

# DISPOSABLE MEDIA

ART | MUSIC | GAMES | TV | COMICS | FILM | LIFE

Issue 8



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## ONE OF THE BEST THINGS

about editing DM is that it's full of surprises. I've always known what a talented bunch of obsessive compulsives staff the magazine, but the response to our very own Keith Andrew's article on print and online games magazines has been as astounding as it was well deserved.

But with success comes the pressure to repeat it, which is why there's been a bit of re-organisation. We now have shiny new Section Editors to focus their efforts on making each part of the mag the best it can be, and you can contact them via the email addresses on the title page of each section.

And astoundingly, Keith now has even more competition, in the form of new contributor Rob Crossley, who starts his time on DM by interviewing legendary games developer Dave Perry for this issue. We also built our own copy robot, who churns out seemingly endless amounts of material, and goes by the name of Jim Miles.

It's always great to get some new faces on board to keep our regular staffers on their toes, and we're always looking for more. Particularly if you're a comic obsessive, or a design wizard who can stand alongside our mighty Andrew Campbell. If you're up to the challenge, shoot me an email.

And remember, the more members of staff we have, the more time I can spend plastering Disposable Media over all my new cars in *Forza Motorsport 2*.

Cheers.

**- Dan**

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# //DISPOSED MEDIA

NEVER ONE TO MISS A BEAT,  
DISPOSABLE MEDIA FILLS YOU IN ON  
THE HAPPENINGS SINCE LAST ISSUE...



## //games

As the summer drought kicks in and May passes without the E3 of old, the industry prepares itself for a long and seemingly soggy summer. Shock then, that there are some fantastic games released and plenty of news to keep the internet/podcasts/blogs positively humming. From our first few hours of play, *Forza 2* is



already impressing the DM team, though we think it's much fairer to give you the definitive review after playing it to death.

Besides, we've been very busy with the *Halo 3* Beta, which is either the greatest FPS multiplayer experience available, or *Halo 2* with new shields, depending on who you ask.

Read our feature on page 12 for more.

Surprisingly, *Mercury Meltdown* on

the Wii has been consuming enormous amounts of brain cells and AA batteries, so to celebrate, we're giving a copy away. See page 50 to see how to win it!

Finally, the RRP for *Rock Band* has been announced. Regardless of the spin, at nearly the cost of a Wii, it's way too expensive. So we're rounding up kidneys to sell. We hate EA sometimes.



## //music

As we write this, Glastonbury is about to flood. We hope. We're only jealous. It's that only time of the year when it's acceptable to look like a moron in wellies, drink cider and have 2 hours sleep on a mole hill in a plastic sheet.

This year it's reckoned (by us) that there are literally over 1000 festivals in the UK alone and with the likes of Arctic Monkeys, Muse, Killers and Snow Patrol

being as massive as they are, 'indie rock' is truly mainstream and the music style of choice.

In other news, Rihanna has released the best song of the year in *Umbrella*, and we wouldn't be surprised if it becomes the UK's biggest seller of the year. This at a time where The Traveling Wilburys are number one in the album charts and the biggest selling gig(s) of

the year belong to Prince. That's some diversity, and we're all for it.

Dance is also making a storming comeback too, with LPs from Justice, Simian Mobile Disco and Digitalism all in with a shout for album of the summer. Oh, and Pendulum are back. Thank the lord.



## //film & tv

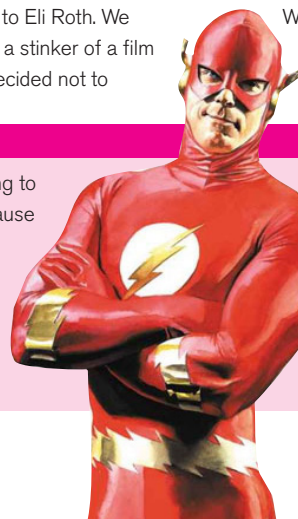
Sometimes an unlimited cinema card is a waste of space in your wallet. Sometimes there are only so many brain-dead chick-flicks you can watch in one month. Right now, that isn't the case. The Biggest Summer in the History of Film is well under way and we – literally – take trips to the cinema on a daily basis.

Not that we've seen anything of interest, other than Peter Parker turning 'emo'. Oh, and *Oceans 13* and *This is England*. *Pirates of the Caribbean 3* however, is unbelievably useless. Our mini review tells you why. *Hostel 2* leaked on purpose according to Eli Roth. We smell a big fat lie, and a stinker of a film to boot. We've also decided not to

mention *The Simpsons Movie* this issue, as you'll definitely be watching it and you really don't need a reason to do so.

Television's best attempt at keeping us indoors this summer is in the form of another obligatory *Big Brother*. Channel 4 must be praying it's going to rain for the next three months. Anything else?

Well, we reckon it'll be interesting to see a Scottish Prime Minister on the telly, the *DM* team really love tragedy plays, you see. Oh, and the *Doctor Who* finale – nuff said.



## //comics

As predicted last issue, Marvel are still flogging Captain America's dead body. The current highlight in the "he's dead, get over it" saga is a Director's Cut of his death. On the plus side, Thor is back.

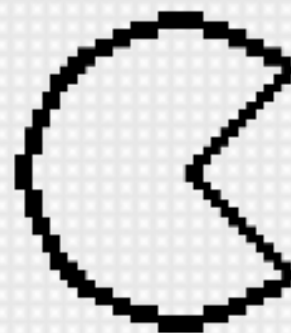
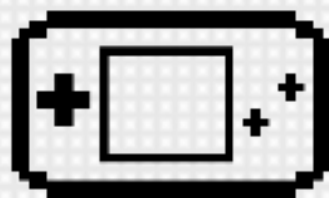
DC is still just as busy as ever and currently they're trying to find an explanation as to why Jimmy Olson can suddenly fire spines while everyone is trying to keep up with who is Flash this

week. Meanwhile, Green Arrow proposing to Black Canary made us teary, if only because that his last proper comic for months...

Just after *DM7* launched, the UK saw one of its few significant comic events, Bristol Comic Expo. We had stuff signed by Brian K. Vaughn and

Kurt Busiek and chatted to *PC Gamer* reviewer-cum-*Phonogram* author Kieron Gillen about nothing in particular. Most of the time was spent with the amazingly talented independent creators present grabbing samples. A single example - Jess Bradley's *The Guide-Dog Detective* is as wonderful as the title might lead you to expect.





# games

**W**ITH A COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP OF ALL THE MACHINES YOU COULD EVER WISH TO READ ABOUT AND ENOUGH EXPERIENCE TO MAKE ANOTHER ILL-CONCEIVED MARINE 'EM UP FORCE AN APATHETIC SHRUG FROM ANY ONE WRITER, WE WISH TO COVER THE TITLES THAT REINVIGORATE OUR PASSION AND GET THE FINGERS SPILLING OUT NEWS AND REVIEWS AS EFFICIENTLY AS THEY PARRY COMBOS AND ROTATE TETROMINOES.

**DAN GASSIS**  
**GAMES EDITOR**

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## currently playing...

dotechin / halo 3 beta / metroid prime / sensor board games / god of war 2 / tomb raider: anniversary / mercury meltdown revolution / mario vs donkey kong 2: march of the minis





For gamers, E3 has always been the sum of its parts; chiefly, three competitive press conferences where anything can happen. And last year, E3 coughed up its most shocking revelation since conception; it was officially over. Faced with unreasonable costs, sloppy and inhospitable organisers, debateable benefits and absolutely no breathing space, the big industry players resigned their interest.

Shortly after, the (now ex) ESA President Doug Lowenstein officially announced E3's resurrection, assuring those key industry players that E3 was going to be a more intimate and sensible expo. In short, the 60,000 attendees in 2006 would be chopped down to around 5,000 this year. But despite this huge streamlining; fewer glary billboards, smaller show floors, no more vacant-looking cheerleaders, E3 is still – inexorably – the sum of its parts; three competitive press conferences.

Whilst desperately hoping that their streamed video could handle such worldwide demand, millions of excited gamers – those uninvited yet just as excited – hunched around their PCs waiting to watch Peter Moore draw first blood at the opening press conference. And the first thing they saw was a band of five *Halo* fans from Libertyville, Illinois. A live rendition of Martin O'Donnell's iconic score was as flamboyant, epic and over-the-top as we've come to expect from E3. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Marching on stage in the outdoor amphitheatre of a Santa Monica high school, Peter Moore was out to make an immediate impact. He quickly announced that every game shown in the 90 minute press conference would be released by the end of 2007, save for one.

It was a declaration that felt out of place for an E3; no tantalising glimpses into the



WORDS:ROBCROSSLEY

DESIGN:ANDREWREVELL

**REDUCED IN SIZE BUT NEVER SMALL ON ANNOUNCEMENTS, E3 WAS ONCE AGAIN THE PROVING GROUND FOR THE BIG THREE. DM LOOKS AT HOW EACH DID, AND DIDN'T, ON CENTRE STAGE.**

distant future for the world's most popular console, no hint of Bill Gate's motion sensing 'revolution' in the works, nothing but a smorgasbord of promising software. In fact, Moore would go on to claim that this year will host 'the greatest holiday line-up in videogame history'.

But the press conference never confidently conveyed how integral the 360 will be for that exciting line-up. Of the five live demonstrations Microsoft had staged, *PGR4* was the only exclusive 360 title. *Rock Band*, *Madden 08*, *Call of Duty 4* and *Assassin's Creed* will all be available on the PS3 by the end of the fiscal year. Surprisingly enough the two most lucrative titles this year, *Halo 3* and *GTA4*, were comparatively neglected with new and old video footage. Despite Moore proudly claiming that 'the 360 is the only console where you can get the complete *GTA4* experience', the lack of embellishment on this must have been met with a massive sigh of relief from Sony's executives.

The irresistible prospect of showing a game to the world's media in one sitting is something that no developer or publisher would pass up. So it does beg the question, was Microsoft's odd choice of live demonstrations the result of developers fearing their exclusive titles weren't ready for such worldwide scrutiny, or was it simply a mistake on Microsoft's part? Since we're six months from that 2008 deadline, DM hopes it can look back at Peter Moore tanking his *Rock Band* performance as proof of the latter.

The sheer number of important titles that Moore ran through in 90 minutes was, however, a promising indication for any 360 owner that they were in for a busy end of 2007. Other haymaker exclusives, such as *Mass Effect*, *Bioshock*, *Lost Odyssey* and *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, will be enough to keep the 360's userbase suitably entertained between bouts of *Halo 3* and *GTA4*.





Microsoft even attempted a little deviation from their shooter/racer/fighter library and their intentions for this year became clear as the conference rolled out the overly familiar and sometimes even plagiaristic games. Microsoft was here to cover all bases, to negate everything their competition would feature. For every *Buzz!*, there was *Scene It?*. Every *Mario Party*, a *Viva Piñata: Party Animals*, every *Gran Turismo*, a *PGR4*, every Eastern-centric title from Sony and Nintendo, a *Lost Odyssey* and *Beautiful Katamari*. For every PSN furtherance, a lucrative downloadable media deal with Disney.

The result was an underwhelming yet purposeful press conference, Peter Moore concluded that 'our cards are on the table', and Microsoft's hope is that each one will block the view of a similar title from the competition. But people left their concrete seats at the outdoor amphitheatre in Santa Monica with nothing to focus their attention on, aside from the fact that this is an incredibly busy time to own a 360.

Now armed with the obtainable chance to steal thunder like a well-timed ghost-steal on *Mario Kart*, Reginald Fils-Aime opened Nintendo's press conference in a packed Civic Auditorium with a predictable, and resoundingly tedious PowerPoint and montage presentation. Hand picking the most ludicrously biased stats to counteract Microsoft's own ludicrously biased stats was something of an endurance test.

Eventually, Nintendo got to the heart of the conference, and essentially the focus of this year's E3, by talking software. To begin, Reggie claimed that over 100 Wii titles would be released in America by the end of 2007, spelling the end to the arduous drought that the Wii has suffered so far.

There were indications of an improvement in third-party support for Nintendo too, though not enough to stop questioning it. Beyond fairly lucrative IP, such as *Smackdown! Vs. Raw*, exclusive middleweight titles like *Soul Calibur*:

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*Legends* and Square Enix' *Dragon Quest Swords*, there was little to shout about.

Then came the Wii Zapper, a cunning piece of plastic that'll sell for \$19.99 by the end of the year. Its existence single-handedly depicts the Wiimote as a flawed lightgun when it manifestly isn't. It ties the Wiimote and Nunchuk together like some crude scaffolding, presenting the Wii's magnificent freehand control system as one that still requires tweaking. *Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles* was the new peripheral's showpiece, which failed to capture the excitement generated from the 360 and PS3's counterpart; *Resident Evil 5*.

The Zapper was more than enough to worry some analysts; why, when the original remote was billed as the solution to the difficulties associated with standard pads, are gamers now being asked to fork out for a new add-on? For the sake of profit, perhaps? Or is Nintendo losing faith in the Wiimote as an accomplished replacement for the trusty joypad?

Nintendo's own showcase of software was as arousing as we've come to expect from the Japanese firm. The usual suspects, such as *Smash Brothers Brawl*, *Mario Kart Wii*, *Phantom Hourglass* and *Mario Galaxy*, didn't fail to excite the audience despite their predictable appearances. *Phantom Hourglass* in particular, with its stylus-only control scheme, looked refreshingly distinct whilst still obtaining that familiar sense of what a *Zelda* game is. Only *Mario Kart Wii*, bundled with a cunning piece of plastic called a steering wheel, will miss the holiday season deadline.

A live demonstration of *Metroid Prime Corruption* emphasised the style of Nintendo's conference; predictable software appearances and shocking (for better or worse) periphery announcements. *Metroid Prime 3* is no longer online-enabled, but that never zapped the energy from a brief but alluring demonstration of Retro Studios' showpiece.

Despite *Metroid's* offline exhibition, Reggie managed to reaffirm Nintendo's commitment to







online gaming. *Guitar Hero 3*, *FIFA 08*, *Dragon Quest Monsters* and the highly anticipated *Mario Kart Wii* were all announced as online-enabled 'without paying a penny' for the service.

The conference gave us another glimpse of Nintendo's re-direction. There was no solid commitment to either side of the dichotomy of their userbase, just compromise. Nintendo is fast becoming a victim of its own success, where every game it releases struggles to satisfy both groups of fans.

Iwata's always-adorable speech may have implored the breaking of barriers, but Nintendo's actions spoke louder than Iwata's warm words; a *Smash Brothers* in one hand, a *Brain Age 2* in the other. Only *Mario Galaxy* appeared to be an approachable game that all Wii owners could cherish, but that's chiefly because Mario games were born to please everyone.

And finally, Miyamoto appeared. Not to demonstrate *Mario Galaxy*, but his new pet project, *Wii Fit*. It was an announcement met with total confusion by the core Nintendo audience. The realisation dawned on them, he is now focusing his efforts to the casual gamer, his 'big surprise' was for an audience who had never heard of him. And as much as Nintendo wanted to convince the onlookers that everyone would enjoy playing *Wii Fit*, its definition as a 'game' is a hauntingly loose one.

The glitchy live demonstrations were reminiscent of nothing more than fitness videos, and the new Wii Sensor Board never proved how accurately it could measure posture or BMI, which made it seem like a toy that acts as a fitness aid, rather than the other way round. But such is the trend for Nintendo press conferences, there was an underlying sense of potential with the new peripheral, a certain Nintendo snowboarding game already in the back of people's minds.

While it was convincing enough for potential retail partners at the Civic Auditorium

### THE ZAPPER'S EXISTENCE SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEPICTS THE WIIMOTE AS A FLAWED LIGHTGUN WHEN IT MANIFESTLY ISN'T.

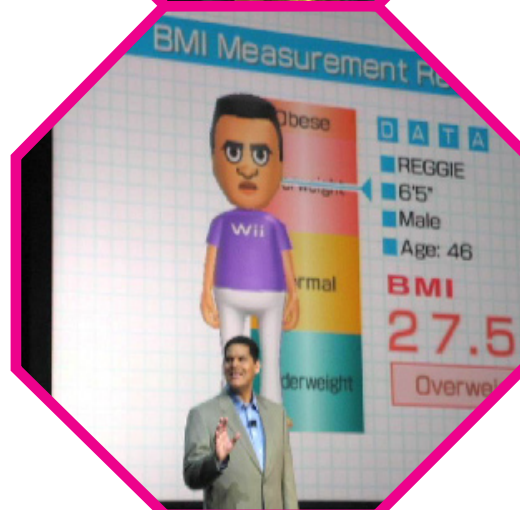
that Nintendo is clearly going to shift more 'self-help' software, it had comprehensively failed at attempting to draw gamers away from the 'hardcore-happy' 360, and even provided questions for dedicated Nintendo fans over the future of their console. Two steps forward and two steps back, it was a conference that would only fully satisfy Nintendo's investors.

Both underwhelming conferences meant the ball was truly in Sony's court. Not only did Harrison, Harai and Tretton have the chance to repair their public image from last year's ridiculous conference, but there was also an obtainable chance to steal the show.

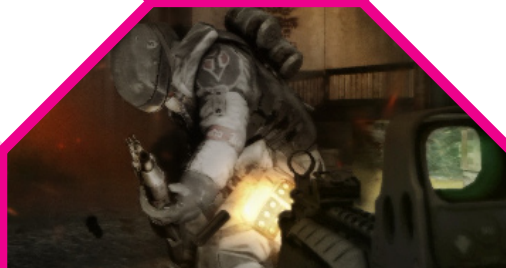
A mere two hours after the media were reeling from the Wii Sensor Board, SCEA CEO Jack Tretton opened the conference, not on stage, but inside *Home*, Sony's response to the MySpace and *Second Life* phenomena. Tretton's nervous and rather sterile wooing of online avatars was neither a convincing nor captivating opening advertisement for the potential that *Home* offers. Yet it was clear that Sony were proud of the service.

*Home*, and indeed the PSN, ended up being the most compelling aspect of the conference. Following Sony's positive GDC showcase earlier this year, Harrison demonstrated that *Home* is progressing as a wonderfully seamless and customisable experience, one that effortlessly integrates with software and hardware.

The PSN is beginning to shape up as a service that can feasibly dwarf Microsoft's Xbox Live. Titles such as *Unreal Tournament 3*, the next *Singstar* and the mesmerising *Little Big Planet* look to utilise the service in more intriguing ways than simply a lobby to join. *Unreal Tournament 3* will host PC mods and user-created arenas, presumably via DNLA. The next *Singstar* can be fully customised with the most popular microtransactions in the world; songs. And, of course, *Little Big Planet* will be *Little Big Planet*. Most of this was hardly news, but it was an insight into Sony's unique and attractive vision of online play.







Tretton himself represented Sony in a refreshingly modest manner. Gone were egotistical sound bites such as 'next-gen doesn't start until we say it does'. Instead, Tretton warmly welcomed the crowd, citing his nerves, ridiculing his own weight, and never missing out on an opportunity to thank the audience. And when Tretton directed a somewhat predictable "Riiiiidge Racer!" taunt towards Harai, there was a feeling that Sony had learnt its lesson, no more hyperbole, no more arrogance, just 'games, games and more games' as Tretton put it.

Sony's rollout of games displayed everything but a crucial ingredient; release dates. Crowd pleasers such as *Wipeout HD* and *Heavenly Sword* lacked those crucial numbers and months. And, rather surprisingly, there was no sign of *Gran Turismo 5* this year. Instead, Sony unveiled *Gran Turismo: Prologue* which, after *GT: HD*, will now be the second stepping stone between 4th and distant 5th edition of the popular franchise. *Haze* was touted as a launch exclusive, which may be due to *Halo 3*'s contemporaneous release date more than anything else.

But perhaps the most memorable new title was *Echochrome*, an instantly adorable, minimalistic yet charming puzzle game available for both the PSP and downloadable via PSN. Harrison's 'least graphics and most gameplay' rhetoric was an absolute understatement of how impressive the title looked; thematically based around M.C. Echer's diabolical *Relativity* lithograph, the game is both a reality-bending brainteaser and a dynamic piece of art at the same time. The second showstopper was a typically bombastic new trailer of *MGS4*, which special guest Kojima personally certifying it as an exclusive. For how long remains a mystery.

Sony ended the conference with a final haymaker; *Killzone 2*. Once ridiculed back at E3 '05 for being nothing but a pre-rendered video, Harrison gave the game a much-

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FOR PSP AND PSN**

needed unambiguous introduction; 'everything you are about to see is in real-time'. The footage was perhaps the highpoint of all three press conferences, proving to all that Sony's '05 conference wasn't full of empty promises, but instead gigantic ideas. With fearsome production values, barbaric and beautiful imagery, smoothly integrated first person cutscenes (à la *Half-Life*) and characters that immediately jumped from the screen, *Killzone 2* looked astonishing. If the trailer is any representation of the game, *Killzone 2*'s release next year may well fill the vacuum that

*Halo 3* leaves behind. And that, of course, was what Sony are looking to, in regards to everything, from E3 onwards.

While Microsoft will host a tremendous amount high-quality content this year, further beyond that, the Playstation 3 looks the more desirable machine. As does the new version of the PSP, introduced by Tretton and Chewbacca (don't ask).

Slimmer, lighter and less power-hungry than before, Sony had made a sincere effort to respond to criticisms levied at the old model. Sony is looking like the company of next year, and, considering E3 has more to do with the future than it does with today, it is where both Microsoft's short-sighted press conference and Nintendo's ambidextrous showcase failed.

How successfully Sony will venture in 2008 remains to be seen, but there are some things we can be certain of. Nintendo will look to continue shifting more 'self-help' software, the 360 owner will still have a crammed backlog of titles to play with, and the PS3 will continue to chip away at its unreasonable price, and develop its standard of software.

But if any of these strategies yield success or failure, there's a chance E3 won't be the stage to see them develop; rumors are rife that E3 is going for good.

But if Sony are on the verge of pulling back their market dominance, at least we'll remember the very last E3 for what it's always been famous for; those hectic three days where the game business turns a corner.



echochrome



**W**hat is it that makes our hobby so different from others'? What is it that makes gaming so susceptible to misunderstanding and criticism levelled at us by mainstream press and opinion? This angle of scrutiny is something that you'll undoubtedly have had directed at you, or even considered yourself, at some point in your hobby's lifetime.

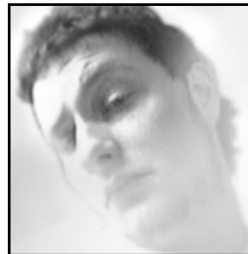
The difference may be easily summarised with a simple, one-line quote, which is as follows: 'Why are you wasting your time with those pointless bloody games?'

This column may not apply to you. 'I just do it recreationally,' you'll say, 'it's just something to

sullen face.

It's this question of relevance, of validity, which makes games quite so easy to dismiss. Because, when our Otaku is finished playing – countless hours later, of course – what has he really achieved? 'Nothing' is the honest answer. And it's this which must be answered, if not for the future of our hobby – the impending doom which never comes – but for the holy grail of mainstream acceptance, and the increased revenue such an achievement will bring.

Xbox Live's Achievements system. It's bullshit, isn't it? They're on the right track, obviously – someone's looked at our hobby and said, 'We need to make this mainstream and relevant, guys,' and then someone must've piped in and said, 'well, we've got this online infrastructure we need to justify, let's do this...'. And so now they've got people and friends competing against each others' scores and creating this illusion of having done something really good at the end of it.



## WISHLIST

ILLUSTRATION: SAM MILLER

**ADAM PARKER TELLS US WHAT HE WOULD WISH FOR TO MAKE GAMING BETTER. THIS ISSUE: WHY GAMING NEEDS TO ACHIEVE VALIDITY.**

unwind with after a hard day at work.' Counter-productive to a level resembling even the worst drug addictions, 'hardcore' gaming naturally strikes fear in the hearts of those who would similarly fear and revile drug use; the kind of person who might, without a hint of irony, label, or accept the use of the label 'evil', when referring to a computer game.

It sees the hypothetical Otaku of this piece sat, in a darkened room, playing numerous games – purchased at great expense, of course – 'shooting up' with visceral hits of entertainment, unreal images of war and gore and terror streaming over his – because it's always a his -

And this is the problem that most other hobbies don't have. Chess: get really good and you'll be a Grandmaster, and even if you don't, you're giving your brain a bit of a workout anyway. Exercise of any form: you're bettering your body, improving your health and general attractiveness. Bird watching: well, at least that's real, isn't it?

Make gaming into a real, tangible achievement – like *Brain Training*, to a degree; or online poker with the prospect of real financial gain at the end of it; or, even, running one of those illegal gold mining scams, sold on for real money, that we all hear about in MMOs.

It is possible to achieve something through games – those people who get married through meeting each other via *World of Warcraft* will attest to this – but it's accidental, interstitial. At least at the moment.

If there's one thing *Brain Training* and friends have proved: crack the question of validity, and you'll find yourself onto a winner.

**"WHEN OUR OTAKU IS FINISHED PLAYING – COUNTLESS HOURS LATER, OF COURSE – WHAT HAS HE REALLY ACHIEVED?"**

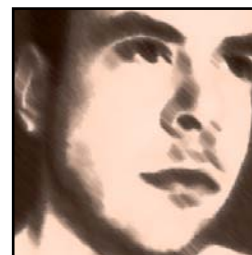




“IT WAS ABOUT two in the morning when a troupe of scruffy, somewhat greasy, sports journalists gathered behind my

PC. In turn they placed their catchpenny dictaphones on my desk before filling the rows of plastic chairs that had suddenly materialised in front of me.

As a couple of journos quickly returned to my desk to reshuffle the assortment of dictaphones, so theirs was closest to me, a gang of paparazzi spread across the back wall, elbowing each other for breathing space. Tonight, while my game was loading, I decided to hold an imaginary press conference.



## CONFESSION BOX

**ROB CROSSLEY COMES CLEAN: HE'S BEEN HAVING A LOVE AFFAIR WITH A COLOURED CIRCLE.**

José Mourinho had just made a life-changing bid of £59M for one of my star players, my darling, Xabi Alonso. Immediate and non-negotiable, the offer was akin to all 100 hidden packages on *Grand Theft Auto 3*, or every single Pokémon, or a catapult to level 60 in *World of Warcraft*.

As the paparazzi armed their cameras, as the reporters poised their pencils, I began my speech. I explained exactly what José had been up to, and that his constant attempts at stealing one of my star players was all in vein. Each word I made was met with the sound of it being hastily scrawled into shorthand notepads, each grimace and smile throughout my speech was snatched into camera flashes.

**WHY CANNOT GAMING, THE INTERACTIVE MEDIUM THAT IT IS, ALLOW US TO PLAY WITH THEME AND CHARACTER AS MUCH AS IT DOES WITH CONTENT?**

I revealed that José - the underhand, cunning villain of this game - had been making several offers for Xabi during the season, some breaking the £25M mark. This was true. I told the press that you can't put a price - regardless of how lavish they may be - on certain players.

I closed the conference by expressing my thoughts on football; that it exists to excite those loyal fans who fork out for this glorious club, week-in week-out. And those fans love Xabi, and they want him to stay as much as I do. I said it all with a riled tone that the reporters began to embellish on the second they left the room.

And I've always been surprised that Xabi - nothing more than a moving dot and limited set of stats - has provided the most intimate relationship I've ever had with a game character. My affection for him was so profound that I was willing to sacrifice tremendous progress to keep him, yet when Aeris died I barely

raised an eyebrow, when Link finally rested the Master Sword I briefly grinned. Why?

I turn to comparable mediums for answers far too habitually, but they often work. It was when I played through some of my favourite records that I realised I hadn't a clue what they were intended to mean. And crucially, I'd never want to.

I'd be mortified to discover that *A Day in the Life* was really about the death of Tara Browne, or that *Morning Bell* was actually discussing divorce. No longer would these songs be unlocking my own thoughts, philosophies, dreams and memories, but instead providing their own.

Words, sounds, images and shapes give us residence for our imagination. If we are given the freedom to decorate them with our own thoughts and feelings, those stories, films and songs suddenly become ours.

Why cannot gaming, the interactive medium that it is, allow us to play with theme and character as much as it does with content? Why is there no breathing space in *Halo* to find our own stories inside it? Why is it explicitly about war, take it or leave it?

Xabi is a dot. He passes dots to other dots. Yet I can tell when he's intimidated by a large crowd, I pray for him when he loses his confidence, I thump him in the face when he asks to be placed on the transfer list.

Which, by the way, is exactly what he did a week after the press conference. And it isn't difficult to imagine which underhand, ruthless sonovabitch convinced him to do so while I was away from my keyboard.

”

# DOTECHIN

WELCOME TO THE DIGITAL ALAMO.  
PRESS SPACE TO DIE.

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD DOTECHIN](#)



“YOU HAVE TO  
PLAY DOTECHIN  
IN ORDER TO SEE  
EXACTLY HOW  
FRENZIED THE  
SCREEN GETS.”

Being overwhelmed by a large number of enemies with a simple objective of survival isn't anything new: in fact, it's typical of any shoot 'em up. However, *Dotechin* (aka *Flying Nice Guy*) builds on this genre staple to such an extent that the game feels radically different from the usual fare.

Describing it in words is problematically straightforward; you have to fly from one end of the screen to the other whilst tons of enemies get in your way and try and kill you. A level concludes with a boss encounter, whose defeat grants you access to the following level. So far: so what?

The thing is, when you play it seems as though there are literally thousands of enemies in the space of a single level; during play your score appears as though it awards one point for every enemy killed, and after about ten seconds it typically passes 300. Each enemy is small and weak, but they overwhelm you in numbers.

However, your ship obviously has some substantial firepower right from the start; power-ups let you use upgraded guns and missiles and whatever else, but the guns you start with easily cut through many of the enemies seen in later levels. Even the boss encounters are surprising; again, after a few seconds the battle against the first boss is over.

It sounds as though it's breathtakingly easy because of the weak enemies and the generously powerful weapons, but you have to play *Dotechin* in order to see exactly how frenzied the screen gets. It's one of those games that defines what freeware (and, indeed, this column) is all about – games that you can start up, be blown away by and then quit out of, all in the space of five minutes.

On the one hand, it could be said that it's a bit intimidating to people who don't have much of an affinity for crowded shmups with

hundreds of explosions and a reliance on quick action, but even the most cackhanded gamer can mash the fire button and get a buzz out of shooting down a few hundred enemies.

It's the kind of game that surprises freeware fans who might have become a little tired of seeing another *Ikaruga* rip-off or another slow-paced 3D borefest; the kind of game that catches you by surprise, and then has you showing it to anyone and everyone you can so that they can be as surprised and delighted as you were when you first saw it in action. And it isn't just the pure raw gameplay that surprises; the presentation of the game is lively and effervescent, helping to make the grin you wear as you play even wider than it already is.

There are downsides. For one; the menus and splash screens are unintelligible, being as it is an eastern offering. However, all you really need to know is that you press Enter or Space at the title screen, then start the game by choosing the middle option from the menu. Secondly, not everyone will be attracted to this kind of shoot 'em up; they'll want a bit more thought in their shooting, a few more tactics, an opportunity to think up – don't laugh – strategies.

There are games available for these people, be they commercial – *Ikaruga*, *Under Defeat*, *Radiant Silvergun* – or freeware – exceed *2nd*, *rRootage*, *Shoot The Bullet* – but we're not in the habit of writing for some of the people all of the time; not least because it would mean covering the same types of game over and over again.

It's this mentality that led enthusiasts to games such as *Dotechin* in the first place, and if these are the kind of games that are out there to reward those perseverant enough to look for them, you'd agree that there's little cause for complaint.



WORDS: ROB CROSSLEY  
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

# DAVID PERRY ON.

WHAT DO YOU ASK  
A MAN WHO'S BEEN  
MAKING GAMES  
FOR 25 YEARS,  
WHOSE HITS  
INCLUDE EARTHWORM  
MESSIAH, WHO FOUNDED  
AT AND LEFT HIS OWN DEVELOPMENT  
COMPANY, WHO SITS ON THE  
ADVISORY BOARD AT THE GAME  
DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE, WHO  
RUNS THE BIGGEST DEVELOPMENT  
TEAM IN HISTORY AND WHO WANTS  
GAMES TO BE FREE TO PLAY? SIMPLE:  
EVERYTHING.

**D**avid Perry has many things in his diary that need to be circled, crossed-out and scribbled over, but right now there's only one thing on his mind: "It's very much summertime here in California and we have some great surfing areas, it just makes me so jealous. I just really wanna go out and get a suntan, play some volleyball and do some surfing."

Fortunately for gamers, David will not be getting sand in his shoes after our interview; instead he will continue to slave away on the many projects he's involved in. As well as helping bring free-to-play MMOs such as *2Moons* and *Dance!* to the western market, he's also heavily involved in his own game investment and consultant company.

If that wasn't enough, he's also headhunting talent on the intriguing community-built MMO, *Top Secret*, where he has promised one lucky (or rather, worthy) contributor the chance to direct their own fully funded, Acclaim-published MMO.



Predictably, over 34,000 enthusiastic members have successfully joined the development team.

But despite this overwhelming workload, and that dangling carrot of a day on the beach, David is still pulling jokes and remains in good spirits. A certain REM track that inspired the company's name springs to mind.

Taking a momentary breather from his workload, he chats exclusively with us about those three consoles, shares his philosophies on free-to-play games, gossips about that other Dave Perry and laughs at our favorite YouTube videos.

First off, to quote Bill Gates during his recent panel interview at D5: "Imagine a games machine where you can pick up a bat and swing it, or pick up a tennis racquet and swing it." Do you think advertising for rival companies in your spare time is a smart business decision to make?

(Laughs) It's actually surprised me how little console manufacturers have been thinking about interface. What we see at the moment is companies adding more and more complexity to a game's input, which is the wrong direction games are going in. The model for the Wii interface is clearly working, Nintendo took buttons off their controller, and that didn't make it impossible to make games for it. There's like seventeen different buttons on a Playstation 3 controller...

Are you counting the D-pad as four individual buttons?

Yeah, of course. (Laughs) Seventeen buttons you just don't need, the NES had less than half as much and it wasn't so daunting for a less-than-casual-gamer to hold, and I think that the allure of simplicity is huge.


A great selling point for the Wii is that simplicity. By offering two different and opposing types of input, how difficult do you think it would be for Microsoft to tap into the Wii's user base?

(Takes a long pause) Y'know, I've followed controllers for a long time. I remember in the late eighties there was a machine called the Konix. The interesting thing was it was a steering wheel, but could take off the steering wheel and pull up some handlebars for a bike, or you could pull the handlebars right up and have it as an aeroplane yoke, and so on and so on.

My point is, is that the Nintendo Wii isn't the final solution to that sort of interactive interface. I think we'll always see more and more interesting approaches to interface, and I really don't think the Wii is the ultimate solution to that.

But I also think that the 360 and PS3's graphical power is essential in attracting the Wii's userbase. The fact is, gamers are attracted to beautiful looking games, they always have been, even back when the Konix was thought up. When a game comes out - a game like a *Halo* or something, something they haven't seen before - they'll drop everything and they'll drop their Wii controllers when it does.

You've always applauded the PS3's remarkable power; why do you think it's commercially underachieving at the moment? Is it as simple as Sony failing to show it as value for money? In every way, the machine hasn't succeeded yet in what it can deliver. They put a BluRay player in there and there isn't really anything to watch on BluRay, although that's starting to change. The 1080p support wasn't there to begin with, but again that's changing too. The price has been extraordinarily high for a family purchase, plus retailers have taken advantage of people and insisted that you



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AND MORE INTERESTING  
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SOLUTION TO THAT.  
”



buy a PS3 in absurdly high bundles, which is also beginning to change and I'm sure a price drop is on the way.

The PS3 has incredible processing power, but it's difficult to programme for, so a lot of the titles that shipped at launch didn't really show off the PS3's capabilities. In fact, I don't think we've seen a true PS3 title yet, but developers are getting better and it's only a matter of time before the PS3 starts achieving in what it offers to customers.

“  
IMAGINE A MMORPG  
AS GOOD AS WORLD OF  
WARCRAFT THAT SHOWED  
UP, AND WAS FREE. IT  
WOULD BE A DEVASTATING  
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”

You've spoken about the possibilities of free-to-play models in games, citing many examples from the East. Given the huge success of Xbox Live Marketplace, it seems gamers are more than willing to pay if the content is right. With that in mind, how successful do you think a free-to-play model will be in the West?

It's a question of 'when' instead of 'if'. Right now, 'free' means 'bad', and that has to change as a concept. And Acclaim is working very hard right now to change that concept. I've seen MMO games being developed over in Asia, I've gone around studios looking over people's shoulders getting full



view of what they're doing. They show us everything, it's great! And I've seen some truly, truly fantastic titles being developed.

So my question to you is very simple: When – 'when' and not 'if' – a game like *Half-Life* shows up that's free to play, how are you going to feel about paying full price for a similar game?

Well, an experience like *Half-Life* for free is a compelling concept.

Completely. Imagine if Valve changed their model to free-to-play, imagine what would happen to the market. So it's a question of quality, when the first high quality game in its genre comes out for free, competitors are really going to take a hit.

Imagine a MMORPG as good as *World of Warcraft* - or even a little better - that showed up, and it was free. It would be a devastating blow for Blizzard. I'm sure there are people out there that'd be very happy to drop fifteen dollars a month, plus paying for the box in the first place, for a similar experience.

A lot of publishers must despise *World of Warcraft*, seeing as it drains the time and money from so many gamers, effectively making them dormant consumers.

Blizzard is the key to that. Blizzard is a company that works differently from everybody else. Publishers can't complain because publishers aren't willing to do what Blizzard does, and that is Blizzard don't ship a game until it's great.

I know those guys really well and the fact is, Blizzard will completely restart a project if they don't like the way it's going, and other publishers just don't do that. They're always thinking 'where do we put the band-aids to fix this problem' whereas Blizzard

doesn't bother salvaging a bad idea and they end up with hit after hit after hit after hit. If anything, there's a model right there (laughs).

Well, what does the model of free-to-play offer, other than a very reasonable price point?

Well, it's a complete change on the paradigm of buying videogames. It's not free to make, there's no return on your investment. Unless, the gamers *love* the game. If they only like it then they're not going to spend money on it, if it's poor they won't spend any money on it. But if they love the game, then maybe they'll think 'okay maybe I will spend a little money on this item'.

The crux of the issue here is, the developer has invested on the quality of the game. It simply has to be good for them to return a profit. Today, publishers can just throw a game onto a shelf and people will buy it.

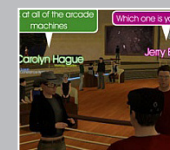
Being so busy, do you have any time to play games yourself?

I play a lot of 360 demos because I just don't have the time to buy a game and spend hours on it. But I've signed up to this rental service in the US and as soon as a game comes through the post I stick it on. The most recent one was *Shrek*.

Highly disappointed by it. Just horrible. I have a little daughter, and so when it arrived I decided to play it with her. The logo scared her first of all, y'know, those giant flashing logos. You can't skip the damn things so it just terrified her, then up comes her hero Shrek who is just punching and kicking and constantly – constantly - fighting everyone. It's not what *Shrek*'s all about, so my daughter was just thinking 'what is going on here' and asking me why *Shrek* was so mean.

I decided to post it back.

## DAVID PERRY ON...



### PLAYSTATION HOME

Everyone is looking into the opportunities Playstation Home offers.

The concept of micro-transactions is hot right now; when I speak to investors they tell me 'don't bring me any games unless they have micro-transactions in them'. That is a very interesting position for investors to take, and so you're going to see developers respond to that paradigm everywhere... not with just Playstation Home either.



### UMDS

The PSP should have had internally stored games. If you could download games

and stick them on your memory card, then the battery life would go up exponentially, the machine could be smaller and things would be much cheaper. It was a bad idea to begin with.



### DAVE PERRY

We kinda laugh about it. He always gets asked about how he can do all his work and make

games as well. But the problem is he likes to make these big, controversial statements, and because of it I sometimes get quoted as saying them, so people start saying that I'm such an asshole, and I'm like, 'that's not me!'

## NEXT ISSUE: PART 2 OF OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH DAVID PERRY...

“...I mean that franchise has been milked beyond belief, it's abusive: somebody should protect games like that from so many sequels. I'm bored of it...”

# RETURN OF THE CHIEF

WORDS: DAN GASSIS DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

It is something of a shame that *Halo* had entered the world of gamers to a somewhat sceptical and wary reception; here was something that had launched on a £300 console, the first console by Microsoft, in a generally under-explored genre

shooter (particularly when playing the excellent single-player campaign of the first game.) Meanwhile, doubting PC evangelists soon begun to admit that it wasn't a bad game; however, the increased competition on that format meant that it didn't have the same impact as it did on the console crowd.

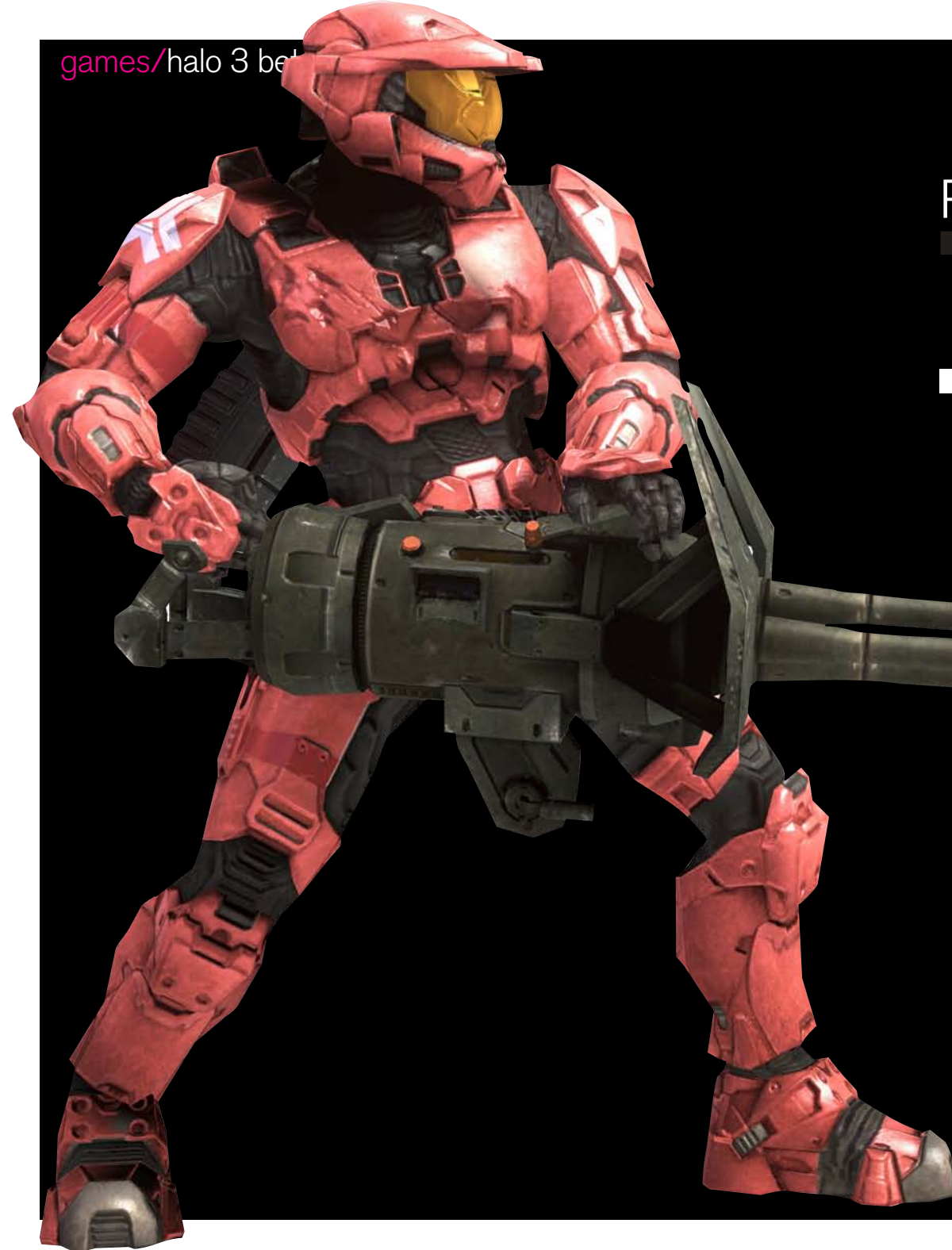
Back to the present, it seems as though *Halo* has been away for ages, at least to those people who aren't hooked on

(*Goldeneye* excepted); put simply, it wasn't the most immediately accessible launch title that one could hope for. Dedicated gamers aside, it's likely that there were many late adopters – people whose only experience of the game was limited to demo pods and visits from wealthier friends. What's worse is the fact that the Microsoft name on the console sent shockwaves across the pages of the PC gaming press; the kind of magazines who frequently provide coverage of dozens of first-person shooters every month, on a format that is as old as gaming itself.

Despite this, the game and it's sequel defied expectations and any late converts quickly saw why the game and it's sequel were so widely credited as being a fine

*Halo 2*'s (admittedly enjoyable) multiplayer modes. Look on the Live profiles of those people, and there isn't a single power-suit in sight; understandable when there is so much more choice for the 360 today, thanks to Live Arcade, some sublime ports (*Guitar Hero II*) and format exclusives (*Crackdown*.) That's not to say that people don't care about the beta anymore; instead, they've realised that the 360 is about much more than a single franchise that was alleged to have the power to sell the console on it's own.

Nevertheless, the beta of *Halo 3* has already converted doubters, even if this only means the multiplayer modes will act as solace when these players are frustrated with the game's solo campaign.





*Halo* has always been about providing a limited number of resources that can be used in interesting ways to create a sublime combat experience, and *Halo 3*, at present, follows that template masterfully.

The core of the game is still *Halo*; it's still about recharging energy and mêlée attacks, bouncy vehicle physics and limited weapon capacity. There's nothing you wouldn't expect any other sequel to deliver – you have new weapons, new vehicles, new maps, better presentation – but there aren't any radical shifts in gameplay.

Hardcore fans wouldn't want it any other way. With such a straightforward agenda, it's easy for this article to launch into a tedious list of the new features and how good/bad they

are – the Spartan Laser is shit because it's overpowered, the Mongoose is great because it's manoeuvrable, the Man Cannon is excellent if you are actually able to find it – but instead, people, players, readers, should think about how it all hangs together as a test bed for one of the most anticipated titles of this generation.

The first thing that anyone would think about is how Bungie has given *Halo* its next-gen makeover. *Halo* was obviously one of the first things on gamer's minds when Microsoft's new console was announced, and the frequent releases of over-saturated, plasticky high-def screenshots of launch games was enough to strike fear into the heart of even the most arrogant fanboy.

The original game's visuals were understated, believable, coherent and solid, and the two maps in the beta are just as appealing, showing off everything from expansive views with breathtaking draw distance, to detailed textures on the most incidental furniture.

Yes, it's essentially a high-resolution *Halo*, but Bungie weren't about to pile all their resources into making the latest instalment of their biggest franchise a cel-shaded platform game, and the visual spectacle of *Halo 3* matches the wonder and awe you first felt as you played in the more picturesque maps of the original.

However, *Halo* has never been a game to show off its pretties; visuals have acted as a mere canvas to frame its exciting combat dynamic. That combat is also familiar – as well as being somewhat more tolerable thanks to the 360's excellent controller – and all the fun of *Halo 2* Slayer games with friends is present and correct here.

The layer of common sense that is often overlooked when considering online behaviour

### “IT'S NICE TO SEE CLASSICS SUCH AS THE ASSAULT RIFLE FROM THE ORIGINAL GAME MAKE A COMEBACK HERE”

suggests that you'll be guaranteed an enjoyable time if you play against people you know; in our own endeavours, being able to share the emergent fun of the new material with these people has been excellent. For instance, the Mongoose – a new vehicle that's akin to a small quad bike – has the potential to establish itself as a favourite, and the hilarity of roaring over a hill into a member of the opposing team never gets old. It's almost as funny as when one of the opposition finds the missile pod; *Halo 3*'s answer to the rocket launcher, and a gun that will send Spartans and mongeese fleeing in the opposite direction.

Speaking of weapons, it's nice to see classics such as the Assault Rifle from the original game make a comeback here; whilst this and *Halo 3*'s new weapons join the arsenal of the previous game, there's rarely been a time when balance has been destroyed during a match (personal bitching about the Spartan Laser is only due to flashbacks of being destroyed by long-range railgun assassins in *Quake 3*) and even at the bottom of the scoreboard, there's enough going on in the game to keep you entertained.

And the beta issues? During the run-up to the launch there was inevitable nay saying from the more dedicated of fans, adamant that it would be plagued with problems (others - through blissful naïvety - convinced themselves that it would go without a hitch.) Of course, launch day arrived for *Crackdown* owners and that magical

option in the game's menu was still inactive. However, this was resolved the next day, so it's a relatively minor issue. (From a personal point of view, all other technical aspects been relatively smooth; no crashes, a bit of lag here and there...oh, and it would have been nice to see clearer details on how to enable voice communication for us Live newbies. Cheers.)

To close, it's worth stressing that that the writing of this article hasn't been as straightforward as anticipated; immediate impressions following the initial play are all very well, but the *Halo 3* Beta will end long after initial impressions have been made. This conclusion was written days after that very closure, and the sentiments made are no different now than before; if you're expecting a revolution, don't look to the multiplayer. Instead, think of it more as a tribute to the elements that characterised the previous two games, with higher resolutions and small refinements. Besides, what's wrong with such an approach? *Halo* started out with an agenda to refine the first-person shooter, and to end the saga with an agenda that remains the same as it was in the beginning is simply a divine achievement; one that's worthy of it's very own halo.



# THE COMEBACK QUEEN

**T**he imminent release of *Metroid Prime: Corruption* has much to answer for. In order for it to step out of the asteroid-sized shadow of the GameCube original, Retro Studios need to do what no other Wii title has done to date; they simply must conquer the Wii's interface.

*Metroid Prime* was faced with a similarly daunting challenge. It may be hard to believe that the eight-year return of a cherished franchise was unanimously dreaded, but expectations of the game are aptly summarised with N-Sider journalist Pete Deol's advice to Nintendo in 2001: "Cut Retro loose of this project."

Even worse for Texas-based development outfit, the overwhelming negativity towards the announcement of a 3D *Metroid* update wasn't simply knee-jerk panic. The newborn company had to cancel four projects before focusing on *Prime*, with reports of constant changes in development approach as well as widespread redundancy; proof enough that reservations towards the game were entirely justified.

But while *Metroid's* new direction was being crucified by the gaming press and its forumites, Retro Studios were busy crafting an experience that wouldn't just honour the series' reputation, but in fact jolt it skyward. The fruits of their labour revealed a game more polished, more impactful and essentially more enjoyable than any other *Metroid* game to date. Quite simply, it's in the top ten of many gamers' secret all-time lists.

The story of its triumph begins, quite fittingly, with its controls. Even when revisiting the game today, it's hard to tell whether the GameCube's controller was built for *Prime* or Samus' suit was built for the controller;

nevertheless, every single button and stick was employed with eerie convenience and adequacy.

The usually redundant D-Pad and C-stick became intuitive, immediate, and somehow satisfying tool-selection twins. Thumb right to X and you're a morphball, thumb forward when holding down A and your plasma charge will carry five rockets. Even that stranded Z button became an ideal map navigation button.

**NEW METROID. BAD IDEA. WON'T WORK. SOUND FAMILIAR? DM LOOKS AT THE FIRST TIME RETRO STUDIOS SILENCED THE VOICES OF DISSENT.**

**WORDS:** ROB CROSSLEY **DESIGN:** DAN GASSIS AND ANDREW REVELL

Everything was snug; everything made sense.

It cannot be underestimated how *Prime's* control service empowered the player; fingers and thumbs in total command of a range of scanners, tools and weapon adjustments. Your visor, unobtrusively housing convenient and essential information, furthered this comforting feeling of being ready for anything. That snazzy hologram map, in particular, hasn't been bettered to this day.

Retro's masterful unity of interface, controls and information design succeeded in removing the boundaries between the player tapping buttons on the pad, and the heroic bounty hunter, surveying the catacombs of Tallon IV and sniffing out its secret doors and passageways. Planning the quickest route between A and B, noting what tools in your inventory are required in doing so, executing

**THE USUALLY REDUNDANT D-PAD AND C-STICK BECAME SATISFYING TOOL-SELECTION TWINS**





your plan – the fluid controls gave you the confidence to do these things, and it was this confidence in taking on the environment, alone but well prepared, that made *Prime* feel so distinct.

Samus' scanner-visor was also employed to fulfil the most unlikely of tasks; storytelling. Scanning across Tallon IV's ancient halls of dead civilisations not only provided clues for progression, but it also helped in piecing together the story of its destruction. Likewise, scanning a dead Space Pirate pictured its final moments. Analysing a crumbled column revealed how long it had been standing. Retro Studios' decision to eschew spoon-fed cut-scenes allowed players to piece together their own version of events, immediately immersing them into a world that imagination would dictate. The results ranged from fascinating to haunting, and it's these small but huge differences that made *Prime* the embodiment of the First-Person-Adventure (because, quite simply, the term 'shooter' would dishonour everything it offered beyond that genre.)

With leisurely – even enjoyable – platforming, graphical muscle and striking locations, with cute effects and beautiful bosses, with masses of Nintendo polish and without any loading screens, *Prime* is an extraordinary videogame. The Wii's Corruption is Retro Studios' biggest challenge yet; undeniably, there are gigantic questions looming over it. But considering how far Retro Studios have come, from cancellations to celebrations, no one can put it past them to deliver the most emphatic of answers.

**IT'S SMALL BUT HUGE  
DIFFERENCES THAT MADE  
PRIME THE EMBODIMENT  
OF THE FIRST-PERSON  
ADVENTURE**





# SENSORY OVERLOAD



**WE'VE HAD GAMES WITH STICKS, GAMES WITH GUITARS, GAMES WITH FIGHTING AND MODDING OF CARS - BUT NOW, IT SEEMS, THE ARCADES OF JAPAN ARE ROCKING TO A DIFFERENT RHYTHM - THE VISCERAL THRILLS OF FAST-PACED STRATEGY. TRADING CARD GAMES MEET ARCAINE SORCERY AND THE RESULT IS AN ALL-NEW ARCADE GENRE. BRETT FINDS OUT WHAT'S GOING ON.**

**WORDS:** BRETT **DESIGN:** ANDREW CAMPBELL

Over the last few years, we've seen many multi-genre games. Thanks to titles like Activision's *Battlezone* and Sega's *Shenmue*, the concept of creating a game designed to straddle the gulf between two genres is no longer alien to us. However, gamers can be a diverse bunch. Although we all have a hobby in common, there are many other trends that "gamer-geeks" tend to follow. Take for example anime; a medium and artistic style which, to many, is inextricably linked to the



Japanese games industry, and which many gamers therefore like. They also like other forms of gaming - one of the more notable being collectible card games, or CCGs. Just remember the speed at which a *World Of Warcraft* CCG was announced after the immensely successful launch of Blizzard's digital crack.

For those that have never played one before, CCGs usually take the form of a duel between two players, each with a personally selected deck of cards, describing characters, abilities or a variety of other matters relevant to the game. The games are almost always played in turns, each player using the cards in their hand to defeat the opponent, in whatever way is required to win. Two of the more famous properties are *Magic: The Gathering*, and the more recent *Yu Gi Oh*. There is, however, a great deal more to it than that. Players of course have to buy the cards, but

**"ENTER THE JAPANESE ARCADES, AND YOU'LL SEE GROUPS OF PLAYERS HUNCHED OVER MASSIVE MACHINES - ROWS UPON ROWS, WITH MANY SCREENS, A LARGE WIDESCREEN DISPLAY, AND SEEMINGLY, NO CONTROLS TO SPEAK OF."**



not individually - you have to buy randomly seeded packs. Players trade cards with each other in order to create a deck that conforms to a particular strategy they have in mind. There are those that argue there is much more to building a good deck than using it in-game, regardless of that though, the two-sided structure of trading and playing works well.

One of the main factors in these games is that they usually have a story of sorts; by having the cards, the player is assuming a character persona. In the case of *Magic: The Gathering*, the player assumes the role of a sorcerer, whereas *Yu Gi Oh* is an anime, ostensibly about characters that play the card game - where it manifests itself as a real magical battle. The problem though is that these stories can be superfluous; the games can be quite abstract and don't always work towards creating a sense of "role".

Enter the Japanese arcades, and you'll see groups of players hunched over massive machines - rows upon rows, with many screens, a large widescreen display, and seemingly, no controls to speak of. Closer inspection reveals an audience locked in an

unflinching trance-like concentration - their eyes darting back and forth over the virtual battlefield displayed onscreen, their mind straining to filter all the information they are being fed into a coherent strategy - and their hands, merely a blur. What is very quickly apparent is an extremely skillful game is being played - a game requiring reactions of a blistering speed, coupled with intense strategic focus.

In the case of one of the games, the screen in front shows a futuristic battleground, based in the Universal Century timeline of *Mobile Suit Gundam*. In addition, players are given a trackball, three colour-coded buttons, and a large white DECISION button. More important than any of these though is the "sensor-board" - an A3 size sheet of plastic, that uses some kind of black magic to read CCG cards that are placed on its smooth surface. The player chooses their force for the battle, and places their cards on the board. The machine then reads them, after which, the battle commences, playing like an RTS - the main difference being that there is no mouse; the player moves his units in-game by moving his cards across the sensor-board.





**“BY NOW I’D EXPECT FORUMS TO BE ALIGHT WITH THEM, MIXING AS THEY DO TWO VERY POPULAR STYLES OF GAMING – BUT IT SEEMS NOONE HAS HEARD OF THEM.”**

### SAMPLE GUNDAM 0079: CARDBUILDER UNIT



Anime fans amongst you will recognize **Karen Joshua** from *Gundam: The 08th MS team*. The card to her right is a piece of equipment to aid her targeting. She is also piloting a Gundam Ez8 Mobile suit, and carrying a beam rifle and shield. This is all contained within a plastic concertina, which is folded up at the start of the match to make a stack of cards that can be moved easily.



It is something of a mystery what form of devilry this device employs to work. Some players have a theory that it reads an invisible magnetic watermark in the cards. The clever thing about it though, is that it takes the form of a multi-point touchpad – you can move multiple units – with either hand – at the same time.

Units have a field of fire, similar to the soliton-radar of the *Metal Gear Solid* games, and in order to target your enemies, you will also need to rotate your cards. Then, the three colour-coded buttons mentioned earlier alter your unit's orders, with a choice of ranged weaponry, a defensive stance and close-range combat – each offering passive and active effects. When an enemy enters a unit's field of fire, a noise signifies the start of the targeting process. A line is drawn from your unit to the enemy, as long as they stay within the field (usually requiring a bit of rotation). The moment the lock-on procedure is complete, you hit the big DECISION button, and the combat plays out in a similar manner to *Advance Wars*. If you hit the button too early, then the targeting starts over. If you hit it too late, you'll likely get shot – unless the opponent has made the same mistake.

This might sound reasonably straightforward. The difficulty however arises in that you may have four units, each one moving, needing a change of orders, getting ready to fire, trying not to be fired upon, travelling to a choke point, returning to your side of the board to be repaired... Within a minute of starting the battlefield becomes a kind of beautiful chaos – that to an onlooker, merely appears to be a mess – whereas the player sees an almost balletic motion of units

working in a strange synergy. The final result is a game of supreme multi-tasking, almost requiring the player to fracture his very psyche in order to maintain any kind of overall strategy.

After wearing down your opponent, you win – or in turn, you are worn down and lose; and at the end of each game, the machine dispenses a single card, randomly selected from the stack within the machine. You might get a useless card, or perhaps a common but useful one but occasionally you'll receive uncommon cards. Of course, after some play, you're bound to get a rare one, the value of which cannot be overstated, as some can trade hands for over £50 each.

The fact that the game plays pretty well, admittedly with a fair amount of confusion at your first go, is not what surprised me. What did surprise me is that these kinds of games have been out in Japan for over a year. By now I'd expect forums to be alight with them, mixing as they do two very popular styles of gaming – but it seems no-one has heard of them. Recently one of the more popular titles has seen a release for the Nintendo DS, and although it lacks the multi-point control, it does play rather well. It is however entirely in Japanese, which may put some people off. It's called *Sangokushi Taisen DS*, and, as the history buffs might guess, it's set in the Chinese Three Kingdoms period recently made popular in so many games by Koei (even though this is actually by Sega). If nothing else, it's a good RTS, and finally fills the void caused by the lack of this genre on the DS. Most good import sites are selling it, and if you like the sound of what you hear, I'd recommend you check it out.





## GOD OF WAR II

(PS2)

Fabulous last hurrahs, such as *Okami* and *FFXII*, have painted the PS2's sunset in luxurious golden hues. With breathtaking vistas, incredibly confident visuals and relentless exhilaration, *God of War II* has provided a dramatic final stroke.

Just minutes into the opening training level – a cinematic brawl with the Colossus of Rhodes, no less – there's an immediate understanding that you're getting your money's worth. And although this truly unforgettable prelude is never outshined, *God of War II* continues to unleash a tirade of remarkable moments – so many in fact, you

begin to lose count.

Kratos' journey remains exciting throughout with the assortment of well-placed QTEs, an exhaustive arsenal of attacks and exquisitely inventive finishers. Its motley-crew of mini-bosses, in particular, puts *Zelda* and the like to shame.

SCE Santa Monica have showed in *God of War 2* that they are a development team with gigantic ideas, who relish battling technical impossibilities and – crucially – absolutely love making videogames.

Rob Crossley



**“GOD OF WAR II UNLEASHES A TIRADE OF REMARKABLE MOMENTS - SO MANY IN FACT, YOU BEGIN TO LOSE COUNT!”**



## MERCURY MELTDOWN REVOLUTION

(Wii)

The Wii isn't shy of 'roll things around a maze' games. Neither is it devoid of titles with added 'party games' tagged on. What the Wii shouldn't need then, is another game that has a combination of these coupled with some terribly simple graphics and presentation.

It's curious then, that *Mercury Meltdown* is perhaps the most essential purchase for the Wii so far this year. At a most basic level, *Mercury Meltdown* utilizes the Wii-mote in the most naturally instinctive manner in the most well implemented game on the Wii since *Wii Tennis*.

It involves the player in a way that makes it instantly playable and controllable by almost anyone and, while the game-play mechanics develop to almost absurd levels of difficulty as you progress, *Mercury Meltdown* is never unfair. Like all the best Wii efforts, events on-screen and the controller in your hand are synchronised to perfection.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



**“LIKE ALL THE BEST WII EFFORTS, EVENTS ON-SCREEN AND THE CONTROLLER IN YOUR HAND ARE SYNCHRONISED TO PERFECTION!”**



## TOMB RAIDER: ANNIVERSARY

(PS2)

Lara's anniversary present shouldn't be seen as a celebration of her success, but more a defiant symbol of her survival. Those ten intervening years has seen the franchise plummet from the heights of Lara's cover on *The Face* to the death of her architects, Core Design.

But after extensive development-reconstructive-surgery, Lara is still here, as young and nimble as ever. *Anniversary* returns to the original's setting armed with Crystal Dynamics' engine from last year's *Legend*, but unfortunately doesn't fully capitalise on the progress it painstakingly made.

*Anniversary* is nonetheless a sincere effort. Restricted as it is by its purpose to imitate, it shouldn't be regarded as a trite money-spinner; the original's charm and wondrous atmospheric impact remains. Its facelift and thorough tweaking is equally welcomed, though perhaps the omission of *Legend's* physics-based puzzles constrains it too far.

Unambitious as it is, you'll leave *Anniversary* knowing the franchise is in safe hands.

Rob Crossley



**“THE ORIGINAL'S CHARM AND WONDROUS ATMOSPHERIC IMPACT REMAINS!”**



## MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG 2: MARCH OF THE MINIS

(DS)

If you were slightly bewildered by the amount of objects and sequences at work in each of the original *MvDK's* puzzles, you might be slightly wary of the DS sequel. However, thanks to the added functionality of the touchscreen, the interactions of *March of the Minis* are a lot more straightforward.

In this release, play no longer centres on Mario in the traditional platformer fashion, but instead allows players to stop and start a group of mini-Marios, whilst also operating lifts, conveyor belts and other devices – the aim being to

insure the minis' path to the exit is always a safe one.

Though the premise may initially seem intimidating, the difficulty is pitched perfectly, and those less able are only punished with a lower score; the resulting compulsive desire for improvement turning this into another DS essential.

Dan Gassis



**“PLAY ALLOWS PLAYERS TO STOP AND START A GROUP OF MINI-MARIOS – THE AIM BEING TO INSURE THE MINIS' PATH TO THE EXIT IS ALWAYS A SAFE ONE!”**

DIRECTOR

CAMERAMAN



# film & tv

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION. PEN, PAPER, PAD. WELL, THIS WRITER'S ROUTINE COULD PROBABLY BETTER BE SUMMED UP WITH 'COFFEE AND KEYBOARD', BUT YOU GET THE PICTURE. THROUGHOUT DM'S STEADY EVOLUTION, THESE PAGES WILL PLAY HOST TO SOME NOTABLE TALENT – SOME NAMES YOU'LL KNOW, SOME YOU WON'T. BUT FOR NOW, SIT BACK AND READ. OR, SHOULD YOU BE INCLINED, GET TAPPING ON YOUR KEYBOARD AND SEND SOME PROPOSALS MY WAY. I'LL DISPATCH THE COFFEE IN RETURN, FOR FREE.

**KEITH ANDREW**  
FILM/TV EDITOR

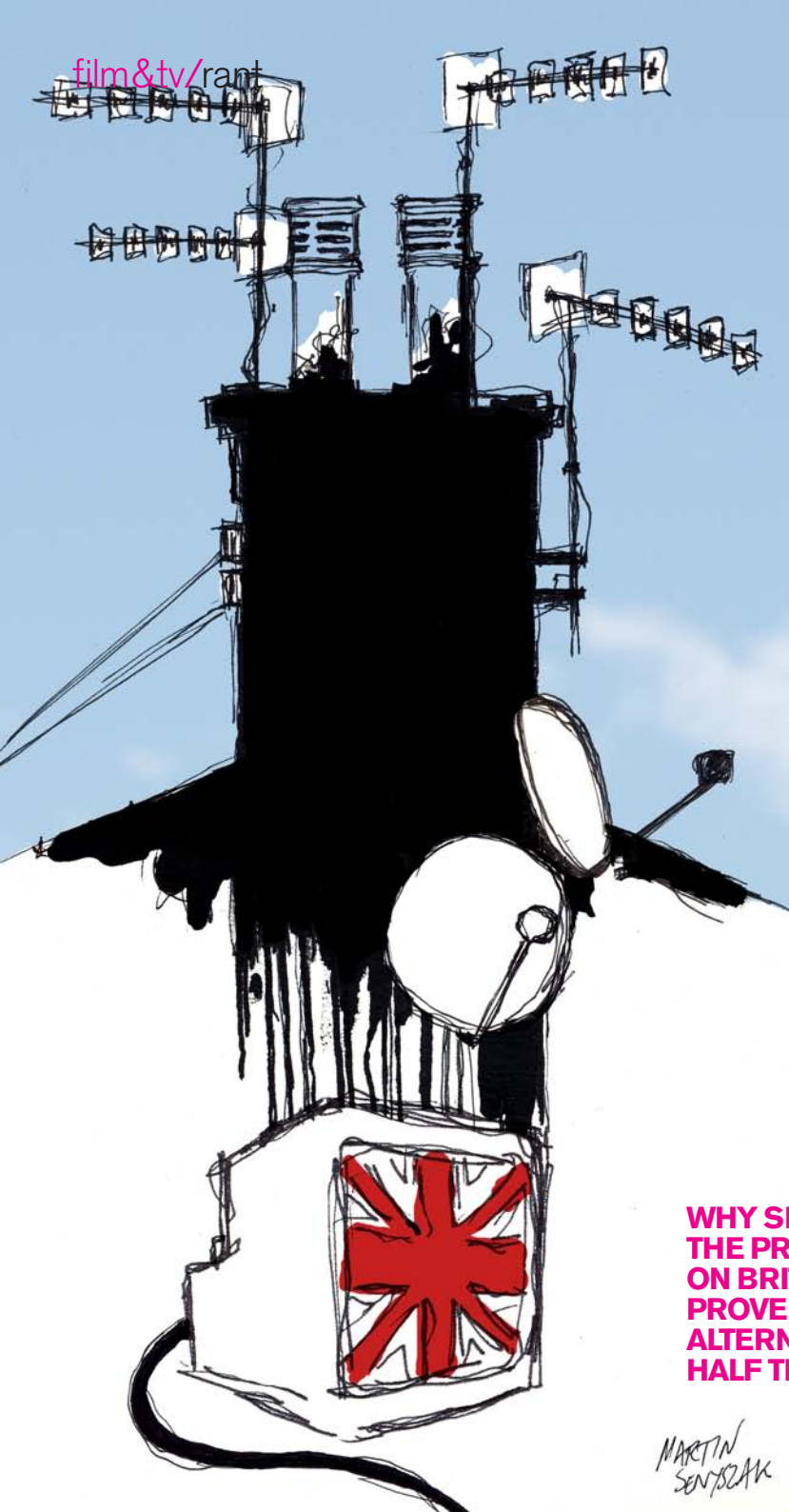
[keith.andrew@disposablemedia.co.uk](mailto:keith.andrew@disposablemedia.co.uk)

## currently watching...

heroes / queer as folk / this is england / 28 weeks later / potc3: at world's end / jindabyne







**“** **FOLLOWING ON FROM** the UK's ritual humiliation at the Eurovision Song Contest last month, it occurred to me that perhaps we're gluttons for punishment on this small little island. The morning after the hellish night before, the tabloids (including the *Daily Express*, which somehow manage to find column inches in between daily Diana scandal stories) didn't break from their tradition of complaining about neighbourly voting, whilst, of course, taking time to point out that we 'basically invented music anyway' – citing examples such as The Beatles, The Who and M People no doubt – in an aggravatingly sneering tone.



## REMOTE REHAB

**LE ROYAUME-UNI DOUZE POINTS: KEITH ANDREW DISCOVERS THAT THERE'S MORE TO BRITISH CULTURE THAN JUST SCOOSH.**

But I don't buy the 'we don't need to win it' attitude. I think that's a cop out, and that we – as a nation – are a lot more sensitive to rejection that we admit. Over the last ten or twenty years, we've felt the squeeze here, creatively. The talent is still there – it's littered up and down this land in spades, but the people at the top often haven't had the courage to invest both their faith and their cheque books in 'commercial risks'.

Our music charts are stained from top to bottom by a decade long invasion of hapless American hip-hop, and our television networks

**WHY SPEND MONEY COMMISSIONING THE PRODUCTION OF A RISKY PROJECT ON BRITISH SHORES, WHEN A PROVEN AND MARKETABLE AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE CAN BE SNAPPED UP FOR HALF THE PRICE?**

were starting to go the same way. By the end of the 1990s, Channel 4 – a station originally commissioned to cater for minorities – had become nothing more than a mouthpiece for U.S. TV networks.

That's not to say that this was an entirely bad thing. In this one-way transatlantic exchange, a few priceless nuggets often made it to UK screens – this writer has previously declared his love for *Six Feet Under* on these very virtual pages – but their dominance trampled on a lot of people's dreams. Why spend money commissioning the production of a risky project on British shores, when a proven and marketable American alternative can be snapped up for half the price?

But, to our advantage, this is something that has started to change over the last couple of years. It only needed a slight shift in power to spark a revolution, and BBC Wales has been at the forefront of that. Three or four years ago, not

only would British stalwart *Doctor Who* drawing in audiences of 7-9 million every Saturday night seemed an alien (haha!) concept, but a late-night adult science-fiction series spin-off series heading for a decorated spot on BBC Two next year would have been the stuff of dreams.

British television is confident and, most importantly, is having fun again. ITV aside, our screens are no longer the home to a mechanical stream of detective dramas – one murder case being neatly solved in the space of an hour so the next can kick off after the ad break. We have shows like *Spooks* which, while not always perfect, aren't afraid to get dirty and try to do something daring. Producers are no longer sitting about in the coffee bar gasping in awe of last night's episode of *24* wishing they could "have a go at something like that." They are – and they're not half bad at it, either.

And we also have an ace or two up our sleeves. British writers and directors have the talent and – most importantly – the grounding in reality that enables them to produce television that taps into our culture. Series such as *Shameless*, or even this issue's retrospective *Queer As Folk*, are more like social commentaries than they are plain old dramas. Production-line soap operas such as *Desperate Housewives* have nothing on these two and, christ, didn't the Americans manage to balls *Queer As Folk* up?

So, while last issue's column wasn't exactly a joyous opener, Rehab does have a sense of balance. We have a lot of shows to be proud of in the UK right now. *Dancing On Ice* just isn't one of them.

**”**



# THEY COULD BE HEROES

WORDS: JIM MILES

DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

**NBC'S HEROES HAS ENJOYED HUGE POPULARITY IN THE US AND ALREADY BUILT A DEDICATED FOLLOWING OVER HERE. DISPOSABLE MEDIA EXAMINES JUST WHY THE NATION WILL BE HOOKED THIS SUMMER WHEN THE PROGRAMME COMES TO BBC TWO.**

One could be forgiven for thinking that - based on the title alone - *Heroes* is about a team of do-gooders saving the world. In fact, the focus is much more on the individual lives of people with supernatural abilities, and it is only by coordinating their efforts throughout the season that a greater purpose is uncovered.

The show counts down to a huge explosion in New York, foreseen by Peter Petrelli, who has prophetic dreams warning him of the imminent destruction, and comic book artist Isaac Mendez, whose stylised work depicts the future (or, as the programme makes ambiguous, a possible future).

Another character aware of the looming catastrophe is the closest *Heroes* has to a main protagonist: the appropriately-named Hiro Nakamura. Hiro is a Japanese office worker with an adorable baby face and childlike mannerisms. His poster-boy qualities aside, Hiro's abilities - which include being able to teleport and freeze time dead - are some of the show's most powerful.

However, Hiro's claim to the role of central character is hotly contested by cheerleader Claire Bennett, whose talent is almost as remarkable: she is indestructible. We are led into Claire's world early on when, in the very first episode, she jumps from great heights, breaking her body into unnatural contortions before getting up and healing herself within seconds. But rather than revelling in her powers, Claire is actually confused and scared - most notably highlighted when she rescues victims trapped in a burning inferno without suffering even a scratch. It's in this scene - arguably the most important of the whole season (it is frequently returned to in flashback) - that we learn she is petrified of being labelled a freak.

This is the essence of *Heroes* - pulling in the audience with what appear to be the wonder and potential for helping people without physical



consequence, conflicting with the social implications that being gifted in such a way would entail.

This isn't Claire's only role; it's her to whom the series' tagline "save the cheerleader, save the world" refers, though to the creators' credit, great lengths have been taken to mislead viewers as to why saving Claire will save the world, and from what exactly she must be saved (she is, after all, indestructible).

With a title such as *Heroes*, it's implicit that in some way, a villain or two will be involved. At least initially, a simple interpretation is that the main 'baddie' is Sylar - a supernatural who can steal a person's ability by eating their brain. Early on, Sylar is a horror movie-like monster, whose whole body we never clearly see and whose range of powers appears to make him omnipotent. However, as the season progresses and other characters' powers are developed, we learn more about Sylar through his confrontations with adversaries. Throughout the series, he develops into a complex character, perhaps akin to a vampire: not necessarily evil but driven to do terrible deeds by a hunger which can only be fed by loss of life.

It is when *Heroes* shows Sylar in a more sympathetic light that the viewer is made aware of other threats; namely the mysterious organisation trying to hunt down those with powers, and the gangster Lindemann, played with deceptive charm by Malcolm McDowell.

*Heroes* has a clever plot, over a dozen main characters, and a level of technical polish that puts it side by side with the very best American TV has to offer. However, it is not

as free from criticism as the popularity and viewer praise suggest. The flaws flagged up by the current audience are all of the nitpicking comic fan variety – assaults on the more ludicrous characters and speculation on who could and should kill who. The decision to create an internet-gifted character called 'wireless' certainly deserves the widespread scorn it has received, but there are deeper problems with the show. Most heinous is the frequency with which plotlines are hopped between mid-episode, many segments comprising only of a few minutes' recap before cutting to another character, having achieved almost no actual plot progression.

For a 23 episode season, nothing like as much happens in *Heroes* as ought to in the 16 hours the creators have to work with.

*Heroes* is also swamped in cliché and bad dialogue. It's not that the dialogue is corny or unrealistic, but that the writers insert supposedly profound observations into the script which will ring horribly in the ears of any intelligent viewer. A perfect example is the line "sometimes questions are more powerful than answers", delivered with the smugness and mock-modesty of a

student trying to bluff a Philosophy exam. Worsening matters, *Heroes* can be hugely patronising to the viewer. In one scene late in the series a disabled character is cured by a man whose gift is that of healing; the event is foreshadowed early and the healing is

inevitable, yet still it is stretched out over several minutes with a gratuitous culmination where the disabled person is shown to be cured, ramming the point home to anyone too slow to realise what was going on. Equally frustrating is that many of the characters ignore information staring them in the face and have tiresome, simple exchanges with those around them to explain what is going on, which feels like a needless concession to viewers who can't piece the story strands together.

Nonetheless, *Heroes* is good television. It offers sympathetic characters and mysterious organisations, and it frames itself intelligently in contemporary context - many events subtly reflect the world we live in. There are issues of race and exclusion, inevitable in any work sharing *X-Men*'s concept of a superhuman minority, and the interconnected character network gives the show an angle to tackle family issues such as adoption and matriarchy.

Most striking is how obliquely 9/11 conscious the show is, with the impending catastrophe heading for New York raising interesting questions. In quite daring fashion, some characters actually perceive the explosion as a necessary evil for the greater good. When Hiro later travels into the future, we are shown footage of citizens marching with "America Remembers" banners, ringing a note of familiarity in the mind of any viewer who caught the masses of post 9/11 news coverage.

Such awareness is a fine demonstration of the attention to detail lavished upon one of the most hyped shows in recent American TV history, but also proof that *Heroes* is truly a product of the world it has been born into.

**"Save the cheerleader, save the world!"  
– Hiro Nakamura**



film & tv/queer as folk

# UNREQUITED LOVE

WORDS: KEITH ANDREW

DESIGN: ROB CROSSLEY AND ANDREW REVELL

**BOY MEETS BOY. BOY FALLS FOR BOY. BOY STRINGS ALONG OTHER BOY FOR SIXTEEN YEARS. EIGHT YEARS ON, DISPOSABLE MEDIA LOOKS AT THE STORY THAT MADE RUSSELL T. DAVIES BOTH A TABLOID TERRORIST AND LITERARY HERO IN JUST A COUPLE OF MONTHS.**



It's easy to forget now, with Russell T. Davies' take on *Doctor Who* drawing in family crowds of between 7-9 million every Saturday night, but the Welshman was once the scorn of the British press. Having seen out the final days of former ITV Drama stalwart *The Grand* (and watching it lose half its audience in the process), Davies' next project was one that – on the surface – was even more likely to turn the viewers away.

Though the likes of *The Daily Mail* may disagree, underneath *Queer As Folk*'s recreational drug taking, underage sex, lesbians having babies, bogus marriages and – god forbid – a gay man working in a supermarket, was a simple tale of unrequited love. This didn't matter to the naysayers, however, ever eager for a quick headline or two. Predictably slated by the right-wing press at a time when Noddy in *Byker Grove* was as gay as television got, *Queer As Folk* also managed lose its sponsor in its first few weeks on air (no, we haven't forgotten Becks) and had to contend with a proposed boycott fronted by columnist Gary Bushell.

Yet, slowly but surely – even in its 10.30pm graveyard shift on Channel 4 – *Queer As Folk* built itself an audience. A fairly sizeable audience. The kind of audience usually reserved for the channel's American imports – *Friends* and the like. The viewers were able to see beyond the press' inane ramblings to the meat of the story – the ins and outs of what happens when love is a one way street.

King of the Manchester gay scene – namely the then burgeoning late 1990s Canal Street – public relations executive Stuart Allen Jones was the epicentre of two lives; best friend and supermarket worker Vince Tyler and 15 year old Nathan Maloney – the latter the product of a "one night stand that never went away."



Aired in early 1999, *Queer As Folk*'s eight episodes followed the lives of these three young men - namely the disproportionate relationship between Stuart and Vince. Though often criticised for showing the supposed 'gay culture' of the time in a negative light (what with snorting heroin and sleeping with schoolboys playing their part) both Russell and executive producer Nicola Shindler's reasoning at the time was that this was not a representative or issues-based drama - this was just a story about three men who happened to be gay. Though, had anyone been looking for an example of how to write gay characters for TV, *Queer As Folk* didn't put a foot wrong.

Davies' writing managed to be aware of the issues of the time without pandering to them. Stuart, confidently 'out' in his day-to-day life, hid his sexuality from his parents. Conversely, Vince played the straight man at work, but benefitted from having a mother - Hazel - who was happy to go out on the town with him. Close and camp friend Alexander appeared to be having a ball in Manchester's clubs and pubs every night, but underneath he was weighed down by the rejection he had suffered at the hands of his mother and father.

But none of them gave up - this was not a tale of depression or nervous breakdowns. When Stuart was confronted by a homophobic car salesman, he didn't slit his wrists or burst into tears - he simply drove the salesman's Jeep through the showroom window, threatening to tell the papers in the process. Russell T. Davies is certainly not a creative who falls back upon clichéd writing, nor do his characters state the obvious in his scripts. Like *This Life* before it and *Six Feet Under* after, *Queer As Folk* had a crucial understanding of the fact that people don't often say or do what they really mean. What moves a drama is not the addition of trite all-guns-blazing confrontations where characters

get everything out in the open; rather, scenes where people misdirect and hide their feelings - treating the audience with a bit of respect and assuming that they can fill in the blanks for themselves - have a larger pay-off.

When Stuart becomes concerned that Vince's adoration of him might be denying his friend the opportunity of a proper relationship, he doesn't shun him or have a 'Queen Vic' style war of words. Instead, he sets up an elaborate chain of events that

results in Vince being 'outed' at work and, ultimately, the end of their friendship. None of this was made obvious to those watching, either - *Queer As Folk*'s path was one that the viewer was encouraged to follow by themselves, rather than being forced down, with every twist and turn pointed out to them in great detail.

In the same way, both Charles McDougall (of *Sex and the City* fame) and Sarah Harding's direction evaded any sense of sterility by ensuring colour and life filled the screen at all moments. Stuart's loft apartment was long and expansive, littered with dark wood and shades of blue, yellow and green - the colours were ever-changing in fact, making it a perfect setting for some beautifully shot scenes; a setting that never looked quite the same from one episode to the next.

Even potentially dry locations such as a church funeral or Nathan's

school-yard were enriched with clever lighting, staging or a slowly panning camera, signifying movement subtly in the background. Of course, all such scenes were also lifted by Murray Gold's (who still works with Davies, now on *Doctor Who*) eminently jolly - for want of a better word - score. From the opening theme to the tracks that decorated scenes throughout, *Queer As Folk* wasn't weighed down by strings or any attempt at a Hollywood homage. Gold ensured the music interacted with the story and was as memorable and iconic as any other element in the show. The addition of the likes of Pulp, Suede and all the other sights and sounds of Canal Street also made sure that *Queer As Folk* was as much a product of the end of the 1990s as Amy Jenkins' *This Life* was a result of a few years previous - when both are watched in 2007, they almost feel like time capsules.

That's possibly the greatest compliment anyone could ever pay *Queer As Folk*. Leaving behind what it may or may not have done for gay men up and down the land, the way it dealt with the right-wing media and how it made little fuss about the discrimination that

targeted it on a corporate scale, the story of Stuart and Vince is one that can now be viewed without all the baggage that dogged its appearance on British screens almost eight years ago.

Either on old copies recorded on VHS at the time or on the inevitable DVD box-set, *Queer As Folk* can now be seen as what it always was: damn good drama.

And it doesn't stop there. Anyone who feels they are missing a bit of Stuart and Vince in their life should be comforted by the fact that Russell's tale of unrequited love continues to this very day. *Doctor Who* - which, ironically enough, was Vince's favourite show - now has such a tale of its own. Martha Jones' love for the Doctor is one that drags her half-way around the Universe every Saturday night.

That's certainly further than Canal Street.

“ **YOU'VE DONE NOTHING, VINCE. YOU GO TO WORK. YOU GO FOR A DRINK. YOU SIT AND WATCH CHEAP SCIENCE FICTION. SMALL AND TINY WORLD. WHAT IS THERE TO LOVE?**

**IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.**  
STUART ALLEN JONES

”

“ **UNREQUITED LOVE - IT'S FANTASTIC! BECAUSE IT NEVER HAS TO CHANGE, IT NEVER HAS TO GROW UP AND IT NEVER HAS TO DIE!**  
VINCE TYLER

”





THIS IS ENGLAND  
(18)

//director:  
shane meadows

Depicting life on the residue of Thatcher's Britain, *This is England* handles its subject matter with a calm yet horrid sincerity that never begs for sympathy.

It follows the impressionable twelve-year-old Shaun (Thomas Turgoose) as he befriends a group of older skin heads during an idle school holiday in a grey seaside town. He and his new companions live in an innocent utopia of misspent youth until the gang's former alpha-male and loose-cannon, Combo (Stephen Graham), returns from his prison sentence. Combo tries to rally the group into

his own jingoistic – and eventually racist – agenda, becoming an unlikely father figure to Shaun, whose dad had died in the Falkland's.

Newcomer Turgoose's performance is a real highlight, but it is Graham's complex and remarkably intimidating portrayal of Combo that steals the show. Muscular, shocking, friendly and funny, *This Is England* is an important piece of British cinema with a masterful, paralytic atmosphere worthy of comparison to James Joyce.

Rob Crossley



**"AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF BRITISH CINEMA WITH A MASTERFUL, PARALYTIC ATMOSPHERE WORTHY OF COMPARISON TO JAMES JOYCE"**



POTC3: AT WORLD'S END  
(12A)

//director:  
gore verbinski

Shallow, beautiful, unrewarding, pretentious yet unfeasibly popular, Keira Knightly mirrors the problems of this the third in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* Trilogy, perfectly.

Trilogy is incorrect though, given that *Pirates 2* and *3* are in essence one very, very long film, with this finale coming in at a needless 3 hours itself. In an effort to give all the main characters a motivation, the writers over-complicate almost every single character to drive unnecessary plot twists, clumsy dialogue and superfluous exposition.

The film's terrible writing and the contrived nature as a merchandise vehicle belittle its opportunity to be a classic summer blockbuster – only special effects and the few fighting sequences add anything of genuine interest. Johnny Depp is both under-used and overly-self aware now, with the rest of the characters adding nothing of note to a film that is as wonderful to look at as it is difficult to enjoy.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



**"THE FILM'S TERRIBLE WRITING AND THE CONTRIVED NATURE AS A MERCHANDISE VEHICLE BELITTLE ITS OPPORTUNITY TO BE A CLASSIC SUMMER BLOCKBUSTER"**



28 WEEKS LATER  
(18)

//director:  
juan carlos fresnadillo

Sequencing an apocalyptic movie is an idea only the perfectly unmindful horror genre can entertain, yet *28 Weeks Later* constantly tries to bluff its way out of the senseless, primordial-soup-horror-flick that it explicitly exists to be.

Twenty-eight weeks later, the US army decides to repopulate England in a territory-by-territory fashion. 'Section 1', as it's named, becomes a tightly controlled, fully-functional living environment. As you have predicted, there is an 'insurgency' from the infected.

The threatening presence and

inhumane nature of the US troops is clearly a desperate swing for credibility, a dry-hump of Iraq War satire against the original's template. It's this preoccupation with credibility that limits the more befitting splatterastic moments (a helicopter-gore-fest being the standout) to seldom appearances.

*28 Weeks Later* doesn't challenge its prequel in any way. Its edgy style and wonderful zombies cannot save it from feeling unnecessary, misguided and ultimately cheap.

Rob Crossley



**"28 WEEKS LATER CONSTANTLY TRIES TO BLUFF ITS WAY OUT OF THE SENSELESS, PRIMORDIAL-SOUP-HORROR-FICK THAT IT EXPLICITLY EXISTS TO BE"**



JINDABYNE  
(15)

//director:  
ray lawrence

It doesn't feel six years since Ray Lawrence's last film – the excellent *Lantana* – explored how a single event could disrupt the relationships of five couples. *Jindabyne* treads similar territory following four men who find a dead woman on a fishing trip. Instead of cutting their trip short, the group decide to report it only when they return to their town of Jindabyne. As disapproval spreads through the town, the men and their families are haunted by their actions and the film intelligently shows us the family trauma that such an event can cause.

Gabriel Byrne turns out a complex performance, with Laura Linney powerfully portraying his wife's obsession to understand his actions. It is their internal struggles and interactions that are at the heart of the film and drive home its message – that decisions that may initially seem straightforward can be perceived completely differently by those close to us. Simply put, *Jindabyne* excels as the year's most thought-provoking study of human behaviour.

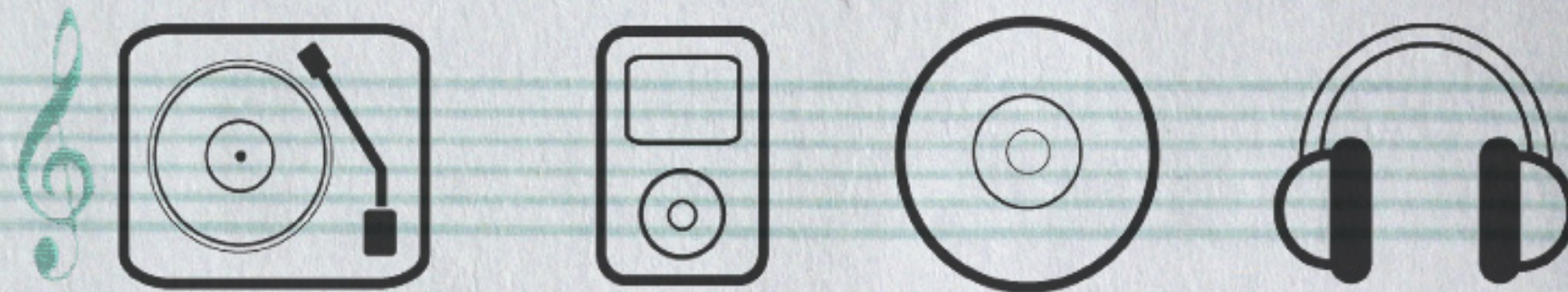
Jim Miles



**"JINDABYNE INTELLIGENTLY SHOWS US THE FAMILY TRAUMA THAT A CONTROVERSIAL EVENT CAN CAUSE"**



# music



**T**HIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT SUMMER, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE STARTED YET. THAT HASN'T STOPPED ABOUT A BILLION FESTIVALS GOING AHEAD THOUGH. WE MANAGED TO GET TO ONE OF THEM. THERE ARE ALSO FANTABULOUS ARTICLES ABOUT THE WHITE STRIPES, ROGER WATERS, AND TERRIFYING PREDICTIONS OF DOOM ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE B-SIDE. READ ON OLD CHUM!

**TIM CHEESMAN**  
**MUSIC EDITOR**

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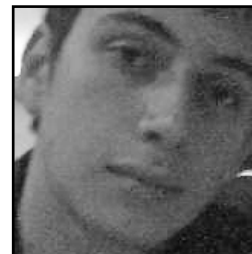
## currently listening to...

the white stripes / roger waters / sion / stephanie dosen / the ryes / alberta cross / the films / loscampesinos!





**“**THE CD SINGLE is dying. I think ever ybody knows that by now: it's one of those accepted truths of the modern day, like global warming and fat children. The internet-savvy will download it - through iTunes or Limewire, depending on their budget and their conscience - while the rest will wait for the album release. It isn't a huge loss to music aficionados - one way or another, everybody will be able to acquire the song. The musicians and labels won't lose any more money than they do already through the disgusting, industry-killing horror that is illegal downloads. It's a seemingly smooth transition into the internet generation for all concerned.



## JAYAITCH

**DM'S VERY OWN JAMES HAMILTON BRIEFLY DISARMS HIS HEADPHONES TO SHARE HIS THOUGHTS ON THE INDUSTRY.**

But there remains a question yet to be answered - something that appears to have been overlooked by all concerned - and that's the future of the B-side. Since the days before true civilisation (read: before The Beatles), the B-side has been a staple of all single releases - fairly obviously, since the old 7" records needed to take advantage of both sides, and record companies wanted people to think they're getting real bang for their buck.

But as time went on, it became more than a question of providing value for money. Music enthusiasts relished the idea of owning the rarities and lesser-known work of their favourite artists,

while occasionally the B-side was even known to "overtake" the A-side as the more popular song. *Maggie May*, *I Will Survive* and *Fools Gold* are among the notable B-sides to achieve this level of success, while the likes of Queen, Robbie Williams and Elvis pioneered the "double A-side", and reinforced the B-side's importance in the music world.

But with the vinyl record no longer the mainstream medium, the CD single on the way out, and digital downloads taking the fore, what will become of the beloved B-side?

Well, in case any readers are about to run down to HMV in a desperate attempt to keep it alive - you're too late. The nature of the download means that people click and buy the track they're after, and rarely think to purchase the B-side track as well. Even the artists themselves seem to be forgetting about it - but in lieu of the traditional B-side, we have leaked demos, MySpace, and the

odd "exclusive iTunes bonus track!" to keep us going.

Some might say it's a good thing - overall, you can find much more "rare" music from your favourite artists online in one shape or form - but that's only for the dedicated; the music buffs and the fanboys. As for the rest of us - those who just want to update their iPods for the journey home - it's a one-click order of the new single, and then we go on our way. If the modern B-side gets neglected, it's as much our fault as it is anybody else's.

And guess what? The record companies will take notice, (because, believe it or not, they do listen to their consumers), and something will be done. Artists will release their one-off download onto the internet, and any surplus tracks are going to be locked away; stored on the company computer for the inevitable "rarities" CD - only £17.99 from your local record shop.

The download cuts out the variables when you buy music - but it's a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it gives Joe Public what he wants, as soon as he wants it. On the other hand, all the songs he's missing out on will be suspended in musical limbo. No more *Maggie May*; no more *Fools Gold*. The B-side falls into obscurity, and with it goes the unpredictable nature of pop music - the turnaround that provided us with so many great songs.

So consider this a eulogy for the B-side - no more surprises, no more variables. Joe Public is king, and the world of popular music has just become a little bit more predictable.

Rest in peace.

**”**

**WITH THE VINYL RECORD NO LONGER THE MAINSTREAM MEDIUM, THE CD SINGLE ON THE WAY OUT, AND DIGITAL DOWNLOADS TAKING THE FORE, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE BELOVED B-SIDE?**



A DISCUSSION OF THE MUSICAL CREATIONS OF  
JOHN ANTHONY GILLIS AND MEGAN WHITE.

OR:

# The White Stripes



INTENDED IN A NOVEL MANNER TO COMBINE AMUSEMENT WITH EXERCISE  
IN THE ATTAINMENT OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

PROMOTED AND ENCOURAGED BY  
**DISPOSABLE MEDIA**

BY  
ANDREW REVELL  
MMVII

## CHAPTER ONE:

### IN WHICH JACK AND MEG RELEASE A NEW LONG PLAYING ALBUM

**I**cky Thump might not go down in history as the best album title. As most of northern England knows, it comes from the exclamation of surprise, "Ecky Thump" which means, roughly, "blimey" and was picked up by Jack White from his Lancashire born wife, Karen Elson. Since most people, specifically those in America, do not enjoy being confused the first word has been altered to "Icky" meaning gross. The end result is that everyone is equally confused.

Despite such obvious quirks with the album title it has also become the first time the band has had a title track and the first single to be taken from the album. Few bands would dive back into the limelight with what sounds like a Stylophone, but the White Stripes aren't many bands. After what feels like an age it is just good to have them back, especially with such a strong and memorable song. Perhaps surprisingly, it is only two years since *Get Behind Me Satan* was released but the reason it feels so much longer, of course, is the release of an album by The Raconteurs.

When *Broken Boy Soldiers* first appeared, many people suggested it was the end of the White Stripes. As the first notes of *Steady as She Goes* rung out it certainly seemed as if it might be another band name trying to contain White's talent. Even before the song had finished though, it would become clear that this was a different band to the White Stripes and that it had more than one creator in it. Brendan Benson might be almost unknown in the UK with only *Cold Hands (Warm Heart)* achieving even modest success, but in the

USA he is well-known enough to allow The Raconteurs to claim super-group status. The partnership between the two gave the album much of its charm and was best summarised in album track *Intimate Secretary*. The track seemingly flickers between two different songs, each suited to their own creator, before being sung over each other and finally coming together as the track finishes. Despite the album being criticised for being over-produced and occasionally self-indulgent, a year later it still seems interesting and entertaining. Despite perhaps not managing to maintain the quality of the first track

throughout the album, it was all good enough to make it worth re-visiting. With The Raconteurs already having spent time in the studio working on new material, *Broken Boy Soldiers* was also good enough to make a follow-up something to look forward to.

With worries that the White Stripes might be gone for good alleviated, the challenge now was to follow the successful *Get Behind Me Satan*. Much like Led Zeppelin's third album, "Get Behind Me Satan" might open with an all-out rock song but it soon settles into an almost entirely acoustic sound. Even by the second

track, *The Nurse*, the electric guitar only manages to get an occasional squeal out and is almost entirely replaced by an extra layer of percussion from a (red and white) marimba. Even the most successful single, *My Doorbell*, was piano led and that sound permeated much of the album. Taken as a whole, the album was nearly a complete departure from the sound that made the duo popular, but unlike Led Zeppelin the critical response to the album was overwhelmingly positive. Praise culminated in a Grammy award and



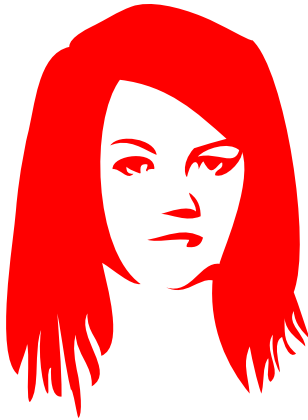
being named the third best album of the year by *Rolling Stone*.

The creation of *Icky Thump* seems to have benefited from Jack White escaping the confines of the White Stripes and spending time with The Raconteurs. As an album it shows a new appreciation for how the White Stripes started out and originally sounded. Compared to *Get Behind Me Satan*, *Icky Thump* is loud. *Elephant* anthems such as *Seven Nation Army* aside, this is probably their loudest album since their angry, Detroit-sounding debut. While *Icky Thump* could never hope to match the passion that drove their debut, it is stylistically extremely similar.

Thankfully, eight years of progress haven't disappeared entirely. Songs on *Icky Thump* are full bodied and not afraid to utilise some of the tricks learnt on *Get Behind Me Satan*. The most obvious example comes in the form of the only cover version on the album, *Conquest*. While the guitar and drums could easily have fitted on the debut, here they are coated in Mariachi-style trumpets and it oozes Mexican style from every pore. Despite being a slightly odd choice of track to cover it is both instantly recognisable and more confident in its delivery, just like *I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself* before it. Perhaps the strongest compliment it can receive is that the song actually sounds better suited to White's voice than it ever did to the voice of Patti Page.

As quickly as trumpets appeared, they disappear again and never return. Perhaps purposefully the track that follows it, *Bone Broke* is one of very few that could fit onto their debut LP and not stick out. As the album progresses, it passes through bagpipes in the poor *St. Andrew (The Battle Is In The Air)* before reaching another one of

## ICKY THUMP IS PROBABLY THEIR LOUDEST ALBUM SINCE THEIR ANGRY, DETROIT SOUNDING DEBUT



its more memorable moments, *Rag and Bone*. Attempting to mix comedy into an album is a brave move and one that could easily have soured the whole album. By combining a simple riff, a catchy sing-along chorus and a spoken word description of the two patrolling for saleable junk it easily becomes the most unique song on the album. It might never manage a laugh, but Meg being told-off prompts a smile every time it is played. The album then passes through a handful of good but forgettable tracks until we find ourselves sitting on Jack's porch letting him sing us the ditty *Effect and Cause*, which acts as an incredibly satisfying conclusion.

As an album, *Icky Thump* is missing very little and perhaps should be considered their best work yet. There might be a few songs that instantly fade away, but most are memorable and many will remain instantly recognisable to fans for years to come. Despite that, it is hard to imagine it getting vast amounts of love from fans of the band. As a pure blues/rock album, it never gets close to their debut, and as an album moving beyond that genre it doesn't get near *Get Behind Me Satan*. As for the mass audience, despite single *Icky Thump* already becoming instantly familiar, it seems unlikely as many songs will enter popular culture as *Elephant* managed.

None of that matters though. It might not be the best White Stripes album, but it is still important as a culmination of everything before it. Like their last album it is almost certain to appear in the obligatory 'albums of the year' lists, just not quite as high as it might have done.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### IN WHICH OUR HERO AND HEROINE SPEND SOME TIME IN THE PARK



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Despite managing to avoid the rain, this was still a badly timed gig. Coming just four days before their release of *Icky Thump* meant they could either play songs few had heard of, or ignore an album full of new material. While other bands would have been tempted to use the gig as an advert for the album, the White Stripes chose to stick with what was known by the crowd. Despite that, it still didn't flow perfectly.

It is hard to put a finger on what was wrong exactly, but it didn't quite manage to enchant the audience as much as they sometimes can, despite few singles going unplayed. Perhaps it was playing older songs that threw them off a little, but it just wasn't quite as good as you'd hope. People at the

## THE GIG DIDN'T QUITE MANAGE TO ENCHANT THE AUDIENCE AS THE WHITE STRIPES SOMETIMES CAN

back found it hard to be involved too. Due to the idiotic decision to have the big screens show the gig in monochrome red and white trying to watch as Jack and Meg merged in and out of the background was impossible.

Worse still, it seemed to leave a few crowd members feeling nauseous.

Thankfully, everything except the screens was righted with the encore. While *Seven Nation Army* was always going to go down well all four songs flowed into each other as you would expect, leaving the crowd exhilarated. By their high standards this was a very average gig, but somehow it still managed to prove the band are one of the world's best live acts.



ROGER WATERS,  
LIVE AT EARLS COURT  
DARK SIDE TOUR 2007

**WORDS:** JAMES HAMILTON

**DESIGN:** ANDREW CAMPBELL

IT HAS BEEN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS since the gig, and I'm still buzzing. This time, thankfully, it's not tinnitus - nor is it the grainy, distorted sound files coming from my mobile. With the various members of the legendary rock band Pink Floyd still not quite ready to tear down the wall and tour again, it falls to the individual members to provide fans with their fix - and Roger Waters, performing at Earls Court last night, demonstrated just how well it can be done.

What could have been another cheap cash-in from a wrinkly old has-been proved instead to be a mind-blowing audio-visual experience that was unlike anything modern concert-goers are used to. Any seventies rocker can rattle off past glories on a whim - or a multi-million pound world tour - but with such a timeless masterpiece like *Dark Side of the Moon*, it feels less of a cash-in; more a revival of a classic work.

Besides, Waters does so with such infectious enthusiasm and raw energy that it's impossible to fault him. His was more of a show than a concert - a theatrical experience that provided incredible performances amid dazzling special effects, with a heartfelt political message at its core.

The dramatic opening salvo of *In the Flesh* was barely audible through the sound of a few thousand jaws hitting the floor - and by the time Waters had picked up his acoustic guitar and started playing *Mother*, the audience were utterly captivated. The atmosphere in the arena

WHICH  
ONE'S  
PINK?



was terrific - the line "Mother, should I run for president?" had at least half of audience members reply "YES!", while "Mother, should I trust the government?" was greeted by a resounding "NO!"

The spell began to wear off slightly during the next number, *Set the Controls for the Heart of the Sun* - which, despite a clever reworking of the original, didn't quite have the same energy - while Pink Floyd's classic *Shine On You Crazy Diamond*, having had the extended intro cut down, also felt weaker than it should have been. Early footage of Syd Barrett accompanied the song, though without the traditional build-up to the verses, its poignancy was lost.

The dynamic and groovy rendition of *Have A Cigar* that followed, however, proved to be a highlight of the show. It was here that lead guitarist David Kilminster was given his first chance to really shine, with some absolutely phenomenal guitar work that reassured the crowds that Waters is perfectly capable of

handling things himself. Ending the *Wish You Were Here* medley with a fine rendition of title track, Waters began to move on to some of his more personal work.

As the backdrop for *Wish You Were Here* segued into *Southampton Dock*, it became apparent just how cleverly structured Waters had made his set list. Each track was picked for a reason; each given added significance by careful placing in the running order. Playing songs from *The Final Cut* as *Wish You Were Here* draws to a close makes perfect sense, and as soon as this clicked, every song felt more significant; became more powerful.

The images that accompanied the songs reflected this also - during Waters' passionate delivery of *The Fletcher Memorial Home*, which is both a tribute to his late father and a scathing criticism of wronging politicians, we saw the words of George W. Bush scrawled across walls, and his photo stuck up next to Osama Bin Laden. Watching the scenes that accompany Waters' words, and as his more

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AS THE BACKDROP  
FOR *WISH YOU WERE  
HERE* SEGUED INTO  
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IT BECAME APPARENT  
JUST HOW CLEVERLY  
STRUCTURED WATERS HAD  
MADE HIS SET LIST.

”



political convictions take the fore, it becomes clear how relevant his music remains, over twenty years since its creation.

Most artists of the present day tend to criticise the government - it is the trendy thing to do, after all - but Waters does so with such vehemence and zeal that you can't help but question the sincerity of his industry peers.

*Perfect Sense*, from Waters' *Amused to Death* album, was next - and a passionate vocal performance from P.P. Arnold was accompanied by breathtaking visuals and explosions on the screen behind the performers. New song *Leaving Beirut* was another that made wonderful use of the backdrop, with a comic-book style telling of the story behind the song, as well as displaying the overtly political lyrics.

With words like "Oh George! Oh George! That Texas education must have really fucked you up!", it's perhaps unsurprising that American audiences didn't take to the song, but the crowds at Earls Court were passionately singing along. Ending the set with a fantastic rendition of *Sheep*, complete with inflatable pig floating above the audience, the first half drew to a close.

*Dark Side Of The Moon* followed the fifteen minute interval, and it was performed to

perfection - with the second half in particular being especially mesmerising. *Us And Them* was exceptionally well sung by Jon Carin, and the segue into *Any Colour You Like* had everybody spellbound. The visuals accompanying the individual songs from the piece were nothing short of spectacular - blending the classic footage from 1973 with state of the art, new visualisations that blew the audience away - including, most memorably, a prism of lasers that shone above the heads of the crowd.

After being met with a standing ovation at the end of *Eclipse*, the band returned for the encore - a storming performance of *Another Brick In The Wall pt.2*, which had hundreds of fifty-somethings grooving along and singing "we don't need no education" in unison (a sight worth the entrance fee alone), and ending with *Vera, Bring The Boys Back Home*, and of course, *Comfortably Numb* - Kilminster really giving his all and earning his place as Roger's lead guitarist.

As the band left the stage, the audiences walked away as if in a reverie. A surrogate band it might have been, but as the crowds began to leave Earls Court, there was no question in anybody's mind as to which one's Pink.





WELCOME TO **GOOD VS. BAD**, WHERE EVERY ISSUE WE DISCUSS WHETHER SOMETHING IS GEORGE-BEST-GODLY, OR BEN-ELTON-BULLSHIT. THIS ISSUE WE'RE TALKING...

# FESTIVALS

## GOOD

**YOU CAN'T REALLY** dispute the joys that a music festival can offer people, but understandably it's not everyone's idea of an enjoyable weekend away. No amount of worthy praise from the DM team will convince someone to pack a tent, pitch it in a field with 30,000+ strangers and watch a ton of bands whilst trying to avoid using the loos for three days. But then that's the charm of festivals, whether it's ATP, Benicassim, Download, Reading, Exit, Sonar or Glastonbury, they each provide their own form of enjoyment, their individual nuances, their own flecks of personality and charm that can only be appreciated by experiencing them. But it's not that simple. Festivals make you work, make you toil to enjoy yourselves – you have to put effort in to enjoy it – and so for many it's a worthless exercise.

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**FESTIVALS AREN'T JUST A RITE OF PASSAGE FOR MUSIC FANS ANYMORE, THEY'RE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT.**

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## BAD

**IT'S DIFFICULT TO** have a bad time at a festival. There are exceptions – there always are – but you'll only tend to have a bad one if you don't put in the effort. That's not to say that it's simple, your experience is indebted to other factors that could very easily make you have the worst time of your life; organisers, bands and weather included. The reason a lot of people dislike the festival experience is because typically you're slumming it. You're going back to nature and living a like a tramp for a long weekend. Albeit a tramp with an ipod. And a phone with a 3mp camera. And probably some designer clothing on your back to make sure that you stand out from the rest of the tramps. Which is ironic given that everyone else will probably be wearing the same designer clothes that they picked up from Selfridges the week before. Or at the very least a near identical 'vintage' t-shirt that some seller on eBay had going for 3.99 buy-it-now with 9 quid postage, even though it weighed 50g.

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**IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC ANYMORE, NOR THE EXPERIENCE, NOR THE THRILL, IT'S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO SAY 'I WAS THERE'.**

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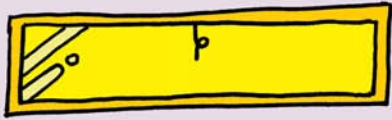
But these are the people missing out. Festivals are a struggle, but they're worth every single raindrop, every bead of sweat caused by dragging four crates of warm lager from the car to your tent, every single anonymous bruise, every single minute queuing to use the inhumane toilets, every single penny of the sheer cost of it. Why? Because there is nothing quite sleeping under the stars, passing out at 1pm in the car park, getting on stage or being the only other person who turned to see the first band on at the smallest tent/stage/venue.

And that's what it boils down to; festivals are a great leveller. The people are all there for the same reason and while your tastes may all differ, you're all there by choice indulging in everything the opportunity affords, every problem, every last minute change in line-up and every sodding raindrop. Festivals aren't just a rite of passage for music fans anymore, they're an essential component.

That's because the modern festival is the badge of cool that you need to complete your hip musical credentials. Owning both the Paulo Nutini and James Morrison album isn't enough, no. If you really want to brag to your friends about 'experiencing' these artists then you'll have to pay 150 quid to watch them whilst standing in a field with 45,000 foul smelling Tory Voting, Magner-drinking tools for company.

It's not all about the music anymore, nor the experience, nor the thrill, it's about being able to say 'I was there'. So if you're not sure exactly why you want to go, then you shouldn't. You'll hate it.

It's not an enjoyable thing to do, it's expensive, unhealthy, dull and full of morons. The weather will probably ruin everything you own and you'll probably get mugged. Your ticket probably cost 4 times the face value anyway and you'll not see anyone you couldn't have seen a venue 10 minutes drive from your house for 8 quid. Still, at least you get a wristband this way.



# THE DOORMAT

WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL  
ILLUSTRATION: JAMES DOWNING

Assuming you ignore the widespread flooding, the sun is out and summer is here. That means festivals too, so with the doormat tucked under one arm and a couple of tickets for the Wireless festival clutched firmly in hand it is time to go on an adventure. Or it would be an adventure if the Wireless festival wasn't such a "nice" festival where you don't even have to queue for beer, let alone bother with a tent. They managed to get away with just moving to half-price ticket sales though this year, rather than giving them away entirely.

Also on the bad planning front, the stage with the best sound quality is also the smallest. Opening on it were **SION** with an alternate rock sound. It's not a type of music best suited to an audience sat in deckchairs and while they never overly impressed, they certainly have potential for a relatively young band. They had clearly played their songs to death and knew what they were doing on stage.

Another act, **STEPHANIE DOSEN**, with her acoustic guitar and friends on cello and violin definitely did suit the deckchair surroundings. Gentle, well-formed drifting serenely out of the bandstand worked well. Clearly a talented singer and song-writer, but as soon as the music stopped she

seemed to be either trying too hard to be memorable or genuinely be a little off-kilter. Despite many SpringWatch ramblings though, an enjoyable set.

Fast forward a couple of days and **THE RYES** have taken to the stage. Cheerful, confident and capable brit-pop, complete with sing-along choruses, and the occasional folk music trick to get the point across. Is it particularly original? Not really. Thoroughly enjoyable on a sunny day while lazing in a deckchair with a pint in your hand? Yup.

Thankfully, most of the people on the XFM stage earlier in the day sounded alike enough to lump them in together, guitars, basses and all. Despite being around for years *Dredg* were, ominously, dreadful. A dull version of *The Mars Volta*, perhaps. *Pete and the Pirates* got bonus marks for hanging up skulls and crossbones bunting around the stage and did seem to be enjoying themselves.

**ALBERTA CROSS** are already on the way up and are worth checking out, while also being commended for some excellent organ usage.

But of this little bunch, **THE FILMS** (despite their ominously boring name) were probably the best. Possibly the journey from North Carolina focused their minds into impressing as many people as possible (probably not unrelated to having a new LP out) and, despite not having a great attendance, still managed to impress. Catchy and memorable garage rock.

Which leaves **LOS CAMPESINOS!** 'Jolly, well-crafted indie pop' is a predictable description, but "singing, bouncing, clapping and xylophones" conveys what they are much better. *Los Campesinos!* didn't need to beg to see people clapping their hands, it just happened. They got the floor bouncing at five to four on a Sunday afternoon, and recieved a show of genuine appreciation from the buzzing onlookers, which they returned with almost tearful appreciation.

Oh, and the *Queens of the Stone Age* were pretty great, and *The Editors* were fine, if a little boring. *The Kaiser Chiefs* might have been good, but you'll have to ask someone who doesn't find them intolerable, or failing that at least someone who didn't leave as soon as they came on.



**SION**  
[www.myspace.com/siononline](http://www.myspace.com/siononline)



**STEPHANIE DOSEN**  
[www.myspace.com/stephaniedosen](http://www.myspace.com/stephaniedosen)



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**LOS CAMPESINOS!**  
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PAUL MCCARTNEY  
MEMORY  
ALMOST FULL

People tend to avoid Paul McCartney albums these days - particularly wounded old-timers who hate to watch a former Beatle fall beneath their impossible standards. But Paul's a talented guy, and when he does release a quality album, it'd be wrong to simply dismiss it. Granted, it's no *Abbey Road* - despite the medley in the second half - but *Memory Almost Full* is a warm and varied album that truly deserves a listen.

Above all else, you can tell the old boy had a great time making it. It's a tremendously fun record, the

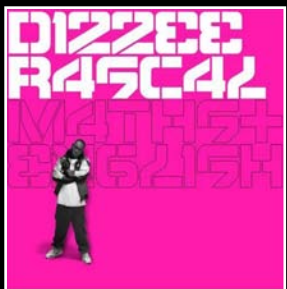
kind that will make you smile every time you listen.

There are one or two poor songs - the dire *Gratitude* being the definite low point - but there's little to criticise here. *Memory Almost Full* is both modern and nostalgic; simple and clever; easily some of Paul's best work of late.

James Hamilton



**"MEMORY ALMOST FULL IS A WARM AND VARIED ALBUM THAT TRULY DESERVES A LISTEN."**



DIZZEE RASCAL  
MATHS AND  
ENGLISH

This third studio album from Dizze Rascal is just as interesting and compulsive as his other work, with clear rap lyrics delivered rhythmically against well-produced backing music.

The track on the album that is most different from Dizze's other work, *Sirens*, has a nu-metal, Primal Scream-like influence and the constant sounding of a ride cymbal throughout. Compared to previous Dizze, it's straightforward and restrained but Dizze's unique delivery still gives the track an irresistible offbeat feel.

In *Wanna Be*, Lily Allen lends

her girly singsong rapping to proceedings, infecting the track too with the distinctive dub sound of her first album. *Where's Da G's* features Bun B and Pimp C, and is a vocal-heavy dissection of the insincerity of contemporary culture (typical line: "how many real cooks on the TV?").

*Maths and English* is, as the title suggests, a mix of different yet crucial disciplines and provides a catchy sound with clear, well written British rap.

Jim Miles



**"LILY ALLEN LENDS HER GIRLY SINGSONG RAPPING TO PROCEEDINGS, INFECTING WANNA BE WITH THE DISTINCTIVE DUB SOUND OF HER FIRST ALBUM"**



CANDIE PAYNE  
I WISH I COULD  
HAVE LOVED  
YOU MORE

Short LPs are fine, especially for rock albums. Turn the album on, have your ears blown out then turn off. Candie Payne's debut LP is fairly short, clocking in at under 40 minutes. Again, not necessarily a problem but the sheer brevity of the songs on *I Wish I could Have Loved You More* leave you feeling a bit undersold.

There's a cutting sense here that the album is underdeveloped.

The real revelation here is Candie's sound; 60's lounge, Springfield-swing, Nu-Northern Soul - stick a label on it if you must but this is ultimately a retro sound given a modern update.

Supremely confident in her voice and her talent, Candie has developed a strong individual identity and sound.

Sadly the album doesn't take full advantage of this, which almost serves it as a showcase of her distinctive sound rather than a strong collection of songs, despite the couple of excellent tracks.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



**"SUPREMLY CONFIDENT IN HER VOICE AND HER TALENT, CANDIE HAS DEVELOPED A STRONG INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY AND SOUND"**



VARIOUS ARTISTS  
KITSUNE  
MAISON  
COMPILATION  
VOL. 4

Kitsune Music is rapidly becoming the only dance label worth paying attention to, focusing as it does on progressive electronic beats and twitchy techno-influenced guitars. Artists on their roster include early Hot Chip, Digitalism, Crystal Castles and Simian Mobile Disco and features 12"s of Klaxons, Hadouken! and Tom Vek.

Volume four of their hugely exciting and inventive compilations has that air of the mix-tape; a dizzying fusion of heady beats, quirky bleeps and inventive structures, a potent mix of the known and unknown acts, a

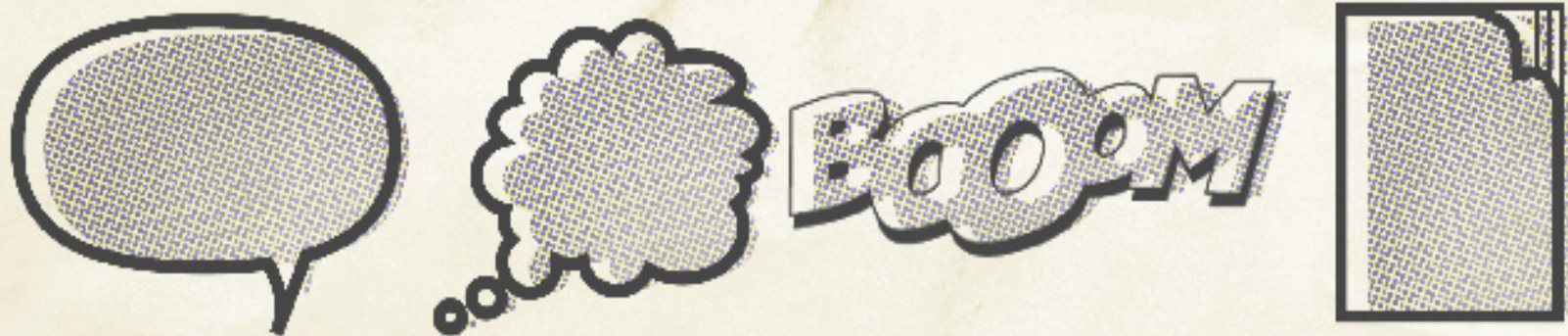
cocktail of the exciting, the twitchy and the fresh.

Stand-out tracks from the ever-incredible Foals and the soon-to-be-incredible Thieves Like Us are well complemented by other choices such as Hadouken! and Darkel, adding to the mixture a surprising amount of guitars and restraint as much as obscene bleeps. For those who enjoy the new as much as the innovative, this is a vital release.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



**"A DIZZYING FUSION OF HEADY BEATS, QUIRKY BLEEPS AND INVENTIVE STRUCTURES"**



# comics

**K**RAKOOM! BOOM! KRRRAASH!

I THOUGHT IT BEST TO START MY EDITORSHIP OF THIS SECTION WITH A BANG. IT WON'T JUST BE ONOMATOPOEIC SUPERHERO COMICS IN HERE THOUGH, MUCH AS WE LOVE THEM, AS WE'LL BE COVERING THE WHOLE SPECTRUM BOTH NEW AND OLD. IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS, YOU'RE A CREATOR WANTING TO SEND SOMETHING IN TO REVIEW, OR JUST WANT TO LET ME KNOW HOW I'M DOING, MY EMAIL ADDRESS IS BELOW. THWIP AND SNIKT.

**ANDREW REVELL**  
**COMICS EDITOR**

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## currently reading...

cyyanide and happiness / xkcd / vgcats / diesel sweeties / qwantz / the adventures of dr mcinja / bigger than cheeses / the perry bible fellowship / player vs player / gone with the blastwave / locas / jonas moore / preacher / true romace comix / fallen son #4 - depression / jla/jsa - the lightning saga / black canary #1





comics/online

# COMICS ON THE WEB

**A WORLD OF COMICS, SIMPLE TO FIND, READY IN SECONDS, RIGHT NOW, AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**

**WORDS:** DAN THORNTON  
**DESIGN:** ROB CROSSLEY AND ANDREW REVELL

**T**he comic format has little reason to fear the internet the way television, newspapers, literature and radio does. For every BBC programme there's a million YouTube videos, for every radio station, thousands of podcasts and a Last.fm. You can get your daily (even hourly) news fix without leaving your PC, and your favourite poems already published in certain corners of the web.

The comic format is different. Seeing printed comic art online is the same as admiring a .jpg of the *Mona Lisa*. It just doesn't convey the same emotional response as it does in ink on a page.

Even so, the internet has given rise to a new wave of comics, and is now being used by the traditional comics firms, with DC giving online previews and teasers on its website. Meanwhile, Marvel now has its own Wiki for accumulating fan knowledge. With *T.H.E. Fox* credited as the first web comic to be distributed on CompuServe and Quantum Link in 1986, for 21 years writers and artists have been utilising the web in a huge variety of ways, giving rise to a myriad of titles.

Suddenly, the four panel comic strip has been elevated into something that stands on its own, outside of the newspapers which traditionally gave it residence. Meanwhile, online comics have become a place for experimentation which goes further than limited edition covers, or airbrushing.

Even conservative estimates give around 18,000 titles online, meaning you're bound to find something which tickles your fancy. And many of these strips are now members of syndication groups such as United Features Syndicate, which sees them placed back into their native print format.

A quick poll around the DM office picked out ten favourite web comics, excluding the excellent Penny Arcade, which was reviewed in DM7. Just be prepared for a few hours to disappear as you take a look at these works of genius.

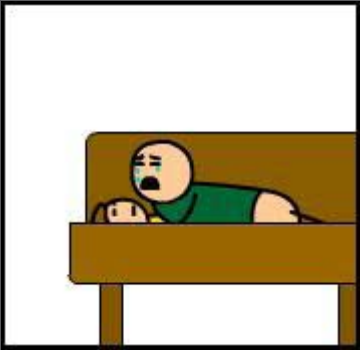




# CYANIDE AND HAPPINESS

Cyanide and Happiness can currently be seen in a toned-down form as an advert for Orange. It's come a long way since its earliest incarnation as the infamous stickdeath.com. The 4 authors of *Cyanide and Happiness* have a broad history of web comics and depraved flash animations. Now residing at [explosm.net](#), where this simply drawn comic of slightly developed stick characters, can be found mostly in 3 or 4 frames. As with many over popular contemporary webcomics, *Cyanide and Happiness* is most notable noted for its controversial punch lines that seem to have no moral boundaries or sense of decency. Now with few boundaries left to push, the comedic value of *Cyanide and Happiness* is waning and is past its most shockingly amusing.

IMM



# XKCD

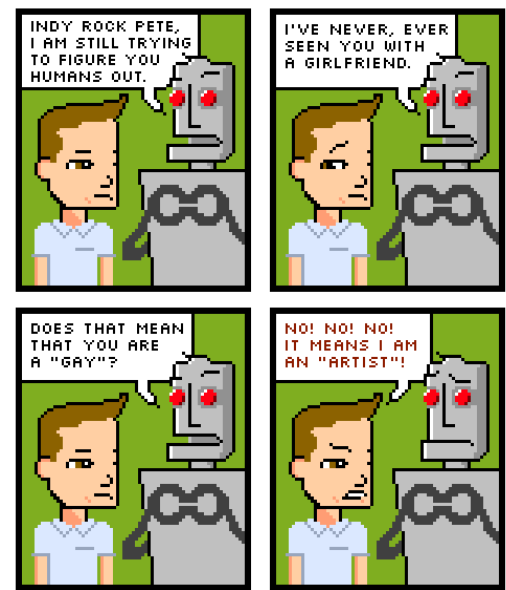
<rob> hi  
<emily> hey you  
<rob> last night was nice  
<emily> the best i've had  
<rob> yeah it was AMAZING  
<emily> ok, i have to ask  
<emily> is this for real?  
<emily> or is it just sex  
<rob> definitely just sex  
<emily> holy shit  
<emily> are you serious?  
<emily> you don't know how much that made  
my stomach hurt  
<emily> i want to cry  
<rob> i'm sorry  
<rob> i wanted to type 'i love you'  
<rob> but our line lengths were syncing up  
<emily> ...  
<rob> and it would have broken the pattern  
\* emily has disconnected



Created by ex-NASA, ex-MIT brain-boffin Randall Munroe, *xkcd* is, in its own words, "a webcomic of romance, sarcasm, math, and language". However, the romance is highly tongue-in-cheek with strips often seeming gratuitously sentimental before a final frame punch line that hilariously undermines the soppieness. Despite the sensitive touch, *xkcd* is mostly read by geeks who find even the slightest Computer Science or Mathematical reference brilliantly witty. And, to be fair, to anyone who knows the material it's referencing, *xkcd* is just that.

JM

# DIESEL SWEETIES



Daily webcomic by Richard Stevens, who, besides being more prolific than most, also manages to hit the target with observations on pop culture. He does so with a cast including an emotional robot, an alcoholic ex-pornstar, an indie rock poseur, a mullet-sporting rocker, a cheerful goth and a robot dedicated to the crushing of humans. Notable for its pixel art, and fascination with genres including anime. For a daily production it has an amazing ability to consistently hit the mark.

DT

# QWANTZ

Also known as *Dinosaur Comics*, *Qwantz* is probably the most literate webcomic out there, often discussing science, philosophy and art between more straightforward gag strips. What is most remarkable about *Qwantz* is the way that every strip follows exactly the same template of T-Rex encountering his friends Dromiceiomimus and Utahraptor and spending time trying to crush objects. It is incredible that the creator Ryan North has succeeded so effectively to establish well-defined and complex personalities in such a restricted format. *Qwantz* splits people into two groups: those tickled by its distinctive and intelligent style, and sceptics who bemoan its superficially repetitive nature. Even if the art will split opinion, *Qwantz*'s scripts are technically untouchable.

JM



# VG CATS



Need something that focuses on videogames and sarcasm, but already overdosed on *Penny Arcade*? Then why not try *VG Cats*, which features a similar brand of humour, but with characters based on creator Scott Ramsoomair's personal cats. Feline heroes Aeris and Leo have starred in parodies of almost every major game since the site started back in September 2001, so you're sure to find strips which cover your gaming favourites. Plus, talking kittens can't fail to be lovable by male and female readers alike.

DT



## THE ADVENTURES OF DR MCNINJA



Take a medically qualified Ninja, a gorilla secretary, a velociraptor, and a 12-year-old Mexican sidekick who grew a moustache by sheer willpower, and you have the surreal world of Dr McNinja, the black and white, story-based comic which grew out of the Something Awful forums. It's a joyous riff on ninja film clichés, with a self-demeaning lead character and well-defined sense of humour in the vein of Spiderman.

Written and drawn by Chris Hastings, and inked by his roommate Kent Archer, Dr McNinja is published three times a week, with issues running between 20-40 pages. It also appears as a smaller comic strip in .Net magazine each month.

DT

## GONE WITH THE BLASTWAVE



Gone With the Blastwave

Not a joke-based webcomic by a long way, *Gone With The Blastwave* is set in a post-apocalyptic world where glib, gas-masked soldiers participate in what appears to be one big, real-life game of *CounterStrike*. The two main (unnamed) protagonists make dark quips about kill counts and heavy weaponry while apparently trying to fight their way out of the city they are trapped in. The comic is rarely updated, but this ought to be excused given the high quality of art - each panel looks like a canvas painting, though closer inspection shows it to be a clever computer effect. *Gone With the Blastwave* has humour, style and a sense of mystery that rivals *Lost*.

JM

## BIGGER THAN CHEESES

A brutally violent strip from Australia, *Bigger Than Cheeses* is written by the multi-faceted Desmond Seah, whose interests range from classic comic book superheroes, through internet culture, right up to keenly observed drawings of sexy women, all manifested in one shape or form in the comic. One of the most interesting things about the strip is how the art style has changed over the years from virtual stick figures to the polished definition it has now. Currently updated only once a week, the comic feels like it has dropped continuity in favour of gags, which is a real shame given the fun range of characters established in earlier episodes. Despite this, the archive is well worth working through.

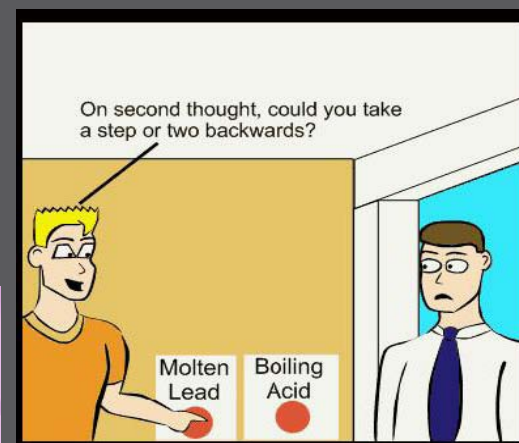
JM

## THE PERRY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP



Using a newspaper-styled format, The PBF is typically made up of 3 or 4 panels and varies wildly in artistic styles, from basic and bold colours and forms to hugely elaborate black and white sketches with obvious historical influences. Being written by just one man however, Nicholas Gurewitch, the edgy humour is constant, often pushing boundaries to include tasteless and offensive punch lines. The sheer talent behind the comic means that it's perhaps best known for juxtaposing traditional-style story set-ups with wildly conflicting endings, which combine with its superbly realised art to mean that The PBF is one of the most well produced, funniest and sickest comics around. Can also be found in the Guardian newspaper.

IMM



## PLAYER VS. PLAYER



©2007 SCOTT R. KURTZ

When it comes to video games web comics, there's one more to add to *Penny Arcade* and *VG Cats*. *Player vs. Player*, by Scott Kurtz, is one of the longest running gaming strips, based around the staff of a fictional video games magazine, and running since 1998. It has more of a soap feel, with a regular cast of 16 characters, ranging from *PvP* Magazine Editor-in-Chief Cole Richards, to the giant panda which lurks in the office hallways and air vents. The continuity of the strip makes it harder to jump in and pick up, but it's worth stepping back a few days until you can pick up the current storyline.

DT

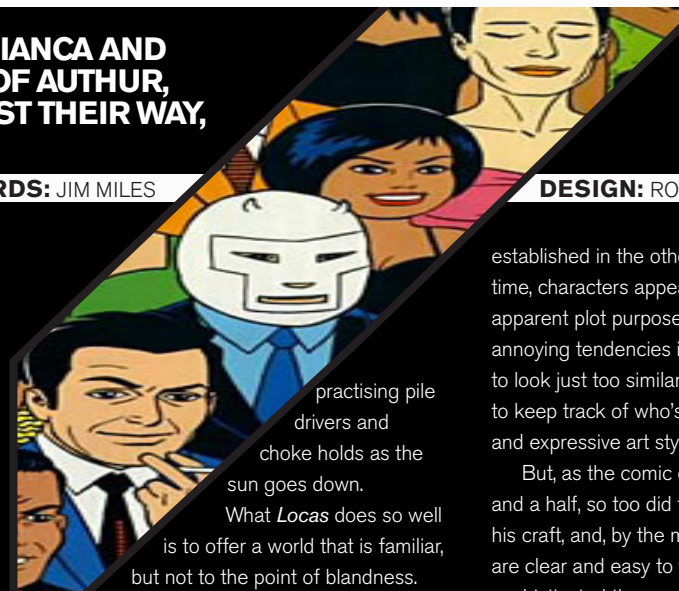
**BEFORE PAT AND FRANK, BIANCA AND RIICKAAY AND THE DEATH OF AUTHUR, BEFORE SOAP-OPERAS LOST THEIR WAY, THERE WAS LOCAS.**

WORDS: JIM MILES

DESIGN: ROB CROSSLEY

**C**omics eh? All about hunky men and big chested women, leaping about saving the world, aren't they? Heroes and villains; Guns, gadgets and super powers? That sort of thing?

Of course not, and the fact that you're reading this means you probably know comics better than most. You've seen what Robert Crumb, Chris Ware and other indies have to offer. You know that in the hands of talented writers, such as Alan Moore and Neil Gaiman, even the most traditional-looking comic idea can be an outstanding work of literature.



practising pile drivers and choke holds as the sun goes down.

What *Locas* does so well is to offer a world that is familiar, but not to the point of blandness.

Through the normality of the leads -

established in the others, and, much of the time, characters appear with no introduction or apparent plot purpose. One of the most annoying tendencies in *Locas* is for characters to look just too similar, which can make it hard to keep track of who's who, despite the crisp and expressive art style.

But, as the comic developed over a decade and a half, so too did the creator's mastery of his craft, and, by the middle period, the stories are clear and easy to follow, yet more sophisticated than ever. It is this period between around '84 and '94 that the series is strongest and the clothing fashions and Rubenesque shape of many of the characters seem to work best.

The more recent stories are still fun to read but feel left behind in a world since conquered by the internet and invaded by a new pack of *Love and Rockets*-influenced comics creators (such as *Optic Nerve*'s Adrian Tomine).

*Locas* captures the humanity of normal people, the insecurities, the triumphs, and the disappointments that make life varied and worth living. You can't ask for much more than that.

**“HISPANIC GANGS PUNCTUATE STREET CORNERS AND FEMALE WRESTLERS RUN GYMS, PRACTISING PILE DRIVERS AND CHOKE HOLDS AS THE SUN GOES DOWN”**

# LOVE AND ROCKETS

However, when the question of comics' cultural value inevitably comes around, several names don't seem to get the level of attention they deserve. The one I'm thinking of today is Jaime

Hernandez, creator of the *Locas* stories from *Love and Rockets*, a so-called alternative comic that ran from 1981 to 1996, returned in 2001, and has been going strong ever since.

'Locas' is Spanish for 'crazy women' and succinctly sums up what Jaime's stories are about; the adventures and day-to-day dramas of a group of young, female, Mexican friends. It is through Maggie, a skilled female mechanic, that we enter *Locas*' world, the fictional city of Huerta, where Hispanic gangs punctuate street corners and female wrestlers run gyms,

including Maggie's best friend and occasional lover Hopey - *Locas* is able to maintain a credible universe, despite the occasional appearance of dinosaurs, space rockets and wealthy alien sugar daddies.

The compulsive enjoyment of *Locas* comes from the serialised nature of the work, the way that it is constructed from individual episodes in Maggie's life which can be read daily, like episodes of a soap-opera. Jaime Hernandez is most critically-acclaimed for the way that he ages his characters, Maggie changing from a slim teenager to a curvier, rounder older woman in a gradual transition so smooth that it must have been painstakingly controlled with planned measurements from episode to episode.

However, the comic isn't exempt from criticism. Several early stories don't really make sense and break the plausibility





# THE MANY WORLDS OF JONAS MOORE

"JONAS MOORE WILL BE WRITTEN ABOUT IN TEN YEARS TIME AS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND. NO-ONE BELIEVES THAT MUSIC CAN CHANGE THE WORLD ANY MORE. BUT I BELIEVE THAT STORIES CAN. THEY USED TO BE TOLD AROUND CAMPFIRES, BUT NOW YOU NEED TO PERMISSION OF MAJOR COMPANIES TO TELL THEM, AND WE'RE CHANGING THAT."  
-HOWARD WEBSTER

WORDS: DAN THORNTON

DESIGN: DAN GASSIS AND ANDREW REVELL

Defining the concept of The Many Worlds of Jonas Moore is a little like trying to juggle water. It's part graphic novel, part major movie thriller, and part black and white film archive. But the story behind the project, and plans for the future, are just as important and interesting as what has been produced to date.

The creator of the concept, Howard Webster, has already been accused of reinventing everything from the graphic novel to the musical. But he may just have stumbled upon something even more dangerous – a way to please all of the people, all of the time, with one character and one brand. And if that sounds like an onslaught of information, it's nothing compared to the machine-gun rattle of ideas that come from just one phone call to the man himself.

The history of Jonas Moore actually began 10-15 years ago when Webster decided to take a break from running a PR firm to become a film writer. As he attempted to get

his films produced, he began a semi-autobiographical column in industry magazine Broadcast, starting a career in journalism which now sees him producing film industry magazine Factory, as well as building a successful photography portfolio of film star portraits.

Meanwhile Jonas Moore lay dormant. Written before the success of films like The Matrix, it was inspired by 90's video games, as Webster became increasingly concerned with the way they grew more violent.

Set in a world where the British Empire never fell, Jonas Moore is a character in a global virtual online world, who starts to become sentient when his dying creator logs in to say goodbye. As the first self-aware character, the network defines him as a virus, and he's forced to jump from game to game to survive until his creator, Professor Kansu Tao, can reprogram the game world. But as he travels through the games, he infects the

other characters until they too become self aware, and begin to turn on gamers themselves to fight for freedom. The script only resurfaced during a house move 12 months ago, when it quite literally fell out of a trunk and hit Webster on the head. A quick re-read and a phone call to photographic subject and British actor Colin Salmon (James Bond: Die Another Day and Resident Evil amongst many other appearances), and suddenly things started to happen:

"I gave the script to him and didn't tell him it was by me. He went home and read it that night, and I got a phone call the next day, saying he wanted to do it. I'd been researching the graphic novel genre and had an idea to blend live action and newsreel footage to create a new genre.

"The Ipod is the biggest selling electronic gadget. Everyone is putting short clips of films onto it, but why try and reverse engineer something to fit?"

Not only had Webster researched the future of television and mobile phones during his time publishing Factory, but he had also become well versed in research into user generated content.

"It's far more important than movies and television. There are all these copyright infringement cases going on for downloads and mash-ups but my view is that if you can create a new media which works with the users and can monetise it, then you're on to a winner.

"I loved the hyper realism of graphic novels, and reinventing the format, and my ultimate inspirations included 2000AD. I'm a big Rogue Trooper fan, and that combined with the films Blade Runner and the Ralph Bakshi animated movie of The Lord of the Rings, from 1977. Plus the audience for graphic novels is 17-34 year old males, which is perfect for advertisers.

On what planet could this be a bad idea?"

With the current vogue for User Generated Content, Webster's timing seems impeccable, and it's this aspect which pushes Jonas Moore beyond a sci-fi script. It also helps to distance it from rotoscoped animation films like Richard Linklater's A Scanner Darkly, or from the gaming world, the comic book style XIII.

"I actually hated A Scanner Darkly. I got bored with the film. Rotoscoping has been around forever and I always loved its look – but my view is to

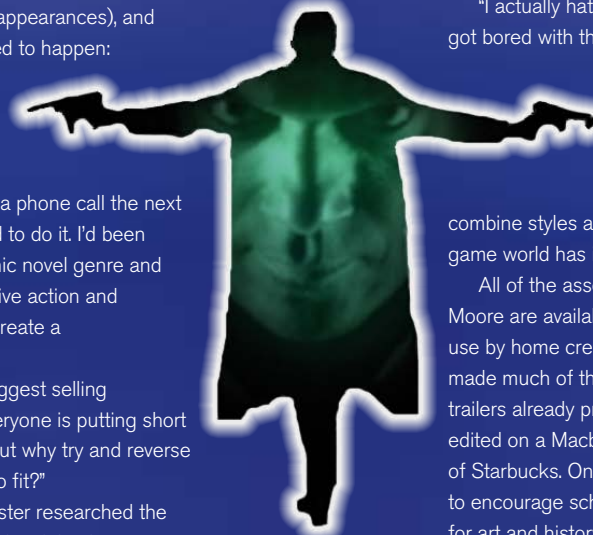
combine styles and visual looks – each game world has its own graphic vibe."

All of the assets used in Jonas Moore are available to download and use by home creators, and Webster has made much of the fact that many of the trailers already produced have been edited on a Macbook in his local branch of Starbucks. One of his future ideas is to encourage schools to use the assets for art and history projects, particularly as he has been able to access

Movietone footage, such as Adolf Hitler at the Nuremberg Rally for one of the trailers available on the website and on YouTube.

Within the first month of the website and YouTube videos, the first mash-up has appeared, with indie band Marvis providing a soundtrack to one of the trailers available, replacing the original version produced by actor and singer Steve Hart. And suddenly the mood and tone has changed, just as the famous re-edit of the trailer to Stephen King's The Shining turned it into a family comedy.

It's this that points to the real genius of the project. You could point to similar plots in film, and similar graphics in games. And when the trailers are set to pop or indie rock, they can even evoke memories of a-ha's iconic Take on



Me video. But it's the fact that one guy in a coffee shop has had the contacts, the research and the confidence to put it all together in one place that makes it believable when he tells DM:

"Jonas Moore will be written about in 10 years time as the first of its kind. No-one believes that music can change the world any more. But I believe that stories can. They used to be told around campfires, but now you need to permission of major companies to tell them, and we're changing that."

As a measure of his confidence, Webster didn't take the traditional route of hiring media and ad agencies to pimp his idea to companies. Instead he actively taunted those firms via two YouTube videos, and instead wrote directly to the people he needed to speak to at the companies he felt fitted the project. And that's resulted in sponsorship from British motorcycle firm Triumph, including their new Tiger 1050 model as Moore's transport. "What would you rather use to jump from game world to game world? A skateboard?". They've also supplied other bikes, Triumph fashion clothing, and funding for the current videos.

"I went for Triumph because the story is set in a time when the British Empire had never ended, they were an old school brand that had reinvented themselves, and bikes and heroes go together."

The hope is that Salmon will also become iconic. As Webster points out, there hasn't been a famous British black action hero, and the fact that Salmon is an established, respected actor with some history behind him adds to the confidence in the project. It also means brands like Triumph can appeal to a younger audience, as they become aspirational. And because the dialogue is in graphic novel speech bubbles, it can easily be

## "(IN THE TRILOGY) THE BIT IN THE MIDDLE WILL BE ENTIRELY CREATED BY YOU AND THE OTHER USERS IN THE AUDIENCE."

translated into multiple languages.

Having spoken about the first black British action hero, the first exclusively online graphic novel/live action film to allow a huge range of user interaction, and reinventing cool British brands which were approached directly, it's no surprise that Webster has yet more plans for the future.

"This is part of a trilogy, and any of the supporting characters, they'll have a start point in the story and an end point where they have to finish up. But the bit in the middle will be entirely created by you and the other users in the audience."

"We'd also like to have music events, where bands can play and the actors can appear. There will be big screens, to the crowd can message each other. And at certain points the audience can split and they'll battle each other, in the arena."

So not content with reinventing films, graphic novels, black action stars, British brands, and the art of storytelling, there are also plans to reinvent gigs and musicals. Such ambition could precede a fall, but it can also provide a defence. With such an overwhelming range of plans it's hard to pick holes in the work that has been produced so far. And with someone as enthusiastic, confident, and dedicated as Webster behind it, it's a brave person who predicted failure for the Jonas Moore team.

Because as long as it can start the User Generated ball rolling, whatever flaws the

official project has, the users can fix. And while there will be traditionalists who will always prefer their comics in printed format, we've already seen comics come onto the internet, evolve, and then be syndicated back into print. It wouldn't be surprising to hear an electronic paper version will be in production in the coming months.

Check out the trailers at [www.jonasmooore.com](http://www.jonasmooore.com) and the latest user-generated contributions at [youtube.com/jonasmooorecreator](http://youtube.com/jonasmooorecreator).

We'll also be covering the progress of both Jonas Moore and Howard Webster at our website, [www.disposablemedia.co.uk](http://www.disposablemedia.co.uk)







# RETROSPECTIVE: PREACHER

“JUST WHEN THERE’S THE FIRST  
GODDAMN GLIMMER OF LIGHT,  
IT ALL HAS TO TURN TO SHIT”

– REVEREND JESSE CUSTER



I can't remember who first suggested I try *Preacher*, but I definitely owe them a big thank you. If *The Sandman* is like sipping a fine brandy in a gothic drawing room, then *Preacher* is like swigging bourbon from a cracked coffee mug in a junkie squat. And that's what makes it so special.

Like *The Sandman* it mixes religion, mythology, and gritty realism, but where Neil Gaiman's work looks at humanity's darkness from a distance, Garth Ennis gives us front-row seats with *Preacher*. But despite the horror onslaught, there's always a black comedy that makes it bearable. It's no surprise the trade paperback carries a quote from *Clerks* director Kevin Smith, as Ennis shares his talent for covering taboo subjects in a way that makes them bearable.

The opening stories, collected in trade paperback as *Preacher: Gone To Texas*, recounts the moment the Reverend Jesse Custer gains supernatural powers as he becomes inhabited by the offspring of a coupling between an angel and a devil. As the sudden power wipes out his entire congregation in an explosion, his ex-girlfriend and an Irish stranger pull into town.

And that's as plain as it gets as the cast and plot expand to include redneck sheriffs, vampires, UFO obsessives, serial killers, and New York cops. Plus the heavenly host of Adelphi and Seraphi, and the cold-blooded killer sent after Custer by Heaven, the Saint of Killers.

It's a lot to pack in, and the story capably moves along at a brisk pace, fast enough that the more fortuitous meetings and events pass by before you can question them. Ennis isn't scared to leave some of the big questions to be delivered at a later date, and it certainly leaves you wondering how everything develops during its run, which stretched from 1995-2000.

Without checking dates, you'd be forgiven for thinking *Preacher* had been influenced by the likes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but the influence of television and movies is only made by the surreal ghost of John Wayne, who appears as Reverend Custer as an occasional advisor.

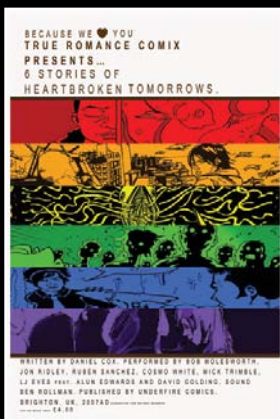
From Northern Ireland, Ennis manages Texan dialogue surprisingly well, although there's the occasional overdone Southern drawl or reference. It's not surprising that one of the major supporting characters, Cassidy, happens to be Irish. He also is able to examine organised

religion and Catholicism, which is obviously something which has always part of the Irish outlook, whichever side of the border someone is from.

Steve Dillon's art stands out not so much for its beauty, although it's particularly good and consistent throughout, but more for the unusual scenes which he has had to imagine and portray. Dillon is also particularly good at presenting facial features, even on incidental characters in the back of the panel, and making sure they all convey the right emotions at any given time. Whether it's the Seraphi or the Saint of Killers, he's able to convey their warrior tendencies, whilst also able to show when Custer's ex-girlfriend, Tulip, is fighting to contain a smile.

If you're tempted by the visceral nature of *Preacher* you'll be pleased to know that there is a download of issue one of *Gone To Texas* on the DC Comics website, which you can find by clicking [here](#). It's also still easy to find online or in your local trade paperback stockist. Just be prepared for a mixture of horror, crime, Western, romance, religion and just plain screwed up craziness, in black humour wrapping paper.

WORDS DAN THORNTON  
DESIGN ANDREW CAMPBELL



## TRUE ROMANCE COMIX (UNDERFIRE)

daniel cox

**T**he *True Romance Comix* is a collection of six short stories, written by Daniel Cox but drawn in six distinct styles by different artists. The effect is predictably hit and miss but does give an interesting insight into the way that an artist defines more than just the look of a comic - by having one writer collaborate with a range of artists *True Romance Comix* shows how drawing styles can control pace in a story, and dictate the personalities of characters independent of the words on the page.

As an experimental showcase of

different styles, *True Romance Comix* succeeds gloriously. Ruben Sanchez's illustration in *The Winter Fountain* has a grimy, adolescent grittiness to it, strongly reminiscent of Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*, while Cosmo White's depictions in *Love Story #1* capture a sense of heroism amidst junkie despair. However, in places, it feels like the writing takes a back seat to the art, which is a shame, given the promise shown by Daniel Cox's solid storytelling throughout.

Jim Miles



**"COSMO WHITE'S LOVE STORY #1 CAPTURES A SENSE OF HEROISM AMIDST JUNKIE DESPAIR"**



## JLA/JSA - THE LIGHTNING SAGA (DC COMICS)

brad meltzer

**T**he biggest problem with reading a comic by Brad Meltzer is that you know something major will happen. *Identity Crisis* spoke for itself, but here if re-launching the JLA wasn't enough already he's also brought back a previous version of one of the big characters.

It is an event that over-shadows the rest of the story. Despite having the JLA, JSA and Legion of Superheroes all involved and an interesting premise (the Legion members coming back to kill one of their team to bring another hero back) the story never sparks or even

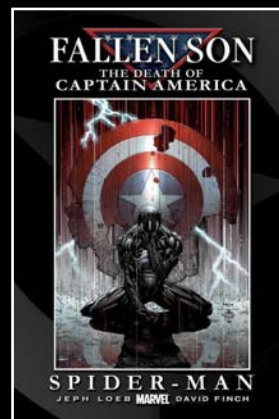
progresses. There are interesting moments, such as Superman being taken advantage of, but they are too far apart.

Despite those problems, it is an incredibly well made comic. Meltzer's prose writing day job means there is a lot of text, but it gives the tale weight. It sometimes makes the art feel secondary, but it is saved by Ed Benes' almost-sketchy style, which complements the story perfectly. On the whole a waste of potential, but still worth reading.

Andrew Revell



**"THERE ARE INTERESTING MOMENTS, BUT THEY ARE TOO FAR APART"**



## FALLEN SON ISSUE #4 (MARVEL)

jeph loeb

**T**he *Fallen Son* series collects events in the lives of five Marvel characters, shortly after Captain America's death, just after the Civil War plot line. In *Depression*, Spiderman is visiting a cemetery, disoriented by grief, when his Spidey-sense goes wild, leading to a fight with Rhino. What is interesting is how Spiderman completely misjudges the situation and is, for the first half of the story, an unsympathetic and grumpy bad guy. However, this challenging opening is ruined by the second half, where it transpires Wolverine has

been observing everything, and the comic degenerates into a tough-guys-talking-sensitive sequence the like of which is inexplicably creeping into more and more Marvel comics. For several pages each frame is simply a couple of large boxes filled with cringe-worthy speech, and the two standing face to face. This disappointment cannot be saved even by the cool new motion defocus effect which gave the first half's action an uncannily cinematic style. A Disaster.

Jim Miles



**"THE DISAPPOINTMENT CANNOT BE SAVED EVEN BY A COOL NEW MOTION DEFOCUS EFFECT"**



## BLACK CANARY #1 (DC COMICS)

tony bedard

**T**he first issue of this *Black Canary* mini-series is tasked with continuing many stories. It follows her relationship with Green Arrow, culminating in his recent proposal. It follows her quitting the Birds of Prey to raise Sin, a child removed from Lady Shiva's assassin training that Black Canary briefly attended. It even follows a short marriage from early in her life that has only been mentioned once before.

With so much to explain, it takes the simple approach and just assumes you already know everything. If you don't, it makes the

story something of a rough ride. Even if you do know what is going on it isn't perfect, constantly spending too much time introducing characters as if it was never meant to be read as a single comic.

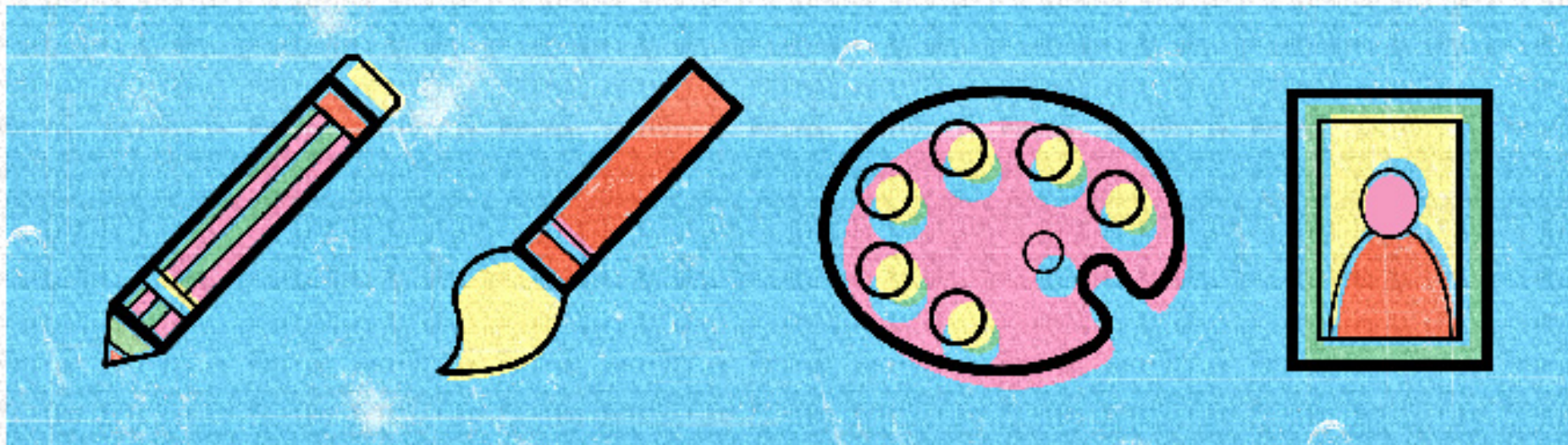
Despite excellent art-work, especially at rendering Black Canary in costume, this issue is lacking but as the first of a mini-series it has a lot of potential, especially for fans of the character.

Andrew Revell



**"IT SPENDS TOO MUCH TIME INTRODUCING CHARACTERS AS IF IT WERE NEVER MEANT TO BE READ AS A SINGLE COMIC"**





welcome to the disposable media gallery...

here at DM we believe in good art. every issue we aim to bring you the best





dm8/gallery

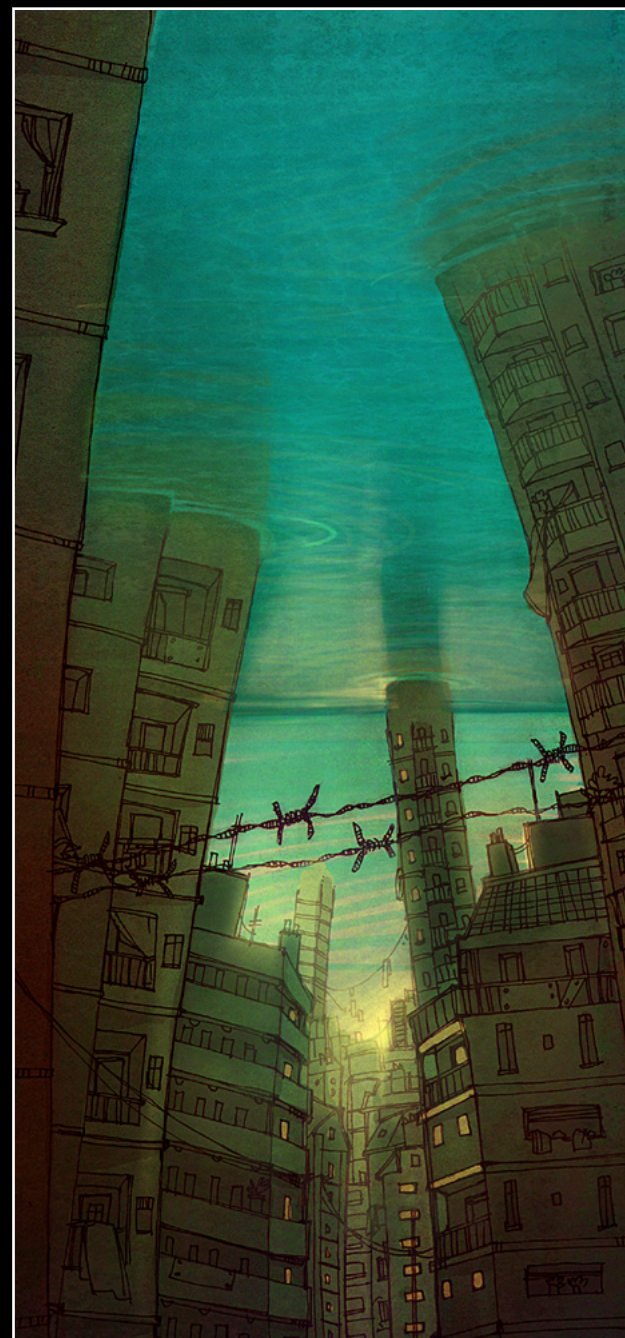


# **martin** **senyszak**

**WHAT:**  
**WHO:**  
**WHERE:**

**MAIN: STAIRWELL INSET: THE POWERSTATION**  
**MARTIN SENYSZAK**  
**IAMMARTIN.CO.UK**





# lois van baarle

WHAT: (1) SMOKING FISH (2) SUBMERGED  
WHO: LOIS VAN BAARLE  
WHERE: [HTTP://LOISH.DEVIANTART.COM/](http://loish.deviantart.com/)



# roxana vazquez

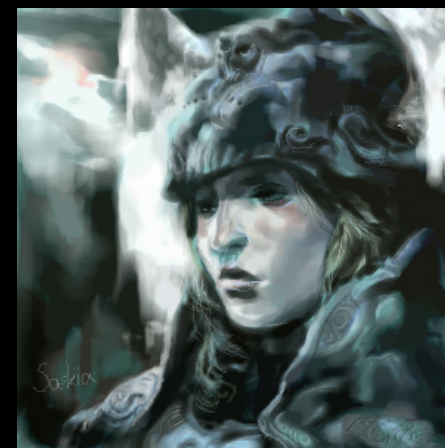
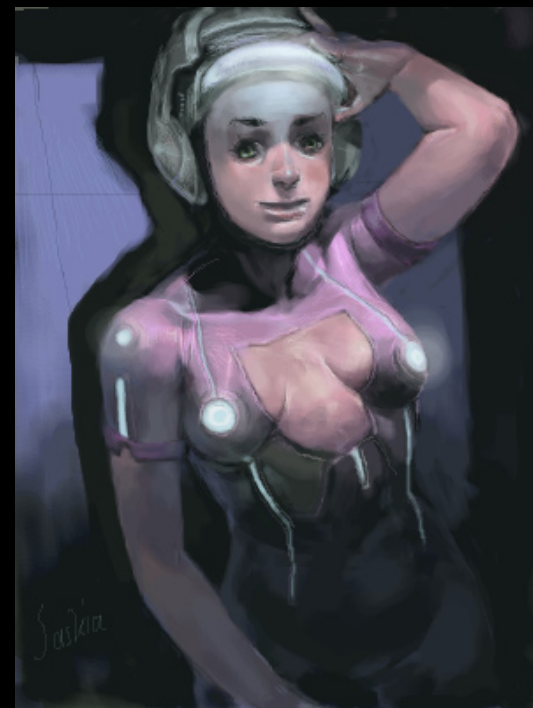
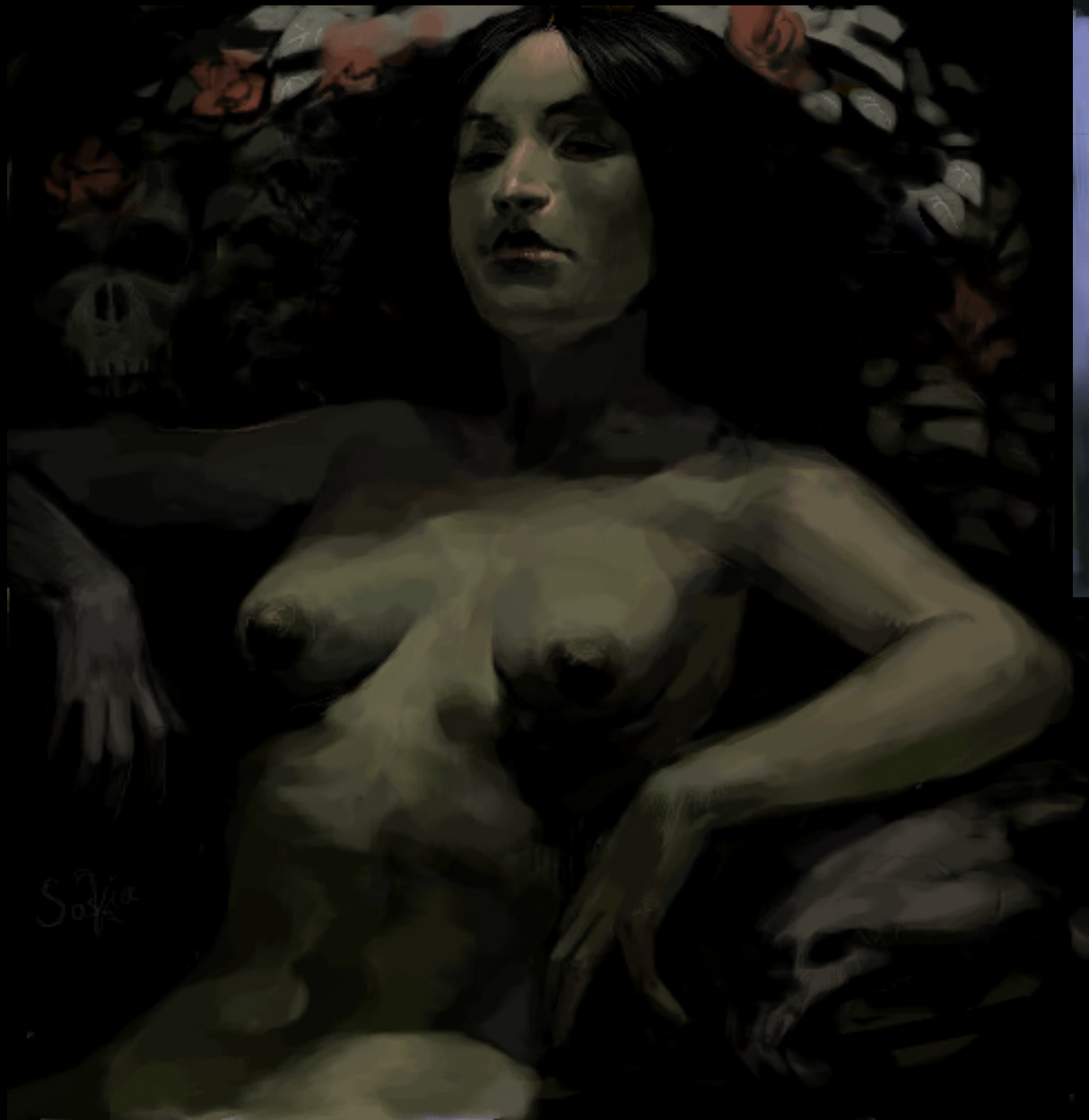


**WHAT:**  
**WHO:**  
**WHERE:**

**A LACK OF COLOUR**  
**ROXANA VAZQUEZ**  
**[HTTP://UN-DIVINE.DEVIANTART.COM](http://un-divine.deviantart.com)**



# saskia gutekunst



**WHAT:**

(CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT)  
OMG BOOBS | OEKAKI | VALKYRIE

**WHO:**

SASKIA GUTEKUNST

**WHERE:**

[HTTP://SASKIAG.DEVIANTART.COM](http://saskiag.deviantart.com)

# GUESS THE SCREENSHOT. WIN GAMES!



THANKS TO THE LOVELY PEOPLE AT IGNITION ENTERTAINMENT, DISPOSABLE MEDIA ARE **GIVING AWAY** THREE GENUINELY-QUITE-GOOD GAMES! IN ORDER TO GET YOUR HANDS ON THEM, SIMPLY NAME THE GAME FROM ANY OF THE THREE SCREENSHOTS PROVIDED. THE FIRST PERSON TO CORRECTLY GUESS ANY SCREENSHOT WILL **WIN** THE CORRESPONDING GAME!

VISIT [DISPOSABLEMEDIA.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://DISPOSABLEMEDIA.BLOGSPOT.COM), CLICK ON THE COMPETITION LINK AND SUBMIT YOUR ANSWER ALONG WITH YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS. IF YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON TO GUESS A CORRECT GAME WE'LL GET IN TOUCH! ANSWERS WILL BE REVEALED NEXT ISSUE. GOOD LUCK!



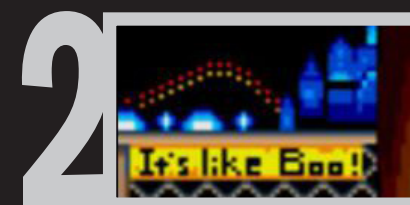
EXAMPLE



## THIS MONTH'S CLUES



PRIZE:  
Mercury Meltdown Revolution (Wii)



PRIZE:  
Metal Slug Anthology (PS2)



PRIZE:  
King of Fighters  
Maximum Impact 2 (PS2)

### RULES.

- 1) One answer, per address, per day. Extra guesses will be ignored, extra emails from the same address within the same day will be ignored.
- 2) Each answer must specify which game you are naming. For example: Game 2 is Mario 64.
- 3) Each answer must include an address. All addresses are strictly confidential and will only be used for verification purposes.
- 4) The editor's decision is final.
- 5) Since you've taken the time to read all these rules, here's a clue: they're all sequels.



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# DISPOSABLE MEDIA WANTS YOU!

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PHOTOSHOP, ADVERTISE, BLOG, CODE, COOK,  
CLEAN, DO THE DISHES, GIVE US MONEY...

IF YOU CAN DO ANY OF THE ABOVE, WE CAN  
PROBABLY USE YOU. GET IN TOUCH WITH US AT  
**DISPOSABLEMEDIA@GMAIL.COM**

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get notified when it comes out, get updates on the new website, send us your stuff to be  
featured on the doormat (now accepting comics, short films, flash games, pretty much  
anything worth shouting about), check out our celebrity friends/stalkees and just generally  
tell us what you think.

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