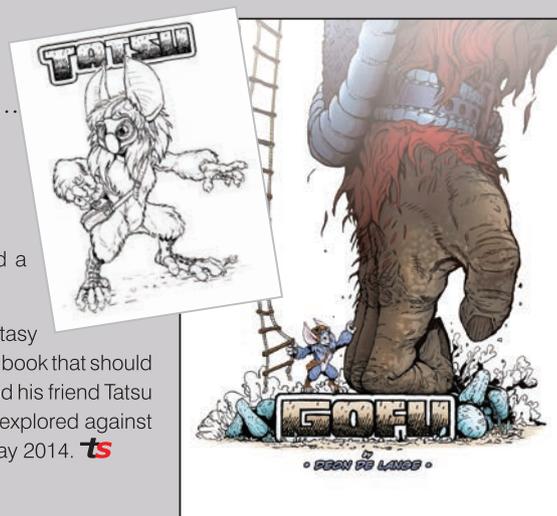
gofu

Deon de Lange

Quick info: Hunted to extinction, the last gofu must flee with his only friend and find a new home.

Deon de Lange does some great world-building in the first part of a six issue series set in a fantasy world. Meticulously illustrated and featuring some endearing and unique characters, *Gofu* is a book that should appeal to both young and adult audiences. The relationship between the gentle giant gofu and his friend Tatsu (a much smaller creature who is protected by gofu and at the same time is his protector) is explored against the backdrop of gofu being hunted in the first issue. *Gofu Part 2* will launch on the 3rd of May 2014. **ts**

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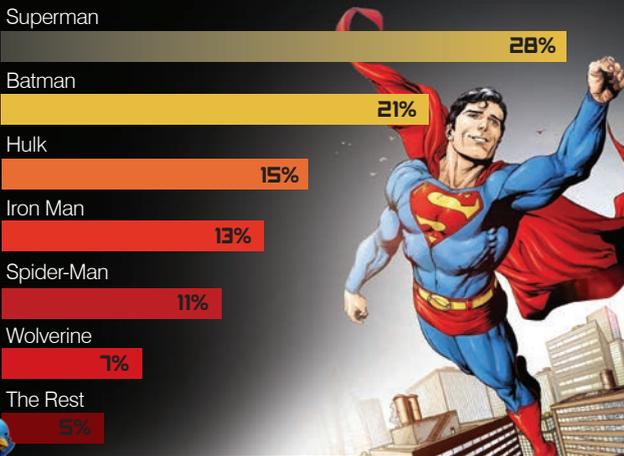
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Used in the Office



Thanks to the friendly folks over at Head & Shoulders for sending us some of their awesome shampoos to try out this month. We didn't know that they have such a large variety of products in their range, and here are some of them: Cameron van der Burgh Limited Edition, Anti-Hairfall, Moisturising Scalp Care, Sports Fresh, Smooth and Silky and Extra Volume. It retails for about R43 for 200 ml and we can strongly recommend to buy some today.

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TOP Tweets!



Charlie @CPK3 · 1h ago

Hey @Rbjacobs when you send me a text informing me that I've paid something, please could you use the :- (instead of the :-). Thanks Charlie

Mystery McSugarTeach @mysteryteacher · 6h ago

Whenever I get new followers I tweet some stupid things to immediately test their devotion.

Brick Tamland @Ch4BrickTamland · 11h ago

sometimes I use big words I dont always fully understand in an effort to make myself sound more photosynthesis

Miss Moneypenny @Ms_Moneypenny_ · Mar 5

When you say "I love you" and then I say "I love you, too" and then you say "I love you even more," you're probably right.
- Inspirational

Craig Rodney @Craigrodney · Mar 3

Someone in my timeline just said the Ellen selfie is like the moon landing of our generation. Can you punch someone through Twitter?

Ceej @ceejoyner · Mar 4

Our guide called the bear tracks I found bike tracks. Laugh it up pal, but if these bears are on bikes we're all going to die out here.

Roy Blumenthal @RoyBlumenthal · Mar 7

Dear Eskom... If you're going to loadshed, you're welcome to turn everything off EXCEPT my modem router. Thanks.

Karl Sharro @KarlreMarks · Mar 20

Everybody has vinyl these days, real hipsters are buying choirs of medieval monks that sing a cappella for that authentic retro experience.

The Rolo @TheRolo · Mar 24

Just ask yourself "What would Hasselhoff do?" Trust me on this.

Rock @TheMichaelRock · Mar 22

Don't forget to waste your life hating strangers on the internet.

calvinerlank @calvinerlank · Mar 21

Dear @TechSmartMag the girl on the back of the magazine should have been on the front #justSaying #eyeCandy P.S. Awesome magazine

CEO Kaz Hirai @KazHiraiCEO · Mar 25

With Facebook's Oculus Rift, you will get to experience what it's like to be in a room of targeted ads based on your Facebook profile

Trevor Noah @Trevornoah · Mar 25

Drove past an air force base & my first thought was - "I wonder if I could get over the wall and steal a jet?" Too much GTA

Ham on Wry @HeyZeus666 · Mar 24

I was once voted, 'Least likely to succeed' yet here I am on Twitter. No...wait. What?

Not Will Ferrell @itsWillyFerrell · Mar 26

If smartphones could talk, they'd be like, "Seriously? You just checked that like five seconds ago!"

Jerm @mynameisjerm · Mar 26

Personally, I think name-dropping is silly and really just attention seeking. My good friend Casper de Vries agrees with me.

APRIL 2014

techsmart's Horoscope

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



ARIES

Ever so often evolution comes up with a surprise, and if all goes well you should be receiving a superpower soon Aries! Which one you might ask? According to the planets it should either be a) always selecting the fastest queue at the tills, or b) your R5 coins always working when paying for parking. Super.

TAURUS

Good news and bad news awaits Mr.Bull. Firstly the bad: Blackouts in April mean your regular pastimes (gaming, movies) will not be available. Now for the good: Congrats, you'll be a father in February 2015!

GEMINI

We know you've been trying your best to get more likes on your Facebook posts recently Gemini. Our advice? Quit Facebook altogether. You will soon rediscover the joys of life without waiting for a thumbs-up. Like!

CANCER

With your outgoing personality Mr. Crab, we need to advise you to take it easy during the Easter holidays, especially when it comes to your drinking habits. Remember: today Richard Gere, tomorrow Reverse Gear.

LEO

PC or Mac, Leo? You have been struggling with this question since deciding to upgrade a while back. Soon you will find out that never mind which you buy, they each come with their own unique problems that would make you wish you bought the other one. Happy computing!

VIRGO

Love and money come into focus this month. More specifically, your girlfriend is set to make off with your dosh. Bad luck, Virgo.

LIBRA

For the next six months Mars will be the fourth planet from the Sun, and that can only mean one thing Libra – news about Half Life 3! Keep an eye out since not only will there be an important reveal from Steam on the most anticipated game ever, but you will also be invited to the exclusive beta! Or not. Since who can count on Steam anyways?

SCORPIO

You've been holding out for a while Scorpio, but during May a new car will soon be yours! Oh wait, the planets apologise – by 'new' they mean second-hand, and by 'car' they mean scooter.

SAGITTARIUS

We would definitely recommend you play the lottery this month, Sagi. It's a superb way to learn that the odds are heavily stacked against you and you will never, ever win. 4-6-12-13-21-29!

CAPRICORN

No matter how many times you microwave that spider on low and then try and get it to bite you, you will not become the next Spiderman. Also, your little brother wants his mask back.

AQUARIUS

We know you sometimes despair at the dire state of politics, Aquarian. It's very clear that the political system is outdated and not a proper way to govern people in the 21st century. It's up to you to find a new solution – our future depends on it.

PISCES

Scientists have recently been able to reverse the aging process in mice and are now set to start human trials. The question Mr Fish, is why worry when you can age gracefully like George Clooney or a good bottle of red? On second thought, with the amount of time you spent in the SA sun, you've aged like a bottle of milk. Good luck to those scientists hey?

The

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

**PIPPA'S EXPECTATIONS OF
 DARK SOULS II
 MIGHT JUST PREVENT
 HER FROM EVER
 PLAYING IT. OR NOT.**

I love RPGs. They're my favourite kind of video game for a number of different reasons. One of which is the narrative and potential for character development – both in a story capacity as well as from a gameplay point of view, and another is the number of hours you invest in gameplay. I rarely come away from an RPG thinking, wow that was too short – which sadly is too often the case with other games that too many times clock in at a five, six hour campaign. A good RPG will give you a minimum of forty to sixty hours of gameplay excluding side quests and DLC, which is more than we can say for many games.

WILL DARK SOULS II SUCK ME IN AS DID ITS PREDECESSOR, AND WILL I ULTIMATELY GET FRUSTRATED AND STUCK AND MOVE ON WITHOUT FINISHING IT?

This is not to say I love ALL RPGs however, but if I'm feeling ambivalent I'm more open and willing to give them a chance. Interestingly, Dark Souls II, which at the time of writing has just been delivered to my desk, is sitting there taunting me while I have to get on with actual work before I can open it.

In order for you to gain a better understanding of my relationship with this franchise, let me take a step back to Dark Souls, released in 2011. This game frustrated me no end, and is probably one of the few RPGs that I hesitate to say I never finished. It was just too f***ing hard. Yes, yes, I know it received a huge amount of praise because of that – and deservedly so, I don't dispute this. It was still strangely addictive no matter that the difficulty curve was insanely steep and that I spent I don't know how long on the first boss fight. I even got a substantial

4 D O S 2 P I P P A

amount of the way in before I eventually got stuck (shame on me, I know) and moved on to something else. But damn, Dark Souls caused me mountains of frustration.

The thing is, it was beautiful and haunting, with a great combat system and a complex skills tree, and it forced one to consider and strategise at every turn. Perhaps this is why it frustrated me even more. I actually loved this game and we had a complicated relationship. Yes, we had our problems, but until such time as the relationship broke down irretrievably by the stubbornness of that one particular enemy, we actually got along very well. It was challenging, but the highs were high even when the lows were low.

And so, there lies Dark Souls II, taunting me, tempting me. And I'm just a little afraid. I'm afraid that this will be a repeat of the previous game, and at the same time I'm afraid that it might not. Does that even make sense? Will Dark Souls II suck me in as did its predecessor, and will I ultimately get frustrated and stuck and move on without finishing it? The thought of either is almost enough to stop me playing it altogether.

Almost. I'm busy undoing the wrapping. **ts**



Castlevania

Lords of Shadow 2

Does Lords of Shadow 2 live up to its predecessor, or does Dracula's latest foray simply suck?



Given that the previous title ranks amongst one of our favourites, we had high hopes that Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2 (C:LoS2) would live up to its predecessor, or better yet, surpass it. In some ways it does so, in others though, it feels like a bit of a step back.

To start with, the first thing that envelops one is the outstanding score – a standout feature in Lords of Shadow and no less here. This time though, the music conjures an even darker, more somber mood, which fits perfectly with Dracula's fate. The game starts with Dracula receiving the mother of all rude awakenings – a siege on his castle by the Brotherhood of Light, and serves as the game's tutorial introduction into the game's basics.

Darkness awakens

This also introduces one of our favourite weapons, the Void Sword, which drains health from foes while replenishing your own with each strike, as well as the Chaos Claws, handy for breaking enemy defences. One of the more noticeable changes from its predecessor is the free camera this time around; which is certainly a welcome enhancement.

In some ways it surpasses its predecessor, in others though, it feels like a bit of a step back.

Whereas Lords of Shadow was set in the Middle Ages and took players to a variety of natural, sometimes fantastic locales, C:LoS2 sees Dracula awakening from his centuries long slumber into a more modern era, in which a Gothic-inspired city has grown around his castle. Another surprise, and important part of the story, is the reappearance of Zobek (once again voiced by the ever-excellent Patrick Stewart), who promises Dracula his eternal rest, in exchange for the not so little matter of dealing with Satan and his acolytes. Underlying this is the rather convoluted, but simultaneously tragic story of the Belmont line.

Changes await

Equally as compelling is the battle system, which enables Dracula to buy new moves and skills; while each of his weapons has its own skill tree. While the modern structures that Dracula traverses in pursuit of Satan's acolytes are not quite as alluring as the lush environs that we loved in its predecessor, it does make for a change of pace. C:LoS2 also introduces a number of stealth sections, and these have been the source of much of the criticism levelled at the game. Admittedly, they are not as strong as the stealth you would find in the likes of Dishonored for example, but still, we enjoyed the opportunity to wield vampiric powers such as being able to transform into a rat and project swarms of bats at foes.

Granted, C:LoS2 is not similar to its predecessor, but that shouldn't dishearten or discourage you from playing it. The game tries a few new things, with varying degrees of success, but ultimately, offers a bloody fun ride. RRP: R650. [RN] **ts**



THE SOUTH PARK STICK OF TRUTH

With The Stick of Truth developers have been able to blend strong gameplay and wickedly smart dialogue into one great game.



The fate of South Park gaming titles has been hit-and-miss over the years, but with the release of The Stick of Truth (TSoT), developers Obsidian may have been able to hit the right mix of strong gameplay and wickedly smart character dialogue. TSoT is essentially a roleplay gaming title with turn-based in-game fighting as well as side scrolling navigation which offers users a variety of elements to explore and get stuck into.

Friendly faces everywhere

At first players will be prompted to design their own *South Park*-styled character, assuming the role of the new kid on the block who has just moved to the fictitious Colorado-based town. For the most part a mute, your character is sent outside to make some friends and immediately become immersed a town-wide *Dungeon and Dragons*/Lord of the Rings type war involving all the kids in the neighbourhood.

The key to TSoT is its ability to perfectly merge a fantastically absurd storyline, solid gameplay and innovative add-ons.

This war revolves around Cartman, as most *South Park* tales seem to do, and his role as a self-created all powerful wizard. Cartman's army has one sole purpose – protecting TSoT from the Elven group. At the beginning of the game, TSoT is stolen by the Elves, it is up to you and bunch of *South Park* mainstays to claim it back. Once recruited into Cartman's army, gamers must choose from four different warrior classes: Mage, Fighter, Thief and Jew... yes Jew.

Gonna see if I can't unwind

Specific class related powers are not only restricted to fights, but also apply to the different mini challenges throughout the game. The attacks are uniquely insane as only *South Park* can provide, but the actual mechanics themselves are not always intuitive as you may wish. The animations for special attacks also take some time to complete, and after a while make you want to use them less.

Another important element integrated into the game is the ability to upgrade armour and weapons which can either be purchased or found in numerous hidden locations. These can be used in a creative way by gamers with items located in-game being combined to make more complex weapons capable of inflicting greater damage. For example, a Mage can combine a bottle of water and toaster to electrocute enemies in a fight.

So come on down

This brings us to the main aspect that makes this game so brilliant, its storyline, penned and overseen by the show's creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone. Translating into an unbridled and undiluted *South Park* experience with many of the characters that die-hard fans have grown to know and love making memorable appearances. The key to TSoT is its ability to perfectly merge a fantastically absurd storyline, solid gameplay and innovative add-ons without ever compromising the true essence of what makes *South Park* so brilliant. R700. [RC] **ts**





Dude, Where's My PRIVACY?

IN THESE INFORMATION RICH TIMES, DEEP FRIED MAN BELIEVES BEING AVERAGE IS THE EASIEST WAY TO PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY.

WhatsApp has been a busy little messaging service. Last month I wrote about Facebook buying it for \$19 billion. Now, WhatsApp has emerged as a star witness in the Oscar Pistorius trial. Not bad for a service best known for being used by young people to commit grave crimes against the English language accompanied by at least ten emoticons per message.

It seems that anything you do or say on WhatsApp, or via SMS, or even on BBM if you're unfortunate enough to own a BlackBerry, can and will be used against you in a court of law. And it's not only Oscar's private messages to Reeva that are now public knowledge, it's his cellphone's internet browser history as well, which proves that, like most men, Oscar surfs the web for porn. Unlike most men, he isn't very good at covering his tracks afterwards.

Too much, too little

The use of these messages as evidence has also led to the inevitable posturing by guys, who say things like "I'm never using WhatsApp again," or "This trial is going to inspire all of us to delete our browser histories." These gents are somehow managing to think too much, and too little, of themselves at the same time.

IS BARRY OBAMA SITTING IN THE OVAL OFFICE CHUCKLING AT THE EMBARRASSING MESSAGES YOU SENT TO YOUR GIRLFRIEND?

They are thinking too much of themselves because they are assuming that the world is as interested in them as they are in a famous athlete once seen as a global hero, and I can assure

them that they are not. They are thinking too little of themselves because the only time their messages will ever be used in a court of law is if they do something horribly wrong. Just don't kill your girlfriend and you should be fine.

But the NSA...

I had a similar reaction when ordinary people were all up in arms about the NSA spying on people's emails with Obama's permission. Is it wrong for them to do this? Yes. But is Barry Obama sitting in the oval office chuckling at the embarrassing messages you sent to your girlfriend apologising for your failure to sexually perform the previous night and explaining that it has never happened before? I think not.

The only conclusion that one can logically draw from all of this is that by far the best way to protect your privacy is to be as average as humanly possible. Very successful people are interesting, as are total losers, but by being utterly dull, normal and unremarkable you are doing exactly what it takes to ensure that no-one in their right mind would have even the slightest interest in your private life.

Sure, we live in a day and age in which governments could spy on your private messages if they wanted to. But, dear reader, take solace in the fact that if you are as average as most of us are, they probably don't. **ts**

Deep Fried Man Photo by: GA Goodman



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