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ISSUE 136 > JANUARY 2015 > ISSN 1728-3358 > THIS PREMIUM PRODUCT IS FREE > **FREEMIUM** >

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# I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

**T**here's no doubt that being able to play with the hottest new gadgets is one of the privileges of working for a technology focused mag. The flipside of this coin, however, is that there's always a particularly nice product that you're not that keen to hand back at the end of the review period. Nonetheless, we've been doing this now for close to twelve years, so I've gotten used to it. Something that we might not have been doing so well in the past is supporting local talent who are using technology to create amazing things. There are thousands of artists, musicians, entrepreneurs and companies that are using technology in creative and sometimes awesome new ways. And they are living right here in Mzansi. If you are one of them, TechSmart would like to hear from you. Drop me a mail at [mike@techsmart.co.za](mailto:mike@techsmart.co.za) to get the conversation going, and tell me a little about how you are creatively using tech. Who knows, we might be able to give you exposure through our magazine and website.

One creative talent I'm happy to have onboard this month to help with our style section, is Monde Mtsi, who runs the style blog Renaissance Men SA. Monde can be described as a men's fashion and style expert, and if you're into sharp looks, you not only have to check out the site at [www.renaissancemensa.blogspot.com](http://www.renaissancemensa.blogspot.com), but also his recommendations for your back to work attire on p28.

Here's to a creative 2015,

Mike Joubert  
[mike@techsmart.co.za](mailto:mike@techsmart.co.za)



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Published by



**SMARTPUBLISHING**  
FREE MEDIA SPECIALISTS

Tel: 0861-777-225  
2nd Floor, Block C,  
Menlyn Woods Office Park,  
291 Sprite Avenue, Faerie Glen, PTA  
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### EDITOR PRINT & ONLINE

Mike Joubert  
[mike@techsmart.co.za](mailto:mike@techsmart.co.za)

### ADVERTISING

Melissa Pols > 083-748-3413;  
[melissa@smartpublishing.co.za](mailto:melissa@smartpublishing.co.za)  
Xander Pieterse > 079-524-0934;  
[xander@smartpublishing.co.za](mailto:xander@smartpublishing.co.za)  
Jacqui Grobler > 083-387-2850;  
[jax@smartpublishing.co.za](mailto:jax@smartpublishing.co.za)

### STAFF WRITERS

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

### CONTRIBUTORS

Stephen Aspeling, Deep Fried Man,  
Linda Pretorius, Moray Rhoda,  
Pippa Tshabalala, Monde Mtsi

### DESIGNERS

Stuart Ponton, Jacques Swart

### SMART PUBLISHING

General manager: George Grobler  
[george@smartpublishing.co.za](mailto:george@smartpublishing.co.za)



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# GREAT GEAR!

## MCLAREN P1 GTR

We're starting 2015 with a bang, featuring two hypercars that blur the line between the racetrack and road - the futuristic McLaren P1 GTR and insane Ferrari FXX-K.

When McLaren debuted the P1 last year, it was less of a hypercar and more of an engineering marvel. The new GTR is the racetrack-bred distillation of its forebear, and as such demands the utmost respect from onlookers.

To ensure that all that raw power does not become too unwieldy, McLaren have also incorporated a Formula 1 style rear wing to keep the P1 GTR tucked to the road while cornering.

This mid-engined racing hypercar achieves an output of 745 kW, proving more than sufficient to deal with the iconic Le Mans racetrack, the environment that McLaren purpose-built it for.



When it comes to cost, if you have to ask it's probably too much, with price only available on application when it goes on sale later this year. For now, we'll have to make do with a poster.

Want one? Well for starters, you can only get your hands on it, if you already happen to own the original P1. Added to this, owners will be given exclusive access to some of the world's best race tracks, as well as expert training from McLaren's racing team.

## FERRARI FXX-K



If the McLaren P1 GTR is slightly out of reach, then we suggest the newly unveiled Ferrari FXX-K. This is the racetrack version of the already impressive Ferrari FXX, and ups the ante in every regard, from a sleeker more slippery aerodynamic design, to a finetuned V12 engine that conjures up 641 kW of power. Much like the P1 GTR, it too features an additional electric motor (140 kW) to take over during low speed travel. If you're looking to get behind the wheel, a long wait is in order, given its \$3 million asking price and the fact that the initial pre-order batch is already sold out. **ts**



# GREAT GEAR!

## 2015 POLARIS SLINGSHOT

Weighing in at just over 700 kg, the Slingshot has place for a driver and very trusting passenger. It has already gotten rave reviews for its raw power and supreme grip and handling while hitting the apex.

Set to make its official debut in the latter half of this year, the Polaris Slingshot is a definitive change in tactic from a manufacturer famed for its off-road venturing vehicles... and that's why we like it a lot.

The Slingshot takes inspiration from KTM's Crossbow, a track day ready racer for those with a motorsports passion and some extra cash to splash. Working on the same track day principle, the Slingshot ups the ante slightly, removing one of the rear wheels to create one of the most interesting three-wheelers around.

Being a Polaris vehicle, the Slingshot features one of the company's modified ATV engines, namely a 2.4 litre DOHC powertrain that develops 2384 cc. To put that in more familiar terms - 129 kW which is paired with 225 Nm of torque.

Although no official details are known about the Slingshot's 0-100 km/h time, top speed or price, we expect this racer to be fully focused on handling and trying its best to make the driver bring up their lunch as it zips through hairpin turns.

## CAN-AM SPYDER F3-S

Should you not be keen on sharing your three-wheeled fun with a passenger, we'd advise opting for Spyder F3-S from Can-Am. Best described as an ATV on steroids, the Spyder's most distinctive feature is its large front end which houses two massive wheels and a 3-cylinder Rotax 1330 Ace engine. Those throttle happy riders among us will be able to reach 100 km/h from a standstill in 4.4 seconds and hit a top speed of 200 km/h. As such, if you're looking to master the outdoors on anything other than a 4x4, the Spyder F3-S is the way to go. Priced to retail from \$20 000, the Spyder F3-S is certainly not an impulse buy. **ts**



# 2015 THE TECH AHEAD

There's a great quote from Edward Weyer Jr noting that "The future is like a corridor into which we can see only by the light coming from behind". It pretty much sums up how these tech trends for 2015 revealed themselves.



## Windows 10 seeks redemption

2015 might just be the year of Windows' revival, as Microsoft distances itself from the Windows 8 bumbles by an extra iteration, bringing us Windows 10. The next OS will apparently bring the best of Windows 7 (yes, an enhanced start menu that was woefully absent at the launch of its successor), with the increased security of Windows 8, to the fore. The next iteration is apparently intended to bridge the gap between users' working lives and their personal lives, all while catering to a world focused on mobility and cloud.

Additionally, the company has lofty ambitions for the OS, with it being aimed at running across computing platforms that span the gamut from 4" up to 80" screens, in datacenters, PCs and tablets. Apparently Windows 10 will be built around tailoring the experience according to the device it is being used on. Here's hoping though that it's less Windows' doom and more its salvation. Expect a release in spring 2015.



## 3D printing popularity set to grow locally

Regular readers of TechSmart should be pretty well versed on the potential surrounding 3D printing. To date the local 3D printing has remain untapped, with local distributors CAD House being the only name worth mentioning. The final quarter of 2014 however, saw New York-based manufacturers MakerBot land in the country, undoubtedly lifting SA's 3D printing profile. Now with these two companies onboard, 3D printing could be set to see a surge in 2015, as entrepreneurs and educators alike aim to take advantage of their design capabilities.

The ability to mass produce objects at will, with very little time and capital required for design, testing and rollout, is what makes 3D printers such an enticing prospect. At this stage an entry level printer will carry a R20 000 price tag, which is certainly not cheap, but when you compare that with what they can create, they make more sense by the second.



## On-demand media streaming enticing more users

The battle for the living room is set to heat up over the next twelve months, as traditional TV players try to cope with the assault from on-demand streaming services like Node and VIDI. Both of these services are competitively priced, offering sub R300 monthly subscriptions for unlimited TV content. These kinds of services are already gaining traction in the US and Europe, with Netflix being the main contender at this stage, now also producing award winning series. This has prompted traditional networks like HBO to debut its own on-demand service.

Another factor is that these streaming services are available on next-gen consoles, which too have stolen the limelight in foreign living rooms. We believe that with the increased level of bandwidth connectivity and slow reduction of broadband pricing, on-demand services (including Netflix by those who access it locally) could soon start infringing on the likes of DSTV and StarSat. As viewers' insatiable appetite for content continues to grow, so will the lure of on-demand streaming.



## Mobile market shakeup

Another trend we expect to see is a bit of a shake-up in the smartphone and tablet space – the sector is ripe for something disruptive to push it forward. Part of the reason for this is that companies such as Apple and Samsung already have their top tier offerings firmly established, which ironically means sales have slowed somewhat as general users are happy with what they have.

Granted, no doubt we will see an S6 coming in 2015, but the big question is how will Samsung for example catch user's interest this time around? Instead we expect some of the most interesting developments to come from other companies, mostly the Chinese. Locally watch closely what Huawei have up their sleeve (we've been told the company has significant plans for the year ahead), while internationally both Lenovo and Xiaomi edge in on the competition by offering more bang for user's buck, with even more feature packed offerings.

## Power to the people

Locally, power is no doubt going to become a major issue in the year ahead, if recent months and the return of the Ghost from Christmas Past, aka load shedding, are any indication. Watch out for solutions to survive without power and for extending the battery life of critical devices such as the Powergorilla portable charger for notebooks. Additionally, we expect more devices to boast power saving modes enabling users to eke out the last remaining bit of battery life; a feature we saw begin to gain traction with the Galaxy Note 4, for example, to great effect.



## Dashcams to become in-car fixtures

We've reviewed a number of dashcams during 2014, and while it is still to reach the levels of popularity locally that they have in Russia, we hope that might change during 2015. Dashcams themselves have a number of applications, not just recording near-miss accident videos for YouTube.

For one, the transportation and logistics industries feel like a natural fit for their use, allowing company operators to keep tabs on how their drivers are going about their business. For the everyday driver, recording exactly what happened during an accident, road rage incident or an encounter with the police, can be of utmost importance. Otherwise, recording your trip driving through the Kruger is also well served. But they need to drop in price before we see more local videos popping up on YouTube. Go check some out at [www.dashcamsa.co.za](http://www.dashcamsa.co.za).



## Healthy habits

Another follow-on trend from 2014, we expect that the rise of health conscious apps and devices will only continue throughout 2015, as tech giants jostle to become the go-to provider for health monitoring and enhancement. Expect to see more options with regards to wearable solutions, with those currently on the market starting to be further refined and improved upon (see our review of the Vivosmart on p16).

Additionally, applications that monitor and advise users on everything from their nutrition habits to how much exercise they currently need to engage in, will likely come to the fore. Also, expect greater personalisation offerings on this front.



## Nano drones take to the skies

The debate surrounding commercial drones is set to only intensify during 2015, with those in favour of their explorative capabilities going up against those that view them as a potential invasion of privacy. Regardless of which side of the fence you're sitting on, drones will prove even more popular during the next twelve months.

At the moment, a high-end drone can set you back at least R4 000, and as such, we foresee a growth in nano drone adoption. These provide much the same aerial reconnaissance experience, albeit on a smaller scale and for far less cash, with one drawback being not as great video quality. We think that's a factor that most wannabe drone pilots will easily overlook, when the average nano drone retails for just over R1 000. They also carry the distinct advantage of being more agile and nimble in-air than their larger drone brethren, something that pilots should also be enticed by. **ts**





# MID-RANGE Crowd Pleasers

Now is as good a time as any to get your hands on a solid mid-range smartphone. With a number of options available, here are three new devices to tempt your wallet.



## Samsung Galaxy S5 mini

**H**inging off the design of its larger and better specced forebear, the Galaxy S5 mini is Samsung's answer for users who are drawn to the look of the S5 flagship, but are unwilling to part with the R10 000 it commands.

### Drawing inspiration

Sporting a 4.5" Super AMOLED display (720x1280), the S5 mini's screen is as bright and vivid as one has come to expect from Samsung of late, registering a crisp 326 ppi pixel density. Along with a brilliant screen that shows no signs of dullness, the mini has taken a few other cues from its bigger brother. Most notable of which is the dimpled plastic back cover. Also included is an IP67 rated waterproofness and dust resistance, placing it on par with the S5 itself.

The new inclusions don't stop there, with a fingerprint sensor integrated into the home button on front, and heart rate sensor located just below the rear camera. These new additions should give users the feeling that their mini is in no way lacking in terms of added extras compared to Samsung's flagship device. This is especially important when compared to the likes of the Sony Xperia Z3 Compact, which comes close to matching the innards of its bigger brother.

### Solid performer

The Galaxy S5 has always proved a processing powerhouse, and although the mini does not sport the same internal specs, it is certainly no shrinking violet in the performance department, proving adept at handling one's multitasking demands. Sorting this workload is Samsung's own Exynos 3 quad-core processor which clocks in at a solid 1.4 GHz. Paired with this is 1.5 GB of RAM, as well as 16 GB worth of internal storage. Should the internal memory prove

QUICK SPECS	DISPLAY	PROCESSOR	MEMORY	CAMERA	PRICE
	5", 441 ppi	Qualcomm Snapdragon 800, 2.2 GHz quad-core	2 GB RAM, 32 GB Internal Storage	8 MP rear, 2.1 MP front-facing	R6 700

insufficient, Samsung has fitted a microSD slot, good for an additional 64 GB of space.

The S5 mini also runs Android's KitKat OS, 4.4.2 to be more precise, but as has become the case in recent years, the switching between the smartphone's screens reveals a number of Samsung-based apps and widgets. The majority of these proved unnecessary and in a lot of ways detracts from an otherwise pleasant to use UI.

### Galaxy worthy

Looking for solid photos? There's an 8 MP camera capable of capturing 3264x2448 images, as well as record full HD (1080p) video. Performing solidly in both high and low light conditions, the S5 mini will not let you down. What I enjoyed most however, is the autofocus, which proved a great aid when taking quick pics on the fly.

Priced at R6 700, the S5 mini is certainly on the higher side of the mid-range pricing scale, a factor brought into sharper focus with the mini sporting the usual Samsung penchant for plastic. Put that aside however and you have a great mid-range device perfectly suited for someone who think modern flagships are just too big. [RLC]

**ALONG WITH A BRILLIANT SCREEN THAT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF DULLNESS, THE MINI HAS TAKEN A FEW OTHER CUES FROM ITS BIGGER BROTHER.**

# LG G3 Beat

When the LG G3 flagship launched in 2014, it thoroughly impressed with its array of high end specs, principally its class leading 534 ppi pixel density 5.5" display. Although not on the same plateau from a specs perspective, the LG G3 Beat still sports some noteworthy specs to keep mid-range smartphone users doing double takes.

## G3's apprentice

First up is the screen, an area that LG has become stronger and stronger in over the years. The Beat's display measures 5" (720x1280) diagonally, making it the largest one featured here. Added to this is a 294 ppi pixel density, allowing for lots of detail perfectly suited for media viewing. In terms of styling, the Beat looks every inch like its flagship brethren, but that said, there is plenty of plastic to negotiate, although LG has gone to great lengths to still make it feel like a premium device. Alas, if you favour metal in your mid-range device, you will have to look far and wide to find one that is not plastic-heavy.

## Ease of use

Measuring just shy of 70 mm wide, the Beat sits nicely in hand with the rear-mounted power and volume button combo easy to reach. The rest of the device is kept clean, and serves as one of the nicer looking mid-range devices available at the moment. Just above the aforementioned power/volume key setup is a mid-range standard 8 MP camera.

Along with capturing solid images, it comes with LG's laser autofocus imaging technology, as seen on the LG G3, allowing for speedier photo taking. Also found is LG's knock code system, which provides a welcome change from the simplicity of pin entry or frustrating fingerprint scanner swiping - it works like a charm and I missed it on other phones.

## All-rounder

Internally LG has kept things a little more reserved, compared to the high spec'd clout of the G3 flagship. A quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 400 processor is found inside, measuring in at 1.2 GHz. Also thrown into the mix is 1 GB of RAM and 8 GB of memory. Should you wish to bump the latter up by 64 GB, users will have to remove the back cover to access its microSD slot. A glance at the G3 Beat sans back cover will also see a large 2450 mAh battery, a welcome addition for any user trying to squeeze out more than one day's use.

Price to retail around the R4 000 mark, the G3 Beat serves as a great all round mid-range performer. If a criticism were to be laid against it, it would be its propensity to heat up under heavy use, most probably symptomatic of its heavy plastic design. That is easily forgiven however, as the Beat delivered on everything asked of it, never flinching for a second. [RLC]

QUICK SPECS	DISPLAY	PROCESSOR	MEMORY	CAMERA	PRICE
	5" IPS LCD (720x1280)	1.4 GHz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 400	1 GB of RAM	8 MP rear, 1.3 MP front-facing	R4 000



**THE BEAT DELIVERED ON EVERYTHING ASKED OF IT, NEVER FLINCHING FOR A SECOND.**

# Nokia Lumia 630

Unlike the S5 Mini and G3 Beat, the Nokia Lumia 630 does not draw on any flagship heritage to lure users. It's also the cheapest smartphone on my list at a budget-beating R2 000. Don't let that fool you however, as the Lumia 630 gets all the basics right at a wallet-friendly price, making it very enticing indeed.

## Wallet-friendly

We mention it time and time again, but value for money is undoubtedly important to consumers. As such, a smartphone that delivers a great experience without breaking the bank is a highly valued commodity. In the case of the Lumia 630 it's a complete win.

Being one of the first devices to sport Microsoft's enhanced Windows Phone 8.1 OS (which I am a big fan of), the Lumia 630 serves up all the fundamental elements a smartphone user could want. Its 4.5" IPS LCD display (480x854) offers enough brightness to make on-device navigation and use a pleasant experience. Producing a middle of the road 218 ppi pixel density, the 630 may not amaze onlookers, but certainly gets the job done.

## The basics

The same pragmatism can be found inside the 630, with Nokia opting for a humbly efficient 1.2 GHz quad-core Snapdragon 400 processor courtesy of Qualcomm. Added to this is 512 MB of RAM, as well as 8 GB of internal storage. Nokia has also fitted a microSD slot for house a far greater 128 GB of storage. This along with the micro-SIM slot are accessed via the removable back cover. Also found in the rear, is a removable 1830 mAh battery, serving a solid day's use under moderate use.

Sticking with the rear you'll find a 5 MP camera. As with most other smartphone cameras with similar functionality, the 630's performs well in good lighting conditions, and is best suited for shooting outside in the light of day. It is less convincing indoors however, and produces particularly grainy images while zooming. Another mark against it is the absence of a front facing camera, which may leave selfie takers reeling in disgust, but is not a deal breaker when weighed up against its R2 000 price tag.

## Mass appeal

When it comes to design, Nokia has kept things simple for the 630, with a subtle angular curve to its sides in order to make handling a shade easier. If there is one area of its design that proved a little flawed, it was the placement of its power button, located halfway down the right-hand side of the device. It was sometimes difficult to reach, and made single handed use a little cumbersome.

Apart from this, there is very little to find fault in with the Lumia 630. When you throw into the mix its R2 000 price tag, Nokia's mid-range WP 8.1 sporting device becomes all the more appealing. For any cost-savvy user who wants a device capable of taking care of their basic multitasking duties, the Lumia 630 is well worth considering. [RLC] **ts**

QUICK SPECS	DISPLAY	PROCESSOR	MEMORY	CAMERA	PRICE
	4.5" IPS LCD (480x854)	1.2 GHz quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 400	512 MB of RAM	5 MP rear	R2 000



**THE LUMIA 630 GETS ALL THE BASICS RIGHT AT A WALLET-FRIENDLY PRICE, MAKING IT VERY ENTICING INDEED.**

# MTN STEPPA TABLET

MTN continues its assault on the entry-level market with the new Steppa Tablet. Much like its smartphone brethren it keeps things spartanly efficient without denting your budget.



For any tablet manufacturer vying for attention in the entry level market, the environment is as competitive as ever. MTN's first foray into the entry level realm is the Steppa Tablet, a 7" WSVGA (1024x600) offering that borrows its name from the Steppa smartphone, which surprised us no end at the beginning of the 2014.

## Give and take

This time round however, the Steppa Tablet is a bit hit and miss, striking the correct points in certain areas, but lacking in others. For users it becomes a question of what you're willing to forego given the Steppa Tablet's R1 000 price tag.

Its overall look is best described as utilitarian, with MTN opting for a bare bones approach to ensure the Steppa Tablet takes care of the entry-level basics. Examples of this include the plastic heavy design, which despite the manufacturer's best efforts, cannot escape the feel of a low-end device. Counting in its favour however, is a brushed aluminium-esque back cover, which other entry-level devices often do not feature. Up front however things are spartan at best, made most evident by a screen that

can be dull at times, with icons and apps looking a tad pixelated.

## Effective performer

Even though the screen is lacklustre, the Steppa Tablet's internal elements are pretty much on par for an entry level device given its price. MTN has incorporated a Qualcomm Snapdragon 200 processor clocked at a respectable 1.2 GHz. Added to this is 1 GB of RAM and 4 GB worth of internal memory. Should that prove insufficient, users can access the Steppa Tablet's microSD slot for an additional 32 GB. Upon booting up this entry level tablet, users will be greeted by an Android 4.4.2 (KitKat) OS, which responded well and performed amiably when multitasking.

All in all, the Steppa Tablet is one of the better entry level tablets we've handled recently. If one criticism were levelled against it, it would be its slightly dull display, but by all other measures it's a worthy device for any cost conscious user at R1 000. [RLC] **ts**

**EVEN THOUGH THE SCREEN IS LACKLUSTRE, THE STEPPA TABLET'S INTERNAL ELEMENTS ARE TOP NOTCH GIVEN ITS PRICE.**

# EPSON EB-X20 PROJECTOR

The EB-X20 is Epson's mid-range multimedia offering, and as such needs to be a jack of all trades. We see how well it copes in different scenarios.

When going for a solid mid-range projector, there are a number of things to weigh up, including size, portability, ease of use and projection quality. As such, Epson's EB-X20 seems to tick all the necessary categories without putting too much of a strain on one's funds.

## Good projections

Being an Epson projector, the X20 utilises the Japanese manufacturer's 3LCD technology to produce vivid and crisp images, even in light rich environments. This results in a maximum colour light output of 2 700 lumen, with the white light output registering at the same level. A greater deal of brightness is therefore achieved, compared to other mid-range projectors and gives the X20 a foot up on the competition. Lighting things up for the X20 is a 200 watt lamp, yielding 5000 hours usage (6000 hours in economy mode).

Moving onto the projection capabilities itself, the X20 produces a 4:3 aspect ratio and adjustable projection size of 30" (diagonally) to a maximum of 300". This means the X20 should fare well in one's conference room

for presentations or living room for a bit of TV series binge watching. To adjust lens focus and ratio, Epson have mounted two manual control dials for easy projection manipulation, with a number of on-projector controls for volume control and in-device menu navigation, as well as 30 degrees of manual keystone correction up or down. There's also a handy remote thrown in for good measure, should you wish to remain in the comfort of your seat.

## Ticking the boxes

When you add to the mix that the X20 only weighs in at 2.6 kg, it is portable enough to

carry around where it's needed. One word of advice however would be the acquisition of a decent set of speakers to pair with the X20, as its five watt loudspeaker proved a little underwhelming watching media. Priced to retail at R8 000, there is plenty to like about Epson's mid-range maestro. [RLC] **ts**

**THE X20 UTILISES THE JAPANESE MANUFACTURER'S 3LCD TECHNOLOGY TO PRODUCE VIVID AND CRISP IMAGES**



# ACER ASPIRE V 17 NITRO — BLACK EDITION

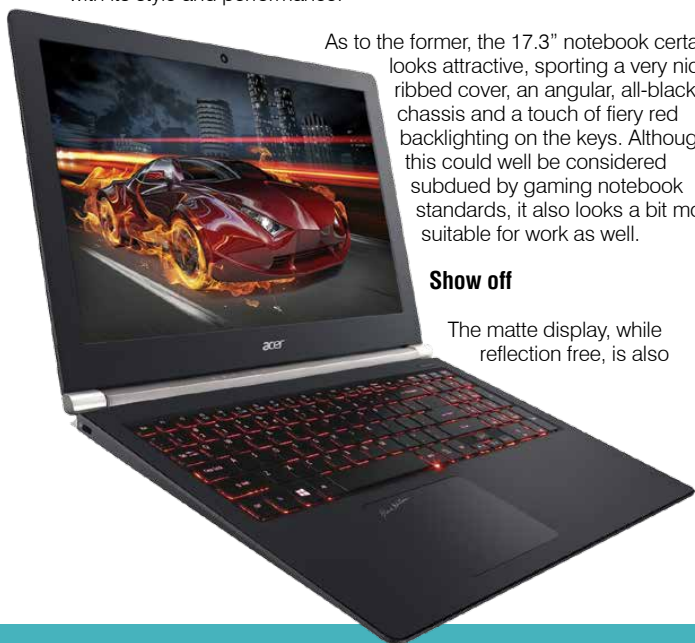
Seeking a gaming notebook this year that won't completely break the bank? Then Acer's latest is a big, bad and beautiful notebook that packs plenty of bang for its buck.

**T**he first crime that Acer's newest gaming notebook commits is inspiring a bout of uncontrollable alliteration. The second, for which you would hardly need to call your local CSIs, is its mouthful of a name. Thankfully though, it more than ably redeems itself with its style and performance.

As to the former, the 17.3" notebook certainly looks attractive, sporting a very nicely ribbed cover, an angular, all-black chassis and a touch of fiery red backlighting on the keys. Although this could well be considered subdued by gaming notebook standards, it also looks a bit more suitable for work as well.

## Show off

The matte display, while reflection free, is also



sharp, offering particularly great contrast, and above average viewing angles. Its resolution may only be full HD (1920x1080) but I had no complaints when playing games and watching movies. Furthermore, the screen's brightness level is thankfully well above average when cranked to the max. With regards to the latter (performance) it's here that the Acer Aspire V 17 Nitro Black Edition really shows its chops. Onboard is the high end Intel Core i7 (4710 HQ) processor, clocked at 2.5 GHz, and curiously, on the Review model 6 GB of memory (rather than the usual 8 GB or 16 GB).

Storage is well taken care of with two hard drives – a 60 GB SSD to keep Windows 8.1 from throwing too many tantrums, and a 1 TB hard drive for everything else. Graphics, meanwhile, is handled with the ever-able Nvidia Geforce GTX 860M (2 GB of memory), doing duty alongside the much less power hungry Intel HD Graphics 4600.

## Summing up

Other touches I appreciated included the roomy and responsive trackpad, the terrific, loud sound thanks to four onboard speakers and the inclusion of two USB 2.0 and two USB 3.0 ports. In general use, it's a very impressive piece of kit, and for gamers on a budget, is easy to recommend. RRP: R20 000 – R25 000. [RN] **ts**

**IN GENERAL USE, IT'S A VERY IMPRESSIVE PIECE OF KIT, AND FOR GAMERS ON A BUDGET, IS EASY TO RECOMMEND.**

# COUGAR 700M GAMING MOUSE

You could be forgiven for at first mistaking the 700M gaming mouse for a model of a high-end sports car, as it's most definitely not your father's pointing device.

**T**o start with, Cougar's 700M is certainly an attractive peripheral, with sleek, somewhat futuristic lines, a combination of black, silver and a hint of gold adding to the premium appearance. Additionally, its aluminium chassis grants the 700M a strong build quality, without making the mouse feel chunky or heavy. Indeed, at a mere 110 g by default, it's actually very light, however, for those users who prefer heavier peripherals, four 4.5 g weights can be added onto the 700M if so desired.

## Speed thrills

On the ergonomics front, I found that 700M fit very comfortably in my hand, with its plethora of customizable buttons (eight in total) within easy reach. Additionally, the palm rest, which is a separate (and replaceable) piece of the mouse, can be lowered or raised to suit different hand sizes, something I found was a welcome touch.

Although it is corded, this is of a decent length, but beyond this, there were three features in particular that stood out.

The first of these is the ease with which one can adjust the mouse's speed in four step increments using a dedicated button below the scroll wheel, all the way up to the speediest 8200 dpi (particularly suited for first person shooters,

where the quickest response time is paramount).

## Ready, set, fire

Additionally, I became a fan of the dedicated fire buttons and the sniper button, with the latter accounting for better aiming during games. Thirdly, the presence of its dedicated 32-bit ARM processor, and 512 KB of memory, meant players can store up to three profiles on the mouse itself and take them from one computer to the next. Very nifty.

However, here is where Cougar's offering really does roar – for these features, we expected a price point north of R1 300. Instead, the gaming mouse comes in below the R1 000 mark, with a RRP of R934. A rich feature set and beautiful, comfortable design make this mouse a winner and all too easy to recommend wholeheartedly. [RN] **ts**

**A RICH FEATURE SET AND BEAUTIFUL, COMFORTABLE DESIGN MAKE THIS MOUSE A WINNER.**



# NIKON D750

Nikon's new D750 is placing quite a few photographers in a bit of an upgrade dilemma. Let us offer some advice.

2014 was an extremely busy full-frame year for Nikon, releasing three new cameras, including the D810, the D610 (they kind-of had to) and the D750. Much like their APS-C sized DX range, Nikon's FX full frame range is now starting to offer a bit of everything – if you have the dosh to cross over.

## In the middle

Straight off the bat we can tell you



the 24.3 megapixel D750 is a great camera, bridging the gap that existed for photographers not satisfied with the D7100 because of its cropped sensor; the D610 offering too little punch; and the D810 offering too much. It even includes two features more common to the DX range: a fold-out screen (good for videography) and Wi-Fi (a decent start for Nikon since you can send photos to your phone to share plus use your phone as a remote trigger).

My shooting experience with the Nikon went as well as I hoped it would. It is specifically the low-light shooting that is great, helped along by its 12 800 ISO sensitivity. Usually we're not too interested in these top ISO offerings since photos are mostly unusable. Not in the case of the D750; after shooting a gig I was quite happy

to post the results (the expanded 51 200 ISO is a different story though).

## The right combination

In my short review period I did not actually managed to drain the battery completely, with Nikon claiming an impressive 1230 shots. My compliments must also actually go to the Nikkor 50mm f1.4 G that Nikon sent with the D750 – an awesome piece of glass with great bokeh. Its fast f1.4 aperture combines perfectly with the low-light shooting abilities of the D750, making it a match made in heaven.

The big question now for many photographers looking to make the move to Nikon full-frame is whether to cough up the extra R10 000 for the D750, or to go for the D610 with fewer features (less autofocus points, slightly slower speed, lower ISO sensitivity). My advice? If you have the money go for it. R30 000 (body only), R34 000 (with 24-85mm f/3.5-4.5 VR lens). [MJ] **ts**

IT IS SPECIFICALLY THE LOW-LIGHT SHOOTING ON THE D750 THAT IS GREAT, HELPED ALONG BY ITS 12 800 ISO SENSITIVITY.

# CANON POWERSHOT SX60 HS

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, yet another camera has won us over – and this time it is the latest superzoom bridge camera from Canon, the SX60 HS.

Superzoom cameras are somewhat of an odd breed, sitting somewhere in between the portable and small compacts, and their larger (but supremely versatile) DSLR brethren. Like most middle children, one can't help feeling like they need to prove themselves, as they cannot claim the slip in a pocket size advantage offered by smartphone cameras and compacts, nor do they boast access to an exhaustive array of interchangeable lenses.

## Up close and personal

How then is a bridge camera to win your heart (and wallet)? In the PowerShot SX60 HS' case, it does so by offering you a massive zoom range (65x optical zoom and 130x with zoom plus) in one small and fairly portable body.

Canon has helpfully labeled this in 35 mm equivalent terms on the barrel, with the zoom going from 21 mm unextended, all the way up to 1365 mm at its maximum. Granted, you need a somewhat steady hand at the top end, but superb image stabilization makes this much easier than you might suspect. This makes it ideal for covering school sports, and I also had some fun doing light bird photography with it as well, although

it would just as easily sit well with travel photography or a trip to the Kruger. For these kinds of purposes, image quality coming from the 16.1 megapixel 1/2.3 inch CMOS sensor was more than adequate.

## Only so far

Granted, the camera does have its limitations – the aperture range goes from f4 to a modest f8 and the shutter speed only goes up to 1/2000. Mitigating against this is a full range of features, including onboard Wi-Fi for easily transferring files, a very good optical viewfinder and accommodating RAW files.

My only gripes are that the actual eyepiece on the viewfinder isn't very comfortable, and for those who prefer touchscreens, you may be disappointed to hear that the 3" 922 000 dot screen doesn't offer this. Nonetheless, the SX60 HS is still an alluring first – or companion – camera; as far as bridges go I would be happy to cross this one any day. RRP: R6 000 [RN] **ts**



AS FAR AS BRIDGES GO I WOULD BE HAPPY TO CROSS THIS ONE ANY DAY.



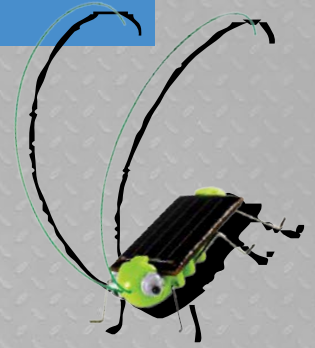
## ISAFE BAGS

On a set of 2×9-volt batteries the iSafe bags can continuously sound the alarm for up to 2 hours, making them useful for emergency situations like getting lost when hiking, and an interval mode will keep it running for even longer.



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"HOW LONG CAN YOU LAST BEFORE FINDING SOMETHING..?"

# GARMIN VIVOSMART

With a bevy of wearables landing locally of late, the fitness-focused vivosmart is aiming to be your go-to choice in 2015. We give it a go.

Last year was chock a block full of fitness-focused wearables, with Garmin's underrated vivofit proving a surprisingly handy wearable. Part of its lure was the high accuracy of its movement capturing and easy-to-use functionality. As such, I had high hopes for the newly unveiled vivosmart fitness band, which ups the ante in every regard. During my time with it, the vivosmart did not disappoint and has set the early pace as far as 2015's fitness wearables go.

## A little extra

What differentiates the vivosmart from the older vivofit is its smartphone syncing functionality. Available to iOS and Android users at this stage, the vivosmart can be paired to one's smartphone in order to provide message and call notifications. Answering and replying however, still require users to delve into their pockets, which means the vivosmart should not be confused with a smartwatch. It's not a one-trick pony though, serving up one's step, calorie and distance covered information

courtesy of the vivosmart's OLED display, which is both bright and easy to navigate, especially outdoors (a problem that the vivofit suffers from).

For those athletes among us wanting their heart rate data close at hand, Garmin has added a heart rate strap to pair with the vivosmart. This feature also lets users know which heart rate zone they are training in, adding to the vivosmart fitness application. As with the vivofit, this new fitness band can be paired with Garmin's Connect app, offering easy to read infographics of daily progress and goals.

## Plenty to offer

Priced at R3 350 (heart rate strap included), the vivosmart is certainly more expensive than other fitness band options, but its sleek design and easy to use functionality make it a worthwhile offering. When you to the mix the aforementioned heart rate strap for the more hardcore fitness user, there is plenty to like about Garmin's latest offering. R3 350. [RLC] **ts**



DURING MY TIME WITH IT, THE VIVOSMART DID NOT DISAPPOINT AND HAS SET THE EARLY PACE AS FAR AS 2015'S FITNESS WEARABLES GO.

# JABRA SPORT PULSE

Featuring a built-in heart rate monitor and handy smartphone app, the new Sport Pulse has a foot up on the wireless competition.

Working out, whether it be at a gym or on the road, is difficult enough without having to worry about pesky earphone wires getting in the way. To that end, Jabra's new Sport Pulse wireless earphones could be as essential to your workout as that sweat-wicking shirt. What gives the Sport Pulse a distinct edge over the competition, is a built-in heart rate monitor found within the earpiece itself, which Jabra claims to have a 99% accurate reading.

## Intelligence inside

Heart rate zone monitoring can certainly prove an effective aid for users who build their workouts around being in the right zones, and want to know just how well they are working out.

As essential as the built-in heart rate monitor is to the Sport Pulse, so is its Jabra Sport Life companion mobile app. Only available to iOS and Android mobile users at this stage, the app provides a full profile for users to view, including heart rate, calories burned and distance covered. Added to this is real-time voice coaching (English, French and German) designed to let the earphone wearers know when workout sessions begin, what heart rate zone they're at and when goals are reached. The app also allows for

workout session customisation and map-based tracking to see your route, plus how you've performed throughout the mileage.

## The right notes

Moving onto the sound quality, the Pulse can handle having the volume turned all the way up without any noticeable degree of distortion. Furthermore, there is a solid degree of external noise cancellation, an important aspect when trying to drown out the noise of wannabe weightlifters and the gym's tawdry dance music.

With its sleek design, solid build quality, in-line volume control and phone call functionality to boot, the Jabra Sport Pulse ticks all the necessary boxes for workout-obsessed audiophiles. Set to retail locally at R2 400, they're slightly more expensive than other high-end earphones, but the heart rate monitoring functionality makes them a particular standout. [RLC] **ts**

THEY'RE SLIGHTLY MORE EXPENSIVE THAN OTHER HIGH-END EARPHONES, BUT THE HEART RATE MONITORING FUNCTIONALITY MAKES THEM A PARTICULAR STANDOUT.



# HI-TEC BAHAMA SPORT

As essential as a great pair of hiking shoes are for an active lifestyle, what about when your feet ask for something lighter? Enter the Bahama Sport sandals.

**W**hat quickly becomes apparent when reviewing active wear is that each type of boot has its purpose and its ideal environment. Trekking up a mountain? You are going to want heavy duty hiking boots with excellent support and grip. Transitioning between walking the trail and pounding pavement? Lighter shoes with good support are in order. However, if you intend heading to the beach, travelling and touring and perhaps going fishing (dam or at a stretch, rock), a good pair of sandals come into their own.

## Boons and benefits

To start with, Hi-Tec's Bahama sport sandals are certainly comfortable, aided by their six open ventilation slots (three on each side), which prevents feet from becoming clammy. My one concern though is that sand and grit is more likely to get into the shoes and irritate. The shoes are noticeably flatter and broader than Hi-Tec's Trailblazers, giving my exposed feet a fair amount of wriggle room, and accommodating normal feet swelling in the afternoon (or when travelling). I was also glad to note a solid toe guard on the tip,

greatly lessening the painful risk of stubbing a toe on an exposed rock.

Granted, the ankle support is not in the same league as what you would find on heavier, closed shoes. However, the sandals were easy to slip on and off, further helped along by the stretch core lace, with its locking toggle. Additionally, I found that the undersole's grip is actually very good, considering the shoe doesn't boast much of a heel. What I was most pleased by is that, unlike lesser sandals, Hi-Tec's offering had enough depth to comfortably fit orthotics, for those who need a little orthopedic help to keep excessive pronation or supination at bay.

All in all, this is a terrific pair of sandals that I found my feet quickly took a liking to. RRP: R650. [RN] **ts**

**ALL IN ALL, THIS IS A TERRIFIC, PAIR OF SANDALS THAT I FOUND MY FEET QUICKLY TOOK A LIKING TO.**



# ADIDAS ENERGY BOOST 2 ESM

Adidas claims their shoes returns energy – we immediately took them for a run to test this.

**I**f there are two industries where the marketing teams maybe have a bit too much latitude, it's the beauty and the running shoe markets. They both bombard the public with terms, names and hyperbole that we're sure only barely make sense to the marketers themselves, and are frequently more confusing than helpful.

Rightly so consumers have become sceptical, thus my hesitance when taking Adidas' Energy Boost 2 ESM running shoes to the road. This is the second incarnation of the Energy Boost shoes, which Adidas claims are "designed to return energy to the foot with every step". It's a bold claim and one which at the current distances I'm doing (sub 21 km), I can hardly vouch for. What I can say however is that the Boost 2 ESM makes for very comfortable running, plus much to my surprise took care of post run knee pain.

## Good support

Being used to shoes offering pronation support (Adidas Supernova, Asics GT), the Boost 2 ESM is not an obvious choice for me since it's a more neutral shoe. That said, it does contain extra support on the

outer heel, while "Formation" technology makes the heel move independently. Adidas also notes that their "Torsion" technology (those marketing terms again) provides midsole assistance, further ensuring that the toes and heel can work on their own. All this might have been the reason for far less knee pain than usual after going for longer runs. I'm not a big fan of the lacing system, since I prefer these to go further down the foot, however the toe box is spacious and there was no chafing on the bridge of my foot.

## Pink is my favourite colour

While we have no complaints about how the Boost 2 ESM performs, the bright pink colour is an eyeful, prompting concern that someone at Adidas suffers from colour-blindness, since they call it Solar Red. While I can't say that the Boost 2 ESM provided me with more energy during my runs, it is true that they were very comfortable and surprisingly fitted my running style perfectly. They are available for R1 900. [MJ] **ts**

**Disclosure: Hi-Tec and Adidas shoes were received as seeding units.**



# DRIFT STEALTH 2

Sleekly styled and lightweight in hand, the Stealth 2 action cam from Drift certainly lives up to its name, proving a welcome aid during your high adrenaline escapades.



For some looking for a nifty action camera, size is everything. Something that's discrete and relatively innocuous and can help with a bit less air resistance. One such camera is the Stealth 2 from Drift, a company well versed in recording the antics of those with a penchant for the extreme.

## Name worthy

Sometimes when manufacturers are mulling over innovative names for their creations, they seldom hit the mark. The same however cannot be said for the Stealth 2, which lives up to the billing, weighing in at an ethereal 97 g and measuring 27.4 mm wide, half that of the popular Drift Ghost-S action camera. Light as it is, the Stealth 2 is very robust and proves capable of taking a beating, an important quality in any action camera.

The recording quality is top notch, capturing full HD 1080p content at 30 fps. Additional image features include up to 12 MP photo capture and slo-mo 720p video recording at 60 fps. I was however disappointed to find a 135° viewing angle, which felt a little restrictive compared to the GoPro's 170° capability. Another mark against it

was a lacklustre performance in low-light conditions, which put a real dent in my spelunking hopes, as well as poor audio recording.

## Good to go

Although a little underwhelming in darker conditions, the Stealth 2 does feature a 300° rotating lens, affording users the ability to mount it on virtually any part of their body, gear or ride and record footage in landscape mode. The standard mount also proved solid during use, with a much appreciated quick release function.

Good for up to three hours of use, with an easy to navigate 1.3" LCD display menu, the Stealth 2 is one of the easier action cams to set up, making for a definite pro in my books. Buying a 32 GB microSD however is advisable as the Drift's 2 GB won't last long. Priced at R4 000, the Stealth 2 will have GoPro users staring intensely over their shoulders. [RLC with help from Hofmeyr Smit] **ts**

**THE STEALTH 2 IS ONE OF THE EASIER ACTION CAMS TO SET UP, MAKING FOR A DEFINITE PRO IN MY BOOKS.**

## TOP Tweets!

**Joel Danger** @joeldanger  
If I say I'm only half listening, its meant as a compliment. I could easily be 100% not listening.

**Eden Dranger** @Eden\_Eats  
I eat in my car like I'm gonna get caught.

**Dawn of the Dead** @DawnLovesZombie  
I cleaned out the fridge and found things I thought only existed in Harry Potter.

**Mojak Lehoko** @mojaklehoko  
The internet:

Where the whole world comes together to take offence.

**Swedish Canary** @SwedishCanary  
To all of you who receive a book from me as a Christmas gift... they are due back at the library January 6th.

**Steve Suckington** @SteveSuckington  
You laugh now. But when money is worthless, women will decide who to sleep with based on who has the best Hot Wheels collection.

**Deep Fried Man** @DeepFriedMan  
We must always strive to be the country we look like in the final scene of Invictus.

**Eldge** @Sickayduh  
Hitting the mute button instead of unfollowing is basically saying "I regret knowing you at all but I don't want to end up alone"

**Neil deGrasse Tyson** @neiltyson  
Relativity. Gravity. Quantum. Electrodynamics. Evolution. Each of these theories is true, whether or not you believe in them.

**CD Anderson** @bizarrojerr  
...when boobies come up on your newsfeed just as your boss walks past your desk.  
thanks a lot, so called "independent arts and culture" blog.

**Lil' Luigi** @IAMLuigi\_II  
@TechSmartMag Just Downloaded All The TechSmart Magazines Online. ;).  
Finna Make Some Popcorn And Instead Of Watching Movies, Read 'Em All.

**Jerm Himselfish** @JermHimselfish  
All fishing is fly fishing if you wear a gold chain while you're doing it and doing it and doing it well.

**Topher Writes** @writeforcast  
Zombie.  
Zombie.  
Zombie.  
Hey.  
Hey.  
Hey.

-The Cranberries watching The Walking Dead.

**Jake Vig** @Jake\_Vig  
"Yo, yo, yo, microphone check 0001 0010!"

- rappin' computer

**Master of Sarcasm** @tmastersarcasm  
I have two dance styles: Sober, dancing silly as a "joke" or drunk dancing with confidence, same exact moves.

**//** @Jviden\_  
Just Got Me Sons Of Anarchy [ S.O.A ] Board Game .  
courtesy of: @TechSmartMag

**Skinnie Talls** @SkinnieTalls  
Gangsta rap made me do a lot of stuff, but you don't hear me crying about it.

**Brendan Jack** @brendanjack  
Just a matter of time before they uncover a connection between  
Scientology and CrossFit.

**3M075** @SamuelHLow  
She doesn't apply eyeliner, she underlines her stare.

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# E-TONE EX1 PROJECTOR

If you think that projectors have to be big and bulky, you haven't met the mobile all-in-one E-Tone EX1 PC projector.

**T**he word that comes to mind when looking at the tiny and portable E-Tone EX1 projector is travel friendly. Although it's cubic in form, it is no bigger than a tennis ball (63 mm by 68 mm, to be exact), and easy to envision placing it, along with its included mini tripod, in your carry-on bag, purse or backpack, leaving plenty of room to spare. It's also suitably light at a mere 202 g.

The device boasts its own 1 GHz Cortex A7 dual core processor and 1 GB of memory, along with 8 GB of built-in storage, and runs off of the Android 4.2 OS, the latter of which makes it particularly versatile. Furthermore, it is able to connect to and beam an image from a variety of secondary devices, including notebooks, smartphones, tablet PCs and of course media can also be brought into it by using a USB flashdrive. Up to 32 GB external storage is supported.

As for supported formats, the E-Tone EX1 is friendly to some of the more familiar ones, including AVI and MOV, plus it contains Wi-Fi, so no cables are necessary.

### Show off

Considering its small size, the picture it can throw is quite impressive; even though it only offers 45

**THE MORE WE USED IT, THE MORE IMPRESSED WE BECAME WITH THE IDEA AND THE POTENTIALS OF THE E-TONE.**

lumens, we found this to be sufficient in a moderately darkened room. Additionally, it can render an image from 5" up to 80" image in size, although, in this respect, we found smaller is definitely sharper.

As for audio, you can either rely on the device's included (single) speaker, or a better option in our opinion, connect a pair of headphones and enjoy your content through them. For those who have work, rather than entertainment on mind, the tiny projector can host a presentation on it without the need for a notebook, and a Bluetooth mouse can then be connected to the device for navigation, although an optical mouse (track button) is to be found on the top of the device.

The more we used it, the more impressed we became with the idea and the potentials of the E-Tone EX1, with the old axiom dynamite comes in small package coming to mind. RRP: R5 000 from E-Tone Technology, Tel: 011-615-2774. **ts**

### Customer Service Center:

**Midi Electronics**  
**5 Harling Street, Mulbarton.**  
**Tel: 011-432-2789**



# ETONE Technology

E-Tone Technology  
 9 Esme Road  
 Cyrildene,

Tel: 011-615-2774, info@etone.co.za



## Android Pico Projector

R4999-00

- Cortex A7 Dual-Core at 1.0GHz
- Android 4.2 Jelly Bean
- 1GB DDR3 RAM
- 8GB Internal storage
- Up to 32GB external memory
- Wireless DLNA streaming
- 3.7v/4000mAh Battery
- Built-in speaker
- USB 2.0, Micro OTG, 3.5mm Audio, Micro SDHC/SDXC



## ET- i8 Tablet

R2999-00

- 3G
- Intel Bay Trail Z3735F Quad Core CPU
- 8" 1280\*800 IPS HD Multi-Touch Screen
- WiFi WIDI 2.0 HD Display
- 5.0 MP & 2.0 MP camera
- 1GB + 16GB Memory
- 64GB Expend
- Android / Windows 8.1
- 4300mAh Battery
- 9mm Thinkness
- Bluetooth 4.0

### Optional :

Bluetooth Key Pouch: R 399.00

8.9" ( 1920x 1200) IPS Screen R 399.00

# ASUS ROG G751JM

If gaming notebooks were superheroes, then the ROG G751JM may well be Tony Stark/Iron Man, as it clearly makes no bones about its prowess.

The 17.3" notebook certainly has the brash confidence of an Avenger, claiming to offer 'more firepower than you can handle, with looks set to kill'. In this case though, the claim can back itself up, from the outside in. To start with, it sports an aluminium finish, and weight wise sits alongside some of the company's other, hefty gaming machines at 4.3 kg.

Opening the lid moves the screen closer to the user, which provides the illusion of the notebook being a bit smaller than it actually is, making for more intimate gaming sessions. This is not solely for the sake of looking formidable; it has a purpose as well, as this design gives the machine an isolated area to vent heat away from the user. However, the rest of the machine's aesthetic is fairly subtle by comparison. The ledge and lid have brushed-metal accents and the vents are flared with red paint that is reminiscent of a 'jet intake', but the remainder of the chassis is covered in a soft, matte finish.

## Flash and flair

However, the notebook is not 'all style, no substance', as it is powered by Intel Core i7 (4710HQ) processor, able to dole out up to 3.5 GHz worth of processing power and which should give The Flash a run for his money. This is then assisted by an almost as alluring up to 32 GB of DDR3 Memory with an NVIDIA GeForce GTX860M GPU packed with 2 GB GDDR5 dedicated memory. Furthermore, the notebook boasts TurboMaster technology for an enhanced graphics performance. Keeping things cool under pressure is a dual-fan cooling system.

Opening it up reveals an IPS anti-glare display with a full HD 1080p (1920x1080) resolution while boasting a 178° wide-viewing angle, just right for sharing movies or games on the couch with one's significant other or mates.

## All keyed up

On gaming notebooks, the keyboard is often paramount, and on this front, the Asus ROG G751JM should not disappoint. Along with being responsive, users can also adjust the level of backlighting to their preference, taking into account different environmental conditions.

Asus has also paid particular attention to the keyboard's functionality. For example, players will find unique game keys for Steam, as well as ROG Macro keys that are programmable with up to three commands. More specifically, players can set these keys for launching apps, multi-key actions, or other functionalities. As for the sound output, Asus has seen fit to include both MaxxAudio processing as well as its ROG AudioWizard, to provide immersive, high quality sound through the onboard speakers as well as its Bass Eye subwoofer.

## Port ahead

With regards to connectivity, onboard are a plethora of ports, starting with two USB 3.0 ports, a VGA connector, three audio jacks, Ethernet,



**ASUS HAS BROUGHT A SERIOUS MOBILE GAMING RIG IN THIS CLASS, AND SHOULD DEFINITELY NOT BE OVERLOOKED.**

HDMI and a Thunderbolt port. Two additional USB 3.0 lay claim to the left side of the machine, alongside the rig's optical drive and SD/MMC card reader.

Asus has brought a serious mobile gaming rig in this class, and should definitely not be overlooked thanks to the excellent price accompanied by the beefy specs and eye catching looks. The Asus ROG G751JM is now available at [Evetech.co.za](http://Evetech.co.za) from R18 000. [bit.ly/1leR1kA](http://bit.ly/1leR1kA) **ts**



## TECH SPECS



### Processor

Intel Core i7 (4710HQ)  
@ 3.5 GHz



### Memory

8 GB 1600 MHz RAM



### Graphics card

Nvidia GeForce  
GTX860M GPU



### Storage

1 TB



### Screen resolution

Full HD 1080p anti-glare



# THE SCIENCE OF (OUR) TIME

AT THE START OF THE NEW YEAR, IT'S A GOOD TIME TO PONDER, WELL, TIME. LINDA PRETORIUS DELVES THROUGH THE SCIENCE BEHIND IT.

## TICK TOCK

Atomic clocks keep the world ticking. In fact, without these accurate timing devices many of our navigation and communication systems would be quite useless. An atomic clock is based on the frequency with which electrons surrounding an atom's core can jump from one energy level to the next and back again – like one full swing of a pendulum in a grandfather clock. Because this is such a constant value, we can measure time very accurately and reliably. At the moment a standard second is defined by the oscillation frequency of electrons in a caesium atom. But last year scientists also announced a strontium-based atomic clock, which they say is so precise that in five billion years – more than the age of the Earth – it would be out by only one second.

**9 192 631 770:** The number of ticks electrons in a caesium atom make in one second

Source: National Physics Laboratory:  
[www.npl.co.uk](http://www.npl.co.uk); <http://1.usa.gov/1bk7fJFK>

## (UN)HAPPY HOURS

In a recent study, scientists found that we perceive different emotions to last different lengths of time. Of the 27 emotions they tested, sadness lasted longest, while episodes of shame, surprise, fear, irritation, and, strangely enough, boredom, were over in a flash. It seems that the duration of an emotion is linked to the amount of thinking and rethinking we do about the event that caused it. Typically, we don't tend to mull over events that are insignificant to our general psychological wellbeing and therefore the associated emotions are short-lived. However, an event that threatens to greatly upset our state of mind warrants lots of thinking and rethinking, and so the associated emotion is perceived to last much longer.

**233** High School Students: The participants in the study

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

## BED TIME

Living against your body clock is a bad idea. In a study last year, a group of volunteers lived in a controlled environment shielded from the natural day–night cycle that keeps our body clocks in sync. Days were simulated to last 28 hours instead of the normal 24 and participants' bed time was delayed by four hours every day. After three days, their sleep–wake cycle had thus shifted by 12 hours, so that sleep occurred in the middle of what their body clocks thought should be daytime.

Blood samples showed that a six-fold drop occurred in metabolism-regulating gene activity that usually follows a 24-hour cycle. This suggests that many physiological processes are disrupted when our sleep–wake cycle goes awry, as happens during shift work and flights across time zones.

Take the University of Surrey's Sleep Quiz: [bit.ly/1zjWu4w](http://bit.ly/1zjWu4w).

**1 in 10** people are morning people and really alert at around 07:00

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

## WHEN TIME FLIES

Although our bodies don't naturally cope well with disrupted sleep–wake cycles, things like long-haul flights and shift work are reality. So, in a study to better understand the mechanism behind jet lag, scientists found that a specific enzyme, called CK1-epsilon, controls how easily the body's internal clock can be reset. Mice that lacked the gene to produce the enzyme could adjust to an altered light–dark cycle much faster than those with the gene. Further experiments showed that the same result is achieved with drugs that specifically inhibit the function of the enzyme. The finding may help us to understand how to get around the negative effects of disrupted sleep–wake cycles.

**24:** The number of time zones across the globe

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

## LIFE IN SLO-MO

Why do things seemingly happen in slo-mo during for example an accident? A few years ago, scientists asked volunteers to look at a hand-held digital display while free falling towards a safety net 31 m below. The numbers on the display changed faster than the brain normally allows two separate visual stimuli to be recognised. If fear caused the brain to increase its temporal resolution, the participants should have been able to report the changing display accurately after the fall. But they couldn't – only a single display seemed to show on the screen. Yet, when timing the fall while thinking back to how long it lasted, they recalled it was about 1.4 seconds longer than it really did. The results suggest that this time stretch happens because our brains pay more attention to what we see during a scare and consequently form more memories, rather than actually seeing more.

**More than 80 ms:** The amount of time needed for the brain to recognise two separate visual stimuli

Source: [bit.ly/1pYlWc](http://bit.ly/1pYlWc) **ts**



## SCIENCE

## PIC OF THE MONTH



## WE ARE GOING TO MARS!

NASA's Orion spacecraft, sitting atop a United Launch Alliance Delta IV Heavy rocket, lifted off from Cape Canaveral last December to orbit Earth twice. Although unmanned, it was the first flight of Orion, NASA's new spacecraft built to take humans to Mars. NASA's goal is to send humans to an asteroid by 2025 and Mars in the 2030s.

# SMART ANSWERS

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



## MALARIA-KILLING MEDICINE

Image: CDC, Public Domain

**What's the best way to kill malaria parasites?** You mark them for destruction.

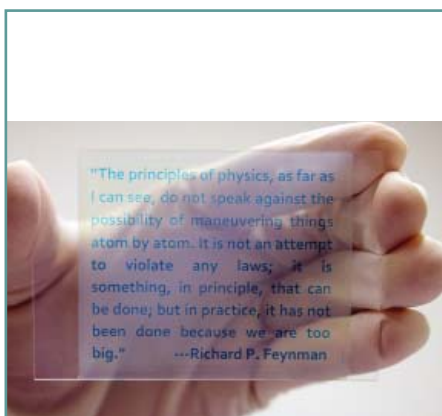
**How?** By making the infected cells look like aging red blood cells.

**How does it work?** Scientists found that an experimental drug can inactivate a specific protein in the parasite, causing sodium to build up in the red blood cells they have infected. This causes the cells to change shape and shrink, which makes them look old and haggard.

**And then?** The body naturally destroys aging red blood cells as part of the immune function.

**How effective is the technique?** Very. A single dose removed 80% of the parasites in mice in 24 hours. After another 24 hours, the parasite was undetectable.

**What's next?** Scientists plan to start clinical trials in adults soon.

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

## REWRITEABLE PAPER

Image: Ym Lab, UC Riverside

**How can we curb paper waste?** By wiping away the ink and printing again on the same sheet.

**Sounds like magic?** Nope, a simple redox reaction.

**So how does it work?** Scientists printed text on a film saturated with a type of dye that can switch between coloured and colourless when the dye's oxidation state is changed. When the film is treated with UV light, the dye bleaches out everywhere except for where the letters are printed.

**And to erase the print?** Simply reverse the process by reacting the dye with oxygen at about 115 °C. The film returns to its fully coloured state again.

**How long does it last?** Text remains legible for about three days and a single sheet can be decoloured and recoloured about 20 times at the moment.

Source: [bit.ly/13mjdlR](http://bit.ly/13mjdlR)

## TOOTHLESS BIRDS

Image: Artwork of Carlos Anzuces. Courtesy of Dr. Rubilar-Rogers

**Why did birds lose their teeth?** Not because they didn't brush properly...

**So what then?** It was likely caused by a genetic mutation in the common ancestor of birds.

**How do we know this?** Scientists found a mutation that inactivated six genes responsible for the formation of enamel and dentine in the genomes of 48 bird species, which represent almost all types of living birds.

**What happened?** Without an outer enamel coating around the teeth, they gradually disappeared altogether. At the same time a horny beak gradually grew from the front ends of the two jaws, all the way back towards the feathered face.

**What's the evolutionary significance?** The study suggests that tooth loss and the associated beak formation may have led to birds becoming a highly diverse group of animals. **ts**

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

# MOST ICONIC CARS IN FILM





With the new Aston Martin DB10 being debuted for the upcoming Bond-film, Spectre, what better to do than to find the five most iconic cars in film history.

## Aston Martin DB5 Goldfinger (1964)

James Bond has been sipping martinis and bedding women for more than fifty years now. In that time he's been behind the wheel of all manner of tricked-out cars, whether it be a submersible Lotus or camouflaged Vanquish. Our personal favourite is still the Aston Martin DB5 from *Goldfinger*, which Sean Connery put to use taking out henchman thanks to machine guns concealed under the bonnet.

So significant is the DB5 in Bond lore, that it made a return in 2012's *Skyfall* and still looked better than its modern equivalent. No longer in production, the DB5 set quite the pace back in the 60s with a



6-cylinder inline engine that produced a noteworthy 210 kW. That combined with its lightweight frame gave it a 0-100 km/h time of eight seconds and top speed of 230 km/h, more than enough to speed away from any M16 nemesis.

Engine:	0-100 km/h	Top Speed:
 6-Cylinder Inline	4.9 sec	 230 km/h

## Mk1 Austin Mini Cooper S The Italian Job (1969)

Few cars have played more pivotal roles in movies over the decades than the Mk1 Austin Mini Cooper S. It seems like no other car is better suited to snaking between the tight corners and city streets than the Mini Cooper, from the epic chase scenes of *The French Connection* to Jason Bourne evading the police in the *Bourne Identity*. Its most iconic moment however is in 1969's *The Italian Job*, with Michael Caine and his band of loveable rogues pulling off one of the biggest capers in movie history.

Although no longer in production, one can still find an old-school Mini Cooper on the roads today, engrossing onlookers with its dainty dimensions. It may not have had the biggest engine around, but the Mini could get to 100 km/h from a standstill in only 11 seconds and a top speed of 159 km/h, courtesy of its aspirated 1275 cc engine.

Engine:	0-100 km/h	Top Speed:
 998 cc	11 sec	 159 km/h

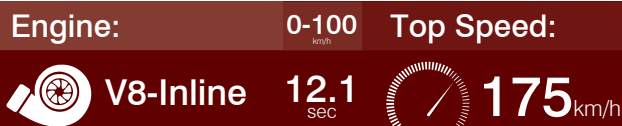




## Ford Gran Torino Starsky & Hutch (2004)

The Ford Gran Torino from the 70s cop series *Starsky & Hutch* is a fond memory for anybody who grew up in that era. It had new life breathed into it with the 2004 movie re-make, and once again from an eponymously named film starring a mean and surly Clint Eastwood. The movie incarnation of this American muscle car is our favourite, especially considering that they totalled more than a dozen during filming, performing all manner of gravity defying stunt.

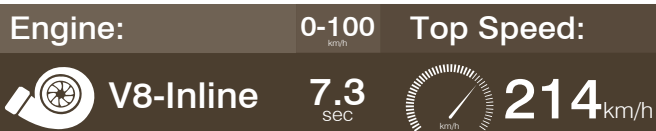
The first Gran Torino debuted in 1972, with *Starsky & Hutch* using the two-door 1974 version. Housing a throaty V8 engine under the hood and three-speed automatic transmission, the Gran Torino managed a top speed of 175 km/h. The Gran Torino's true calling card however is its 447 Nm of torque, allowing for great wheel spinning and a 0-100 km/h time of 12.1 seconds.



## 1967 Mustang Shelby GT500 Gone in Sixty Seconds (2000)

For one car to stand out among the plethora of vehicle's featured in *Gone in Sixty Seconds* takes some doing, but the 1967 Mustang Shelby GT500 is up to the task, and remains the one good memory from an otherwise mediocre film. Part of its charm is its achingly good looks, with an angular athletic profile that, in our opinion, no other American muscle car has been able to match since.

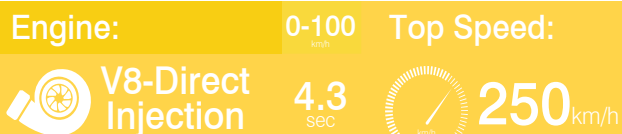
The Mustang featured in *Gone in Sixty Seconds* incorporated a Nitrous Oxide (NOS) system to help it accelerate away from police helicopters in an epic car chase scene. You won't find this on the more commercial road-legal version, but it still gets around pretty quickly. Under the bonnet, there's a no-holes barred V8 engine that propels it up to 214 km/h and 0-100 km/h in 7.3 seconds. Not available today, Mustang connoisseurs will have to venture to vintage car auctions in order to find one.



## Chevrolet Camaro SS Transformers (2007)

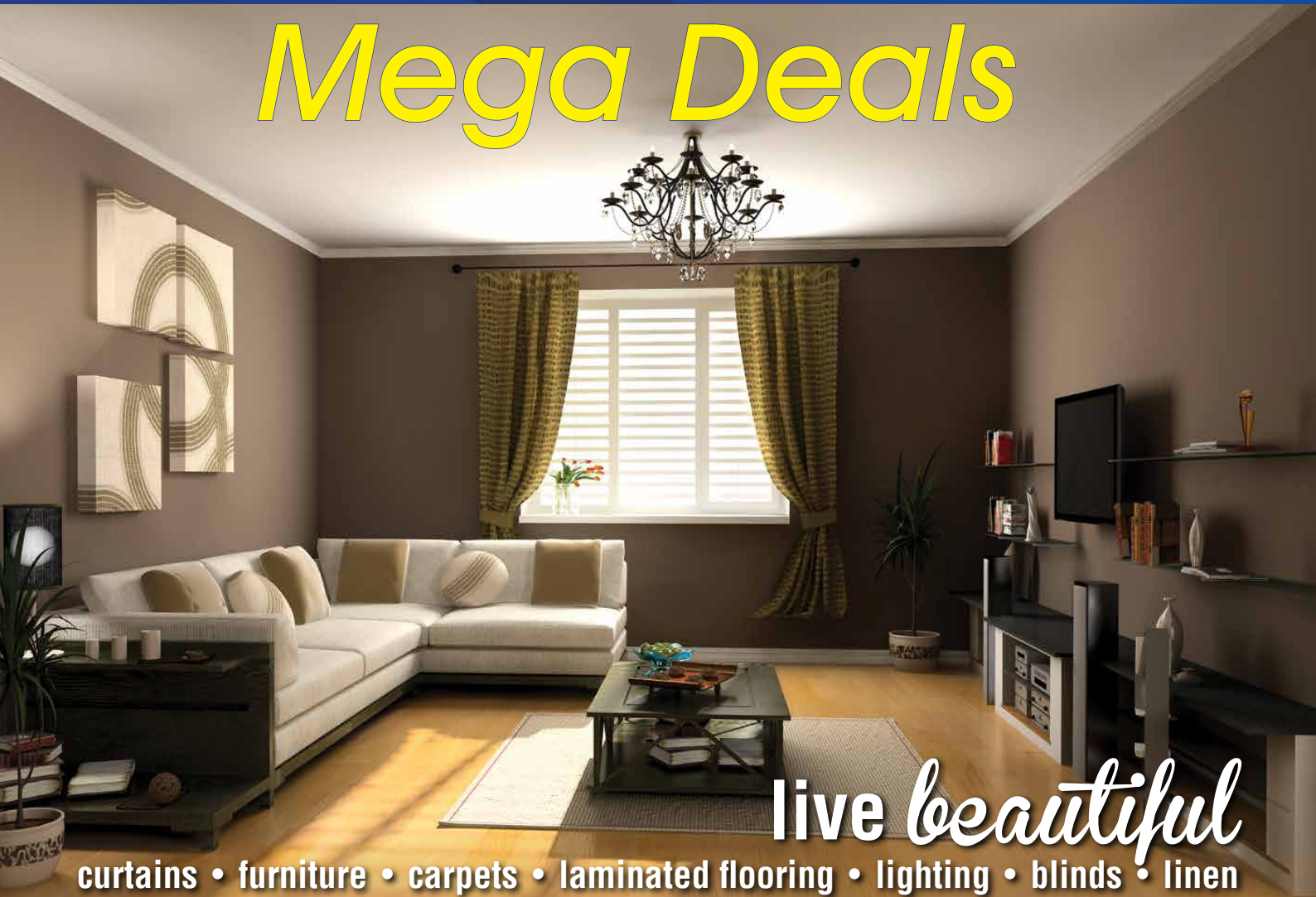
Apart from Megan Fox and tons of CGI action, Michael Bay's *Transformers* franchise also introduced a fan favourite among the Autobots – Bumblebee. The original cartoon TV series saw Bumblebee transform from a VW Beetle. The new live-action version saw the Autobot adopt a concept Chevrolet Camaro SS as its alter ego, thanks to a commercial deal with General Motors. It proved a good move, as the Camaro's muscular stylings proved a great fit for the high-octane look and feel of the *Transformers* movie, and made Bumblebee seem like more of a badass, even though his moniker is not.

The real world version of the Camaro SS may not be able to transform into three story tall alien robot, but it still features enough compelling tech to keep onlookers' eyes fixed. Its 3.6 litre direct-injection V6 engine produces 224 kW to ensure its performance are as solid as its looks. [RLC] **ts**



# MEGASTORE

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[info@metrohomecentre.co.za](mailto:info@metrohomecentre.co.za)



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kitchen appliances • heaters  
water dispensers • airconditioners

*be entertained*  
home theatre systems • tv's • dvd players



*outdoor living*  
braai • bicycles



*fabulous fabrics*  
bridal & evening wear  
local & imported



EXCLUSIVE TO  
410 Madiba St. (Vermeulen), Pretoria  
GPS: S2544.65' E2811.86'

**WE DELIVER**

# Back To Work in (Practical) Style

ONE OF THE UNAVOIDABLE CONSEQUENCES OF THE NEW YEAR IS THE MOVE BACK TO THE OFFICE. IT NEED NOT BE A SLOG, AS LONG AS YOU DON'T MAKE A STYLE CHALLENGE A CAREER HURDLE. ONLINE FASHION PORTAL, THE RENAISSANCE MEN ([BIT.LY/RENMENSA](http://bit.ly/renmensa)) PROVIDES FIVE SIMPLE TIPS TO SECURE YOURSELF GREAT LOOKS WITH GREAT RESULTS.



## SUIT UP – THE WORK SUIT

A simple formal two-button suit in navy, blue or grey is an essential hard-working wardrobe item. The right cut means you can dress it up and down effortlessly. Make sure your cut's sleeves end low enough to cover your wrists but high enough to show some shirt. Best ways of pairing it for work is with tan leather brogues or loafers and a tan belt. A crisp white shirt with either a red, navy slim tie is the ideal combo to pull the look together for that NB corporate presentation. Dress it down on Tuesdays with a vest.

**BEST PLACE TO SHOP A NAVY SUIT: FABIANI + BEN SHERMAN + WOOLWORTHS**

## SHORT GOALS – THE SHORTS SUIT

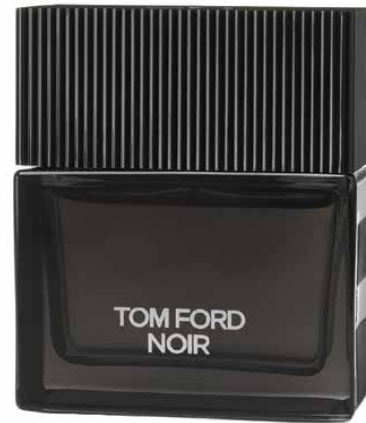
With the heat starting to pile it on, a shorts suit is an ideal way of dressing up for work in a cool manner. Great buys would be a pair of cotton shorts suits or a pair of wool and cotton blend. It'll breathe, be easy to maintain, and if bought in a neutral colour like a blue check or dark pinstripes, one can wear it with anything their wardrobe, including a forest green golfer and leather loafers.

**BEST PLACE TO SHOP A SHORT SUIT: MARKHAM + WOOLWORTHS + KURT GEIGER**

BAXTER OF CALIFORNIA  
1.2.3 SHAVING KIT



TOM FORD NOIR  
(50 ML OR 100 ML)



## CLEAN UP - GROOMING IS ABOUT SUCCESS

The thing about getting back to work after holidays is that you could tend to sport that grizzly bear look. Clean up your act with great grooming tools like these from Baxter of California (or check out p30). And while you're at it, smell like a million bucks with Tom Ford Noir – the ultimate in men's fragrances.

BEST PLACE TO SHOP GROOMING: **BAXTER OF CALIFORNIA + EDGARS RED SQUARE**

CFX CARBON ADELAIDE  
SOFT DUFFEL BAG



PATEK PHILIPPE CALATRAVA  
WRIST WATCH



## BAG IT – THE MAN'S BAG

An every day guy needs to own three simple bags: a backpack for the weekends, a brief case / notebook bag for work, and an overnight tote for business trips. The backpack for weekends is ideal because you can use it while hiking. The weekday's brief case carries your laptop, looks sleek and complements your looks each day. The overnight tote is a great man's hold-all. It packs enough space for clothes for a long weekend and you can carry it on the plane.

BEST PLACE TO SHOP BAGS: **FRASER + TUMI**

## WATCH IT – BE ON TIME

For some, it might just be a time piece, but for others what wraps around your wrist is a sign of control and power. The Patek Philippe Calatrava is just the tool to get work done on time. Sleek and subdued, its style is only rivalled by its accuracy. Your boss will be impressed, so will your significant other. **ts**

BEST PLACE TO SHOP WATCHES: **THE WATCH & JEWELLERY GALLERY**



**F**or those readers who pay particular attention to the Chinese Zodiac, 2015 is the year of the goat, an animal noted for its signature Fu Manchu-esque tufts. While we may not advocate any kind of designer stubble during these hot summer months, we do believe in looking fresh faced and starting the year in the right way. To that end, we've compiled a list of must have products to ensure that 2015 is noteworthy for more than just goats.

**Prudent facescaping**

Summer is hardly an opportune time for sporting a full beard, despite what some hipsters may say. As such, a beautifully crafted shaving kit is a worthwhile investment. Forget four blades and hydrating strips, and go back to basics with Baxter of California's Safety Razor set, complete with badger hair brush and double edge razor. Take it easy though, unless you want an unwelcome trip to the ER.

Once your mug is looking perfectly follicle free, it'll still need some love and attention. We advocate a good face wash and scrub combo, good for exfoliating and washing away any unwanted remnants of 2014. We're quite partial to the offerings from Clinique for Men, which don't have any pesky perfumes to dry out the skin. That being said, a good moisturiser with built-in SPF is a must, especially when making the most of SA's great weather.

**Scents of Summer**

Speaking of scents, summer dictates opting for something light and airy, although not too airy though, as you still want you to smell as a man should. Try out Luna Rossa from Prada, which has a good balance of floral scents while staying masculine. Another great summer scent is Freedom by Tommy Hilfiger, which smells just like the ocean, in a good way of course.

Now that your visage is taken care of, it's time to tackle that crop atop your head. Firstly, keeping it clean. As heat, styling product, and life in general mix into that expensive haircut throughout the day, a good shampoo to remove excess dirt and grime allows you to start each day anew. We're partial to American Crew's Power Cleanser Style Remover. After that's done and dusted, work in some of their Forming Cream and style to your heart's content.

For those looking to make the year of the goat memorable for the right reasons, heed our well considered advice and get into your own routine, lest you be left to feel more like a doe. **ts**



**1** Safety Razor Set, Baxter of California, R2 900



**2** Clinique Essentials Kit, Edgar's Red Square, R1 500



**3** Prada Luna Rossa 50 ml, Stuttafords, R900



**4** Freedom Tommy Hilfiger 100 ml, Stuttafords, R1 300



**5** Power Cleanser Style Remover Shampoo, American Crew, R225



**6** Forming Cream, American Crew, R250



# NEW

## CINEMA RELEASES



### The Judge - 9 January

To many, Robert Downey Jr. is Sherlock Holmes or Iron Man, which makes getting your next dramatic role somewhat problematic if it doesn't involve gritty London or hi-tech weaponry. The charismatic never-say-die actor plays a lawyer in *The Judge*, which isn't such a big transition when you consider his role in *Ally McBeal*. The coming-of-age drama gives him a chance to flex his thespian abilities as the loudmouth lawyer heads home to bury his mother and repatriate his father.



### Birdman - 9 January

Michael Keaton was Batman, now he's *Birdman* in what could be a case of art reflecting life for the veteran actor. Currently being described as "the comeback of the century", Keaton makes a strong case for an Oscar nomination if not an Oscar in this story about a washed up actor trying to stage a Broadway play to reclaim former glory. *21 Grams* director, Alejandro González Iñárritu, uses continuous long shots and a top-notch cast including Edward Norton, Zach Galifianakis, Andrea Riseborough, Emma Stone and Naomi Watts to capture this black comedy, which has received nothing by critical acclaim and a leading amount of Golden Globe nominations.



### Unbroken - 16 January

Louis "Louie" Zamperini's amazing true story was destined for film. As a youngster, he fought off bullies, took up track to represent the United States at the Olympics, spent 47 days adrift after his plane crashed into the sea, only to be thrown into a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

Besides Garret Hedlund and Domhnall Gleeson, the cast is relatively unknown, opening the space for authenticity and young talent like Jack O'Connell to emerge. Directed by Angelina Jolie, written by the Coen brothers and based on the book by Lauren Hillenbrand, this epic tale of survival and beating the odds is sure to inspire the world.



### Maps to the Stars - 23 January

David Cronenberg directs a star-studded cast in Julianne Moore, Mia Wasikowska, John Cusack, Olivia Williams and Robert Pattinson. *Maps to the Stars* entrenches itself in the heart of a Hollywood family, chasing celebrity and their ghosts as two former child stars become central to this satirical commentary on the entertainment industry and Western civilisation.

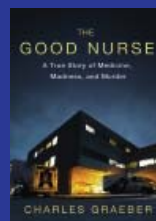
This is Cronenberg's second consecutive collaboration with Robert Pattinson after *Cosmopolis*. The director has a rich and varied filmography and while "never a dull moment" doesn't quite apply to *Cosmopolis*, it could be Cronenberg's mantra considering his accomplished career. Expect big performances from *Maps to the Stars*.



### Fury - 30 January

Brad Pitt, Shia LaBeouf and Logan Lerman star in *Fury*, a gutsy World War II action drama about "Wardaddy", a tough army sergeant and his 5-man tank crew as he commands a dangerous mission behind enemy lines. Writer-director David Ayer is unrelenting in his films as witnessed in *End of Watch* and *Fury* is no different. The director sent his cast on a gruelling four week boot camp with *Navy Seals* to help deliver an authentic, yet fictional account of history much like *Inglourious Basterds*. Judging from the tag line "war never ends quietly", you can expect raw and visceral action.

## MOVIE NEWS



### Aronofsky's Serial Killer Nurse

Now that *Noah*'s ship has sailed, Darren Aronofsky is moving onto an adaptation of Charles Graeber's novel, *The Good Nurse*, about Charlie Cullen, one of the most prolific and complex serial killers in American history. Dubbed the "Angel of Death" by the media,

it was estimated in 2003 at the time of his arrest that he was implicated in the death of some 300 people over 16 years and nine hospitals. Worse still... he was well-liked.



### Spider-Man Down or Crossing Over?

After the Sony hack revealed there was talk of *Spider-Man* joining the Marvel universe, there's been much speculation, especially in the wake of the disappointing box office results

and mixed reviews for *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* in a highly competitive year for superhero projects. The reboot franchise seems to be flagging and one possible solution, which was reportedly communicated by high-ups, would be for Peter Parker to pick up the storyline in *Captain America: Civil War*. **ts**

# SIX MOST Anticipated Releases of 2015



If all else fails, there are always the movies to cheer you up, and 2015 looks jam-packed with some awesome new releases. Movie fundi Spling picks the best of the lot.

## Avengers: Age of Ultron

Possible date: April 2015

**A**vengers Assemble! *The Avengers* sequel is one of our hottest releases of 2015 thanks to on-going hype and a buzz around South African locations in the wake of the blockbuster success of *The Avengers*. Joss Whedon's got a lot to live up to after the dark horse success of *Guardians of the Galaxy*.

Luckily his all-star team under Robert Downey Jr. as Iron Man have the muscle and fire power to take the franchise to greater heights. The story centres around Ultron voiced by James Spader, an artificial intelligence with a god complex, intent on eradicating humans from the face of the earth.

**Why it's sizzling:** *If the trailer and cast are anything to go by, we're in for a blast!*

## Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens

Possible date: December 2015

The seventh *Star Wars* instalment is set 30 years after *Return of the Jedi* and will see Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Mark Hamill and Peter Mayhew reprising their roles. After Disney acquired Lucasfilm in 2012 and announced a third trilogy, there's been growing speculation and excitement around casting and more recently the teaser trailer.

J.J. Abrams has been entrusted with co-writing and direction, and after his sterling work with the *Star Trek* reboot, he seems like the perfect man for the job. The cross-over may irk hardcore fans but if he succeeds in 'rescuing' the franchise he may even meet and surpass the great Steven Spielberg.

**Why it's sizzling:** *The up-and-coming cast, the returning cast, and the fact that the future of Star Wars hangs in the balance.*



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## Jurassic World

Possible date: June 2015

Set 22 years after the events of *Jurassic Park*, we're introduced to a now fully-functioning theme park called Jurassic World. In order to boost dwindling visitor numbers, a new attraction is launched, which as you might guess backfires terribly. While no one was really expecting another sequel from the franchise, the 3D re-release and the \$150 million budget have helped spark renewed interest.

The commercialisation of the dinosaur theme park and recent criticism aimed at companies like Seaworld give this sequel a contemporary edge. *Jurassic World* will be Colin Trevorrow's (*Safety Not Guaranteed*) second feature film, but will all the new talent be able to pull it together?

**Why it's sizzling:** *Chris Pratt's newfound stardom from The Lego Movie and Guardians of the Galaxy have made everyone sit up and take notice.*



## The Fantastic Four

Possible date: August 2015

These days, you could probably close your eyes and point anywhere at your movie collection to identify a reboot or remake in the pipeline. Marvel's *The Fantastic Four* is the latest superhero franchise to get the heave-ho with *Chronicle*'s Josh Trank doing the heavy lifting.

This 2015 release is exciting because it features amazing next generation talent in Miles Teller as Captain Fantastic, Michael B. Jordan as The Human Torch and Kate Mara as The Invisible Woman. Throw in Jamie Bell as The Thing (seriously?!), add Toby Kebbell for experience, and you've got yourself a superhero reboot with serious dark horse potential.

**Why it's sizzling:** *Josh Trank is going for a more grounded, emotional and character-driven film and it's backed by X-Men writer-producer, Simon Kinberg.*



## Spectre

Possible date: November 2015

James Bond has been darker, more violent and dare we say cooler ever since Daniel Craig reinvigorated the series with *Casino Royale*. He's rugged, the action is grittier and Bond has become less Austin Powers and more 007. Is it all in the hopes of winning an Oscar? Judging from *American Beauty*'s Sam Mendes and some award clout from Dame Judi Dench in *Skyfall*, maybe.

While you may miss the penguin suits, cheesy lines and silly gadgets, the new direction for 007 is dead serious espionage. Cryptic messages, sinister organisations and a cast including the outstanding Christoph Waltz, Ralph Fiennes and Monica Bellucci have got us all wondering, will 2015 be Bond's year?

**Why it's sizzling:** *The recent Sony hack reveals Spectre is over-budget, which hopefully means an even bigger and better Bond.*



## Furious 7

Possible date: April 2015

Flashy cars, muscular heroes, sexy women and adrenalin-pumping action are the order of the day for *The Fast and the Furious*. The series is ramping up for the seventh instalment, an impressive feat whichever way you look at it. They restored our faith with their "Brazilian Job", made us cringe a bit with a never-ending air strip and are now ready to shift into 7th gear.

In a surprise move, renowned horror film-maker James Wan (*SAW*, *The Conjuring*) is in the driving seat for the latest sequel, which sees the return of Dwayne Johnson. The already impressive line-up will also include Jason Statham, Djimon Hounsou and 80s action hero Kurt Russell.

**Why it's sizzling:** *After Paul Walker's untimely passing and the exciting Tokyo Drift post-credits sequence to Fast and Furious 6, everyone's wondering what they've cooked up.* **ts**

# SA COMICS ROUND-UP



By Moray Rhoda

Right now is probably the most exciting point in the history of SA comics. Every year more comics are created locally and just about every genre under the sun is covered. With that much choice out there, I'm as surprised as anyone that two of the books I most enjoyed reading, happen to be autobiographical.

## MENGELMOES 2

WILLEM SAMUEL

[www.willemsamuel.blogspot.com](http://www.willemsamuel.blogspot.com)

*Mengelmoes 2* covers Samuel's matric year and the self-confessed teenage angst he felt at having his heart broken (or torn out of his ribcage as per his illustrations), his views on Christianity and school life in Cape Town. Samuel masterfully evokes the complexities of living in South Africa and our uncomfortable relationships with the history of our country. Fantasy and the reality of his past combines as effortlessly as the different art styles Samuel uses, creating a book that is visually impressive, but is probably also the best storytelling in a comic book by a South African during 2014. The artwork changes throughout to reflect the dark or positive emotions Willem felt at specific moments in time. Although broken hearts might seem like a heavy topic, plenty of humorous moments are sprinkled throughout making this an enjoyable book and one of the sweetest odes to a lost love I've read.

## SOPHIE THE GIANTSAYER

KAY CARMICHAEL

[bit.ly/giantkill](http://bit.ly/giantkill)

40 years ago giants came from space and invaded earth by land, sea and air. The devastation they caused drove humanity into small scattered enclaves all over the world and no one could stand against them until one of the astronauts that released them reappeared with a magic sword. The story picks up with young Sophie having heard these legends her entire life, although most people have not seen giants for decades. Carmichael creates an intriguing world, setting up the greater history in a few conversations and small scenes with meaningful character interaction. The struggle between the islanders who believe in giants/magic and the rational idealists/scientists who doubt they ever existed is established early as the main conflict. *Sophie the Giantslayer* is a well-paced, well-written tale of the hero's journey of a young girl who must save her tribe when the giants return.

## FIXED UP

IAN NORRIS

[www.fixedupcomic.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.fixedupcomic.blogspot.co.uk)

Ex-Cape Town boy, Ian Norris has a nostalgic and heartfelt look back at the failed relationships of his past, starting with the first pressurised fixed-up scenario as a twelve year-old. The cartoony approach and subtle humour is the perfect vehicle for a story where the characters and events are the main focus. In especially the first issue there is a childlike honesty to the story, from the start where Norris exchanges being happy for a girlfriend and a good dose of misery. Some universal themes are touched upon, such as peer pressure to get fixed-up, the desperation of dating, the end of relationships and the difference between desire and action. Issue 2 moves the story on to post-matric Ian and his year gap year spent at a kibbutz and how that changed him but not his calamitous relationships. *Fixed Up* is a great start to a series and an entertaining read. **ts**



# THE COMIC BOOK GUYS

## MORAY RHODA

As far at the local comic book scene goes, one guy has been working extremely hard at pushing it forward – our very own comic book guru Moray Rhoda. He answered a few pertinent questions.

**TS:** You have done a lot of heavy lifting in order to elevate the local comic book scene. Where do you think the industry is right now, and what needs to happen to take it to the next level?

**MR:** Right now is definitely the best time for SA comics in terms of the amount of books out there, the vast genres covered and the quality levels of locally produced books – both in terms of art and printing. A few local artists and writers are also managing to build international careers doing comics and I fully expect more locals to make that breakthrough. There are also more events around comics and pop culture every year, which enables comic creators to build a local audience.

I've given up on any local publishers ever being anything but stupidly myopic in terms of what they believe will sell, but one thing that could help the local scene would be an invested local publisher with a global game plan. Local comic creators should also not get so caught up in the local fan service that they forget to look at international audiences.

The biggest thing that would help though, is for local comic creators to realise that even though our art is on an international level, local writing and storytelling in comics is generally as bad as our art was in the late 80s, early 90s. They need to fix this and spend as much time on the writing as they do on artwork or on marketing themselves.

**TS:** What is your goal regarding your own comic book creation?

With the best intentions I always vow (or threaten) that this year I'll work on my own comic projects and spend less time managing events or organising publications, and each year I don't get there. So the simple answer is – I am working on a few projects with other comic folks and all things being equal those projects are aimed at public launches from June 2015 onwards.

**TS:** What are some of the projects you are currently busy with?

In terms of organising things, I am planning SA Comics at Design Indaba 2015 along with Ray Whitcher from Legion Ink. As always, I am also moving things along in the production process of the next *Velocity*. Because I seem to be doing a lot of workshops, I will be spending a sizable chunk of my time in formalising those workshops and my thoughts about storytelling in comics over the next few months. This would be based on my practical experience and collaborations with artists and writers, as well as my observations of certain shortcomings in local storytelling and also very much based on the type of questions I get in workshops.

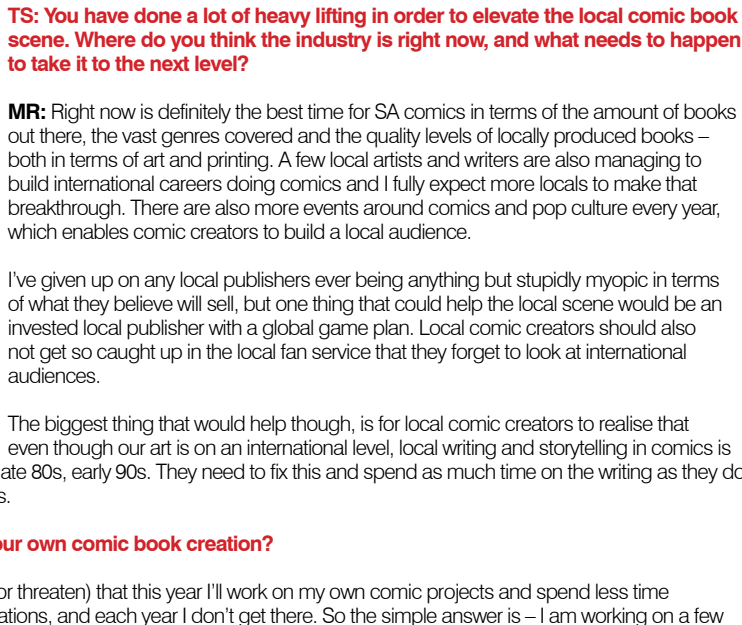
In terms of comics, I will be writing the next installment of *The Lil 5* comic ([www.lilfive.com](http://www.lilfive.com)) and doing art for a story by Christo van Wyk. I am also working with a few other local creators on a long-term new comic project for launch in mid 2015.

**TS:** When will the next *Velocity* appear?

*Velocity 5* is in the production process with artists already working on their stories. Some have in actual fact already finished their artwork and handed that in. We try to aim *Velocity* launches as events, so at this point we are aiming at the first weekend in May, at Free Comic Day. **ts**

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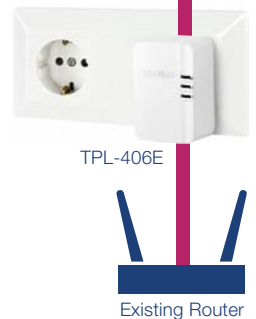


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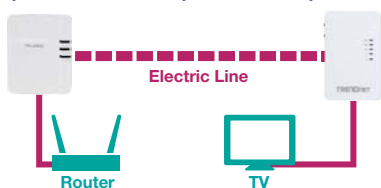
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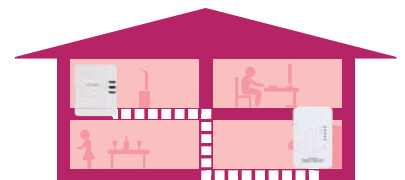
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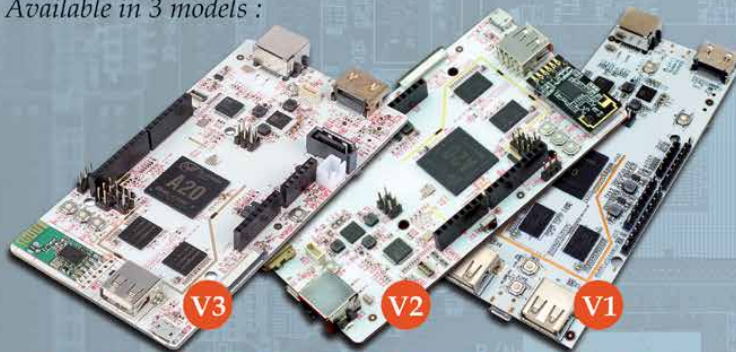
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# CALL OF DUTY

## ADVANCED WARFARE

The latest addition to the Call of Duty behemoth, *Advanced Warfare*, kicks the franchise up a notch, bringing several new innovative and engaging additions to the combat first person shooter.

In the past, the Call of Duty (COD) franchise has been accused of copy and paste gameplay, with each succeeding entry being all too similar. Although *Advanced Warfare* offers a familiar dynamic, Sledgehammer Games have gone to great lengths to make it more distinctive, to the extent that it may well be the best entry to date.

Helping matters greatly is Kevin Spacey, who lends not just his likeness to the game, but his gravitas and charisma as a thespian as well. His performance, via faithfully rendered avatar, is faultless, believable and at times, quite chilling, as Jonathan Irons, the grieving father of your deceased best friend, made a casualty of war. Whether it's because of his role in *House of Cards*, or just due to his acting chops, Spacey's wading into the game's political shark tank works brilliantly.

### Meet my exo

Be warned though, there is, as usual, plenty of geopolitical context and the no less convoluted story. In a nutshell, after a mission goes tragically wrong and leaves you (voiced by the go-to guy for video games, Troy Baker) injured and quite literally disarmed, you are discharged from the military. Instead of spending the rest of your life sipping Pina Colada's on a Caribbean beach, you are recruited by Irons' private military company, Atlas Corporation, which can act militarily without pesky political oversight.

As the game is set roughly fifty years in the future, *Advanced Warfare* can and does make you feel at times like a super soldier thanks to your exoskeleton suit (exo). Indeed, boost jumping, gliding off buildings to safety, climbing up obstacles with magnetic gloves and deploying an

**ADVANCED WARFARE IS A TIGHT, FLUID AND FREQUENTLY BREATHTAKING FIRST PERSON SHOOTER, AND ULTIMATELY PROVIDED THE MOST FUN I'VE HAD WITH A COD ENTRY IN A WHILE.**



energy shield or cloaking device are some of the goodies you can look forward to. Alas, these are mission specific, so you don't have access to all your enhanced abilities throughout the game.

Answering your typical gamers' need for improving their character is the dynamic of earning upgrade points – accomplished by scoring headshots, pulling off grenade kills or finding intel hidden along the way. These points can then be spent on improving your exo to increase your resistance or improve your speed, for example.



### Get a gripe

If there is a downside to *Advanced Warfare*, it is that it is still overly linear, a design choice that is all the more glaring if you are playing *Far Cry 4* at the same time, and it can quickly feel like you are being led by the nose.

Beyond that though, there is still plenty to like and enjoy once you get into the meat of the game. Along with the fact that combat feels more fluid than ever, the action, while coming fast and frequently furious, is changed up almost as quickly. For example, one moment you are deploying and piloting an attack drone, the next you are turning a wall into a viewable screen and tagging hostage takers for a time sensitive takedown, and then moments later you are dealing with a runaway turret, and the action only ramps up from there.

All in all, *Advanced Warfare* is a tight, fluid and frequently breathtaking first person shooter, and ultimately provided the most fun I've had with a COD entry in a while. RRP: R800. [RN] **ts**





## There has been no shortage of tantalizing blockbusters of late, but one game begging to be played is none other than the fourth entry in the Far Cry franchise.

**H**ere's the thing about Far Cry 4 – it's a ridiculously good looking game, to the extent that it made me seriously consider packing my bags and booking a trip to the Himalayas, or at least upgrading my puny 40" HDTV, to drink in the sights. More than once I stopped playing to survey Kryat's imposing snow-capped mountain range, but no less tantalizing were the glistening mountain streams and beautifully detailed wildlife.



The game sees you, Ajay Ghale, venturing to the Himalayas to honour the last wish of your deceased mother by scattering her ashes in her fictional birthplace, Kryat. Problem is you soon enough run into your dictatorial dad, Pagan Min, who is cultured, well dressed and deeply psychotic. This then leads you to land right in the middle between a bunch of freedom fighters, known as the Golden Path (formerly led by your mom), and Min's own plans.

### Play your way

Further helping the game's immersiveness is its score, which is at times haunting to the point of being mystical; at other times, at the height

of action, bombastic and jarring, lending urgency and tension to the events unfolding before you. Special mention must go to the characters populating the game in general; and the voice acting in particular, as it made most of our encounters with non-playable characters (NPCs) feel wholly believable.

Sky high production values are all well and good, but the immediate question that comes to the fore is how well does Far Cry 4 actually play? Thankfully, the answer is almost as good as it looks. The gaming dynamics are exhaustive, offering a variety of ways to deal with your enemies. If you prefer a more stealthy approach, then the game's sneaking dynamics are more than competent; a la other stealth titles (which need no mention) you have the standard alert system which reveals whether enemies are alert to your presence.

This enables you to distract foes by throwing rocks, thus ensuring you redirect them and stay out of their line of sight, or throw bait to attract wild enemies to their locale and let the wildlife do your dirty work for you. If you would like a more unconventional approach, you could always ride an elephant into their encampments and, as your dad encourages early on "tear sh\*t up". Alternatively, if you can also opt to go Rambo on your enemies, reap explosive chaos and be as subtle as a sledgehammer, with an array of weapons.

### Armed to the teeth

These, incidentally have to be unlocked before they can be bought or picked up when found. This is accomplished by liberating bell towers, thus throwing a figurative wrench into daddy dearest's propaganda machine. Liberating towers also grants you access to new quests and reveals more of the game's world on your map, giving you yet more ways to immerse yourself in the game and watch your leisure time disappear.

Far Cry 4 is quite literally a far cry from scripted, linear first person shooters, and executed so well that I would list this as one of the must play titles of 2014, or any year, for that matter. RRP: R830. **ts**



**Far Cry 4 is a ridiculously good looking game, to the extent that it made me seriously consider packing my bags and booking a trip to the Himalayas.**

# DRAGON AGE INQUISITION

The latest from BioWare begs the question - can Dragon Age: Inquisition breathe life into the franchise and reignite its glory?

**B**ioWare's first Dragon Age role playing game, Origins, quickly earned itself a legion of fans, boasting the company's trademark deep story, well drawn characters and an engrossing world. The sequel though seemed to be a step back, largely disappointing and seemingly sending the franchise into a deep slumber. In most fantasy lore, something ancient and powerful invariably reawakens and returns, and so too has Dragon Age, with Inquisition leading the charge to reclaim its throne as a RPG king. Here's the good news: it succeeds.

## Scratching the surface

Setting the stage for a much more complex and convoluted story, you discover that you are the only remaining survivor of a devastating attack on a peace brokering meeting between the Mages and the Chantry, leaving the latter leaderless. Despite the fact that you can't remember your involvement, you are considered the prime suspect for being so inconsiderate as to still be alive.

Exacerbating matters is that all is not well in Thedas, Dragon Age's world, as demons are pouring through rifts that are opening across the land. What's more, an inexplicable mark on your hand grants you the power to close these rifts and mitigate the demon invasion. While the Chantry wants your head (sans the rest of your body), Cassandra

**IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T REALISED ALREADY, DRAGON AGE: INQUISITION CAN QUICKLY BECOME A TIME SINK OF NOTE, ALTHOUGH THIS IS HARDLY A CRITICISM.**



(Dragon Age II's Seeker of Truth) instead wants your help to close these rifts and help restore order to the land. Luckily, the latter gets her way and this sets the stage for what quickly becomes a grand, even epic, adventure.

## Here there be...

There is so much world building that has gone into Dragon Age: Inquisition, that it can be overwhelming. Beyond a far reaching story to pursue, demons to fight, people to speak to and lore to find and read, there are companions to get to know and decisions to be made about which side of the world's politics you wish to align yourself with. All this kept me playing well into the wee hours; in case you haven't realised already, Dragon Age: Inquisition can quickly become a time sink of note, although this is hardly a criticism.

Thankfully though, the game's diverse and often splendid environments are top notch thanks to the Frostbite 3 engine, making it a pleasure to explore. So is the voice acting, complete with distinctive accents, while its terrific score had me racing to iTunes to buy it on its own. This is also backed by an engaging combat system, whether you choose to be a mage, warrior or rogue, and a plethora of gear to find and to buy. I do recommend trying out at least a couple of the classes and races before diving headlong into the full campaign, to see which best suits your liking, as your class and your race will influence how the world's denizens react to you. Yes, you will face off against the titular dragons and a variety of fiends eager to facilitate your demise. Luckily these foes are often challenging enough to keep battles engaging, to say the least.

In a nutshell, BioWare is back on fine form and Dragon Age has simply never looked or played better. Inquisition stands proudly alongside some of the finest RPGs, and if you are a fan of the genre, I cannot recommend this one highly enough.

RRP: R700. [RN] **ts**



# PIPPA TSHABALALA ON: AN IDEAL WORLD

In an ideal world, everything would be backwards compatible. Yes. You would be able to play your old PS3/PS2/PS1 games on your PS4. You could revisit your favourite games from your childhood any time you liked without having to wait for the "HD Remastered" version to be released on your current platform.

In an ideal world, nothing would be platform exclusive. No elaboration needed really. All games would work on all systems. Always.

In an ideal world, nothing would require upgrading on your PC. You'd be able to play the newest version of The Witcher without thinking: "Can my PC handle this? It's still pretty speedy, but it's a year or so old, and I'm not convinced that I won't need another 2 GB of RAM or worst case a whole new graphics card in order to play it."

In an ideal world, games wouldn't be so expensive. Yes, I said it. It doesn't matter how you spin it, almost R1 000 for a game is hard on our pockets. It's all very well and good if you buy a game that gives you hours and hours (and I mean in excess of 20 here) of play, but when a game that you've just spent a small fortune on only provides at best eight hours of play, there is something very wrong. I've said before that as gaming journalists we often forget how expensive games are, but at a time when there are three or four big releases in a month, the consumer suffers financially, if they can afford to spend that much on a game at all.

In an ideal world, we would have time set aside for gaming. I would be able to come home from work, eat dinner, sit down and play for hours without being interrupted. Now don't get me wrong, I wouldn't trade my kids for anything in the world, but having children completely changes your gaming habits. You go from gaming in every spare moment, to trying to squeeze it in after you've put the kids to bed, before you get too tired to keep your eyes open, knowing you have to go to work the next morning. It takes twice as long to complete a game and the days of playing games into the early hours of the morning are long gone. There's no going to bed at 4 am after a particularly gruelling boss battle when you have to be up at 6 (if you're lucky) because your kid wants to watch cartoons.

In an ideal world, there wouldn't be even a hint of a gender feud. Ok, perhaps feud is the wrong word, but 2014's #GamerGate controversy that swept through the gaming world, lends itself to this description. The fact that women feel the need to disguise their gender when playing games in the online arena simply wouldn't happen in an ideal world.

Perhaps not all of these are completely realistic, but this isn't an ideal world. In an ideal world I would be ensconced behind a high powered gaming PC, while still interacting meaningfully with my family and not even a little bit worried about my gender. **ts**

**"Perhaps not all of these are completely realistic, but this isn't an ideal world."**

PHOTO: TIM HULME FOR SPLICED  
MAGAZINE

# TOP EIGHT GAMES IN 2015: GLORIOUS GAMING AWAITS

If there is one upside to games that are delayed into the following year, it is that the months ahead becomes jam packed with tantalizing titles. And then of course, there are still the games scheduled for release in that year as well. Either way, 2015 is looking extremely good on the gaming front.



## Dying Light

PS4 - Xbox One - PC  
Techland - February 2015

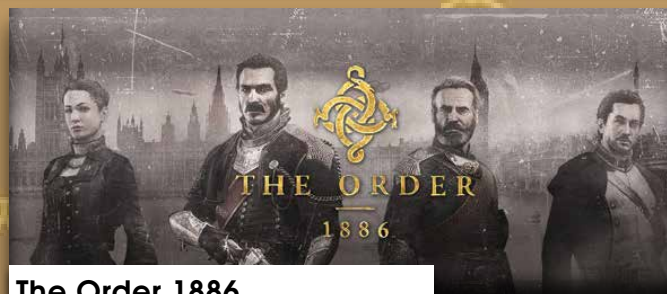
Combine two primal fears – darkness and the dead coming back to life, hungry for your blood – and you have Dying Light, a game which links the walking dead's aggressiveness, and your vulnerability, to the inevitable passing of day into night. This also changes the game's dynamic, from scavenging and hunting during the day, to just trying to survive other lurking monstrosities that also come out when the sun retreats. The game appears to be a mash-up of two genres – action adventure and survival horror, and looks set, along with the equally alluring The Order: 1886, to start 2015 off with a bang.



## Bloodborne

PS4  
From Software - March 2015

Another of the games leading the charge into 2015 is also a PS4 exclusive, which mixes a dark Gothic world oozing atmosphere, with challenging, and gory gameplay. Bloodborne may have spoken softly last year, but it nonetheless carries the proverbial big stick in the form of seriously wicked looking weapons and monstrous denizens that make Freddy Krueger look like a pulpit boy. Did we mention that it comes in a killer collector's edition? The game, hailing from the makers of Demon Souls and Dark Souls, From Software, is certainly not going to be a cakewalk; however, it has plenty of its own distinctiveness.



## The Order 1886

PS4  
Ready at Dawn, SCE Santa Monica Studio - February 2015

The Order: 1886 takes players to an alternate Victorian era London, to play as part of an elite team of Knights dedicated to protecting humanity from half breed monsters, which are combinations of animals and beasts. These protectors aren't your run of the mill Knights, and thanks to the discovery of a substance called Black Water, boast advanced healing and special abilities. Add to the fact that the game's setting is more technologically advanced than the Victorian London we are familiar with, and a number of intriguing weapons, then The Order: 1886 may just win the prize for being the most distinctive game we will see early 2015.



## The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

PS4 - Xbox One  
CD Projekt - May 2015

Finally, Geralt is expected to come bewitch us again, in a game world that is apparently larger than the first two titles combined. Even though Wild Hunt was recently delayed yet again into May, the gameplay, world building and mature story looks no less compelling than it did during 2014. Somewhat heartening is CD Projekt's determination to shore up any bugs before the game hits the shelves, making this the next RPG to watch out for.



## Batman: Arkham Knight

PS4 - Xbox One - PC  
Rocksteady Studios - June 2015

The third (and apparently final chapter) in the Dark Knight quadrilogy from Rocksteady Studios looks nothing short of amazing, with the Batmobile being given a chance to shine and Batman boasting a number of flashy and innovative ways to take down his enemies. Not only will players have to contend with the Scarecrow and other familiar foes like The Riddler, Two Face and Harley Quinn, but also a much more formidable foe – the titular Arkham Knight.



## Until Dawn

PS4  
Supermassive Games - TBA

Eight friends, a remote mountain retreat, the anniversary of a friend's death and some Ouija board fun – what could possibly go wrong? Well, throw in a serial killer and you have a bunch of terrified youngsters running and screaming for their lives. Until Dawn is already looking suitably spooky, as survival horrors ought to, but beyond that, every choice players make will have its own set of consequences and determine each player's unique story.



## Rise of the Tomb Raider

Xbox One - Xbox 360  
Crystal Dynamics - TBA

Forget for a moment all the controversy about the game receiving a timed exclusive on Microsoft's console, the fact remains that 2013's Tomb Raider was an extremely strong and enjoyable game. While its story of Lara's beginnings as the Tomb Raider was neatly wrapped up, it also concluded open-ended enough to leave the door open to a sequel, as well as with the possibility of further refinements in any follow-ups. The main improvements we are looking forward to seeing in Rise of the Tomb Raider include globe-trotting and larger, much more complex tombs to explore.



## Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

PS 4 - Xbox One - PC  
Naughty Dog - TBA

Xbox One players may be getting the next Tomb Raider in 2015, but action adventure PS4 players have ample recompense in the next (and first next gen) Uncharted. What we do know about Uncharted 4 is that Nathan Drake is back, apparently pulled out of retirement for one last score, hunting for pirate treasure with an older brother in tow. This time round, the PlayStation's most prolific climber will have a little help from a grappling hook, although the biggest question at this point is where are Sully and Elena?

## In the meantime, play this:

These are by no means the only games coming in 2015, with the next Legend of Zelda, and the reboot of Ratchet and Clank also incoming this year. Admittedly, several of these games are several months away. Thankfully, there are still titles from the tail end of 2014 that well justify your attention, such as the superb Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare, and Assassin's Creed: Unity (fully patched). For something family friendlier, Smash Bros for Wii U, or Lego Batman 3: Beyond Gotham are also solid considerations. [RN] **ts**

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## SCI-FI SHORT STORIES

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

## RoBokkie

BY DILLON JOSHUA PRETORIUS

Illustration: Jacques Swart

“Dieter... Dieter, how are you feeling?”  
Dieter slowly turned away from the window where he had been watching the concrete apartments whip past as their car drove by, much faster than any human could ever control. “Oh, fine, still dying, but great!” he snapped back to his doe-eyed mother sitting across from him. He briefly felt bad for the tears he saw welling up yet again, but at least, he thought to himself, she would have time to get over it. Unlike him.

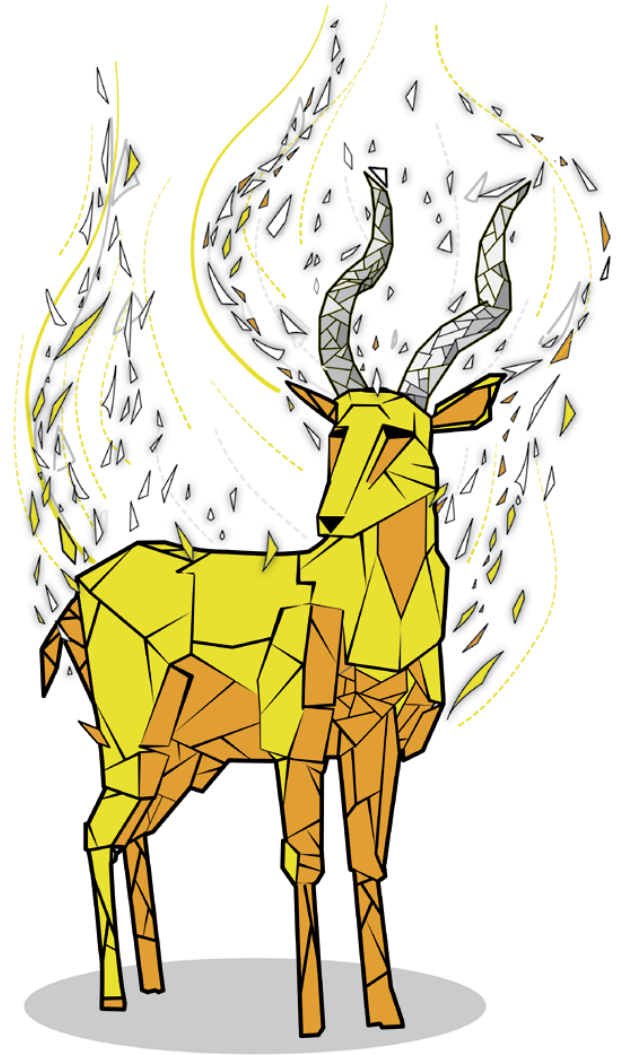
His sweaty, hairless head was sticking to the seat behind him as they finally pulled through the gates of the Kruger Park, the only preserved bit of land left in all of South Africa since that building project in the Cape in 2054. This had been Dad’s dumb idea. They thought this new “puppet safari” experience everyone had been raving about would cheer him up a bit. Fight the “Death Doldrums”, as Dieter had begun to call them. Ja, right.

The man that greeted them at the door of the squat little brown building they had stopped at reminded Dieter of a praying mantis, towering over his rotund parents and gesturing them inside with his pointy hands. They were lead to a smaller room with what looked like a dentist’s chair at the centre. It had several monitors as well as coloured lights, buttons and switches on the walls.

“This, the puppeteer room, is where the client will recline and the projection will be managed. Sir and Madam, you may view the experience on the monitors. This is brand new, cutting edge technology, but I assure you it is perfectly safe,” he said in a whiny, nasal voice.

Dieter, who hadn’t said a word, lay down on the centre chair, secretly relieved, as even the short time walking since the car had drained his frail form. The mantis-man placed wired electrodes on Dieter’s temples and a rubber cap over his bony head. Dieter looked over at the man who went and stood at a switch on the wall. “This shouldn’t hurt, but it will feel a bit strange.” He pulled the switch. Dieter fell.

He opened his eyes to see an impala’s butt not 4 cm from his face. He stumbled back, his four hooves skittering over the sandy ground. Incredible. It actually worked. He had read how they had developed the injectable nanotechnology to allow for the simple-minded buck to be “driven” by tourists seeking an authentic bush experience, but he had never imagined it would feel like this. He pranced around his new musky-smelling brethren for a while, taking in the sight, touch and smell of the diminutive creature. He tried eating some leaves as the rest of the herd was doing, and discovered that since the bokkie loved the taste, so did he. He took deep breaths through his little black nose without the usual ever-present sting of pollution. This pretty creature was... alive, in a way Dieter hadn’t been in a long time.



After a while, he decided to explore. The herd seemed to express some concern at his leaving, but did not follow. He wandered through the bush, absorbing everything with the fresh wonder of a child. He came to rest under the shade of a thorny tree he did not know the name of, and suddenly felt sadness overcome him. He could still faintly feel his weak shell of a body lying on the chair like a corpse. This new experience of life just made his approaching death seem even more unfair.

Then out of nowhere, pain raked down his side and a fierce roar sent panic through his tiny form.

“What’s happening!?”

“Please be calm, Madam, a leopard appears to have attacked the puppet. I will recall your son. It...It’s not working. He should be waking up. This has never happened before. He’s slipping into a coma! I don’t know what to do!”

Dieter opened his eyes and felt no pain, only strength and pure freedom. He could climb trees with his claws. He could breathe with powerful lungs. Dieter was alive. **ts**



# Genesis

BY LEAH GHARBAHARAN

Illustration: Jennifer Christensen

**H**e was late.

Hurrying home as the evening sky darkened, Andile caught sight of the cane field that lay between him and his home. Ordinarily, fears of cane rats and muti killings would make him skirt the edges of the murmuring field, but tonight he knew that each passing minute would translate into another lash from his father's green stick stinging his calves.

The backs of his knees prickled with anticipation and remembered pain, urging him to cut across the sugarcane field, regardless of outsized vermin and warnings of lurking witchdoctors. As he pushed his way past the tall stalks, thoughts of this afternoon's experience returned to his mind.

His friend Ben had borrowed, without asking, a pellet gun from his older brother, and the boys had spent all afternoon shooting pellets at bird nests near the river, far from any adult presence. When the boys realised they could barely see their targets, the two had taken off, trying to get home before their fathers did. But, while Ben had already reached home and quietly replaced the pellet gun, Andile still had to fight his way through the cane field.

As his bare feet pressed into the warm dirt, Andile's thoughts faded, replaced by a new awareness that he had missed his deadline: it was now night. Wiping a trickle of sweat off his eye, the humid Natal night began to feel oppressive. Sugarcane seemed to tower over him like so many adults, whispering, discussing his impending punishment. The field seemed to stretch forever. Stalk after rustling stalk was pushed through only to reveal another row of the sweet, stifling plant. Andile could hear his heartbeat; a rising thrum that forced his hands to grasp blindly and his open mouth to gasp at liquid air until, doubled over, he stopped. He realised that what he thought was his heartbeat was in fact an audible vibration that he felt in his bare toes. The inhuman sound seemed to rise from the earth in waves, suffocating his vision as the soil appeared to come alive all around him. His eyes wide, Andile saw the earth open as if sliced, and seething below the rent skin was a mass of pale, gleaming ropes.

Wordlessly, he tried to run. His lungs burned with the effort of it, but time, for him, seemed to stand still. As he watched the ropes burst from the ground he realised they were limbs, arcing through the sugarcane to wrap around his ankles, his torso, his wrists. The thrumming tentacles quickly surrounded the boy, pulling him inexorably into the soft, dark earth.

Underground, unseen, a synthesised, humanoid skeleton began to evolve as the alien creature forged new joints and sinews, combining its own DNA with each new component that stumbled into the cane field; mysterious disappearances explained away by witchdoctors and muti murders. Nestled in the dark earth, the drone faded and the susurrations of crickets and cane leaves reclaimed the night air, patiently awaiting the day a superior army is born from the earth. **ts**



Jen@flowerpot.co.za



# RETRO TECHNO

**SOUTH AFRICAN TECHNOLOGY PUBLICATIONS NEED TO START FOCUSING ON MORE ATTAINABLE FORMS OF TECHNOLOGY, WRITES DEEP FRIED MAN.**

Each month TechSmart, a South African technology magazine, brings you the latest tech developments, innovations and gadgets. This is a strange thing for a South African magazine to do, as most of these amazing tech gizmos run on a cutting edge form of technology that South Africans have no access to – electricity. I realise that what all tech publications are supposed to do is highlight the technological advances that move us towards the future. This technique is not suitable to our country, though, where we have a more retro approach to technology and, like the Amish, our government-run energy parastatal Eskom believes that electricity is wicked and that we should learn to live without it.

Really, what we need to do is focus on the kind of tech gadgets that do not presumptuously assume that its users have access to a working power supply. I therefore present to you, a list of some gadgets that are going to be playing an important role in the lives of South Africans for the next few years, or, if Eskom's level of competency is anything to go by, forever.

## 1) GENERATORS

A generator allows you to be the envy of your block during load shedding. With the right

generator, you can even run every appliance you own and blast your music as loudly as possible to induce extra jealousy (the best type of music to blast? Power ballads, of course). As if that's not enough, generators come free with a loud, constant whirring noise as well as diesel fumes that can provide you with a long lasting and legal high strong enough to allow you to forget you live in a country with no electricity. In South Africa, generators are the future. Good luck finding one, though - demand seriously outweighs supply at the moment.

## 2) BOARD GAMES

I know what you're thinking. Board games simply cannot be considered tech devices. But since power cuts make modern gaming difficult, gaming companies sensitive to the plight of South Africans should start releasing board game versions of their biggest titles. That way, when the new Grand Theft Auto or Call of Duty is released worldwide on PC, PlayStation and X-Box, young South Africans don't need to feel left out – they can simply go buy the cardboard version.

## 3) BATTERY OPERATED SEX TOYS

Sex is one of the few entertaining ways of passing the time that does not require electricity at all, unless you happen to be a fan of 'erotic electro-stimulation', a practice that is not particularly popular in South Africa for obvious reasons (Google it).

For most of us, all that is needed for a good session of sex is at least one willing partner. But why not spice things up with a vibrator? This will open up a range of fascinating possibilities in the bedroom and more importantly, they're battery operated.

These are just a few suggestions for tech devices that you can use when 'I Got The Power' is nothing but a song by Snap. Until next time, stay positive, and let's keep moving South Africa forward towards the 21st century. Here's hoping we get there soon. In the meanwhile, remember that, as the saying goes, it's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. **ts**



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