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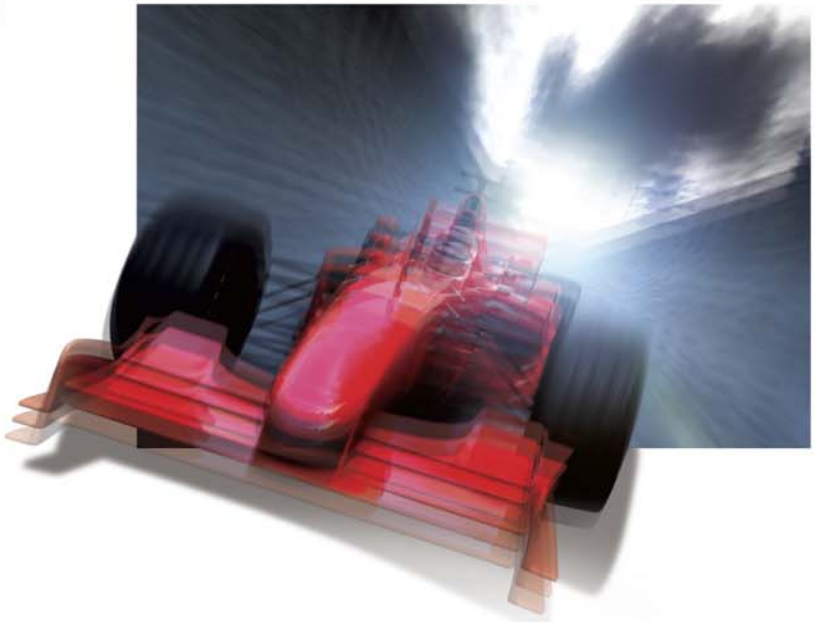

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The Education Issue ›› August 2011

Social, but not that social

Google's new Google+ social network sure looks interesting and comes with a number of features that give it the thumbs-up in a number of critics' books (see p9). But whether the search giant's latest innovation will be a success is far from clear. At this stage Google+ is sparsely populated, seeing that you're only allowed into Google's social party if you scored an invite. Although invites are not that difficult to come by these days, the number of people onboard are still a long way off those on Facebook (about 10 million vs. Facebook's 750 million users). This leads to a "news feed", or "stream" as Google calls it, which is a rather low on content and not that enticing to visit on a regular basis. Another problem for Google+ is that lots of Facebook users have invested quite heavily in Facebook, not only building up substantial friends lists, but also uploading a number of photos and joining all the right fan pages. A mass exodus from Zuckerberg's site is highly unlikely.

Personally, I've had enough of all this online socialising, I'm heading to the bar.

Enjoy the issue,
Mike (michael@techsmart.co.za)

» Regular

The Big Issue: Google+ 9
Google takes aim at Facebook with their innovative new Google+ social network. We delve into the who, where and why of this Big Issue.

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Welcome to the Tablet Age 11
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Editor TechSmart & TechSmart.co.za
Mike Joubert > 083-290-2889
michael@techsmart.co.za
Business manager
George Grobler
george@smartpublishing.co.za
Print media manager
Suzanne Rall
suzanne@smartpublishing.co.za
Sales Manager
Chantell Nell-Marais > 082-780-4696
chantell@smartpublishing.co.za
Advertising (Agencies)
Carmel Ann Singh > 079-515-8708
carmel@smartpublishing.co.za
Designers Brett Wilson, Otto Ueckermann
Contributors Mike Joubert [MJ], Hanleigh Daniels [HD], Johan Keyter [JK], Quintin van Rooyen [QvR], Ryan Noik [RN]
Accounts & subscriptions
Ronel Keet > 012-362-2732
accounts@techsmart.co.za
Distribution
Renier van Vuuren > 073-166-1515
renier@smartpublishing.co.za

ABC CERTIFIED
98 535
copies per month
Consumer: Male
[Jan – Mar 2011]

Published by
SMARTPUBLISHING
MASS MEDIA SPECIALISTS
Tel: 012-362-2732
1218 Arcadia St, Hatfield, Pta
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TOP TECH TITBITS

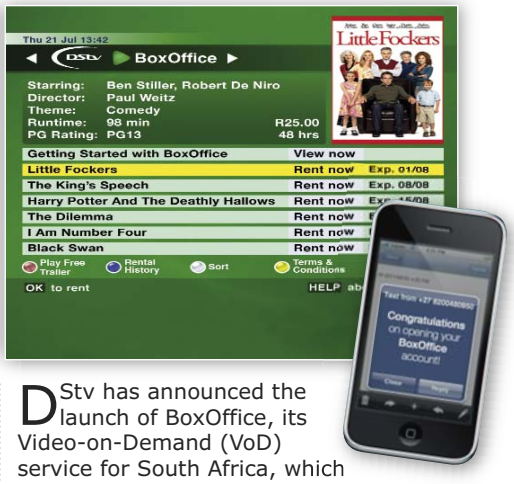
Google+ takes aim at Facebook

For a moment last month it seemed like everyone online were trying to score a ticket to the hottest show in town – Google+. Instead of sharing information with everyone that connects to you, Google's take on Facebook is built around your updates only shared with a selected group of friends. With ten million early birds signing up in less than a week (by invite only), it's still dwarfed by Facebook's 750 million users. Only time will tell if Google+ will fly, since most people are heavily invested in Facebook, making it doubtful if they have the time or energy to manage two social networks, while also trying to keep up with Twitter and LinkedIn. Read more on p11.

Data prices hacked and slashed

It was an extremely good month for low data prices as the cellular network operators did their best to undo each other on data prices. It all started when 8ta announced 10 GB data bundle for R199 per month at the end of June. MTN responded by dropping their so-called "Uncapped" Lite offering from R749 to just R299 per month. Vodacom threw their hat in the ring, scaling down prices across the board, for example their MyMeg 110 data bundle at R88 (80c per MB), now goes for R49 (but for 100 MB). Not wanting to be left out, Cell C whooshed their offerings, with 120 GB (SIM only) now retailing for R3999.

DStv launches VoD service



DStv has announced the launch of BoxOffice, its Video-on-Demand (VoD) service for South Africa, which gives subscribers the opportunity to rent the latest Hollywood blockbusters (15 to start off with) from the comfort of their couch. The service is only available for DStv Premium subscribers with PVRs, so what excites us more is their online offering which should be up and running before the end of the year. Here anyone with a fast enough connection can download movies to watch for a selected period of time. We hope DStv keeps the relatively good price of R25 per movie, watchable for 48 hours (more on p7).

HOT NEW PRODUCTS

Philips Fidelio SoundSphere

We had the opportunity to hear Philips' new Fidelio SoundSphere Docking speaker (DS9800W) in action, and boy, is it impressive. Not only does it look the part of a futuristic high tech speaker, but thanks to AirPlay technology you can stream music wirelessly from iTunes on your computer, iPad, iPod or iPhone as long as you have a Wi-Fi network present. RRP **R7999**

Lenovo ThinkPad X1

The X1 is Lenovo's thinnest notebook yet, measuring 17 mm and weighing 1.72 kg. Although it has a minute frame, like all ThinkPads it pays a lot of attention to sturdiness, with the X1 containing an interior roll cage, a magnesium chassis plus a hard-as-nails (almost) Gorilla Glass screen. Also onboard this premium offering is a Solid State Drive and the latest generation Intel Core processors. It starts at **R9000**.

DStv Mobile Drifta

With most of the Rugby World Cup games being broadcasted here in SA in the morning, it might bring about some priority conflicts at work. DStv has released a new Drifta USB, and just like its wireless brother, this one allows you to watch DStv Mobile content live on your PC. It retails for **R399** (less than its bigger brother at **R599**) with a **R39** per month subscription. Go Bokke @work!

Updated Apple MacBook Air

Apple's updated thin-and-light Air still measures in at a mere 17 mm at its thickest point, but now boasts Intel's Core i5 or i7 dual-core processors to boost its processing performance by as much as 2.5 times. The Air is available in either 11" or 13" guises and also features the new Mac OS X Lion providing its OS bite. Expect it at the end of August.

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Sci News

A fond farewell

In an emotional finale, the United States' thirty year space shuttle programme has been concluded with the last landing of the Atlantis. The shuttle landed after completing a thirteen day resupply mission to the International Space Station.

The retirement of Nasa's shuttle fleet, which was used to repair the Hubble telescope and construct the space station, has become the victim of the recession and a review of the high costs needed to maintain the crafts. It further leaves the country unable to place astronauts in orbit. However, there is a glimmer of hope for an industry that will suffer from associated job losses and of what some are calling the end of an era. Nasa intends to invite the private sector to provide it with space transport services.

Shrinky and the brain

The good news for humans is that we live longer than chimpanzees. The bad news is that we are the only known species to suffer from age related dementia, according to a paper by the Proceedings of the *National Academy of Sciences*. The paper further suggests that our longevity is possibly related to the larger size of our brains, and the shrinkage of the brain as we get older.

According to the report, this shrinkage affects all regions of the brain. While the average human brain would have lost 15% of its weight by the age of 80, sufferers of Alzheimers and age related dementia would fare worse and show greater shrinkage as well. While all creatures age and experience the decline in certain functions, scientists as yet do not fully understand why brain shrinkage is unique to humans.

Don't forget to sleep tight

If you want to retain your memory, make sure you get a good night's sleep. This is according to research that suggests that it is not just how long you sleep for that matters, but how uninterrupted that sleep is as well. According to *Science News magazine*, mice were unable to remember toys they had seen after a night of interrupted sleep. Additionally, the research suggests that waking up during a sleep period interrupts the biological process necessary for retaining memory that sleep initiates, and 'resets' it back to the beginning. Additionally, interrupted sleep is believed to potentially interfere with protein production and the rewiring of brain cells. While the mice, which only sleep for short bursts, required two minutes of prolonged sleep, and fruit flies required thirty minutes, scientists believe that the time period required for humans could be considerably longer. [RN]

» More hot science

Next Mars Rover to land at huge Gale Crater. **http://bit.ly/rovergale**

Stephen Hawking explains where we come from. **http://bit.ly/hawkingbegin**

Not Twilight, but rather Pluto: New Moon. **http://bit.ly/plutomooning**

Eco News

Vodacom to construct one of Africa's greenest buildings

Construction of one of Africa's greenest buildings kicked off at the end of June as Vodacom and its parent company Vodafone, plans an alternative energy innovation centre to assist in the reduction of carbon emissions across the globe. Once completed, this Midrand-based innovation centre will house a team of experts tasked with developing energy efficient technology to counter some of South Africa's, and the planet's, greatest environmental challenges. "The innovation centre will be… powered with renewable energy using cooling and heating technologies. We are working with the Green Building Council of South Africa to ensure the building is accredited according to the Green Star rating system," Vodacom CEO, Pieter Uys, said during the media introduction of the centre.

International eco award for Goodyear EfficientGrip tire

Goodyear's EfficientGrip tire has received The Green Innovation Award by GreenWorks, a Luxembourg-based portal dedicated to companies that employ sustainable development initiatives. In addition to the EfficientGrip tire, the company's Marathon LHT II commercial vehicle tyre also ranked second in the category of Green Product Awards. According to Goodyear, this accolade reflect its efforts to reduce its CO_2 footprint via the use of innovative tyre technologies. EfficientGrip sports innovative Fuel Saving Technology and provides drivers with reduced fuel consumption due to its rolling resistance. It also boasts a variable tread and block angle arrangement, allowing for a quieter, noise pollution reducing ride. This tyre is imported to South Africa in a variety of sizes.

Saving the world via mobile video game

Last month Nokia announced the availability of a new mobile game via its official Coversations blog. This game, Climate Mission 3D, is available to download (a sizeable 25.76 MB) for free via the company's Ovi Store. Whilst playing the game, users will receive tips on how to reduce their carbon footprints, and even have the chance to donate to an eco-friendly charity including WWF (not to be confused with the WWE), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Oxfam. Within Climate Mission 3D, smartphone users can don their green cape, mask and gloves to take part in three different game types, these being Ants, Trees and Icebergs. Each game type sports 20 levels to complete, meaning there's a grand total of 60 levels to make your way through. [HD]

» Other interesting eco news

2011's top green cars – which one rules the eco roost? **http://cnet.co/ecocarchamp**

Another pipeline leak for BP at its Alaskan oilfields. **http://yhoo.it/BPoilyleak**

Panasonic develops breakthrough thermo-electric generator. **http://bit.ly/newpangen**

An African 1st. 1time Airline will become the first African and 3rd airline globally, to introduce Apple's iPad 2 into the pilots' flight deck, as an all-in-one Electronic Flight Bag (EFB).

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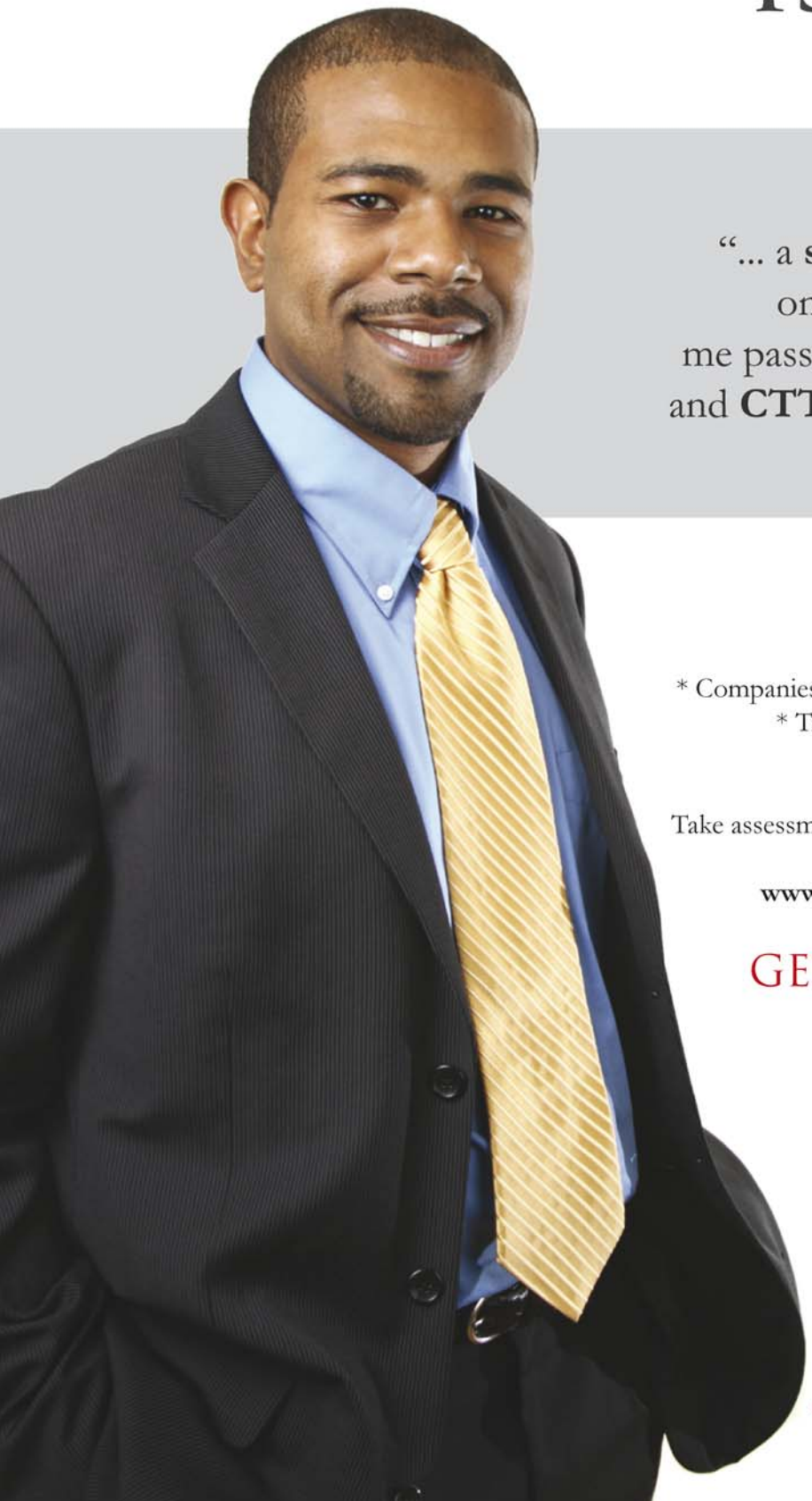

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Interview: Phillip Gronvold, Mobile Product Manager, Opera Software

Opera Software's Mini and Mobile browsers dominate the mobile browser landscape, especially on the African continent. Since introducing an "open in background tab"-like feature, Opera Mobile has also become the browser of choice on mobile devices here at the TechSmart office. We caught up with Phillip Gronvold, Opera Software's product manager for mobile.

TechSmart (TS): The Opera Mini browser is the leading mobile phone browser in SA and a number of countries on the African continent. To what do you attribute its popularity?
Phillip Gronvold (PG): The dominance of mobile browsing over desktop browsing in Africa, and limits in internet connections, have certainly led to the popularity of the Opera Mini mobile web browser. Opera Mini is unique in that it shrinks down webpages to as little as 10% of their original size before they land on your phone – this saves a mobile phone user time, money and frustration, and helps extend the capacity of data networks. We also find that Opera spreads like wildfire by word-of-mouth, and with 72% market share throughout Africa, that's a lot of people getting the word out!

> "Opera Mini is unique in that it shrinks down webpages to as little as 10% of their original size before they land on your phone."

TS: Smartphones and tablets PCs feature prominently on the mobile computing scene and are pretty powerful platforms. What new features have these devices allowed you to bring to your mobile browsers?
PG: Smartphones and tablet PCs are significantly more powerful than previous devices, and feature better connections with faster mobile data lines. The tablets also of course have a larger display screen and allow for a different type of content to be displayed. These devices also give greater touch responsiveness, faster page drawing, and smoother scrolling on websites. For us, smartphones and tablet PCs mean we can pursue new, innovative features and performance updates to give users a top-notch browsing experience.

TS: What will be driving the adoption of the Opera web browser in future?
PG: Our strategy is to build a better web browser with features that make your browsing faster and easier. Opera strives to lead the pack in innovation, while supporting web standards to ensure compatibility. Our vision is to provide the best internet experience on any device, and Opera is indeed bringing the web to more devices, such as TVs, set-top boxes and any other device with an internet connection.

Interview: Jean Louis Acafrao, General Manager: DStv on Demand

TechSmart attended the launch of DStv's BoxOffice, a movie on demand service available for DStv Premium subscribers (see p3). We had to opportunity to talk to Jean Louis Acafrao, general manager for DStv on Demand, about this and their upcoming online offering.

TechSmart (TS): Why did you choose to start off with only 15 movies available to pick from in BoxOffice?
Jean Louis Acafrao (JLA): What we are trying to do is learn from the market and also to find out exactly what the right proposition is. It's an evolving product with the service now on PVR, with online coming later in the year. What we have now is a premium offering that can be the most easily understood and consumed by the South African market.

TS: So will the PVR offering be restricted to 15 titles?
JLA: Until we get new versions of PVRs, that amount is pretty much locked down. As we cycle through better PVRs with bigger hard-drives, we'll be trying to make more content available.

TS: When will your online video on demand offering be up and running?
JLA: Definitely before the end of the year.

TS: What about download size of the movies?
JLA: Download size will vary in regards to the quality of the movie. We are considering giving users the option of either a fast download, but lower quality, or waiting longer for a higher quality movie.

TS: For the same price? (DStv subscribers currently pay R25 per BoxOffice movie).
JLA: Potentially yes, we have not finalised pricing for our online offering yet. Right now we are making sure that the proposition is correct.

TS: Will series be made available online too?
JLA: Not in the immediate future, but we don't discount that it might become available.

TS: The movie on demand market in SA is there for the taking. Are you expecting any competition moving in soon?
JLA: We welcome competition and we think it's healthy. The only thing is the size of the market in SA – we don't really have a big broadband base in SA. The studios also make it cost prohibitive for anyone to apply for rights. We do see potential competition, but I think it will be a niche offering, for example sport or lifestyle.

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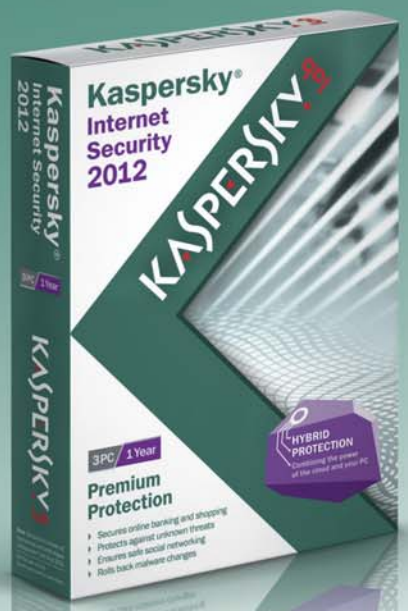

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THE BIG ISSUE

The launch of Google+ had pundits, tech analysts and users scratching their head over what exactly it is (and how to score an invite). Is Google+ meant to be a Facebook competitor, or, with its Following feature, a competitor for Twitter? The answer might be a bit of both, but perhaps more accurately, Google + is Google's take on social networking.

THE GOOGLE+ SOCIAL NETWORK

The only way to join, at present, is to be invited by someone who is already on it. This shouldn't be a cause for concern since with ten million users, it is likely that you know someone who has a Google+ account already. This strategy, which lends Google+ an exclusive air, while simultaneously leveraging off word of mouth by the millions of users who use Google's various offerings (Gmail, Google Docs, Reader, Maps, to name a few) appears to be working. While it took Facebook 852 days (two years and three months) to reach ten million users, and Twitter 780 days (two years and one month) to reach that same following, Google+ has lured ten million users in a mere 16 days.

"The biggest question is how will it change the social media landscape?"

Specific communication

Instead of broadcasting your updates to all your friends, as is the case with Twitter and Facebook, Google+ divides people you know into several circles – much like the concept of spheres of influence. Default circles include friends, family, acquaintances, and people you are following. Additionally, you can create your own circles, if you want to organise several people, such as from a particular club, into their own dedicated grouping. That way, you can specify what information you share and with whom. This may help alleviate the biggest problem Facebook has been plagued with, namely the issue of privacy. Additionally, your streams (the equivalent of Facebook's status updates), can be selected by each circle. This means, rather than scrolling through legions of annoying Farmville updates, you can select to see streams solely from family members or friends, for example.

An also ran?

It would be a mistake to underestimate or write Google+ off as an imitator or also-ran. This is after all the same company that made the word "google" part of the English language and brought us the world's most-used smartphone operating system in Android. Perhaps the biggest question is not what is Google+, but how will it change the social media landscape in the months and years to come? [RN]

FNB first with banking app » Taking banking into the smartphone age

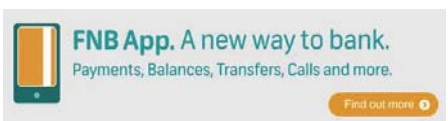
These days it seems like First National Bank (FNB) is always first with innovation. And they've done it again with the launch of its free Transactional Banking app, specifically designed for smartphones and tablets.

The app allows FNB customers to have immediate and secure access to their bank accounts, also enabling them to view their account lists and detailed transactional history, perform transactional services including transfers between accounts, as well as to pay beneficiaries. FNB's Transactional Banking app further helps FNB customers to find FNB branches and ATMs using location-based services and make free calls to any FNB contact centres as well as cheap outbound calls to other numbers. Additionally, users can also view Foreign Exchange rates from within the app itself. What surprised us is that the app is available across three platforms – Apple's iPad and iPhone, BlackBerry devices, as well as Android-running smartphones and tablets. Availability for Nokia's Symbian operating mobile devices is expected by the end of August.

What surprised us is that the app is available across three platforms – Android, Apple and BlackBerry.

Good security

As security is of prime concern with any banking initiative, Michael Jordaan, FNB's CEO, emphasised that numerous measures had been instituted to insure that customers' banking details would remain secure in the event of their smartphone or tablet being lost or stolen. The first of these is the requirement of a password and a linked internet banking account. Additionally, users can set their account limits for daily cash withdrawals, for which one would still need to access an ATM. Furthermore, new beneficiaries cannot be added using the app alone, and transfers can only be made to existing beneficiaries. Additionally, an algorithm called Smart Block, which is part of the application, detects strange or suspicious transactions and reacts accordingly.



Coming up

The app will be updated with new features in the upcoming months, with the first of these being an SMS alerts function in September. Developments on the various smartphone and tablet platforms would be done simultaneously. Additional features that are intended to be incorporated into the app in the near future include augmented reality, near field communication, share trading and eBucks. FNB customers who have Apple devices can download the app from Apple's App store, whilst Android customers can get it from the Android Market and Blackberry users can download it from Blackberry App World. [RN]

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WELCOME TO THE TABLET AGE

MORE HOT NEW TABLETS ARE A-COMING

With the prevalence of tablet news, tablet announcements and tablet reviews, you could easily be forgiven for thinking that in 2011 the Tablet Age is in full swing.

Some of the tablet news landing on our radar this past month include more details on two uniquely designed tablets from Sony, Lenovo's announcements of three new products and the eagerly awaited Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 finally reaching South African shores.

» Sony S1 and S2

Earlier this month, Sony finally unveiled its two new Android tablets to the media at press launches across the US for some preliminary hands-on time ahead of its as yet, unconfirmed launch date.

Rather than follow the standard 7" or 10" form factor, Sony appears to focus on differentiating itself in the tablet market with some unique designs.

The S1, Sony's 9.4" tablet, has a tapered design along the back of the tablet which raises it slightly when it's laid down in a horizontal mode, presumably to make typing on the device a bit more ergonomic. It also provides the feel of holding a magazine folded on itself when held in portrait mode. Sony's other tablet, the S2, has disregarded the typical 7" form factor in favour of a clamshell design with dual 5.5" screens, a little reminiscent of Nintendo's DSi XL. According to the company, this has been done to optimise mobility and to enable one to slip the tablet into a jacket pocket or purse. No local release dates have been announced.

» Lenovo joins the party

A week later, Lenovo joined the tablet fray by announcing not one but rather two tablets aimed at consumers and one for enterprise: the IdeaPad K1, the IdeaPad P1 and a business-centric ThinkPad tablet.

The 10.1" IdeaPad K1, which will run the Android 3.1 Honeycomb operating system, is firmly aimed at consumers, and will ship preloaded with more than forty apps, including Angry Birds, Kindle and Documents To Go. Lenovo's IdeaPad P1 takes the road-less-travelled by shipping with Windows 7, a bold move seeing that this OS is not really optimised for tablets. It ships with a stylus, presumably to help with "touch", while also running on an Intel 1.5 GHz processor, with Lenovo's other offerings running the speedy Tegra 2 dual-core processor. Finally, the business focused ThinkPad tablet comes with both a full-sized USB and SD card slot, while file encryption, anti-theft software and remote wipe features are also included. The Lenovo tablets will launch in the US in August and the company stated that the tablets are expected to be available worldwide during the Q3 of this year. Whether this includes SA remains to be seen.

» Samsung launches Galaxy Tab 10.1

Samsung was one the first companies to respond to the success of the iPad, launching the smaller 7" Galaxy Tab not long after. Now the South Korean company is ready for a second coming, with the unveiling of the larger Galaxy Tab 10.1 to the South African market. This new device weighs 595 grams and measures a mere 8.6 millimeters in thickness – the thinnest Android 3.1 (Honeycomb) tablet to date. With a 10.1" touch-screen display (hence the name) with a WXGA (1280 x 800) resolution, it houses the Tegra 2 1 GHz dual-core processor and a 6800 mAh battery, which the company asserted will provide up to ten hours of continuous video play on a single charge.

Notable features include Samsung's Hubs to manage popular content. The social hub aggregates email, contacts, calendar and Facebook and Twitter feeds into a central location, while the reader hub and gaming hub does the same for e-reading and gaming respectively. It competes against other 10" Android devices already available in SA, including the likes of the Acer Iconia A500 and Asus Eee Pad Transformer.

Of one thing we are certain – with so many tablets on offer, expect the race for a share of consumers' wallets to become fiercer than ever. [RN]

>1 million. The number of registered Twitter apps available online, compared to just 150 000 apps a year ago.

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Asus U36S ›› Thin, light and powerful

The new Asus U36S is a thin-and-light notebook competitor perfectly adapted for the business environment.

The 13.3" U36S is a breeze to carry around, weighing only 1.9 kg and sporting a super slim waistline at only 19 mm thick. The notebook is bathed in an all black guise with a magnesium finish stretching across the outer lid and palm rest. The finish looks attractive enough and does a great job of shrugging off sticky fingerprints, ensuring your notebook won't be covered in greasy finger-marks when you're gathered around the conference table. While not the most stylish or out-of-this-world notebook available, the U36S nevertheless exudes modern design staples, with its compact form factor made all the more prominent thanks to deceptively thin clasps supporting the display.

Performance

The U36S is equipped with a second generation Intel Core i5-2410M CPU clocked at 2.3 GHz in addition to switchable graphics in the form of Intel HD graphics and an Nvidia GT 520M GPU. Our test model was also equipped with 6 GB of DDR3 RAM – extremely impressive for a thin-and-light. During benchmarking, the U36S scored 4857 in 3DMark06. This is considerably higher than for instance the ultra portable Toshiba Portege R700's score of 1954, and speaks volumes of what the inclusion of a quality GPU does for performance. The device also scored an average of 8.3 frames per second in Heaven Benchmark 2.0, compared to the recently reviewed Sony VAIO CB15's average of 7.9.

"It speaks volumes of what the inclusion of a quality GPU does for performance."

The U36S does become a little hot when intensive tasks are being performed, meaning it might not be the most comfortable thing to have on your lap at all times. This causes an increase in fan noise, but it wasn't anything overly distracting and the U36S's fans managed the heat increase capably. Battery life on the device was quite impressive, with the 6-cell battery (an 8-cell option is also available) supplying us with 5½ hours of life during regular use (browsing, text editing) with Power Saver options turned on.

Conclusion

The Asus U36S is a great new contender in the slim-and-light notebook segment, giving users the performance and display sizes they crave, whilst not being overly bulky or power intensive. It goes for a recommended retail price of **R10 499**. [JK]

Sony VAIO CB15 ›› Colourful computing

Since its inception in 1996, Sony's VAIO notebook range has become one of the most well-known names in the industry. Their new CB range packs a very colourful punch.

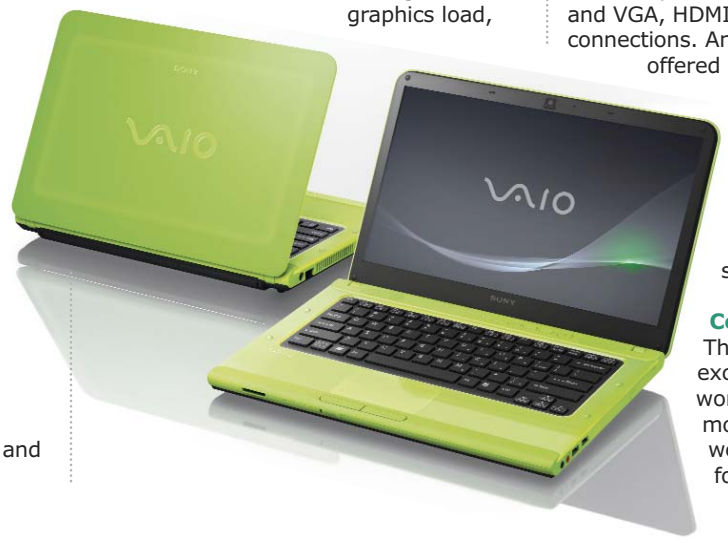
The first thing one notices when spying the new CB range is its eccentric colour schemes, with vibrant green, orange and pink designs ensuring your notebook stands out in a crowd. Our review model was bathed in a neon green which for some might be somewhat of an acquired taste.

"Instead of a small or large GPU, the CB15 throws logic to the curb and adds both."

Luckily Sony hasn't gone completely overboard with the VAIO CB series also available in a more conservative white or black guise. Apart from the colours, the CB15 sported a highly appealing design, feeling very sturdy and weighing a manageable 2.75 kg.

Performance

The notebook is quite a powerful beast, and makes for a capable desktop replacement, sporting an Intel Sandy Bridge Core i5 processor clocked at 2.3 GHz, 4 GB of DDR3 SDRAM, a 500 GB HDD and DVD reader/writer combo. While these are impressive specs, the VAIO's most telling feature is in its GPUs. This dual configuration sees a discrete Intel HD 3000 alongside a more powerful AMD Radeon HD 6630M GPU making its way onto the device. It switches automatically between these two options when it detects a higher graphics load, and at times a pop-up box will prompt you to specify which GPU a program should use.



Features

The VAIO CB15 sports a 15.5" full HD LED backlit display with a native resolution of 1920 x 1080 pixels, featuring rich and bright colours. Many other notebooks in its class can only brag with a HD ready display, so the Sony's full HD display is definitely a boon, delivering a very pleasant visual experience. Furthermore the machine offers three USB 2.0 ports, one speedy USB 3.0 port and VGA, HDMI, Ethernet and headphone connections. An SD card slot is also offered as well as Bluetooth and Wi-Fi 802.11n wireless options. Something which really impressed us on the VAIO CB15 was its chiclet-style backlit keyboard and numpad providing a smooth typing experience.

Conclusion

The Sony VAIO CB15 is an excellent all-round notebook workhorse with one of the most comfortable keypads we've tested yet. It retails for an RRP of **R9999**. [JK]

400 million & 100 million. Number of Windows 7 and Office 2010 licences Microsoft sold in 2 years.

HTC ChaCha ›› Stylish friend finder

Perhaps the HTC ChaCha is so named for the dance between its stylish workhorse form and funkier Facebook functionality.

HTC ChaCha is not a typical Android device. It's being dubbed, somewhat incorrectly, the 'Facebook phone', due in no small part to the singular Facebook button on the bottom right of the ChaCha's white and chrome front. It is not a phone created by Facebook, but rather pays particular homage to the popularity of that social network and user's predilection to constantly check their feeds and update their status.

"The HTC ChaCha's keyboard performed much better than any BlackBerry device we've tested."

Portable performer

As is expected from HTC, the phone is solid and has a pleasant weight (124 g), measuring 65 mm wide and 114 mm long. Nonetheless, it seems more compact than its measurements suggest. This may be due to the fact that the phone gently but noticeably curves upward, raising the screen slightly above the keyboard's level. While other Android phones tend towards making their screens as large as possible, the ChaCha shares its front face equally between a small 2.6" touch-screen and a QWERTY keyboard. The all-important keypad keys are small but pleasingly elongated and slightly raised, which provides a smooth and accurate typing experience – much better than any BlackBerry device we've tested.

Facebook button

Somewhat counter-intuitively, pressing the Facebook button does not take you to your news feed, but rather defaults to a status update field where you can either post a photo or a new status. We could not find a way to access one's feeds from this default screen, instead it's required to go to the home-screen and access the Facebook app. Hopefully a software update from HTC can rectify this since, like most people, we check our feeds more than we actually post updates.

The ChaCha packs a 800 MHz processor and 512 MB of memory, which manages to run Android 2.3 (Gingerbread) and HTC's updated Sense interface smoothly, with no notable problems in terms of navigating the familiar Android interface. The screen, despite having a 480 x 320 resolution, was nonetheless sharp and bright enough, even if it wasn't exceptional.

To the point

The HTC ChaCha offers an excellent typing experience, better specs than similarly priced offers from BlackBerry and quick access to update your Facebook status. If only the Facebook button gave instant access to your news feed too. It retails for a low **R2350**. [RN]

Full review:
http://bit.ly/chareview

Huawei IDEOS X5 ›› Mid-range specs on budget device

We've already reviewed the smart Red Bull Mobile HD, but sans all the Red Bull bells and whistles, it's actually Huawei's U8800 IDEOS X5. We take the X5 for a spin.

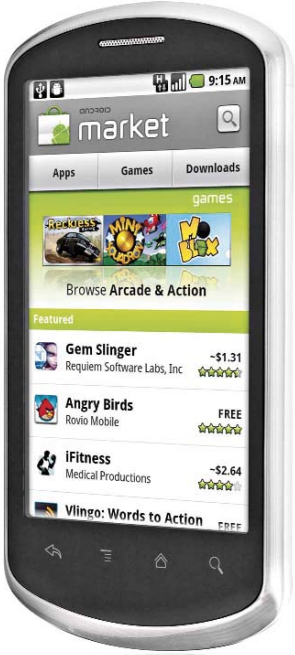
With pocket-friendly measurements (120 x 62 x 11.6 mm) and quite a large 3.8" capacitive touch-screen, the Hauwei X5's 480 x 800 resolution compares very favourably to other budget conscious, Android-powered smartphones' screens. This includes the likes of the LG Optimus One's 3.2" (320 x 480) TFT capacitive touch-screen and the 3.2" (320 x 480) touch-screen of Samsung's new Galaxy Gio.

"The X5's screen resolution and processor are actually better than we expected to find."

The TFT touch-screen of the IDEOS X5 features multi-touch capabilities such as pinch-to-zoom, which works well when zooming in and out webpages via the standard Android browser or feature rich Dolphin Browser HD. There are touch-enabled displays boasting superior resolutions, including the iPhone 4's superb Retina Display, but the budget conscious X5's screen still makes photos and videos appear vivid and is very responsive to use.

Skinless Android

You employ this touch-screen to navigate the smartphone's mobile operating system (OS), Google's stock standard Android 2.2.1 (aka Froyo) in this case. The OS is a little dated, especially since the cheaper (R2080) Samsung Galaxy Gio runs on Android 2.3 (Gingerbread). It has no fancy skin, such as HTC's Sense, layered on top of it either. For general usage this isn't really a disadvantage, as the vanilla flavoured Froyo is easy to use, boasting five home-screens to populate with your chosen widgets and shortcuts.



Features

Powering the IDEOS X5 is Qualcomm's MSM 7230 chipset featuring an 800 MHz Scorpion CPU and an Adreno 205 GPU. This certainly isn't the most powerful duo in the smartphone kingdom, but definitely not the slowest either – and actually better than we expected to see.

It keeps things running smoothly in the OS, with occasional lag, when you view HD videos for instance. Also onboard is a 5 MP camera that can record HD-ready videos (720p@30fps), Wi-Fi 802.11n, Bluetooth 2.1, 3G HSDPA, GPS, and 2 GB of storage that can be boosted via a microSD slot that supports cards up to 32 GB in size.

Conclusion

Huawei's IDEOS X5 smartphone isn't the most exciting Android-running mobile around, but for a almost entry-level **R2799** you do get some very nice mid-range specs. [HD]

Full review:
http://bit.ly/IDEOSX5

50% & 18%. BlackBerry OS usage figures for OS 5 and the latest OS 6.

LG Optimus Black ›› Bright is beautiful

One of the most important features of a touch-screen smartphone is arguably its screen, and LG is hoping that the Optimus Black P970 has what it takes to outshine the competition.

Today's smartphones can no longer just impress performance wise, they have to look the part as well. With its all black front and aluminium back, the Optimus Black gives the impression of being slick, sleek, and stylish. Furthermore, the Optimus Black is thin and remarkably light, considering its large 4" screen, which seems to have become the standard amongst smartphones of this class. Despite measuring 122 x 64 x 9.2 mm, which is basically the same size as the Samsung Galaxy S, the Optimus Black somehow comes across as a bit more compact.

"The mid-range Optimus Black would have been seen as top-end model just a year ago."

Performance Power

The Optimus Black's standout feature is arguably its brilliant NOVA screen. With a screen resolution of 480 x 800, LG has asserted that the phone's 700 Nits of brightness (the iPhone 4 is 500 Nits) affords true blacks and whites as well as better performance in sunlight. We certainly found the screen to be a pleasure to read off of, offering up vibrant colours, vivid video, and a clear browsing experience both online and when using the included Facebook for LG and Twitter for LG apps. Of greater interest, is that this mid-range offering matches the Samsung Galaxy S (i9003) performance wise, which came as little surprise, since it packed the same speedy 1 GHz Cortex-A8 processor and PowerVR SGX530 GPU on the TI OMAP 3630 chipset.

Ultimately, this resulted in a smooth, stable and responsive experience of the onboard Android 2.2.2, which offered little to no lag between gestures and their responsiveness. Two cameras – a two megapixel front camera for video calls and a five megapixel back camera for photos; 2 GB of internal memory and a MicroSD card slot that accommodates up to 32 GB extra storage, rounded out the smartphone's features.

To the point

At a RRP of **R4500**, the Optimus Black is neither cheap nor top of the range, but as the saying goes, you get what you pay for, and from beginning to end, the impression left is that you are getting a great deal of smartphone, one that would have been seen as top-end model just a year ago. [RN]

Samsung Omnia 7 ›› A more intuitive user experience

Samsung is no stranger to Microsoft's Windows OS, however, the Omnia 7 is the first Windows Phone 7 OS-running smartphone within its Redmond-powered Omnia range.

The Omnia 7 measures in at a grip-friendly 118 x 60 x 12 mm, while Samsung keeps OS lag at bay via Qualcomm's QSD8250 1 GHz application processor, but it must be noted that dual-core processors have become in-vogue of late for high-end smartphones. Onboard is a decent amount (8 GB) of storage space, but unfortunately you cannot expand on this. You will also find a 5 MP camera capable of recording HD-ready (720p) videos. The most prominent design feature is the 4" (480 x 800 pixels) Super AMOLED capacitive touch-screen. Put it next to an iPhone 4 and the Omnia's screen displays colours more vividly and brighter, but the superior resolution (640 x 960) of the iPhone's Retina Display equates to better detail on images.

"Put the smartphone next to an iPhone 4 and the Omnia's screen displays colours more vividly and brighter…"

Redmond powered

As snazzy as the smartphone's display, is its Windows Phone 7 OS, sporting a design-conscious look and feel. Its epicentre is the Start screen, populated by movable "tiles", representing shortcuts to files and apps. Swipe right and you're taken to the main menu, consisting of a list of shortcuts to apps, settings and "hubs". Hubs include Microsoft's Office hub, one of the strongest documentation creation and editing packages available on any mobile OS.

The intuitiveness of the OS impressed, but there is room for improvement. Firstly, there's a single home-screen to display apps and shortcuts vertically on, eventually equating to lots of downward scrolling. Secondly, the number of apps available via Microsoft's Windows Phone Apps Marketplace (25 000), compares unfavourably to that of the Android Market (200 000+) and Apple App Store (425 000+). There isn't a WhatsApp messenger app or MXit app for instance. All apps were downloaded from the UK Marketplace, as the local regional one will only be activated later this year with the OS' Mango update. Lastly, multimedia files stored on your PC can only be transferred to your smartphone via Microsoft's Zune media package, which you must download (119 MB).

Final word

Samsung's Omnia 7 is a solidly built, intuitive device offering some impressive specs and as soon as Microsoft bolsters its Marketplace app count, it will be game-on with Google and Apple. The Omnia 7 retails for **R5299**. [HD]

Full review:
http://bit.ly/omnia7review

>3 000 000. Samsung Galaxy S II models sold after 55 days, one sold every 1.5 seconds.

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Skullcandy Roc Nation Aviator headphones ›› Classy looks meets sweet sound

Skullcandy hooks up with Jay-Z's Roc Nation entertainment company, birthing the ultra-cool Roc Nation Aviator headphones. Is this another case of expensive audio fashion over acoustic function, or do these earphones have the sound power to match its potent price tag?

Over-the-head headphones are pretty hot right now, with the Aviators about as cool as it gets. This thanks to a design incorporating quality metals, polycarbonate headphone cups and plush memory foam ear cushions. It feels durable and is very comfortable on the ears, plus it's foldable to easily fit in the included travel pouch. A 1.3 m anti-tangle braided nylon cord means that even the loftiest users will easily connect the ear gear.

Sound performance

As one can demand from a headset with a R2k price-tag, the sound quality is very high. Sound levels are much higher compared to your average pair of headphones, but even more impressive is the fact that at the highest volume settings, the sound quality remains excellent and doesn't distort at all. Bass-levels are very good and thanks to the ear cups there's also a decent amount of noise suppression to keep harsh real-world noises at bay.

> "The sound quality remains excellent and doesn't distort at all."

As your music playing device will more than likely be carried inside your pocket, the job of controlling the music playback falls on the integrated in-line controls, located about 10 cm or so below the left ear phone cup. These controls are simple to use, but the only hassle is its close proximity to the headset since this makes it awkward (at least initially) to see which button you're pressing.

Final word

Skullcandy's Roc Nation Aviator headphone go for a pricey **R1999**, for which you get stylish and practical (barring the placement of the in-line controls) set of headphones, boasting really impressive sound levels and quality, as well as a truly palpable sense of quality in terms of construction and design. [HD]

EMTEC Flash Drives ›› Put a panda in your pocket

As useful as portable flash drives are, they're not the best looking gadgets in the IT toolbox.

EMTEC's wide range of USB flash drives is not just another generic grey stick. The EMTEC "Zoo" series includes a Panda, Teddy Bear, Mouse, and Panther, while the "Aquarium" range includes a Penguin, Dolphin, Sea Turtle and Clownfish. Good looks aside it, the storing, transporting and sharing usefulness of their fellow memory sticks are all intact. You can get them from The Gadget Shop on 012-346-2726. **R155** for a 4 GB model.

Joby GorillaTorch Blade ›› Casting light on shadowy crime elements

The latest addition to the GorillaTorch range is the new Blade flashlight, which uses a powerful 130-lumen LED light.

It is the first offering in the line to come with rechargeable batteries and it is also the first flashlight from Joby that is able to be removed from the tripod stand. The internal rechargeable battery charges from a USB port and can also be charged from the wall outlet via the included adapter. The legs of the tripod are flexible and can be adjusted, making it possible to pan the flashlight 360-degrees and tilt it 180-degrees. This means that it can be attached (by utilising its handy magnetic "feet") to a railing, to be employed as a security light by a poorly lit area around your home or business. The GorillaTorch's light can be customised to spot or flood settings. It retails for **R599** and is available from The Gadget Shop on 012-346-2726.

15. The age that Microsoft's free email service, Hotmail, turned last month.

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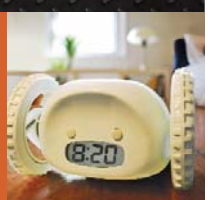
With a range of up to 100m away, this trainer lets you manage your furry friend's unwanted behaviour even if he's not wearing a lead. The unit has 8 levels of correction and a lightweight collar that can fit any dog comfortably.

Clocky alarm clock

Typical alarm clocks just don't work well. Clocky will wait for you to get up. But if you snooze, Clocky will jump off of your nightstand (from 3 feet), and run around your room, determined to get you up on time



Tocky alarm clock

Tocky is designed to roll off your nightstand and make you get up and chase it in the morning. Sadistic! But this version has a touchscreen and records messages and MP3s. It's quite the upgrade!

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25 000. Apps on Microsoft's Windows Phone Marketplace, compared to > 200 000 in the Android Market and > 425 000 in Apple's App Store.

Interview: Nikolay Grebennikov, Chief Technological Officer, Kaspersky Lab

In part two of our interview with Nikolay Grebennikov, chief technological officer at Kaspersky Lab in Moscow, we find out more about how they are using the cloud in Kaspersky Internet Security 2012.

TechSmart (TS): The new Kaspersky Internet Security 2012 package utilises "cloud protection", can we assume that this will be less resource intensive on the PC?

Nikolay Grebennikov (NG): Yes, it was one of the reasons why we pushed our cloud services. We realised that with our application control technology and reputational database, the size of the software's database will increase very fast and in this case we cannot upload all this information on a user's machine. At the same time we took into account the emerging trend of mobile devices on which you don't have a lot of space and we also wanted to use cloud technologies that does not overload it. We are also doing behavioural detection, the detection of the behaviour of applications (what certain applications do once downloaded), and this can be very resource intensive.

TS: What are the key examples of this new technology that is provided via the cloud?

NG: Well the first example would be to also check the behavioural pattern of files. We collect this behavioural pattern in our cloud from users' of Kaspersky Lab products. Before, we only checked executable files (.exe), but right now we detect and have info in our cloud database about dynamic libraries (dls), drivers and info about PDF files because of new PDF exploits. Another good example is the anti-rootkit technology; because more and more malware try to go deeper, sit in the system and try even to infect micro boot records (mbr) of the disk. This is not rootkit but bootkit, the most comprehensive. I can say that it is basically generation 2.0 of cloud protection that we are introducing with Kaspersky Internet Security 2012.

TS: Are we going to see anti-virus packages for tablets too?

NG: During an internal meeting in April, I already demonstrated to all our R+D employees a prototype of an Android tablet anti-virus and security solutions, and yes, we will be introducing protection for Android tablets later this year. Because we don't just see malware as a treat, but also privacy issues, phishing and social engineering, we have to pay attention to this too. Plus unwanted content, mostly for children.

Kaspersky Internet Security 2012 ›› On your PC and in the cloud

Quiet and peaceful in the background, until there's a problem. This is a good description of Kaspersky Internet Security 2012.

One of the last things we want to be paying attention to while working, is managing our internet security package.

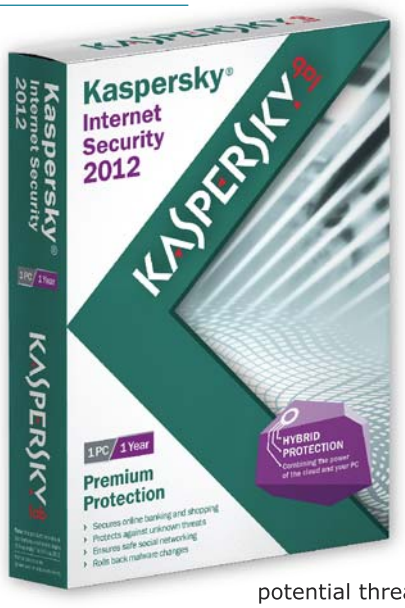
> "A very comprehensive internet security package which is quiet but effective."

It should update quietly at an appropriate time (preferably not after boot-up), not distract with constant notifications, but of course provide effective protection when needed. This is indeed the case with Kaspersky Lab's Internet Security 2012. Like most similiar packages it required a fair amount of input from our side at installation, but after this initial phase we were rarely bothered by it.

Lots of functionality

The KIS 2012 package hides a lot of functionality, which can all be found either in the main control panel or a rather large control "icon" that resides on your desktop (yes it is removable).

KIS 2012 boasts with a redesigned user interface, which although more minimalistic, still requires a fair amount of familiarisation before receiving the most benefits from this quite powerful package. And a lot of functionality there indeed is, with the most obvious being computer scanning, intensive parental controls and a firewall. Anti-spam and anti-banner technology are also onboard, along with a few interesting tools that grabbed our attention. We like System Watcher, which checks how a downloaded application behaves, allowing you to roll-back if it brings about any malicious changes. To protect against key-logging software, there's a virtual keyboard that can be used when logging into online banking, while Kaspersky also provides Safe Run option that adds an extra layer of protection for websites when security is required.



Cloud onboard

KIS 2012 benefits from improved cloud protection (see interview above) provided by the Kaspersky Security Network. This network monitors data coming in from all Kaspersky users connected to it, building a database of safe downloads, malicious applications and potential threats. When downloading a new application for example, KIS will tell you that this has been downloaded x-amount of times by Kaspersky users and it's generally considered safe.

KIS 2012 is a very comprehensive internet security package which is quiet but effective. There's far more functionality than described here, with the added benefit of hybrid protection via the cloud. [MJ]

10 is better than 8. A leaked roadmap of AMD's 2012 desktop plans hints at support for up to a tantalising 10 cores in 2012.

Advertorial Taking better care of your battery ›› Laptop City to the rescue

The friendly folks over at Laptop City do a lot of repairs on notebooks with damage to the battery that could have been prevented. They give us some nice tips regarding taking better care of your battery.

Calibrating your computer's battery for best performance

The battery has an internal microprocessor that provides an estimate of the amount of energy in the battery as it charges and discharges. The battery needs to be recalibrated from time to time to keep the onscreen battery time and percent display accurate. You should perform this procedure when you first use your battery and then every few months thereafter.

1. Make proper settings for "Power" option: click right key of your mouse in the blank screen, choose "Properties" – "Screen Saver" – "Power Schemes" – "Portable", and "When computer is" "Running on batteries", tick "Never" for all options. Under "Alarm" option, don't tick "Low battery alarm" and "Critical battery alarm" functions, and then choose "Apply" and "OK" to save the settings.
2. Disconnect the power adaptor and use your battery until laptop shuts down.
3. Plug the power adaptor in and fully charge you computer's battery to 100%. Upon initial use (or after prolonged storage period) the battery may require three to four charge/discharge cycles before achieving maximum performance. The charging process should last at least around 14 hours.

You have to first discharge your battery until the laptop shuts down before you recharge it to 100% for calibration.

After that, you can connect and disconnect the power adaptor when the battery is at any charge level.

Battery Storage

Batteries may be damaged if stored for prolonged periods with a closed circuit. If the battery will not be used for a month or longer, it is recommended that it be removed from the device when 60% – 80% charged and stored in a cool, dry and clean place. Use battery once a month to ensure good storage status.

Battery Safety

- Do not drop, hit or otherwise abuse the battery as this may result in the exposure of the cell contents, which are corrosive.
- Do not expose the battery to heat sources moisture or rain.
- Keep battery away from fire or other sources of extreme heat.
- Don't try to disassemble, repair or change the battery pack which would cause over-heating or fire. Corrosive alkaline solutions or other electrolyte leakage would lead to fire or personal injury and death.
- Don't puncture the battery by sharp materials.

For more information please contact Laptop City on Tel: 012-663-1155.

>1.1 million. MXit users downloading the new version 6 of the IM app during the 1st week of availability.

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Teach Parents Tech

Google's Teach Parents Tech is a simultaneously tongue-in-cheek and genuinely helpful site that any child of the digital era will appreciate, and that many parents will relate to. With it, tech savvy kids irrespective of their age, can send their befuddled parents a 'tech support care package' of videos that address common problems they may have asked for help with. Categories include PC basics, the web, communication, media and finding information. Checking a series of boxes then produces a personalised package with a note that can be emailed.

http://simplynoise.com

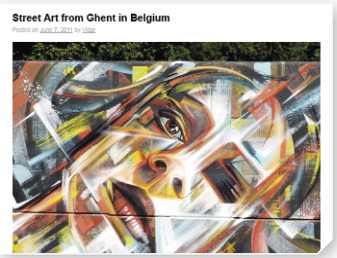
Simply Noise

Despite the site name, there is actually a great deal more to the site than being a run-of-the-mill noise generator. With content crafted by a professional sound designer, Simply Noise is an online source for colour noise, which can be used to assist in increasing focus, reducing stress, promoting positive sleep patterns and pacifying children and pets. White noise, brown noise and pink noise can be played online here, as well as downloaded for listening offline. Additionally, the site is home to MP3 recordings of soundscapes, such as waves and a thunderstorm.

http://bit.ly/maschefau

Masterchef Australia

If you are one of those food fans following the daily reality cooking show, and have wished you could conjour up the recipes shown, the Masterchef site is a food fanatic's dream come true. The site has a wealth of downloadable recipes in PDF format in almost every conceivable category, from seafood, meat, vegetarian, pasta and salads to cakes, desserts and chocolate treats. In short, if you want every recipe, you could spend a considerable amount of time compiling your own free Masterchef cookbook from the recipes on offer.



www.streetartutopia.com

Street Art Utopia

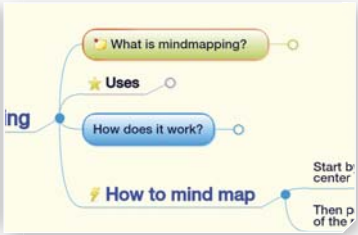
After visiting Street Art Utopia, it is likely that you will never look at graffiti the same way again. The site features truly breathtaking works of street art from around the world. Some of the artworks – painted on walls, the sides of buildings and on bus stops – are often larger than life, occasionally mind-boggling and frequently amazing. For anyone who has any kind of appreciation of art, Street Art Utopia shows how dramatically drab buildings and ordinary city elements can be transformed into something colourful and awesome. [RN]

Android Apps of the month

With over 100 000 apps available for Android smartphones at the Android Market, TechSmart helps you to get to the good ones first!

MapQuest

As a GPS navigation app, Mapquest gets the nod ahead of Google Maps since it sports turn-by-turn voice navigation (Google's offering is unfortunately not available here in South Africa yet). Add to this night mode, on map display of a myriad of points of interest such as airports, restaurants hotels, petrol stations shopping as well as a "Follow me" tracking option, and you have yourself a fully-fledged GPS navigator right on your phone. Just remember to turn on your GPS for better tracking.



Thinking Space

Ever struggled visualising a new project or coming to grips with a difficult subject? Then Thinking Space is a productivity must-have, since making mind maps and organising tasks are dead easy. Thinking Space allows you to add nodes and connect them to multiple tasks and ideas with ease. You can attach notes to nodes, change their colours and add branches to nodes and even use gestures to manipulate your mind map. Added to all that is the ability to export your mind map to various formats for use on your PC.

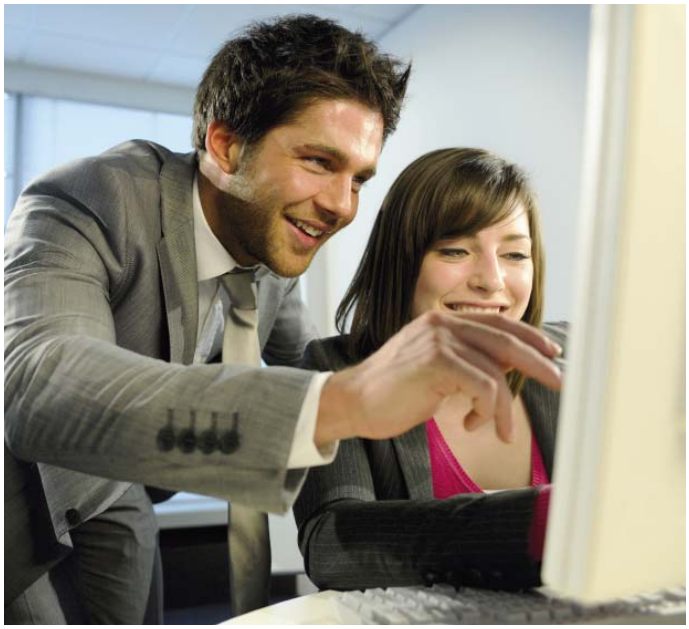
remind@

There are many "remember-the-milk" type apps available on the Android market. remind@ does one thing that the others don't – it will trigger reminders of tasks based on your GPS location. All you need to do is create your to-do task and then on the provided map tag exactly where you want it to remind you. This is handy for reminding you to, for example, pick up your new credit card when close to the bank. Another benefit is that your GPS doesn't need to be turned on for this to work.

Stair Dismount

If Angry Birds is a bit too cute for your liking, you might want to try on Stair Dismount for size. The aim of this 3D game is simple – shove Mr Dismount down a flight of stairs, ski ramp or other wacky platforms, with points awarded according to how much damage our 3D friend takes in the fall. A word of caution, Stair Dismount is not for the squeamish – although you cannot see bones break, the sound effects are very accurate, and if cracking ribs are not your thing you should steer clear of this one. [QvR]

750 million. Social networking behemoth Facebook has reportedly crossed this major milestone in active monthly users.



Advertorial Learnfast ›› Leaders in the delivery of instructor-led IT and soft skills short courses

If you want a career in the information technology (IT) sector or simply want to freshen up on your PC skills, the choice of educational institution can be as crucial as the actual selection of your occupation.

Learnfast is a provider of quality IT and business skills short courses, delivering these sought after skills to professionals within the industry, as well as those who wish to enter this employment sector. The company's training centres, located in Sandton and Centurion, are equipped with the best and latest equipment, to ensure that learners receive the most up-to-date and industry relevant training. All of the available courses are offered in-class while some are even presented on-site.

Types of courses offered

Learnfast is a Microsoft Learning Partner offering short courses in all the Microsoft applications on all levels including Microsoft Office, Windows, Sharepoint and SQL Server. Novice PC users or those users new to Microsoft applications can complete Learnfast's Microsoft All-In-One course, which will educate them around the essential Windows and Microsoft Office skills. This course will ensure that they can successfully navigate Microsoft's Windows PC operating system and operate the Office applications (Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook) on a daily basis. The Microsoft All-In-One course is offered at both campuses over a five day period.

Besides the assortment of IT courses on offer, Learnfast also has a selection of additional courses including one in Small Business Development. This is aimed at people currently working in the customer service field that want to boost their knowledge of customer service basics. The day long course is offered at the Learnfast Sandton campus and participants in it must have prior knowledge (work experience) of the customer service industry in order to get the most out of it.

For more detailed info regarding the company and the courses it offers, please visit Learnfast at **www.learnfast.co.za**, email them on info@learnfast.co.za or phone them on 012-643-1409.

37.9%. Rate at which the African mobile advertising market grew over the three-month period until May 2011.

One Laptop per Child success in Kliptown ›› Crossing the digital divide

TechSmart was lucky enough to see the One Laptop per Child project at work in Kliptown, Soweto.

The Kliptown Youth Program (KYP) offers support for educational activities and after-school activities in the very poor community of Kliptown in Soweto. The program received 290 green XO notebooks since 2008, managing to change the prospects of a number of kids in the region. These notebooks are produced by a non-profit organisation called One Laptop per Child (OLPC), which was born from the vision of MIT professor and director, Nicolas Negroponte, to provide low-cost computing to under privileged communities across the world. As of May this year, more than 2 million of these low-cost machines have been distributed to poor communities around the world.

It can bring change

Thulani Madondo, director of KYP, believes the XO notebooks have brought about big change for the learners, providing them with the opportunity to cross the digital divide. When finishing high school for example, the learners can walk into tertiary education or the workplace knowing both how to work on a computer and how to type.

One of the key pillars of OLPC is ownership of the notebooks, which means that the students are allowed to take them home. OLPC believes that this is important, since much like each kid needs his/her own pencil, notebooks cannot be pooled for the benefits to become apparent. Madondo also believes that if the notebooks were kept at KYP, many more would have been stolen. To date, not one machine has gone missing. For many parents, their kids' XO notebook will be their first contact with a notebook, with the youngsters often teaching the parents basic PC skills.

Doing is important

KYP is also the first stop on a massive journey for a remarkable OLPC volunteer. Nelspruit born Tamin-Lee Connolly is a Dubai based teacher that has become one of the key evangelists of the XO notebook's role in the betterment of African education. On the 5th of July she set off on a journey to 39 African countries in an effort to distribute 5000 of the newer solar powered XOs. These notebooks were bought via sponsorships and donations, and while Toshiba is covering her travel costs, Connolly is using her own vehicle on this journey, which she believes will take a year to complete.

To get in touch with Connolly visit **www.everythingexceptthehorn.com**, or visit **http://one.laptop.org** for info on OLPC.

Advertorial

Santam ›› Properly insure your teenager's assets before they leave the nest

Technology has added a whole new dimension to the responsibility of being a parent, and a bigger price tag.

A UK based company says that 49% of young adults don't have contents insurance, with this especially true for students who typically own valuable items like notebooks, smartphones, MP3 players, televisions and cameras. So what can you, as a parent, do to protect your teenager's valuables and ensure that they understand the value of appropriate insurance cover before they spread their wings and leave the nest?

As an intermediated business, Santam offers a range of insurance policies that protect technology-based items from theft, damage and loss. "The insurance industry is complex. Parents don't necessarily have the time or expertise to navigate the wide spectrum of insurance products available, and this is where a broker's value is most felt," says Shehnaz Somers, Santam's head of Personal Lines Underwriting. "Brokers are able to quickly identify the risks involved and the products best suited to the individual's circumstance and needs. This kind of advice can save parents time and money and ensure peace of mind when it comes to equipping a teenager with the information and financial protection that they need when leaving home," continued Somers. Santam recently partnered with Incredible Connection to offer customers insurance on the purchase of any notebook, netbook or tablet computer purchased at any of its stores. The aim of the partnership is to allow customers easy access to insurance against theft, electronic or accidental damage at purchase level.

Santam offers parents the following tips to properly insure their teenager's assets:

- Talk to your teen before he or she leaves home and try and help them understand the risks that they may face, what insurance is about and how to adequately protect themselves.
- Don't under insure. If you pay R6000 for a laptop and only insure it for R5000, only 80% of the loss will be paid out when you claim.
- It is critical to ensure that the value of your teenager's possessions is updated on the policy at regular intervals.
- All of Santam's insurance policies are written in Plain English and are therefore easy to understand. If you are the policy holder, make sure that they have a copy of the policy so that they know who to call in case anything happens and you are out of reach.
- Read and understand the insurance policies you have taken out for your teenager so that you know what procedure to follow in the event of having to make a claim.

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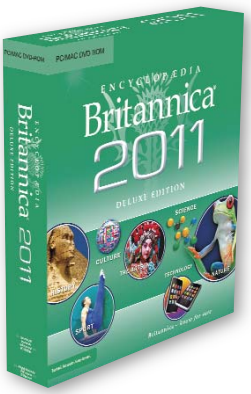
200. New features Apple is adding to its iOS mobile operating system, with the release of iOS 5 later this year.

Encyclopedia Britannica 2011 Deluxe Edition ›› Learn more offline

Encyclopedias have come a long way since owning an encyclopedia meant storing upwards of twenty separate volumes. The Encyclopedia Britannica 2011 is a testament to just how much progress has been made on the digital encyclopedia front as well.

More than 80 000 articles, a world atlas, dictionary and thesaurus, and 21 000 images and more than a thousand video clips, make this edition a treasure trove of information. Additionally, the deluxe edition features links to more than 165 000 web links and magazine articles online. The interface is clean and easily accessible, dividing topics into six tools for research purposes. These include dictionaries, an atlas and timelines, which show the people, events and discoveries throughout history. The interactive brainstormer tool enables one to draw connections between people, places and concepts, while the workspace tool enables one to organise articles, notes and multimedia into one location.

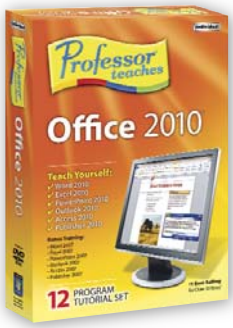


For researchers and students in particular, the software could potentially save hours otherwise spent searching the internet for required information on a topic. Available for **R300** from Phoenix Software on 011-803-5437.

Professor Teaches Office 2010 ›› How to be the Office boss

One of main 'problems' with Office 2010 is how fully featured it actually is. And, while the software offers numerous ways to enhance and maximise productivity, becoming familiar with all the features to get the most out of it can be a challenge.

This is where Professor teaches Office 2010 tutorials can be helpful. Professor Teaches encompasses Word 2010, Excel 2010, Powerpoint, Outlook 2010, Access 2010 and Publisher 2010. Additionally, it also covers the 2007 versions of those programs. Each of the twelve program tutorials can be installed separately, along with another tutorial titled "Professor Answers." The tutorials divide into topics, with each topic providing extensive instruction in common tasks. Topics for the Word 2010 tutorial, for example, include workspace basics, an introduction to the program, how to create and edit text, formatting text, designing page layouts, working with graphics, formatting tables and collaborating on documents.



Steps to accomplish tasks are both narrated and displayed visually. The narration can be paused and replayed at any time, and one can go back to previous steps as needed. Available from Phoenix Software for **R263** on 011-803-5437

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Huawei IDEOS S7 Slim
Chinese manufacturer Huawei tries to capture the 7" tablet market with the decently priced IDEOS S7 Slim.
http://bit.ly/s7slimreview

Canon PIXMA MX870
Canon's latest all-in-one workhorse includes Wi-Fi connectivity as well as a fully integrated Auto Document Feeder (ADF). We emptied its ink cartridges in order to give it a proper review. **http://bit.ly/canonadf**

Western Digital Caviar Blue 1 TB
We check out the data retention abilities of the Western Digital Caviar Blue 1 TB internal hard drive, a reliable data companion for any desktop setup. **http://bit.ly/caviarbluereview**

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
We take a nostalgic gander back in time as we review The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, marking Link's first foray onto the 3DS. **http://bit.ly/3dzelda**

Alice: Madness Returns
In this sequel players are once again confronted with the bizarre and insane characters and creations of this macabre dreamland, as Alice attempts to regain her sanity and save a crumbling Wonderland.
http://bit.ly/madnessalice

15 million. The number of iPhone 5 manufacturing orders that Taiwanese manufacturer Pegatron reportedly received.

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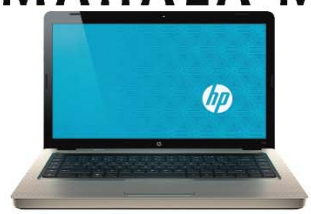

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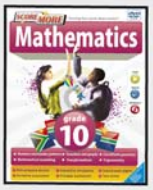

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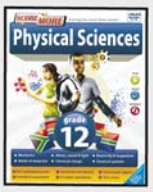

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2012. Supposed release date for the Xbox 720 and the PlayStation 4, unfortunately also when the world will end.

inFAMOUS 2 ›› With awesome electric superpowers...

inFAMOUS 2 poses a simple question: if you had superpowers – would you save the world or destroy it?

This question takes on an all too menacing form with the appearance of a seemingly undefeatable enemy, known as The Beast. In order to amp up his powers and defeat The Beast, our protagonist, Cole, goes to New Marais accompanied by NSA agent Kuo and his friend Zeke Dunbar. The city is ruled with an iron fist by the maniacal dictator Joseph Bertrand II, who manages to make Muammar Gaddafi look like Tinky Winky.

More powers

To defeat the game's assortment of baddies you get to use a new melee weapon called the Amp, through which Cole channels his electric energy to shock opponents while bashing them into submission. Joining the Amp and the first game's batch of powers, such as Zeus-like electric bolts and exploding electric grenades, is Cole's shockingly cool new electric abilities. These include our favourite, the Ionic Vortex, a tornado made up of pure electricity, which wreaks havoc on the unfortunate souls you unleash it upon.

A world to discover

Cole can freely move around the city and climb over almost any nearby structure. Developers, Sucker Punch, has retained the automated grappling system of the first game, which sees Cole automatically gripping onto the nearest available surface whilst jumping. This helps you to easily get from one place to another, but it can also be a curse, particularly during sections where you have to employ split second timing during jumps. Cole can grab onto the nearest, but wrong, object, leading to your death. It's not only the physical path in New Marais that you can follow, but also a "spiritual" one. You can be either good or bad, guarding the citizenry or regarding them as expendable. The game includes various side missions that assist you in making this choice and completing these also gives you experience points that you use to buy upgraded powers.

Conclusion

inFAMOUS 2 is incredibly entertaining and sports some added fun courteousy of the additional powers. It doesn't really bring anything new to the genre, but for a RRP of **R599** you'll be too busy flinging cars around like they were toys to care. [HD]

Full review: http://bit.ly/inFAMOUS2review

Dungeon Siege III ›› Classic fantasy fighting

The original Dungeon Siege was one of the games which helped shape the modern Role Playing Game (RPG) experience, introducing players to cavernous loot-filled dungeons, party members and 3D graphics. Can the third iteration keep up the pace?

Unlike the previous games, story actually takes on a much more prominent role in Dungeon Siege III (DS3), with lots of effort put into weaving the game's tale and attempting to create believable characters. The story is once again set in the Kingdom of Ehb, and takes place roughly 150 years after the events of the first game. We find the 10th Legion, noble protectors of the land, almost completely wiped out, with the evil Jeyne Kassynder enforcing her will upon the kingdom. It's up to our heroes to put an end to this sad state of affairs, but while the story definitely seems ambitious, its delivery lacked the scale and 'epicness' to really make it stick. Somewhat forgettable characters with rather shallow voice acting doesn't help in this aspect either, and it all culminated in a storyline that, whilst enjoyable, didn't manage to pull us in and say "Wow!" like a Diablo, Dragon Age or Elder Scrolls can.

Loot

DS3's vanilla RPG experience is strong, and as always there's a certain addictive aspect to seeing your lowly rag-covered hero turn into an armour plated wielder of swords and magic as you progress throughout the game. The title does a good job of pacing valuable drops so you'll always want to inspect the next room or smash open that next crate to check if something valuable can be plundered. Your inventory contains enough slots to house a fair amount of gear, and a mechanic we enjoyed is the ability to turn excess items into gold right from within your inventory screen.

Conclusion

Dungeon Siege III manages to get a lot of things right, but at the same time destroys a lot of elements that didn't need changing in the first place, such as the co-op element and a wonky camera. The game makes an admirable attempt at appealing to the console crowd, and if you enjoy your straightforward dungeon looting quests, then the game will satisfy. Also keep in mind that the single player campaign in Dungeon Siege III is only worth six to ten hours of gameplay, depending on how fast you progress. [JK]

Full review: http://bit.ly/ds3review

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