

DISPOSABLE MEDIA

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

Issue 7

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Greetings,

Spring is making way for Summer, sun lotion ads have appeared on the TV, and it takes half an hour of moving the curtains around to get rid of the reflections on your TV before you can play a game or watch a film.

Even *DM* has acknowledged there's a world away from HDTVs and surround sound. We're welcoming new contributors, including our first photography in the Art section, and there's plenty to read, despite the fact we all fancied bugging off to the nearest beer garden at the first opportunity.

So sit back and relax with the latest issue of *DM*, safe in the knowledge that it might be sunny outside now, but you'll need our game, film and music advice for the inevitable days when it pisses down with rain. And pity us, as we once more resume our hermit lifestyle, locked indoors, chained to our laptops and desktops, all in order to bring you our next issue in 2 months' time. If you're about after that, we'll see you down the pub.

– Dan



//DISPOSED MEDIA

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



//games

Guitar Hero 2. Guitar Hero 2. Guitar Hero 2. Gears of War. A small list, but a great one none the less. Who needs to worry about the summer drought when you've got those two? Just as well really, as there's nothing else out, there's no news and not much happening. Aside from *Nights* on the Wii.



And the *Grand Theft Auto 4* trailer, the *DM* verdict of which is wonderment and we're very, very excited, especially given that the 360 line-up for the rest of the year is comprised of almost entirely 'revolutionary FPSs' which will be rubbish, but probably quite a laugh on Live. Some people are quite happy about

the surprise 'x' button in *Halo 3* and are wondering what it might do. We couldn't give a toss and are much more worried about whether there'll be anything decent out for the DS in time for our holidays. The PS3 is still not selling and the Wii is still sold out everywhere. But some things never change.



//music

The Arctic Monkeys released a new album. It quickly sold a lot and is ok, if a little short with at least 2 definite duffers. We'd give it a 3.5 if we did half marks, but we don't so we'd give it a generous 4, mostly for *505* as it's the best thing they've done since *Fake Tales*. Though we do wonder why no one else has mentioned that they seem to have stolen Richard Hawley's guitar and production style.

Everyone else seems too scared to release albums and go on tour in preparation for festival season instead. It's costing us a fortune. Beyonce has 3 singles out at the same time and bores the world more than Mark Ronson on *American Idol*. Well, he probably would do if he could take his bloody trumpets on with him. Yes, we're very bored of him.

And Interpol finally unveil some details about their new album. 'Our Love to Admire' is out on July 7 and will most likely be brilliant.



//film & tv

Guess what? Everything's a bit quiet. It's nearly summer and everyone is spending their money on BBQs, cider and tents. That and the industry is primed for the most ridiculous summer of modern cinema history with *Spiderman 3*, *Pirates of the Caribbean 3*, *Shrek 3*, *Harry Potter 14(?)*, *Transformers*,

Ratatouille, *Die Hard 4* (we're refusing to use the .0 suffix), and *The Simpsons* film now all confirmed before August. How very absurd. According to friends, family and the internet, we should make more



of an effort to get into *Heroes*. We'd have watched it more but we've been busy watching repeats of Gordon Ramsay's *F Word* and *Mythbusters*. We'll make a point of joining in with the *Heroes* come July when it's shown on BBC2. Until then we're occupied with the possible brilliant end to Season 3 of *Lost*. It's actually very good again. And the football on Sky. It is May after all.



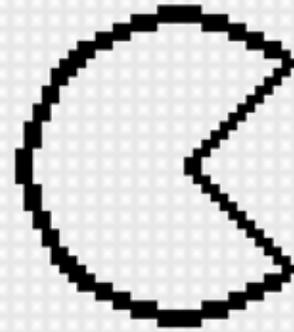
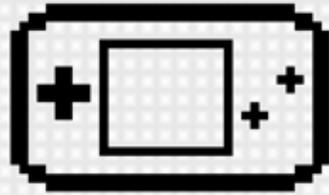
//comics

Well, *World War 3* came and went. There really isn't that much more to say about it unless you were a big fan of Young Frankenstein. Elsewhere DC is bringing back the Amazons and hopefully realising sooner rather than later that the secret agent version of Wonder Woman isn't very good.



Over at Marvel, they still haven't given up flogging Captain America's dead body and will probably still be doing the same next month too. The crossover everybody wanted, *Evil Dead and Marvel Zombies* is drawing some attention away from it, thankfully.

Without nearly enough noise, Top Shelf has turned 10. A good excuse to go back and enjoy *Monkey vs. Robot* or try and pluck up the courage to buy *Lost Girls* (not that we have). Or you could just read the *Owly* page in the indie comics section of this issue...



games



currently playing ...

motorstorm / videogame journalism / echoes / sbk 07 / the red star / phoenix wright: ace attorney - justice for all / trackmania united

Binary Zoo is quite a well known name amongst indie fans, and their previous games - such as *Duotris* and *Mono* - have shown that the team have a strong sense of passion and are able to hold a distinct style that permeates through each of their remarkably slick releases. The way in which they maintain such brilliance across their releases has made *DM's* freeware correspondent pay more attention to their news and developments lately, and so the release of *Echoes* is an excellent opportunity to reacquaint oneself with the kind of neon fury and polished aesthetics that they can pull off.

Essentially, the game is Binary Zoo's take on *Asteroids* - the arcade classic where your desire to blast apart the huge rocks looking to crush you is only tempered by your fear of later being overwhelmed by the fragments you ended up creating. The formula is timeless, encouraging restraint as much as it encourages wanton destruction, and allowing more subtle players to take a more controlled approach as they try to pick apart each rock one by one. (It's also worth commending the website's candid admission(s) that this is "a bit like *Asteroids*".) It could be argued that the developer has been here before quite recently with *Mono* - a game where each coloured ball destroyed would leave behind a "stain" of sorts, and so the more chaotic the game got as it progressed, the more colourful the background would get. It was a beautiful game, much like *Echoes*, but the base gameplay mechanics of the two do initially seem alike. However, this small point works in *Echoes'* favour dramatically, because they've applied *Mono's* control scheme to *Echoes*, and if you know enough about *Asteroids'* inertia and momentum, or *Mono's* wonderfully responsive mouse/keyboard control dynamic, it doesn't take much to understand that *Echoes* is a game that turns the very nature of *Asteroids* on its head. The game has pretty much removed most

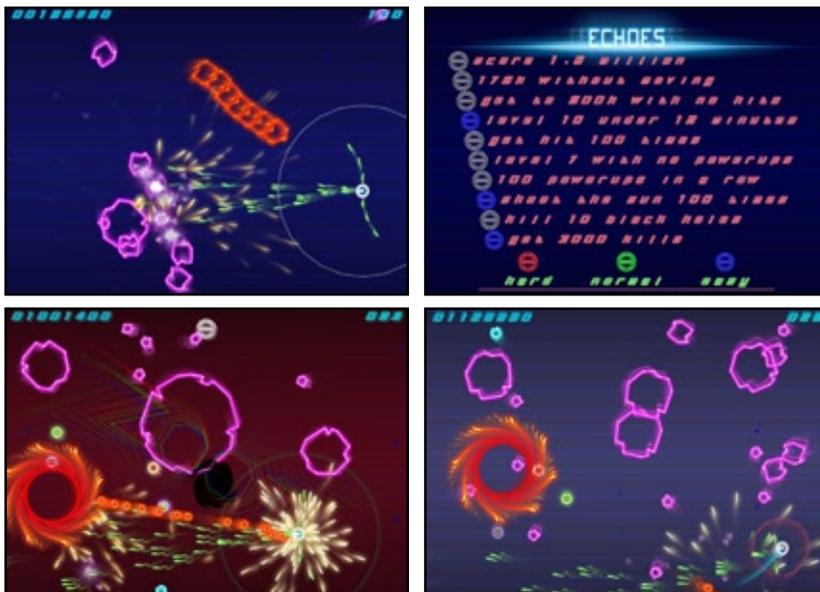
of the ship momentum found in the arcade classic, and so this acts as a perfect excuse for many more rocks to appear in the play area, allowing for a much more exciting game.

Another interesting gameplay twist is the way in which the playfield behaves. In *Asteroids* you would generally be presented with a wraparound environment on a static screen, where the rocks (and the player's spaceship) would, for instance, float off the right hand side of the play area and emerge on the left. With *Echoes*, everything is bound by the constraints of the screen after being introduced into play. Rocks scroll into the area at each new level, but once they are established in the playfield, they will bounce around the borders. This means that instead of being pressured by rocks behind you but relieved by ones in front of you floating away, you would instead have walls that coax rocks back towards you. It's another brilliant design decision, and it almost seems like a response to the control system - something to justify the flexibility of your movement and shooting. A wraparound environment would be far too meandering with the mouse's responsiveness and the instant turning granted to you by the keyboard controls and the lack of gravity, so the levels have instead been calibrated so that you make use of your responsiveness. The introduction of more rocks as you progress is also judged really well; it ensures that the player rarely has time to take a breather, and encourages careful shooting as opposed to mindless rock-shattering play.

If you're reading this and are a fan of hectic indie shooters, or modern arcade shmups that pile on the pressure with hundreds of obstacles, think of *Echoes* as a version of *Asteroids* designed for you and people like you. Old timers might be a little more alienated, but if this game encourages them to try the genre's more modern offerings, it would be an achievement that creates echoes of its own.

ECHOES

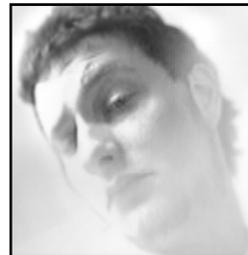
**YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ASTEROIDS LIKE THIS;
BINARY ZOO IS BACK WITH A GAME THAT GIVES
THE ARCADE CLASSIC A MODERN EDGE, WITH
MINDBLOWING RESULTS...**



“ ESSENTIALLY, THE GAME IS BINARY ZOO'S TAKE ON ASTEROIDS ”



Streets of Rage has recently been made available for download on the Wii Virtual Console and, my goodness, what an eye-opener it is to play through again. There's something so refreshingly pure about playing in two dimensions - the unreal charm of it, lovingly detailed in every pixel of every sprite. The way the protagonist and the street thugs you face interlock as tightly as *Tetris* blocks, as you suplex badguys into the ground. There's a sense of pace and delicate precision - as you hurriedly grasp for any weapons that your assailants or the streets might hold, demolishing swathe after swathe of enemies with the discipline and readiness of a ninja - which few modern games can match. You find yourself



WISHLIST

ILLUSTRATION: MATTHEW PLATER

ADAM PARKER TELLS US WHAT HE WOULD WISH FOR TO MAKE GAMING BETTER WISH THREE: MODERN 'OLD SCHOOL' BRAWLERS

acting less as a wayward police officer, and more as a street cleaner, engaged - with each kill and the subsequently evaporating sprite - in the wholesale disposal of matter itself.

Sega produced a 3D spiritual successor in 2005's *Spikeout: Battle Street*, though it played with rather less grace than its predecessor. An array of bugs, a cheesy techno soundtrack and a baffling, somewhat embarrassing plot all made for a significantly weaker experience.

Tekken 3's 'Force Mode' was Namco's brave attempt at taking the side-scrolling beat 'em up genre to three dimensions. For a bundled

minigame, it was an enjoyable diversion, but felt slow - the added dimension, too, felt clumsy when mapped to the PSone controller. Somehow, the realism that polygons brought to the characters and environments diminished the feeling of foreboding as your imagination was called upon less to fill the gaps. The music, too, felt more 'arcade fun' than 'techno-pumping Grindhouse movie'. Perhaps it wasn't Namco's intention to emulate the game: but for a homage that would inevitably be compared *Streets of Rage*, it could only disappoint.

The overnight demise of a popular, faultless style of gameplay is unique to this technology-centric industry. How absurd would it be to hear film buffs ruing the day the film industry stopped making action films? While we still have hands and eyes, there will always be a desire for this scrolling, playpen style of combat -

yet there is nothing in the way of a modern equivalent.

The post-*GTA3* *Grand Theft Auto* series is perhaps the closest contemporary equivalent, or at least, the direction in which the genre has evolved via three dimensions, with freer boundaries, and an emphasis on things other than dispatching criminals - such as taxi driver missions and performing stunts. Its largely projectile-based combat and clumsy engine which favours the safety of long-range fire fights over close-quarters duelling is rather less satisfying and, for all its realism, makes murder far less personal.

And, really, isn't that what gaming is all about? The screams of marketing men demanding that a new release will 'bring you closer to the action than EVER BEFORE!' are finally becoming more than meaningless hyperbole in this generation of motion-sensitive controllers. More and more titles, like *Ninja Gaiden* and the *Hitman* series, are beginning to recognise the satisfaction that close-range combat can bring. Yet they don't pretend to be *Tetris*-meets-*Street Fighter* as *Streets of Rage* does, for when your target has been dispatched, the body remains - a sombre, more realistic reminder of the finality of your actions. How successful such changes are is questionable, in the artistic, fantasy sense that videogames were once viewed. Similarly, the value of motion sensing in a fantasy environment has yet to be fully proven.

In the end, there will always be limits to how close you should want to get to the action. When a friend's sister recently, quite innocently, asked her brother's friends if 'Boxing' on *Wii Sports* actually required gamers to hit each other, the nervous laughter was telling.

"THERE'S SOMETHING SO REFRESHINGLY PURE ABOUT PLAYING IN TWO DIMENSIONS - THE UNREAL CHARM OF IT, LOVINGLY DETAILED IN EVERY PIXEL OF EVERY SPRITE"

KICKING UP A STORM

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU PLAYED GRAN TURISMO AND THOUGHT "THAT'S A PRETTY GAME"? REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU CRASHED IN GRAN TURISMO AND THOUGHT "OH" AS NOTHING HAPPENED TO YOUR PRETTY CAR? REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW THAT E3 VIDEO FOR MOTORSTORM AND YOUR BRAIN REFUSED TO BELIEVE THAT A GAME THAT SPECTACULAR WAS IMPOSSIBLE? TURNS OUT IT WASN'T. STILL IN MILD DISBELIEF, WE ASKED PAUL RUSTCHYNSKY, SENIOR DESIGNER AT EVOLUTION STUDIOS JUST HOW IT WAS ALL POSSIBLE.





Firstly, congratulations on the finished game; from the outside in it's been quite a ride getting to retail, but has it been an enjoyable one for you?

Games development is never an easy task, and *MotorStorm* was certainly a challenging title to work upon due to the amount of new technology and the pressure to be out within the launch window. It has been a fun ride, one which has had its fair share of highs and lows, but I'm proud to have been to part of the experience. And now it's great to be able to read all the reviews and player comments which have been extremely positive on the whole.

How did you get your job and what was your role in the game; how did this work on a daily basis?

I started at Evolution Studios back in September of 2004 where I began as a junior designer on (the excellent if I do say so myself) *WRC Rally Evolved*. Previous to this I worked in a number of QA departments at other companies which proved to be invaluable experience.

My role on *MotorStorm* was as a designer, my primary responsibility was to carry on my vehicle handling specialization from *WRC RE* which involved lots of testing, tuning and then more testing to ensure that each vehicle handled just right as well as being balanced against one another. A lot of my time was also spent on the design documents, making sure that every little detail had been covered and that they were always up to date.

The PS3 has been in development for a while now and there's been a lot of talk and speculation about the machine, its games and the launch. How has the

outside talk affected the creation of the game, especially some of the less than positive talk of the console in general? We've not let this affect our development in anyway whatsoever, we've been confident in our ability to deliver a quality product on the Playstation3 from the start. It's important to note that the bulk of the negative press comes from the vocal minority, and the millions of Playstation users worldwide won't have seen or heard any of it. When you are trying to contribute to making games as widespread as possible it's important not to let them get you down, although they are an important group.

In the same vein, the addition of motion sensors in the sixaxis seemed to be a 'late' addition to the PS3; were you informed early in the games development of this or was it something that occurred late on? *MotorStorm* is the launch title that utilises the motion capabilities the most naturally, would you say that it's a useful addition to the game and was there difficulty in delivering a satisfying sense of control in the game?

Only key people on the project were informed of its inclusion before the global announcement due to the sensitivity of the information, so work on this did begin within a reasonable time frame. The SIXAXIS has a huge amount of potential that we have exciting plans for, and we believe that it'll become an integral part of the Playstation experience in the future.

Many traditional gamers have had trouble adapting from the analogue sticks, but there have also been many that have made the switch and now will never go back. To make the most out of it I'd recommend for first time players to try it

with it enabled, and in this respect I regret not making the motion control the default option as many don't even attempt to use it.

Does the agreement between Sony and Immersion bode well for the console's future, especially coming from your point of view of a dev co which enjoys its racing games?

I can't comment on the agreement between Sony and Immersion, you'll have to ask them. Personally I think rumble is a great feature, and given the opportunity I would like to include in within future PS3 titles. I do think this agreement is great news for us and the whole development community.

When did you actually start production of the game and when was it started in relation to the finalised PS3?

Pre-production started way back in 2004, roughly at about the time I started when development began on *WRC Rally Evolved*. Development for *MotorStorm* began in the New Year and we received the final development kits sometime during 2006 (that's as precise an answer as you'll get).

The PS2 was notoriously tricky to develop for; how does the PS3's environment compare?

The technology although more advanced in the Playstation 3 is actually easier to get more out of due to superior architecture and improved software support from Sony. We think we've untapped more raw power from the console than maybe we expected on day

one, but just like the Playstation 2 its going to take some time to master it even though it was easier to pick up.

If you're asking me was it hard to develop a AAA title for launch of a new platform, then yes, absolutely! But if it was easy then everyone would do it.

The E3 video then. Not wanting to dwell on them as the product is now available and a critical and commercial success, but how did the videos and their reaction affect the development? From the outside in, it could be said that they made your work difficult...

We took a lot of flak for showcasing the target render video, but we do not regret it in the slightest. The video was something for us to aspire to, outlining the core vision of *MotorStorm* and I think that everyone who saw it instantly knew what to expect from *MotorStorm*. Based on that I believe we have succeeded in bringing the vision to the Playstation 3 by creating a brutal off-road racer like no other.

Now that the game is out, to what extent will downloadable content be released? Will it be a simple case of new tracks and vehicles or are there plans afoot for more or is all the effort of the team going into the sequel?

I'd like to make it clear that we aren't the kind of developer who would deliberately remove content in order to cynically sell it at a later date, hence the reason we're releasing some content for free. We had downloadable content in mind for *MotorStorm* from the beginning, but we ran out of time during development, so it

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“THE TECHNOLOGY ALTHOUGH MORE ADVANCED IN THE PLAYSTATION 3 IS ACTUALLY EASIER TO GET MORE OUT OF DUE TO SUPERIOR ARCHITECTURE AND IMPROVED SOFTWARE SUPPORT FROM SONY. WE THINK WE’VE UNTAPPED MORE RAW POWER FROM THE CONSOLE THAN MAYBE WE EXPECTED ON DAY ONE”

to turned out to be a blessing allowing us to go back to our original wish list and offer a bigger experience.

The plan at the moment is to bring a quite comprehensive list of content over a generous period of time, providing not only the ‘standard’ content such as new tracks and vehicles but adding whole offline and online modes.

*Has work started on **MotorStorm 2** yet?*

Our current focus is to support *MotorStorm* with a wide-range of downloadable content to extend and improve the boxed experience.

A lot has been made of the graphics and the physics of the game, especially in relation to the real time deformation of the track, but for us, the AI is something that really stands out as being next gen. Was this a deliberate move or something that just happened through the development period?

We set out with a vision for the AI, which was to create AI that doesn’t just race around the track but actually goes out of its way to entertain the player. This was born out of general frustration with AI in other racing games where its only real goal is to win often at the expense of the player’s fun.

Have you ever been in a helicopter?

I wasn’t one of the fortunate Evolution

employees who got to go on the reference trip to Monument Valley, but I’d love to take a trip in one someday.

*The **WRC** games have been tremendously well received, so what drove the decision to move away from that brand and create a new IP for the PS3? Do you prefer creating original games or games for a license such as the **WRC**?*

Whilst we loved working on the *WRC* franchise we were in danger of becoming pigeon-holed as a one-game developer, and after having worked on a single franchise for such a long period of time it’s difficult to expect a talented bunch of individuals not to have the desire to work on something entirely new.

My personal preference is to work on original games, as I’m sure most designers would but there are still plenty of opportunities to do great things with a licensed product.

*Do you still play **MotorStorm** yourself or are you sick of the sight of it?*

You may not believe me but even after almost 2 years on the project I still play *MotorStorm*. I’ve completed the single player of the game a few times so you’ll generally find me online now, and with the upcoming content you’ll be sure to see me online even more.

X-BOX CAR RACER

WORDS DAN THORNTON

DESIGN ANDREW CAMPBELL

WITH A SEQUEL DUE FOR IMMINENT RELEASE, FORZA MOTORSPORT STILL HAS A FANATICAL FOLLOWING, PARTICULARLY FOR AN ORIGINAL XBOX GAME. WHY IS IT STILL THE CONNOISSEURS' CHOICE OF RACING GAMES?

Like most successes in motor racing, *Forza Motorsport* doesn't do one thing particularly well, but it's the whole package which has made it a class leader, from the car handling and customisation to the online play. It has also inspired fans to create 'home-brew' championships with rules to rival real race series. With a dedicated community ignoring the lure of Xbox 360 games and Achievement points, there's a solid fan base waiting patiently for *Forza 2* to emerge from the pits.

The game starts with a good combination of cars and tracks. There's something for everyone with dedicated saloon and sportscar race machines and real life tracks such as Silverstone, Road America, Road Atlanta and the Nurburgring. But if you prefer classic cars, there are European sportcars such as the Lotus Elan, or American muscle like the Mustang, Shelby Cobra and Dodge Charger. Or take a car you might own in real life, such as the Peugeot 206, Mini, or Honda Civic and see what's possible on some of the custom made tracks.

The variations are impressive; from uprating the brakes to swapping the engine, you've got a wealth of possibilities within classes ranging from almost stock to tuned beyond recognition. On top of that there's aerodynamic options and cosmetic makeovers including spoilers, wings, and alloy wheels. Once you've sorted the car there are time trial modes, point-to-point races, and even autocross to test it out on.

So far, so *Gran Turismo*, but it's the online side which makes Forza come alive. In a

straight race the difference between sixth and seventh becomes so much more important when you're relegating a real racer rather than one of the, albeit impressive, A.I. console creations. Getting a good placing on the timed leaderboards requires much patience and hard work. A nice touch is to allow racers to download settings and ghosts of the top times to give some guidance to putting in a fast lap.

But the combination of online competition, various classes, and the ability to form and join car clubs has given rise to a particularly fanatical breed of dedicated racers. The likes of the TTR, FWC and other clubs regularly come together in amateur championships, with strict rules on tuning, and cars available, making for close racing. As an FWC racer myself, I can vouch for the pressure to snatch a tenth of a second off my qualifying time, and the difference an earlier or later pit stop can make over the competition.

After all that players can retire to the paint shop which allows a huge range of colour schemes, stick kits, and, if you have the patience, stunning custom designs which can make you an instant celebrity on the numerous *Forza* forums and websites.

With official tournaments and online car auctions forming two of the big additions to the new *Forza*, there's no better time to dig out your old copy, get online, and get ready for the arrival of *Forza 2*. The official site has just been redeveloped for the new features at <http://forzamotorsport.net>. Just keep an eye out in your mirrors for Badger Gravling and the rest of the *DM* race team.

“ LIKE MOST SUCCESSES IN MOTOR RACING, FORZA MOTORSPORT DOESN'T DO ONE THING PARTICULARLY WELL, BUT IT'S THE WHOLE PACKAGE WHICH HAS MADE IT A CLASS LEADER ”

DISPOSABLE MEDIA?

WORDS: KEITH ANDREW
DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

DESPITE NUMEROUS SLURS AGAINST THEIR INTEGRITY, INTERNET SITES AND BLOGS ARE NONETHELESS PROVING AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR WAY FOR THE AVERAGE GAMER TO DIGEST NEWS AND REVIEWS. BUT BY INSTILLING SUCH POWER IN WHAT REMAINS A LARGELY UNKNOWN ENTITY, HAVE WE ESSENTIALLY HANDED OVER THE GAMING PRESS TO A GENERATION OF ILLITERATE 13 YEAR OLDS BROADCASTING FROM THEIR BEDROOMS?

It's one of the first lessons force fed into the mind of any marketing student; beware of the competition. The relevant ethics of that profession aside, it's an important warning that, for all crafts and trades, should be taken as gospel. Complacency is the key to many a downfall, and adversaries don't always attack from the direction you might expect.

For instance, when the visionaries of the 1960s predicted that we'd all be flying around the countryside on hovercrafts by now, it's probably fair to say that the industries and networks that supported the motoring trade – from the car manufacturers, to the oil companies, to the people who tarmac the roads – didn't dismiss their new rival simply because it didn't consist of four wheels and fluffy dice hanging from the wing-mirror. In fact, it could well be the case that it was this very awareness that prevented the car's demise.

In the same way, the steady rise of the internet in the mid to late 1990s offered up a new competitor for the UK's big magazine publishers. The slow ascent of a medium which, at least at first, seemed like the perfect home for little else than rainbow coloured GeoCities

pages dedicated to people's fluffy kittens was, in fact, a stealth attack. Today, that kitten has bitten back; the now News Corp. owned IGN Network estimates that more than 4 million people in Britain alone visit its pages every month. When you consider that the top selling games magazine in the UK – Future Publishing's Official PlayStation 2 Magazine UK – has a circulation figure of just over 71,000 nationally, it's quite clear to see who has the upper hand in 2007.

Content with fighting a battle within its own walls, when this writer was growing up, Future and the then Paragon tussled it out on the magazine stands, with each party knowing exactly what the other was up to. Even now, the top brass at Future and Imagine – though 'at war' at the newsagents – apparently take each other out for dinner once a year. Perhaps both factions are at ease with the fact that, as far as gaming magazines go, collectively they have the market sewn up.

Those who monitor the industry are worried, however. Could it be that the men and women in control of our gaming magazines have lost sight of what's really going on?

"I think it's fairly obvious that gaming magazines are in decline," says Rob Fahey, former editor of GamesIndustry.biz. "Commercially, there's no doubt that they're in serious trouble - circulation is down, and advertising revenues are increasingly going online."

Fahey, who now regularly contributes to the Eurogamer network, is the kind of writer who is undoubtedly a thorn in many a magazine editor's side; an intelligent scribe who chooses to ply his wares online rather than in a magazine.

"By and large I don't think magazines have adapted to the new market in which they find themselves," says Fahey. "Commercially, they have massive new competition for both revenue and readership. In terms of news and reviews, they face a rival media which can deliver content much faster than they can - and which offers user interaction that magazines can never emulate, which is especially important to reviews."

Undoubtedly, the single biggest change in the way magazines operate has been the appearance of the gaming website. Currently enjoying an explosion - with new sites popping up virtually every week, their arrival has changed the nature of the game.

"Websites have made a whole load of what magazines do pretty much obsolete for hardcore gamers," states regular PC Gamer contributor Kieron Gillen. "News sections in games mags don't do much on basic game announcements anymore, preferring to concentrate on analysis of the big stories. Exclusives are less valuable, as even if they break them in the mag, a website will just take

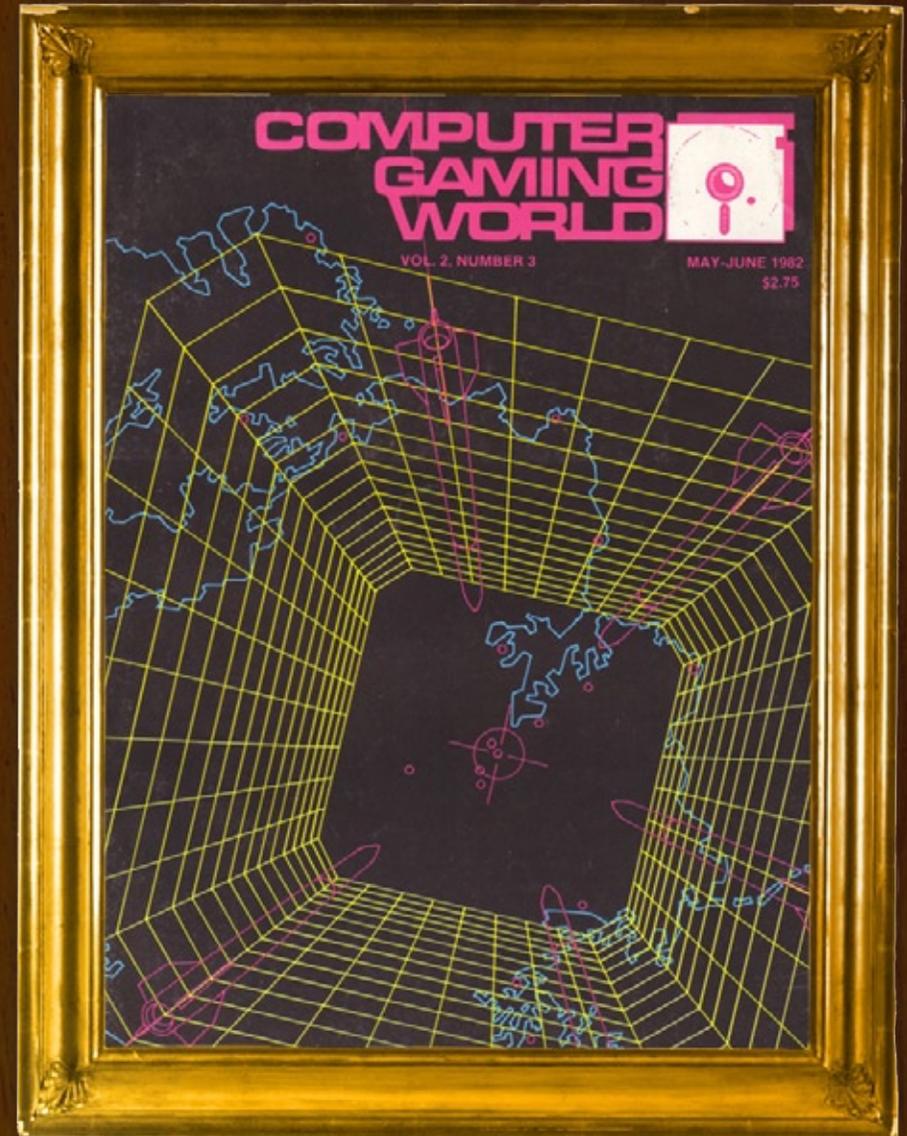
the facts and write them up online. Hell, some will even break copyright and put them up on the page."

But can the blame be squarely placed on the internet, or are there other factors at play? Gary Adams, who for three years worked on the likes of Play, Games TM and Cube - amongst others, thinks the industry has reached a difficult maturity. "It's a fast-changing industry, and the kids who funded it in the beginning are adults now, and some of the people running the magazines don't seem to want to grow with them," states Adams. "I would also say that the people producing the magazines aren't respected by their bosses, and this is reflected by their wages. The people I worked with weren't paid enough to live on, basically. Compare that to how much a journalist gets paid on a national paper, and you realise why there are so many bitter ex-games journalists out there."

It's an atmosphere that isn't exactly a stable base for creative writing. The average wage for a staff writing position on a games magazine in the UK is somewhere between £12,000 and £14,000. When you consider where these magazines operate - the expensive South-West of England - many writers barely manage to get by.

It's perhaps therefore understandable when, greeted by poor wages and a lack of direction, many up-and-coming writers are ignoring magazines entirely.

"There is a limited pool of genuinely well-informed, talented games writers out there, and websites are getting bigger commissioning budgets and are getting better at snapping up the good writers," says Fahey.



"THERE IS A LIMITED POOL OF GENUINELY WELL-INFORMED, TALENTED GAMES WRITERS OUT THERE, AND WEBSITES ARE GETTING BIGGER COMMISSIONING BUDGETS AND ARE GETTING BETTER AT SNAPPING UP THE GOOD WRITERS." - ROB FAHEY.



“IT ANNOYS ME THAT THE REPUTATION OF GAMES JOURNALISM IS DRAGGED DOWN BY EVERYONE WHO CAN AFFORD A DOMAIN NAME.” - KIERON GILLEN.

And that's not all. "It's been really obvious how far apart the web and print are drifting just from looking at how journalists behave at events like E3, or on press trips," he continues. "A site like Eurogamer had dozens of hands-on previews, interviews and videos up by the end of E3 or TGS; the huge US sites like IGN had hundreds. The print journalists by this stage are still just thinking about writing up their notes for a feature in a magazine that's out in two weeks."

Let's not forget, however, that not all sites have the budget or indeed the talent available to the Eurogamers of this world. Taking an event such as E3 as an example, a large amount of web coverage is now written by people who have not set foot on the show floor; gaming blogs and fansites regurgitating the news and views of others on a daily basis. These sites, perhaps harmless in intention, blur the boundaries and pass themselves off as reputable sources. Teenagers writing without a thought for grammar or facts go without pay, covering games every hour of every day.

"Most websites are just fansites," adds Gillen. "They don't know what they're doing and they can barely write. Readers have every right to be cynical of them, but it doesn't stop people reading them - it just means don't trust them. People do know the difference between an IGN review and something from an obviously much smaller site."

"The thing that these people don't really understand about the Internet is that anyone can publish there - and pretty much anyone does exactly that. As such, there's a real variety in the quality out there," says Fahey. "There are definitely sites out there - and I think some of

the big American blogs are responsible for this to a large degree - which have acquired a big audience but don't do the kind of fact checking or background research that they ought to."

Is it a case of a missed opportunity, then? Have scores of unpaid pre-pubescent writers tarnished the reputation of online journalism as a whole? Kieron Gillen thinks it's a simple case of bad PR. "To be honest, it annoys me that the reputation of games journalism is dragged down by everyone who can afford a domain name," he says. "But when professional ones screw it up on such a regular basis, it seems a little churlish to moan."

Perhaps weighting is key. The very nature of the internet means an amateur blog can gain as much attention and exposure as a professional site if it is presented in the right manner. Tracking sites such as NewsNow display headlines from said blogs side-by-side with their more accomplished peers, helping perpetuate the notion that anyone can be a games journalist if they can nab themselves a plucky web address.

"Internet journalism has the potential to be far more daring and brave and interesting than print journalism, but far too many people who are involved in it spend a ridiculous amount of energy trying to brand their sites and themselves," says Adams. "I'd love to see some honest, genuine writing on websites, but as it is, almost every website I've seen consists of re-worded press releases, speculation in the place of news and lazy points of view."

It's important for some kind of distinction to be made. While the big websites cover games in much the same way as a magazine would -

albeit with the bonuses of time, feedback and the lack of a cover fee on their side, fansites simply echo other people's reporting. Unable to scoop interviews and exclusives of their own, they instead get sucked in by rumour and gossip, playing a game of Chinese whispers with their readers and ultimately propagating poorly researched stories.

Ever concerned with snatching enough hits to generate advertising revenue, many such websites have a set tally of news that must be uploaded daily. If an editor demands 6-10 stories a day but, in reality, there is nothing to cover, inevitably that site – and indeed those who mirror its coverage – is flooded with hearsay and speculation to fill the quota.

So if such a large proportion of internet sites are poor in so many aspects, surely games magazines as a whole would simply up their game and let the quality shine through? Basic business logic suggests customers usually get a better quality of service from industries not monopolised by one or two main players. If the web represents a genuine threat, improving the magazines on the stands would logically seem to be the way forward.

"You'll see better reportage and coverage in an average issue of PC Gamer or even Edge than online," says Gillen. "Also interestingly, we actually have more apparently stable niche magazines than previously – Retro Gamer is, I suspect, going to be an enormously important magazine historically."

However, Fahey thinks niche titles, such as Imagine's Retro Gamer, are still in the minority. "I think websites could have a positive effect on gaming magazines, but so far I haven't seen it happening," he says. "I think they could force

magazines to specialise, to move upmarket and try to serve an intelligent, educated niche – but that would require magazines to accept that they'll never be the dominant force in games coverage ever again, and I think that might be too painful for a lot of magazine writers to accept just yet.

"So right now, yes, I think that most magazines are just being overwhelmed by the new competition," he continues. "A few of them are pioneering really interesting new types of content, and that's very exciting – but overall, I'm not seeing the kind of evolution that could actually save this sector."

There's an argument many people subscribe to that suggests that publishers no longer see games magazines as genuine creative forces. Unlike music magazines, which are tailored for different genres and lifestyles, many format-exclusive games titles don't contain either interviews or features, instead keeping to the set structure of news, previews and reviews.

As a result, each magazine struggles to gain an identity or even a purpose, with the shelves awash with bagged-up and brightly coloured clones. A recent issue of one nameless Xbox publication consisted almost solely of supposed 'insightful' game previews (read: large pictures and waffling copy) stretched throughout the issue, to the extent where whole pages had been dedicated to games that hadn't even been announced yet.

In the midst of all this sterile noise however, there is the opportunity for someone to take on the likes of Edge and co. and create a publication not purely defined by the console it covers.

"If I were in charge, I'd sink as much money



"INTERNET JOURNALISM HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE FAR MORE DARING AND BRAVE AND INTERESTING THAN PRINT JOURNALISM, BUT FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE SPEND A RIDICULOUS AMOUNT OF ENERGY TRYING TO BRAND THEIR SITES AND THEMSELVES." - GARY ADAMS.



“IF THE WEB REPRESENTS A GENUINE THREAT, IMPROVING THE MAGAZINES ON THE STANDS WOULD LOGICALLY SEEM TO BE THE WAY FORWARD.”

as possible in getting journalists into positions where they could score some genuine news,” says Adams. “I wouldn’t wait for trade shows before sending them overseas, but have offices in other countries, where journalists could build contact lists that are relevant.

“I’d also try and break away from the traditional gaming magazine format. Currently, it’s tough to differentiate a lot of the magazines from each other. It’s a bit stale.”

Rob Fahey also believes that each magazine has to find a reason for its existence beyond ticking its publisher’s boxes. “I think the only real hope for games magazines is to become established as extremely high quality, thought-provoking and interesting periodicals,” he says. “They can’t hope to compete on news and reviews in the medium to long term, but there is a market of game players who are getting a bit older and would like to see a more thoughtful approach to coverage of this medium, of this hobby.”

“Videogame magazines need a counter-culture, both to mirror it and to feed off, and opening up the possibilities a little,” adds Gillen. “Current mags are, basically, a little too much like each other. I’d love to see a future where games mags – in terms of demographics served – were more like music mags. Q is writing for different people from the NME which is writing for different people to Mojo which is writing for different people for Wire, Plan B, Kerrang, whatever. It’s one reason why I think Retro Gamer is honestly, really important.”

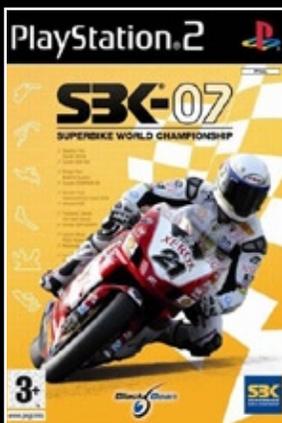
Change, as far as magazines are concerned, certainly seems to be key. The most powerful component of the internet is its ability to alter itself. Magazines find themselves up

against a constantly changing beast, unmediated and unpredictable. If we still want to see games magazines on our shelves in five or so year’s time, hard decisions regarding the purpose and drive behind each publication have to be taken by their respective editors – though, as Fahey points out, there is a suspicion that many editors secretly hope that internet “will just go away.” The reality is, even if magazine publishers do get to grips with the current danger posed by the likes of the publication you’re reading right now, chances are the game will have already moved on by then.

But this constant momentum could and should be used as a force for positive change. The fact that magazines are never likely to have it easy again is a reason to invest in the writers shaping their future, to strive for better standards, and to ultimately ensure that creatively they can’t be touched. Sitting pretty isn’t an option. Is it? “Nothing much will change,” says Adams, simply. “It’s profitable for the boys at the top.”

“I’ll be genuinely astonished if games magazines exist as anything other than a curiosity item in five years’ time, to be honest – but I hope I’m wrong about that,” concludes Fahey. “I’d love to see publications like PC Gamer and its ilk actually managing to create a dedicated audience of people who want to read highbrow, thoughtful coverage of games. I’m just not entirely optimistic that commercial pressures will allow them to do so.”

“There will be less mags on the street in the future,” adds Gillen. “If mags don’t differentiate themselves a bit more, there will be far less, but I’m having some faith in the intelligence of editors to know what time it is.”



SBK-07

(PS2)

The long-running *MotoGP* motorcycle franchise now has a rival in this officially-licensed production-bike based World Superbikes game.

The first result of a five year deal sees all the correct tracks and teams accurately represented, including Britain's Brands Hatch, and Italy's Monza and Misano. Even better is the fact Britain's inclusion, James Toseland, is a former champion and true title challenger.

The PS2 copes well with a good level of accuracy for both riders and circuits, and the option to quick

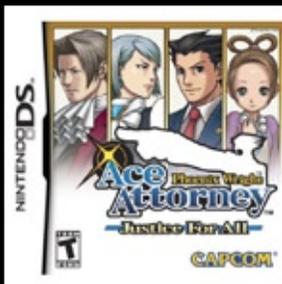
race, experience a whole weekend of action, or compete in a complete season.

The difficulty can be changed with a range of options, including traction control and bike damage, and the handling is good, derived from last year's road-based Super-Bikes game.

The PS2 and PSP versions are out shortly, with PC and Xbox 360 formats later this year. *MotoGP* now faces a battle to stay as the game of choice for bike fans. **Dan Thornton**



"THE FIRST RESULT OF A FIVE YEAR DEAL SEES ALL THE CORRECT TRACKS AND TEAMS ACCURATELY REPRESENTED"



PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY - JUSTICE FOR ALL

(PS2)

Essentially another ported *Gyakuten Saiban*, the second game in the series doesn't deviate too much from the first in terms of mechanics, though there are sadly none of the DS-exclusive additions seen in the original's fifth case.

However, it does offer a lot more of the traits we were first introduced to in *Ace Attorney*; bizarre-yet-accessible humour, conversations and investigations dense with information - some of which is more useful than other false trails - and excellent characterisation of a brilliant cast. The satisfaction of

trusting little more than your instincts, and taking everyone's information with a pinch of salt, was one of the greatest achievements of the first game, and the one truly new gameplay addition - Psyche-Locks - builds on this superbly. The increased complexity of cases arguably makes this a harder game, but this is tempered by the ability to save anywhere. Just like *Ace Attorney*, then, this is essential.

Dan Gassis



"INCREASED COMPLEXITY OF CASES MAKES THIS A HARDER GAME, BUT THIS IS TEMPERED BY THE ABILITY TO SAVE ANYWHERE!"



THE RED STAR

(PS2)

If this updated riff on *Super Probotector* didn't feel old-school enough, the fact it was lifted from the bankruptcy sale of Acclaim's stock, and was originally developed for the first Xbox, all adds to the retro feel.

Adapted from a comic/graphic novel, you take control of one of three characters and melee and shoot your way through a host of enemies. It alternates between side-on and top-down action, with additional special moves available for clearing bad guys, and a whole host of start, mid and end of level

bosses to take on.

It's competent enough for a rental on a quiet evening, but probably only worth buying if you don't own a SNES or Wii already. On the bright side, you get 19 stages of action, for a cost somewhere between a budget game and a full-priced offering. It's just shame that it was obviously made before retro downloads became so readily available.

Dan Thornton



"YOU GET 19 STAGES OF ACTION, FOR A COST SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A BUDGET GAME AND A FULL-PRICED OFFERING"



TRACKMANIA UNITED

(PC)

TrackMania is a simple idea flawlessly executed: a racing game about tracks, not cars. It makes sense, when you stop to think about it - the best racing game memories are of close matches on elegantly designed courses, not the moment you upgraded your engine to from level 3 to level 4 on *Gran Turismo*. With simple left-right-go controls, and a quick resetting on the track should you crash, *TrackMania* is pick-up-and-play fun that can be enjoyed for a 15 minute break or a good three hour session perfecting that racing

line on a particular course.

TrackMania United is as much a community as a game, an environment of time trial addicts and track-designers comparing their achievements and becoming more and more "at one" with the meticulously constructed game engine. It may not be the most realistic or technically detailed racing game, but it's certainly one of the purest, a showcase of architectural beauty and an abstract test of skill.

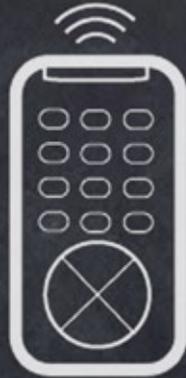
Jim Miles



"TRACKMANIA IS A SIMPLE IDEA FLAWLESSLY EXECUTED: A RACING GAME ABOUT TRACKS, NOT CARS!"

DIRECTOR

CAMERAMAN

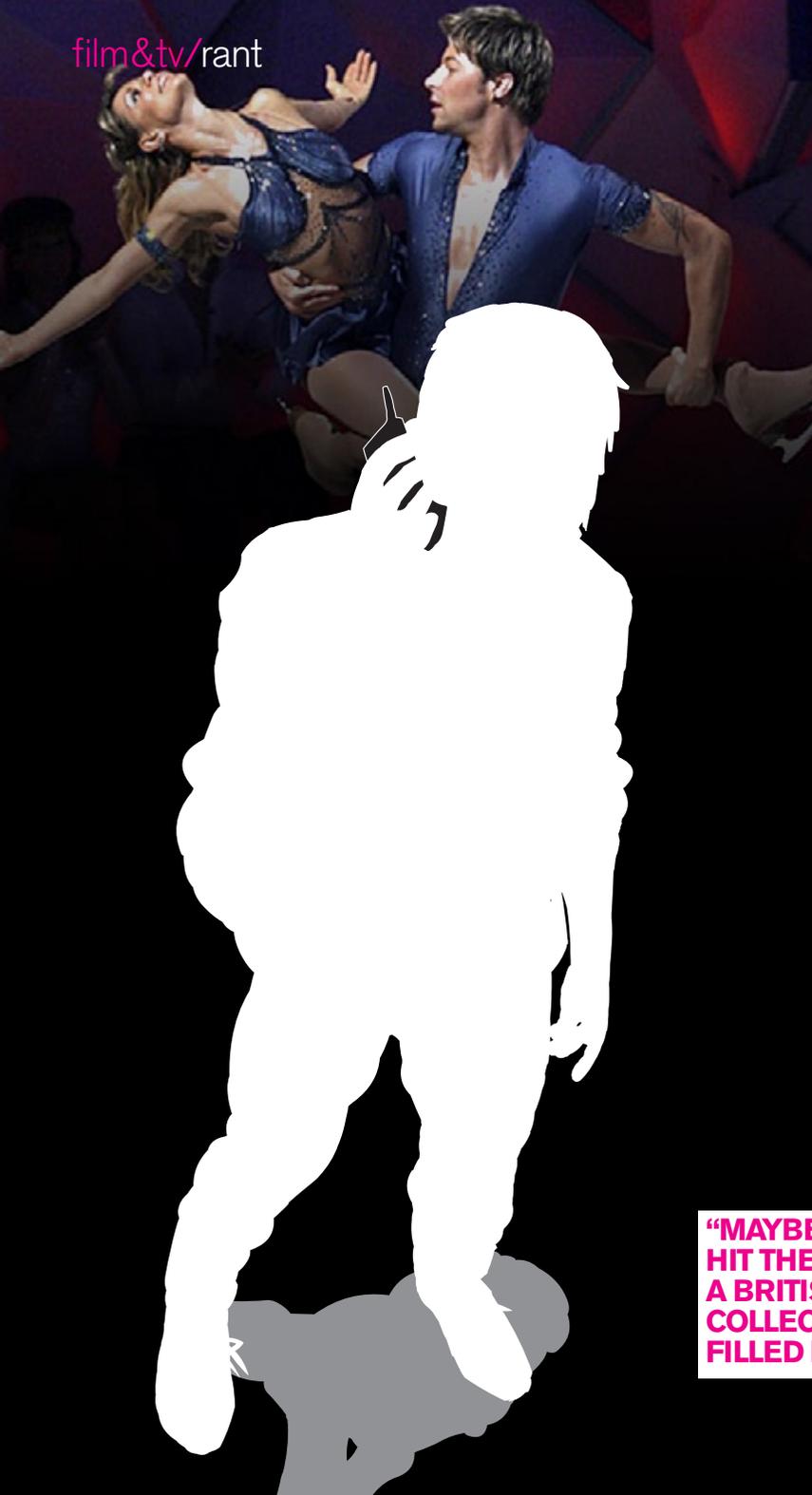


film & tv

currently watching...

band of brothers / movie piracy / tv phone-ins / sunshine / blades of glory / shooter / grindhouse





Back when I was at school, days off sick (or faux-sick, if you like) would usually, quite ironically, be spent lying on the sofa in the front room watching Channel 4's 'For Schools' line-up. Apart from being transfixed by that rotating '4' logo, its collection of half-hour specials on the favelas in Sao Paulo or how to make your way around a French supermarket were infinitely watchable because they were so keen to be 'down with the kids'. It was obvious that, in the opinion of the men and women in charge at the time, anything seen as out of date would be immediately deflected away from children's brains by some kind of shield, constantly scanning for *Open University* leftovers – namely bearded men in C&A



REMOTE REHAB

**ARE WE ALL IDIOTS?
KEITH ANDREW HAS NO
IDEA, BUT HE'LL BE CALLING
A PREMIUM RATE NUMBER
LATER TO FIND OUT...**

jumpers pointing at blackboards.

Personally, I always found the shows that tried too hard much more entertaining and, as a result, probably lowered my own mind shield and made good with the education. Any German language show that features a *Lawnmower Man* style animated rapper dropping beats about Biology being his "lieblingsfach" (feel free to Babel fish it) is worth its weight in gold.

Such shows now seem to be relegated to the small hours, leaving me feeling ever-so-slightly sorry for any kids absent from class these days – that's assuming they're not ram-raiding an off-

licence, of course. But when it comes to daytime TV in 2007, you've got more chance of being treated like an adult if you tune in to CBeebies than if you stay loyal to any of the terrestrial channels. The early hours on BBC One feel like they've been devised for people whose brains are on five minute resets. The obsession with auction houses and the property market aside, the sheer amount of needless repetition and talking down to camera leaves you under no illusions as to just what Broadcasting House thinks of anyone not at work.

If the likes of *Beat the Burglar* (and indeed, follow-up *Beat the Bailiff*) are to be believed, there's a high chance that you're severely in debt because you keep forgetting to lock your doors at night. Incidentally, the fact that *Burglar* ever made

it past its initial pitch is worrying; staging a real life ransack in someone's house, while they watch their possessions get trashed and carted off in an unmarked white van from a studio, is questionable (but admittedly amusing) programming at best.

It's with some surprise then that there was quite so much furore in the press regarding phone-ins and voting, recently. The news channels inevitably leapt upon it, but it was the public outrage that most caught my attention. Were people genuinely worried that the assorted television networks might have overcharged them by a few pence here and there, or was their concern more directed at the fact that their votes for some non-celebrity making a tit out of themselves on ice skates might not have been counted?

I suspect it was the latter. Which leaves me wondering whether the Beeb's morning line-up of antiques, boot sales and wannabe estate agents actually have a point. Anyone who spends their wages weekend upon weekend voting for a former boyband fatty in an ice skating contest probably is a bit thick.

Maybe daytime TV has actually hit the mark in catering for a British public whose heads collectively read like the gutter-filled pages of OK! Magazine. Maybe we've lost our right to complain. After all, there's been no mass march on the BBC complaining about Blue's Duncan James landing a job on *The National Lottery Draw* following his painful exploits on the ice. No rally. No head on a stick.

Let's just hope he stays relegated to the late-night Wednesday edition, where they try to kid you that they've managed to put together an audience willing to travel to London at quarter-to-eleven to see a few balls dropped by playing an audience track in the background. It's almost as if they think you're an idiot.

**"MAYBE DAYTIME TV HAS ACTUALLY
HIT THE MARK IN CATERING FOR
A BRITISH PUBLIC WHOSE HEADS
COLLECTIVELY READ LIKE THE GUTTER-
FILLED PAGES OF OK! MAGAZINE!"**



BLOOD BROTHERS

EVERY ONCE AND A WHILE TV HAS THE POWER TO TRANSCEND ITS LIMITS AS A MEDIUM AND THE IMPOSED BOUNDARIES UPON IT. BAND OF BROTHERS IS ONE SUCH TV SHOW. HUGELY ENTERTAINING, CRUSHINGLY DIFFICULT TO WATCH AT TIMES AND AND PERHAPS THE GREATEST MINI SERIES OF MODERN TIMES, DISPOSABLE MEDIA TAKES A LOOK AT THE PEERLESS BAND OF BROTHERS.

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR

DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

Band of Brothers is one of those TV series. 'Watercooler' moments now occur frequently in an age of car-crash, all or nothing, shock prime-time celeb-obsessed television, but in the modern age of TV these moments are now specifically written and carefully produced. What *Band of Brothers* achieves is not this, but rather painfully awe-inspiring moments that spark a million threads

on internet forums at once, quivering lips and trembling hands, the mere mention of the show inducing sparks in eyes. The hint of an article that mentions *Band of Brothers* positively forces people into furious curiosity and personal fascination. "The credits! Market Garden! Capt. Winters! Bastogne!" The exclamation marks appearing above peoples heads as if both absurdly animated and a soldier in *Metal Gear Solid*. *Band of Brothers* is one of those shows.

Perhaps then, the best way to look at a show that draws so much varied attention and





provokes so many personal highlights is at the beginning. Why then, is it so utterly compelling? It's not the credits. Despite their elegiac beauty, the credits offer little to the plot and indeed provide many spoilers if watched at any detail. As hauntingly stirring as they

are, the credits provide little beyond a clue to the technical brilliance that underlies the show as a whole. At the beginning of most episodes elderly men, members of Easy Company, offer soundbites of their experiences. These tightly edited 'highlights' provide a sense of context and reality to the show as a whole, ensuring that the viewer is not allowed to forget that the series they're watching is grounded in a deep and personal reality. It also establishes what each individual episode is roughly about, whether in terms of plot, personal experience or establishing an emotional theme, before the wonderful credit sequence gives way to the action at hand, presented almost as a vivid flashback.

What *Band of Brothers* perhaps does most brilliantly is to not draw bias or influence with its audience, rather it presents war as one regiment experienced it. There is no information from the German side, no news reports, no perspective from home. The war in Europe is shown depicted and narrated exclusively by one small, but ultimately hugely influential group of men which at a most basic level, treats you as one of them. That we take enjoyment from their situation evokes a strong guilt, our pleasure is ultimately their pain, but the series excels as

it doesn't ever allow you to forget just how real the action presented really was. It doesn't let you sit and passively watch, it actively drags you into the screen and forces you to suffer in order to enjoy. Bastogne highlights this more than any other episode - it's the relentless shelling, the 'exploding trees', the visible death and the almost hopeless situation that Easy Company find themselves in at Bastogne that defines the soldiers' experience of war. As an audience it also defines ours.

And as the audience, we get to see everything. But to begin with when they get shot or stabbed, blown up or fall out of a plane it almost doesn't matter - we barely know these men and all we have for a connection is the first episode, Currahee, in which we witness the men undergoing training. But very

“THE WAR IN EUROPE IS SHOWN DEPICTED AND NARRATED EXCLUSIVELY BY ONE SMALL, BUT ULTIMATELY HUGEY INFLUENTIAL GROUP OF MEN WHICH AT A MOST BASIC LEVEL, TREATS YOU AS ONE OF THEM.”

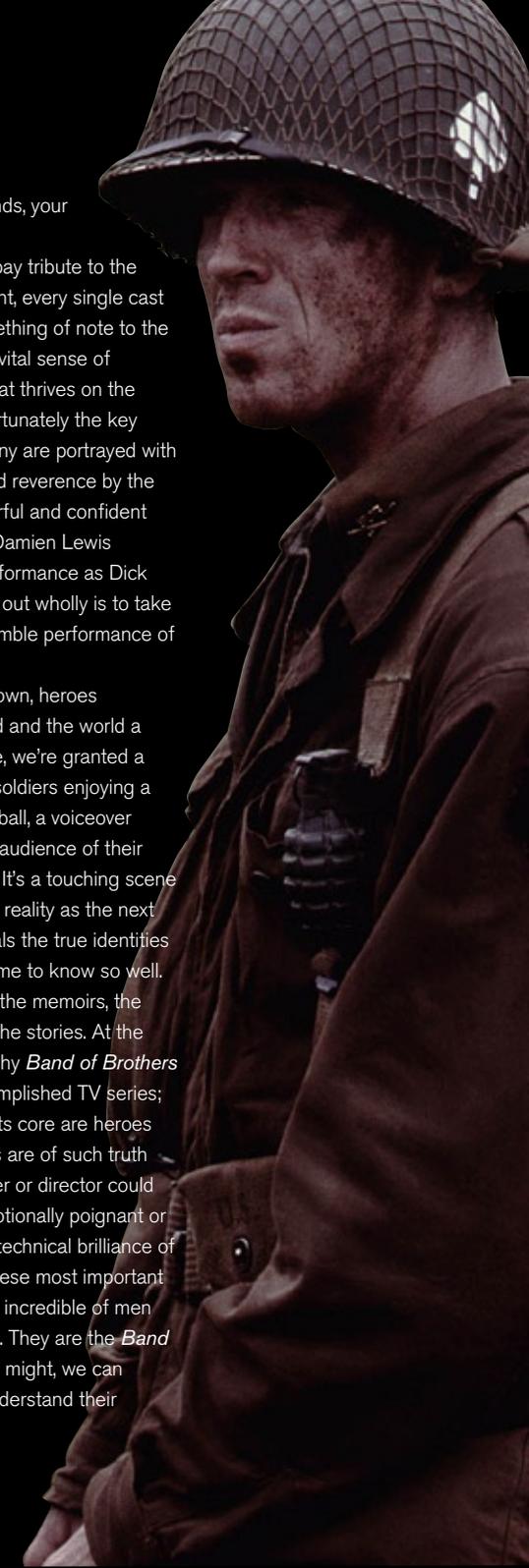
quickly it matters, as you learn that no one is immune, everyone is equal and no one is special. You quickly find favourites, remembering certain people but not others and at first, resenting the replacements. The men who make up this company quickly establish themselves as humans and as people with history, stories of home permeating the gunfire, talk of girlfriends and wives amongst mortar fire. In turn, it makes the battle sequences, the horrifically beautiful battle sequences, all that more fraught. You yearn for people not to advance, you feel your stomach tighten as they march on positions and you actively leap in shock as bodies twist and contort under enemy machine-gun-fire. War is not pleasant and especially when it affects those around

you, your colleagues, friends, your band of brothers.

It's important then to pay tribute to the acting. Consistently brilliant, every single cast member contributes something of note to the series as a whole adding vital sense of comradeship to a story that thrives on the sense of brotherhood. Fortunately the key members of Easy Company are portrayed with a real sense of dignity and reverence by the contemporary cast. Powerful and confident but always with respect, Damien Lewis provides the highlight performance as Dick Winters, but to single him out wholly is to take focus away from an ensemble performance of unequivocal quality.

As the series winds down, heroes established, lives changed and the world a different place, we're granted a scene of the soldiers enjoying a game of baseball, a voiceover informing the audience of their fate post-war. It's a touching scene

and one that adds further reality as the next set of talking heads reveals the true identities of the men who we've come to know so well. We see the faces behind the memoirs, the deaths, the victories and the stories. At the end we come to realise why *Band of Brothers* is such a powerfully accomplished TV series; the characters that form its core are heroes one and all and their tales are of such truth that the viewer, scriptwriter or director could not fathom stories as emotionally poignant or physically important. The technical brilliance of the show simply allows these most important of stories and these most incredible of men the platform they deserve. They are the *Band of Brothers* and try as we might, we can only witness but never understand their exceptional experience.



EVER DOWNLOADED A FILM?
BOUGHT A PIRATE DVD? TAPED
STAR WARS OFF THE TELLY?
DISPOSABLE HAS. WE SUSPECT
YOU HAVE TOO. AND PROBABLY
SO HAVE YOUR FRIENDS. THE FILM
INDUSTRY KNOWS THIS AND ARE
TRYING TO STOP IT.

ORIGINAL PIRATE MATERIAL

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

YOU MIGHT HAVE SEEN THEIR
ATTEMPTS AT CONVINCING YOU
NOT TO DO SO WITH ADVERTS IN
THE CINEMA HIGHLIGHTING THE
EXPERIENCE THAT ONLY A CINEMA
VIEWING CAN OFFER. WE ASKED
**CRAIG TUOHY, FORMER TECHNICAL
MANAGER FOR FOX UK AND ONE
OF THE BRAINS BEHIND THE
CAMPAIGN FOR HIS THOUGHTS
ON THE CAMPAIGN, HIGH-
DEFINITION FORMATS AND
TOM CRUISE'S SEXUALITY...**

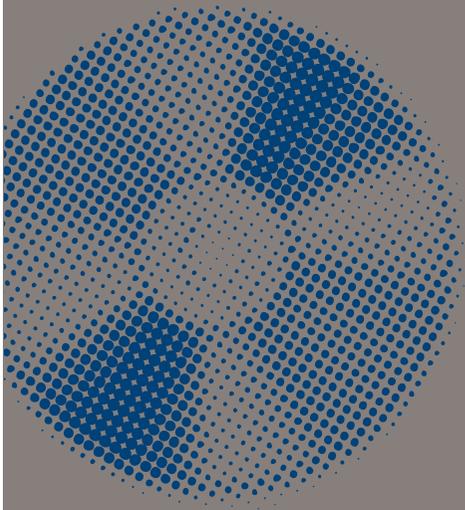
What was your role at Fox? On a day to day basis, what did this entail?

Between May 2005 and November 2006 I was the UK Technical Manager in the theatrical dept. This basically entails making sure the movie reaches UK cinemas to a certain quality standard while servicing the Publicity and Marketing depts with their film related needs. Basically I am (was) responsible for the censorship, print creation, trailer creation, distribution, quality control etc of all film materials. Be it for press events, premieres or theatrical release.

Is Tom Cruise gay?

Heh. Unfortunately I was never lucky enough to work on a Tom Cruise film. I say lucky cos

back then you were on to a guaranteed winner. I did however manage to meet him when I was working at Disney in Kensington. He was in the UK shooting *Eyes Wide Shut* and he and Nicole wanted to watch movies but for obvious reasons they couldn't go to the multiplex like you or I. They would therefore come to our screening room and I would arrange to borrow prints from other distributors for them to watch. Tom was always on point with the manners. A true professional. He knew the names of every security guard and would always ask about their family or their day or whatever, and he'd listen too. After filming finished and he went back to the US he gave a knitted sweater to the projectionist as a thank-you gift. Dunno if



sweaters make you gay, make of that what you will.

Did I read somewhere that you're on the Academy voting panel?!

I am. That's not really so big a deal. I am a member of BAFTA. But all that means is that I've worked in the UK Film industry for a number of years and applied for membership. No great shakes there. It is however a nice membership scheme. Around award time all the candidate movies will be put on and often there will be Q&A's with Directors, Screenwriters, Actors etc. It's a very nice club to be a part of as a lover of movies.

How did the advert in the cinema come about? Was there a sudden need to tackle piracy - one film being massively pirated and

simply were not buying into the 'Piracy funds Terrorism' message that previous campaigns had tried to get across. New research suggested that cinema goers would react far more positively towards the message that pirate movies are simply of inferior quality to the cinema experience.

So how did your involvement in this come about?

The idea for the ad came about through a process of brainstorming. The MD at Fox then volunteered Fox to be the spearhead of the campaign. Anti-Piracy initiatives were (still are) underfunded and so the idea was to get a 30 second ad produced, certified, printed and distributed for as cheaply as possible. Being the Tech Manager at Fox I was charged with organizing this. The agencies all

isn't the most technically accomplished piece of film but the message is true and clear. People constantly say "you can get good quality pirate material" but I don't agree. Sure you can get great pirate material that's already released officially on DVD or has been in cinemas for a few months, but our message was that when a NEW film enters the market there is no better place to see it than at the cinema. I believe that to be true. DVD's and downloads of new releases are shocking quality. How can you enjoy watching that? Believe me, we see them all, it is our film after all.

How successful have they been? Is there some sort of data about what effect it could have had?

They have been tremendously successful.

DVD'S AND DOWNLOADS OF NEW RELEASES ARE SHOCKING QUALITY. HOW CAN YOU ENJOY WATCHING THAT? BELIEVE ME, WE SEE THEM ALL, IT IS OUR FILM AFTER ALL

therefore having an effect on box office sales for example? Or was this part of a long running campaign?

A bit of both. *Spider-man* was hit pretty hard by Piracy, due to it's 12 rating meaning parents couldn't take their kids to the cinema. I think that woke a lot of people up. Also, in the UK *Finding Nemo* had a very long window before release and it became very apparent from raids and seizures that it was driving pirate DVD sales greatly. On top of that we saw the effect downloading had on the music industry. To the point where it was costing jobs. There was a definitely a movement toward trying to understand the march of technology and its effect on our business, before it was too late. I think the music industry acted far too slowly. The cinema 'Experience' ad came about from market research that suggested the public

recognised that this was an initiative that helps all of us and reacted in an incredibly positive fashion. The BBFC certified it for free, a media agency produced the ad at a fraction of their usual cost under my direction, AGFA and FUJI both gave us free film stock, Technicolor and Deluxe labs printed for free and only charged us a small handling fee, Carlton Screen Advertising and Pearl & Dean both put the ad in their showreels free of charge. It was an incredible coming together of minds and was a very satisfying achievement to see agencies that are essentially in competition with each other working together for the good of our industry.

What was YOUR thinking behind the adverts and how did the end product differ from your intentions and vision?

I was 100% satisfied with the end product. It

We weren't aiming them at people who are internet-savvy forum-reading uber-geeks. The ads were aiming at PREVENTING the spread of downloading and DVD buying. Saying to the people who have yet to buy, "Don't bother". Independently commissioned market research has proven that the message had a much bigger impact than any previous campaigns.

On a personal level, how successful do you think they've been?

Well, the ad was originally designed with the idea that it would run on 5 features over 6 months. Unfortunately, as with anything that is a success other distributors have decided to keep the format going. They now fund their own versions of the ad and pay to have them placed. It's possibly seen as an extra form of advertising for their product, outside of the

trailer reel, which is a shame as the message is being diluted. I think if you had seen the ad a couple of times and then it disappeared it would have served its purpose. Now I think people are starting to get sick of being repeatedly preached to and berated. And rightly so.

If the thread on rllmukforum.com is even slightly representative of general opinion, why do you think the adverts have produced that kind of response?

Like I say, repetition. You don't want to be told to go to the cinema every time you go to the cinema! There was no negative reaction on rllmuk or the DVDforums or anywhere else initially. In fact the initial reaction was quite the opposite. But we get it now, the message

and saying "thanks" to the good guys who keep us all in work.

Will a 'simple' marketing idea such as an advert be enough to prevent or even help against piracy in its current form? Or will it require something more drastic - ie, releasing 'bad' copies of films onto the internet?

That's getting out of my area. I'm sure there have been conversations about releasing fake torrents and stuff but all of this happens in the studio in L.A. - that is where global planning is done. I only worked on one UK-centric campaign. I do definitely think that intelligent advertising about piracy has its place though. As long as it doesn't patronise and as long as it isn't FORCED on the customer. We have the disadvantage that the

definitely more passionate than others.

How bad is the piracy problem in reality? Can or will it have a fundamental effect on the film industry?

It's not something you can point to and say "that was definitely due to piracy" but of course it has an effect. I was made redundant from Fox, I was at Disney UK when the entire Home Entertainment team were made redundant after *Nemo* and the DVD business was moved back to the studio in LA. It's possible to argue these lost jobs could have been saved if every sale of *Nemo* on DVD was genuine.

For me personally though it's not about the Film industry. They are big boys and they make plenty of money. For me it's about not

OF COURSE ORGANISED CRIMINALS PROFIT FROM PIRACY. I MEAN COME ON, DO YOU THINK THOSE BANKS OF THOUSANDS OF DVD BURNERS IN WAREHOUSES ACROSS THAILAND AND CHINA ARE FOR SOME KIDS' SCHOOL PROJECT?

has sunk in. Move on already.

Were you disappointed with the reaction? Had you expected any type of reaction?

I wasn't disappointed. I agree, it has run its course. I still think that the campaign I worked on, which began with *Fantastic Four* and ended with *King Kong* was a great success.

With hindsight then, do you think a different sort of advert works better?

There was a great comment on Rllmuk which stated that a simple 15 second ad saying "Thank you for your continued support of our industry, by coming to the cinema you are investing in the future of entertainment". I think that is a tremendous idea for a campaign. We focus all our attention on the few 'bad eggs' without ever turning round

pirate is an intelligent being. They know how to use newsgroups, they know how to see through bullshit. They talk to each other. It's just a shame they don't realise how much damage buying a fake DVD can do in the grand scheme of things.

Is there an industry wide cohesive fight against piracy planned or, as is often perceived, a some half-hearted, scattershot approach to the 'problem'? In your opinion.

We are coming together now. We're too late again, just like the music industry was, but it is happening. The heads of all the major studios all realise it is their problem and they need to fight it together, so yes, they do all get round a table with FACT and other bodies and try to work out strategies together. Although some are

supporting organised crime. If you buy a fake DVD you are basically giving £5 to a criminal. Why would you support that? I have seen first hand illegal Chinese immigrants who sell DVD's to pay for the return of their passport. One day they sell DVD's the next day they sell drugs. These DVD's are mass produced in warehouses by their thousands and distributed worldwide. Criminals are making millions selling art that was created by someone else. Morally I cannot support that.

Isn't one of the problems facing piracy that the 'greed' of cinema chains have brought this on themselves? In some parts of the UK it's £9 to see a film - can you sympathise with the pirates/downloaders?

The guys who make the movie and the guys who show the movie are completely different.

Truth be told they don't even get along very well! The relationship between Movie distributors and Cinema chains is incredibly volatile, which of course is ridiculous when both need each other equally to make money. It IS expensive to go to the cinema. However the movie makers have no control over that price structure. If a film takes £20million at the UK box office the distributor will be lucky to get £8m of that. They will have probably spent £2m advertising the film, £1m making and distributing the prints, and of course it cost £40m to make the thing in the first place. People who think the cinema industry is a licence to print money are way off the mark. The distributor makes little to no money with cinema releases. Why release films at the cinema if you don't make any money you ask? Well, because a successful cinema

I don't sympathise with downloaders who can't afford £9 to see it at the cinema. It isn't your god-given right to watch movies. They cost a lot of money, time and talent to make and if you can't afford to see it at the cinema then you really should just wait for the DVD release and rent it for £3.50. BMW's are expensive, does that make it OK to steal one if you have a driving licence?

Would you agree that some of the anti-piracy campaigns before have been almost 'clutching at straws'? The 'buy a pirate DVD and you fund terrorism' campaign for example was met with much derision.

No I don't. The cynical view that pirate DVD's aren't linked to organised crime angers me greatly. Of COURSE organised criminals profit from piracy. I mean come on, do you

Unfortunately we couldn't get the public support of the message so we had to drop it. That doesn't mean the message isn't 100% true or correct, just that it fell on deaf ears. Which saddens me greatly.

As someone involved within the industry, what are your thoughts on HD technology? Is it necessary? Will it catch on with the public at large? And can they add anything to the piracy issue?

It's not necessary, but it is great! I've seen *Star Wars* at 2k resolution in 3D and you know what, it's better than on VHS on a CRT!

DRM is an attempt to control piracy that will become more prevalent. But it is not something I support. I am more about education than enforcement.

I'VE SEEN STAR WARS AT 2K RESOLUTION IN 3D AND YOU KNOW WHAT, IT'S BETTER THAN ON VHS ON A CRT!

release guarantees a successful DVD release, and that's where film distributors make LOTS of money.

I can't speak for the cinema chains because I've never worked for one, but the film salesmen I've worked with all seem to think the cinema chains make shockingly little money. Any profits they do make are from concessions. In my 10 years of working in the UK theatrical industry I have seen buyout after buyout. I have seen banks bail out cinemas again and again, to the point where the bank owns the cinema. Even to the point where the bank owns the whole chain, which is where we are at now. There was a time when film companies owned their own cinemas. Remember Rank, Warner, UCI. These are all owned by banks now. If it was such a lucrative industry why are they all selling, or merging?

think those banks of thousands of DVD burners in warehouses across Thailand and China are for some kids' school project?

Look at it this way, if you were a small time crook looking to make a bit of cash, would you sell drugs and go against the entrenched drug trafficking network and risk a lifetime in prison? Would you sell guns and go against the gunrunning trade and risk being shot by an overzealous operation Trident officer or twitchy crackhead, or would you set up a factory and produce and sell pirate DVD's in local pubs and shopping malls? Risking possibly having your van broken into or getting a hefty fine from the government.

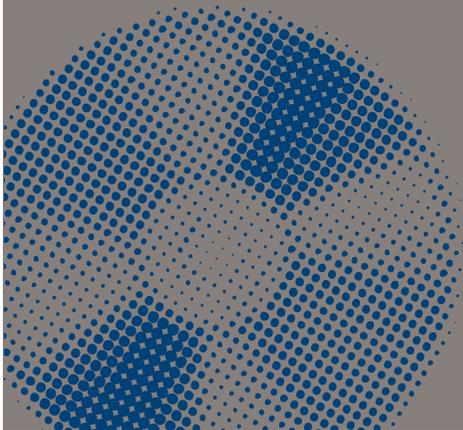
DVD piracy is a no brainer for criminals. It is safe from rival gangs, safe from the law and obscenely profitable. What kind of organised criminal would you be if you DIDN'T sell pirate DVD's?

Can the new formats offer anything of intrinsic worth to the industry?

Been to see anything in Digital at the cinema recently? Looks pretty sweet doesn't it? Digital is revolutionising the cinema experience just like it is the home experience right now. No more reel changes, meaning no more cue dots. No more scratched prints. No more dirt on the screen. 1 print of a film can now run for 6 months and at 30 different cinemas and still look and sound exactly the same as it did on that first showing. When I started, a film that had been in circulation for 6 months was only good to become the heel of some woman's shoe!

Is there a need for an outright winner in the BLU-HDD war?

There is for the consumer. If only to save space under the TV!





SUNSHINE
(15)

//director:
danny boyle

If Boyle's *28 Days Later* was described as a closet zombie flick, *Sunshine* is human drama/horror that incidentally happens to be set in space. When faced with the dying Sun that they set out to nuke back into life, the humanity of the crew is magnified enough to bring all the cracks, flaws and errors to the surface, where science is no longer enough.

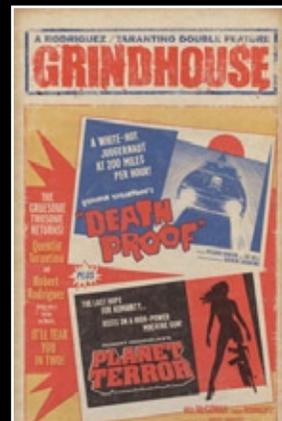
Awesome cinematics, with a capital Awe, and a brilliant soundtrack by Underworld, accompany some really 'real' performances from the international



"AWESOME CINEMATICS, WITH A CAPITAL AWE, AND A BRILLIANT SOUNDTRACK BY UNDERWORLD"

Rachel Wild

team of eight - a refreshing change from the usual space hero types, although still slightly better looking than your typical scientists. Not your run-of-the-mill sci-fi, whilst certainly appealing to genre fans and better executed than most; this film has reality and life as we know it at it's very core.



GRINDHOUSE
(TBC)

//directors:
robert rodriguez
& quentin tarantino

G *Grindhouse* could have easily suffered the same fate that befell last year's *Snakes On A Plane* - a mediocre movie dressed up as irony. Fortunately it's in the safe hands of Rodriguez and Tarantino, two of Hollywood's most adroit directors. Poor box-office Stateside might suggest otherwise, but *Grindhouse* is one of the year's most accomplished movies. While it could have easily roamed into spoof territory, it stands as an obvious love letter to the trashy movies of the 70s and 80s. *Planet Terror*, Rodriguez's contribution to the double-bill, harks



"POOR BOX-OFFICE STATESIDE MIGHT SUGGEST OTHERWISE, BUT IT'S ONE OF THE YEAR'S MOST ACCOMPLISHED MOVIES"

Andrew Campbell

back to films like *Return Of The Living Dead* with the added bonus of a John Carpenter-esque score. Tarantino goes the slasher route with *Death Proof* but manages to add his own take on the well worn genre; characters are dispatched but for once you actually care for them, thanks largely to QT's slow paced talkathon. International release permitting, *Grindhouse* is definitely one (but technically two) to see.



SHOOTER
(15)

//director:
antoine fuqua

S *Shooter* is like two or three episodes of *24* glued together into a feature film. Highly politicised, highly charged and highly unrealistic, it's a little bit of excitement whose political details shouldn't be confused with reality, and whose core is about getting the viewer's heart rate racing. Wahlberg is retired marine sniper Bob Lee Swagger, who is brought in as a consultant to explain how an assassin might be able to kill the US president from over a mile away. However, once involved, he is framed for the attempted murder of the president



"IT'S NOT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED GOVERNMENT INTRIGUE MOVIE AND CERTAINLY MORE ACTION THAN THRILLER"

Jim Miles

and spends the rest of the film trying to prove his innocence.

Filmed so we're always on Swagger's side and willing him to succeed, at around the 60 minute mark *Shooter* drops all political pretensions and delivers on its title's promise with good old fashioned shoot outs and violence. It's not the most sophisticated government intrigue movie and certainly more action than thriller, but it is fast-paced gun-happy entertainment.



BLADES OF GLORY
(12A)

//director:
josh gordon
& will speck

W ill Ferrell's popularity in America is shadowed by a very British disdain for his often shallow, "fratpack" antics. However, *Blades of Glory* could turn naysayers over as it's not as steeped in American humour (college or otherwise) and has a general appeal to anyone who has seen Olympic figure skating. The premise is simple and inherently funny: two skaters (Ferrell and Jon 'Napoleon Dynamite' Heder) are banned from competition in 2002 for fighting on the awards podium. Now, through a loophole in the regulations, they compete in the



"BLADES' STRENGTH LIES IN THE WAY AN UNCOMMON SPORT IS CARICATURED INTO SOMETHING SURREAL AND OVER THE TOP"

Jim Miles

couples event as a male-male partnership. *Blades'* strength lies in the way an uncommon sport is caricatured into something surreal and completely over the top. Moments like the crotch-bump move and the choosing of ever more flamboyant costumes highlight just what a bizarre and closed world the characters exist in. This takes the good ideas from *Dodgeball* and *Zoolander* and turns them into something completely original and unique.



music

currently listening to...

good/bad: arcade fire - neon bible / the doormat / modest mouse / maximo park / 65daysofstatic / black rebel motorcycle club



NEON BIBLE

WORDS: IAN MORENO-MELGAR DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

WELCOME TO GOOD VS. BAD. EVERY ISSUE WE PICK ON SOMETHING MUSIC RELATED AND PRAISE IT AND SHOUT IT DOWN AT THE SAME TIME. THIS ISSUE IT'S THE NEW ARCADE FIRE ALBUM, NEON BIBLE

GOOD

There's a lot of talk of Funeral in this article, perhaps too much given that the subject of this article is the album that followed it. But the fact that Neon Bible exists as a second LP is inescapable. That Funeral was as brilliant as it is casts a looming shadow over Arcade Fire and all that they will ever do, but rather than trying to escape it, the band have instead used their success to emotionally and critically fund Neon Bible.

Funeral was immense and all the talk from those privy to the 'Neon Bible Sessions' suggested the second album would be a startlingly ambitious affair. Talk often centred around that organ used on Intervention, the sense of ambition, scope and talent of the band and of their creative freedom, surely something that all true great bands crave. Neon Bible arrived quickly, too quickly some said, but here is a band positively juddering with feverish creativity, full of song and life, desperate to get their work heard, their thoughts known, their lyrics sung. For Arcade Fire there would be no

NEON BIBLE IS BLEAK, BEAUTIFUL AND STUPENDOUSLY CONFIDENT

hiatus, no pause and no delay - they knew what they wanted to do, nailed it and sent it to the world.

For many, Funeral came out of nowhere, a breakthrough hit from media-shy but deeply, unapologetically, creative people. For others, it arrived after some furiously attentive critical praise and it didn't disappoint. Neon Bible may differ given the huge expectation behind it, or in its unilaterally bleak view of the world or

because the audience of the band's message has changed. But the quality hasn't. What Neon Bible provides is 11 tracks of unashamed collective talent, a selection of songs that exude life and energy yet communicate the band's fears and worries as well as their personal triumphs and problems. Bleak, beautiful and stupendously confident, Neon Bible is an album of a strange romance, of isolation and deep pessimism. It isn't an album which will keep Arcade Fire hidden from the public conscience, or alienate the mainstream, but will, in time, be considered a classic.

BAD

Firstly and quite importantly, Neon Bible is not a bad album. The problem with it is the sheer unequivocal and unqualified praise it's received. Neon Bible has been unceremoniously blanketed with praise and critical attention, the band having become the new 'best band in the world'. This 'follow up' LP was always going to be good, but few have actually asked how good it is.

They were never going to match Funeral, never mind beat it. Funeral is one of those albums that comes

along once every decade, a few chinese whispers of fettered excitement, poor quality mp3s, hand scrawled track listings and indie press reviews making its existence known. Neon Bible had none of this, instead hyperbole and 'critical deconstruction' of popular band myths and 'exclusive' insights into the making of the album helping to stoke the Arcade Fire. Neon Bible arrived on the back of a vicious expectant wind; it was bound to fail.

But if any band could avoid the 'difficult second album' pitfalls though, it's a band of

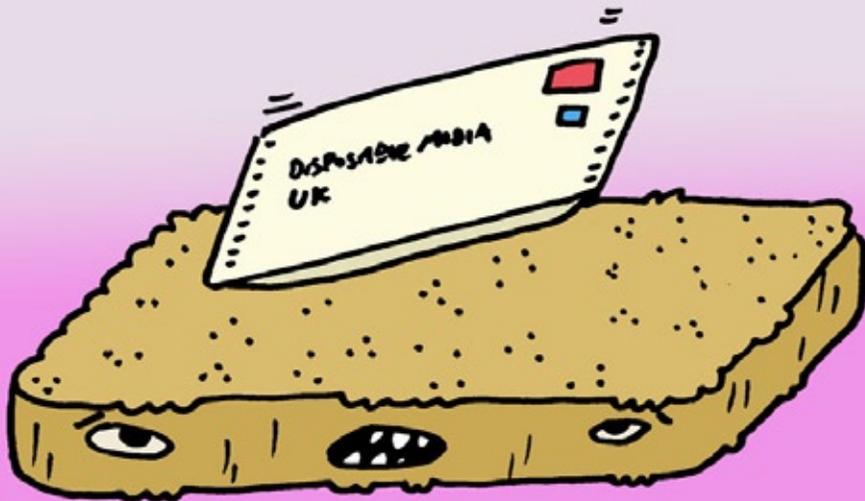
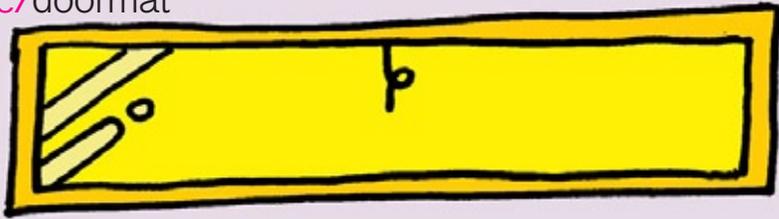
such obvious innate talent that Arcade Fire are. This is a group of people with such ferocious ability and confidence that surely nothing is impossible. Keen to avoid complacency, they went away and tirelessly, efficiently made Neon Bible; an album that contains at least two songs that already existed for 2 years, one even being on their very first EP. An album which includes the song Black Wave/Bad Vibrations, which is

NEON BIBLE IS RUSHED AND FULL OF MIXED IDEAS, PASSED OFF AS AN ALBUM OF FALSE CONCEPT.

essentially the good parts of two songs mercilessly stitched together for great filler material. Presumably, the band couldn't work out how to finish either of the songs.

Neon Bible has been reckoned by many to be a second album of vast importance that presents a direct and keen social commentary by the world's best band. What Neon Bible actually is, is rushed and full of mixed ideas, passed off as an album of false concept. This is an LP from a band trying to stay in the public conscience in an era of helplessly fickle audiences and critics. Neon Bible is not a timeless album, rather a well-timed one.





ANOTHER ISSUE AND YET ANOTHER SELECTION OF TALENTED MUSICIANS HAVE SENT STUFF TO LAND ON...

THE DOORMAT

WORDS & DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

ILLUSTRATION: JAMES DOWNING

It's a Doormat with a difference this month, as we focus entirely on digital music, to clear our inbox of a mix of posturing, pleading and models who want to be our friend on Myspace.

That doesn't mean we've fallen out of love with CDs we can touch, hold, and file in case it turns out we've got a rarity in ten years time. It just means that Myspace has given rise to business-like bands who see it as a cost-effective promotional tool. Or insane chancers who use it as an outlet for some quite bizarre concoctions. Guess which ones we prefer?

And as a bonus, it means you can sample all the songs without having to leave your

computer. Not even to go to the front door. So why not stick some on while you read the rest of the mag and see if you agree with us on the following selection. And if you don't why not email disposablemedia@gmail.com to tell us where we've gone wrong. If it turns out you're right, you could be appearing on the Doormat next issue.

So it is looking good for **MIRNO** then, isn't it? Thankfully, they aren't as bad as the Kooks knock-off band they described themselves as. There's a lot less emphasis on pop and they really only share a few drum-rolls. Most of the tracks (commended for being downloadable) angle for a more sub-

Grace-level wail. If a below-par mix of Jeff Buckley and The Kooks doesn't sound like a bad idea to you, sod off.

Much more pleasant, some girly-acoustic-guitaryness, a few violins and generally delicate music from **JULIANA MEYER**, who did ask to be reviewed. Coming from someone who owns Minnie Driver's album, it was unlikely to get a bad review and the three songs on her profile page have been happily playing through as background music for a while now. The only slight problem is that now they've finished I can't remember any of them. But if you like this sort of thing, you'll like this sort of thing.

SHERWOOD are clearly doing too well to be mentioned on this page, but not well enough to have stopped spamming MySpace inboxes. Very indie-pop, very American and annoyingly enjoyable. If they haven't been played on *The O.C.* yet, expect it soon. And on the other end of the scale, dance music from Huddersfield, **HEKTAH**. Thanks at least in part to the uni, Huddersfield isn't a bad place to be from if you want to be a musician at the moment. This is house with a little bit of disco and funk and is really quite good. One to watch out for.

Those were the last spammers I could be bothered with, so back to those offering to send a CD with **TONEARM**. Perhaps receiving a CD wouldn't have been a bad idea for this one, since he has a couple of MySpace pages each with different stuff on. The instrumental page, the one we were

actually linked to, is an odd balance between drum and bass and gentler, almost classical music and whilst enjoyable, sounds a little too much like a soundtrack. The other page is the better of the two, still benefiting from the same electronical talent and polish, but the guitar and singing it's applied to gives it a slightly more unique edge and makes it feel more rounded and complete. Try and think of a Mylo remix of a Jack Johnson track and you wouldn't be a million miles off but still not with quite enough poise. Very good.

Next, **MELV**. Assume that it must be something sort of related to The Melvins and you're mostly up the wrong track, not that this reviewer made that mistake, honest. Melv is actually a bloke called Neil Melvin and what he has actually created is a lot closer to Muse. There are layers of guitars and a couple of the tracks go through the same sort of build-up. For a single bloke it's impressive, but it never quite reaches the epic sound it seems to aim for and you can't help but think the first way to solve that problem would be to hire a band to stand behind him. With his first EP out now though it certainly can't be described as a bad start.

So that's our inbox clear for the moment. But now we're struggling to wade through the CD's piling up on the front porch of the *DM* HQ. So find out which ones are worth listening to, and which ones are stopping our coffee mugs leaving rings on the table next issue.



MIRNO

myspace.com/mymirno



JULIANA MEYER

myspace.com/julianameyer



TONEARM:INSTRUMENTAL

myspace.com/tonearminst



TONEARM

myspace.com/itonearm



SHERWOOD

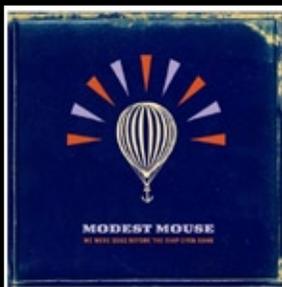
myspace.com/sherwood



MELV

myspace.com/melvrock

**WANT TO BE HERE NEXT ISSUE?
EMAIL DISPOSABLEMEDIA@GMAIL.COM
AND WE'LL TELL YOU WHERE TO SEND YOUR STUFF.**



MODEST MOUSE
WE WERE DEAD BEFORE THE SHIP EVEN SANK

It's decided. Our previous rule of disliking all music (except jazz) that includes trumpets is revoked. *Dashboard* is the best pop song of the year so far and the second best single Modest Mouse have ever made. (*Float On* obviously being number one). With a number one album in America, and Johnny Marr now on board, Modest Mouse are almost an entirely different proposition from the band that cult-band-lovers fell in love with. However, they still they contain the inexplicably fiery vocals, the borderline ramshackle 'gypsy-rock'

guitar work and the dauntingly pessimistic lyrics, but now with an added professionalism some might mistake for restraint. Guest vocals from The Shins' James Mercer on *We've Got Everything* prove to be both an album highlight and one of the band's greatest album tracks. *We Were Dead* then, is either Modest Mouse's most cohesive effort, or their sell-out LP. If you think the latter, you're wrong.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



"MODEST MOUSE ARE ALMOST AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PROPOSITION FROM THE BAND THAT CULT-BAND-LOVERS FELL IN LOVE WITH"



BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB
BABY 81

When *Howl* was released, BRMC confused a lot of people as the acoustic sound was far from the distortion-laden *Spread Your Love* that brought them to fame. The explanation was probably in the second album, which felt like it lasted forever and never got anywhere. A change was needed and thanks to an acoustic guitar, a bit of blues, a bit of gospel and probably a bit of luck, BRMC were back on track.

Baby 81 goes back to the sound of heavy distortion but doesn't solve any of the old problems. There are

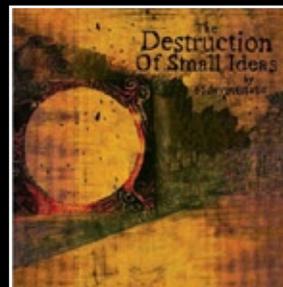
still good songs, good ideas and occasionally *Howl* seems to have left a genuine improvement to the song writing. But once again it's too easy to lose interest at the three minute mark and by the time the album reaches nine-minute epic, *American X*, paying attention is a matter of pure willpower.

BRMC could still have a fantastic album in them. This isn't it.

Andrew Revell



"BABY 81 GOES BACK TO THE SOUND OF HEAVY DISTORTION BUT DOESN'T SOLVE ANY OF THE OLD PROBLEMS"



65DAYS OFSTATIC
THE DESTRUCTION OF SMALL IDEAS

You should never judge a book by its cover, but lavishly produced album artwork is a good sign of ambition, creative talent and confidence. 65daysofstatic's latest, *Destruction of Small Ideas*, is no different. The inlay is immaculately produced, beautiful to behold and full of dark wonderment. Vague illustrations, abstract graphs, newspaper print warning of death and destruction, random sepia photographs, hand drawn sheet music and dark swirls of biro. And a baby. There's an awful amount of care, thought and most importantly of all,

someone's vision at work here. The cd contains the musical equivalent; all judder and excitement, vague danger but perpetual anger presented in furious drumming, insanely loud, layered guitars, creaky old-school pianos and electronic clicks. This is 65's most accomplished work to date, building on their electro-post-rock formula, but honing it, making it alive, teeming with sorrow and a strange hope. Unashamedly creative and an essential buy.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



"THIS IS 65'S MOST ACCOMPLISHED WORK TO DATE, BUILDING ON THEIR ELECTRO-POST-ROCK FORMULA"



MAXIMO PARK
OUR EARTHLY PLEASURES

It's not surprising Maximo Park have matured in both music and lyrics for their second album. Their angularity now has polished edges, but the urgent energy they're known for (especially in their live sets) hasn't gone anywhere.

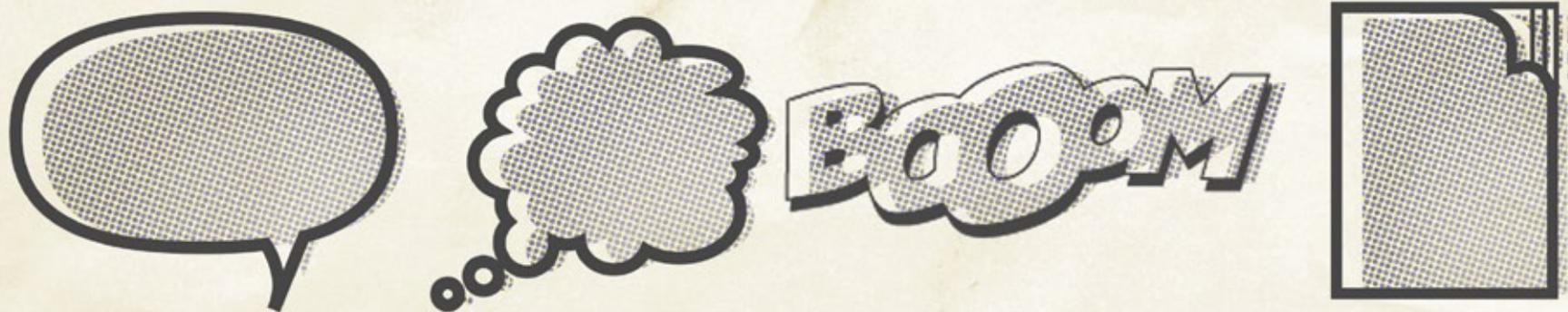
Swapping Moog organs for a more artificial synth sound, *Our Velocity*, and the sped-up Victorian-merry-go-round tunes in *The Unshockable*, bring the party, while the end of the album chills into a warmer, more orchestral, acoustic feeling. Stand-out track *Sandblasted* and *Set Free* whispers paranoia and *Castlevania*

underneath Paul Smith's heartfelt vocals and emotive lyrics, clearly showing a band pushing themselves new heights. Tracks like *Your Urge* and *Russian Literature* are played out with drama, fitting their content perfectly, but others such as *By The Monument* and *Nosebleed* feature the same old sound, and choruses that hold promise but build up to nothing. Not enough of a departure to annoy fans, but an improvement that will hopefully attract more.

Rachel Wild



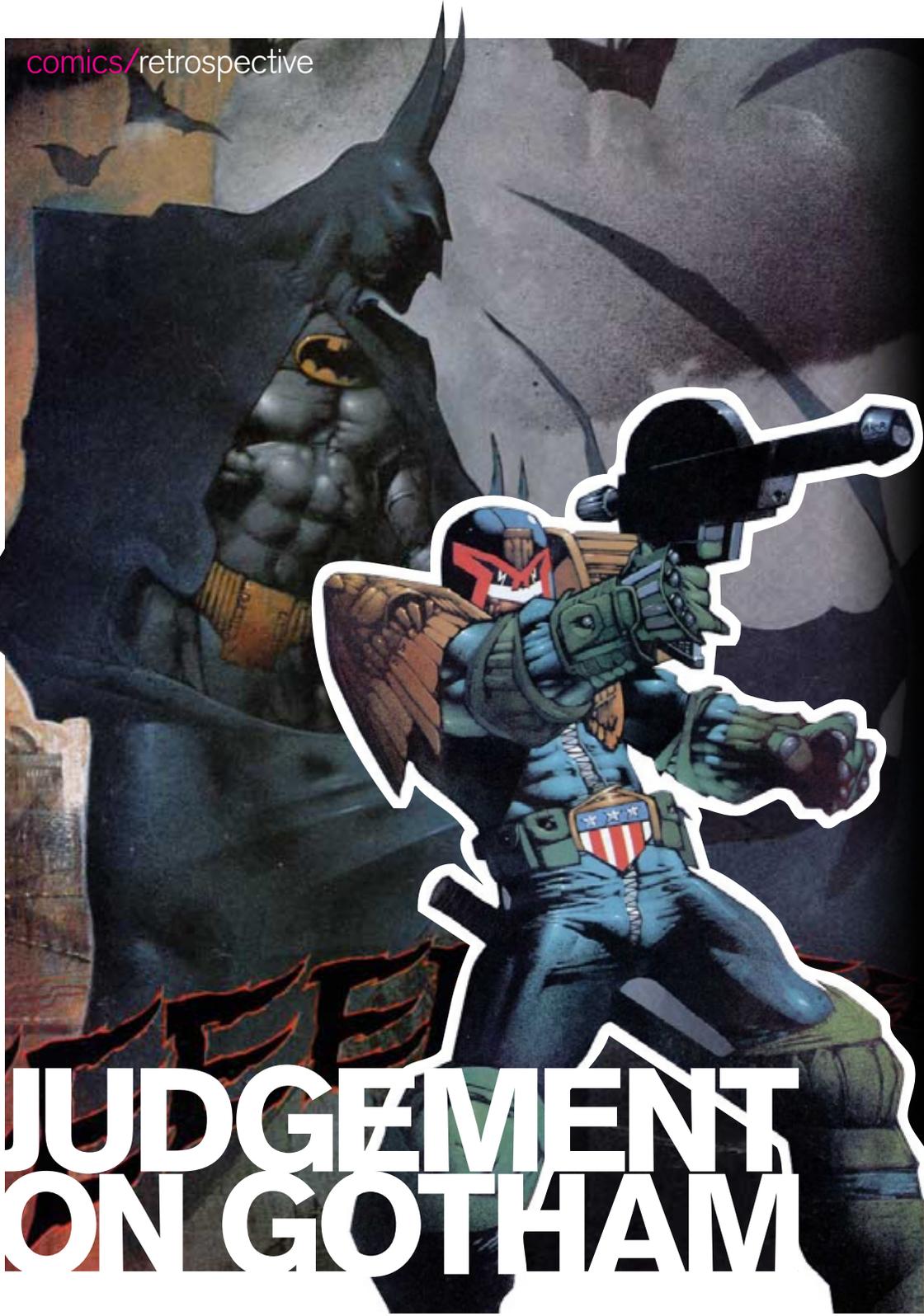
"NOT ENOUGH OF A DEPARTURE TO ANNOY FANS, BUT AN IMPROVEMENT THAT WILL HOPEFULLY ATTRACT MORE"



currently reading...

owly / judgement on gotham / buffy / green arrow / penny arcade





A TRUE MEETING OF COMIC BOOK HEAVYWEIGHTS; THERE WAS ALWAYS GOING TO BE A MIX OF ANTICIPATION AND CONCERN FOR A TITLE WHICH COMBINED TWO OF THE MOST SERIOUS LAW ENFORCERS IN THE WORLD OF COMICS.

WORDS DAN THORNTON

DESIGN ANDREW CAMPBELL

Crossovers are prevalent in comics, and Batman himself is a team-up veteran from the days of *The Brave and The Bold* in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the time, however, they were kept within the DC universe, and used to introduce new characters or boost the popularity of lesser-known creations.

But *Judgement* saw the usually serious and imposing Batman in a team-up with *2000AD*'s ultimate law enforcer, Judge Dredd, famed for upholding the law of Mega-City One with unflinching rigour. No matter how dark the Dark Knight has been portrayed, the playboy alter-ego and occasional sardonic humour meant he would become the lighter side of the pairing when partnered by the Psi-Judge, Judge Anderson.

Collaborators Alan Grant and John Wagner were obvious choices for the title, with histories including stints on both *Judge Dredd* and a range of DC comics (Wagner created Dredd with artist Carlos Ezquerro). A more unusual choice was British artist Simon Bisley, who brought unique *2000AD* style to Bruce Wayne with an airbrush-type look that shocked fans of American comic books in 1991.

To bring Dredd and Batman together took the appearance of Judge Death in Gotham, the Dark Judge who believes all life is a crime. And from the Batman rogue's gallery, only one villain could really survive a comic meeting with Death in a mortuary, in one of The Scarecrow's best outings.

Surprisingly for a DC title, the all-British team and appearance of Dredd favourite, Mean Machine Angel, makes it a Dredd title in which Batman guests, even if a lot of the

climactic action takes place in Gotham.

There are beautifully dark, and typically British moment of humour, with Death's earthly robes of office including spare ribs as shoulder pads, and a charming musical performance whilst dismembering a heavy metal band. The use of Judge Anderson allows for the plot to be explained to Batman and any non-Dredd fans, whilst keeping the iconic enigma silent and judgmental as ever. It's hard not to feel sorry for Batman as he dimension jumps to Mega-City One, only to be greeted by the hard head of Mean Machine Angel, and then arrested and beaten by the judges. It's only Anderson who goes against the law to break him out of a lifetime in prison to jump back to Gotham, and only Anderson who offers a way to contain Death and keep any hope alive.

The success of the title led to three more outings for the duo, with *Vendetta in Gotham* (1993), *The Ultimate Riddle* (1995) and *Die Laughing* (1998), all written by Grant and Wagner, but without Bisley's art.

If you're looking to pick all four books up, be aware that *The Batman/Judge Dredd Files* omit *Vendetta In Gotham* as it was the only title without fully-painted art, despite great art by Cam Kennedy and the Ventriloquist, a Grant-created Batman villain.

Even with the strong *2000AD* heritage bias, it's Batman that gets the sympathy of the reader by enduring attacks by villains and Judges alike, and still triumphing, whereas Dredd is hindered by his enigmatic character from ever being developed further. But as a Bisley-painted team, there are few team-ups in comic history to match them for importance.

“THIS IS MEGA-CITY ONE, CREEP. I AM THE COURT OF LAW.”
– JUDGE DREDD

BIRD OF PLAY

OR 'WHY THIS FREE COMIC BOOK DAY IS THE PERFECT CHANCE TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH OWLY AND FRIENDS'

WORDS & DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

Comics are for kids, right? They're just glorified picture books, not serious literature. Well for once, we're going to agree. For a medium so associated with children, there is an increasing lack of all-ages, family friendly comics. Ever since Frank Miller ushered in the age of grit and darkness, the funny books haven't seen so much light hearted laughter, until a little owl and his wormy friend came along to remind us of what comics once were.

Owly is a long standing feature of Free Comic Book Day, with a new story produced especially for the event every year. It's easy to see why the two go together so well - Owly is a truly universal comic, appealing and accessible to everyone. Whilst the content - the eponymous owl and his woodland friends going on adventures and learning lessons - is child friendly as it is, the way that creator, Andy Runton, expresses the unspoken dialogue between his characters is what makes Owly stand out from everything Johnny DC and Archie have to offer. It makes sense, really, neither



woodland animals or very young children know how to talk, or read, proper English, but communicating through facial expressions and a language made up of pictograms in speech bubbles opens up the story to anyone. It's not just for the kids' benefit either - deciphering the story through these pictures brings a real sense of immersion and empathy for the little owl and his companions.

It wouldn't work if Runton's artwork wasn't up to the task, but the simple lines and so-cute-you're-gonna-want-to-buy-the-plushie character drawings show that pictures really are worth a thousand words. Inspired by silent strips from the past such as Snoopy and Woodstock, but mashed with the computer icons that the artist used to design for a living, Owly is the updated spawn of good old newspaper cartoons, less bright colours and superpowered action and more home-cooked kindness; as Runton says, inspired by his Mom and the

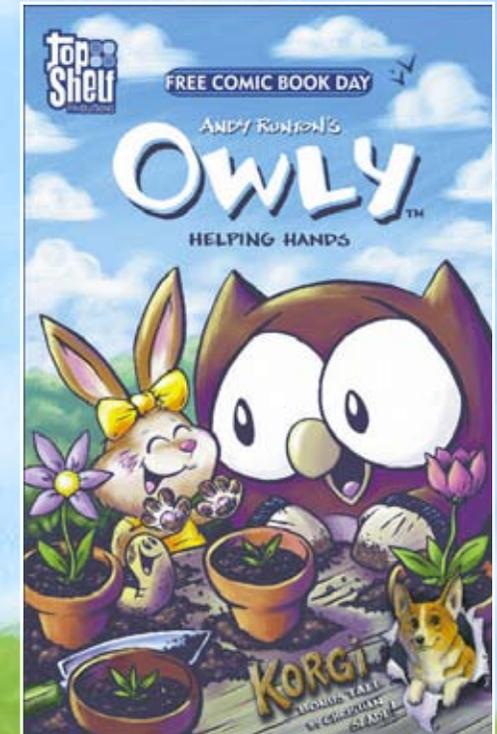


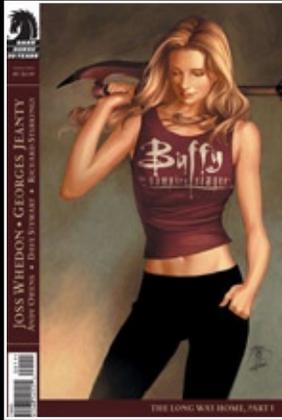
A LANGUAGE MADE UP OF PICTOGRAMS IN SPEECH BUBBLES OPENS UP THE STORY TO ANYONE

doodles he used to draw for her. Her care for small creatures seems to have rubbed off, as Owly aims to be a wholly animal-friendly comic, with a vegan aesthetic even down to the pens and brushes Runton uses. It's these kind of details that really attract the type of people who aren't traditionally catered for by the mainstream comics industry, which is really what FCBD hopes to promote.

If there is one title you should pick up on May 5th, it's Owly. If you can resist those doey eyes yourself, it shouldn't be too hard to find someone who can't. There's no mountain of continuity to get through, and since he only stars in paperback graphic novels, there's no chance of diving in half way through a story, and no financial commitment to keep buying (apart from the aforementioned plushie that is). Owly is simple to understand, and simple to love.

Owly is published by Top Shelf Productions (www.topshelfcomix.com) and written and drawn by Andy Runton (www.andyrunton.com)





BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER #1
(DARK HORSE)
joss whedon

Season Eight starts here, with *The Long Way Home, part 1*. This is not the Buffy comics of yore - bland, cheesy, your usual licenced fare - this is Whedon back at the helm, and the snappy dialogue certainly shows the better for it. Aside from all the hints of continuity from the TV series, things have certainly changed for the Sunnydale crew. Such as them not being in Sunnydale anymore, and not even necessarily being a crew, with a notable lack of key characters presumably being kept back for future issues. Not that the cult fans

will notice past the Whedon worship, but the art isn't spectacular, aside from some nice framing and Jo Chen's gorgeous painted covers. It does the job however and is not too bad an ambassador to the legions of fans who will be venturing into comics shops for the very first time to buy this. They won't be disappointed, *Buffy* is back, and with several cliffhangers already, it looks to be a very interesting series.

Rachel Wild



"NOT THAT THE CULT FANS WILL NOTICE PAST THE WHEDON WORSHIP, BUT THE ART ISN'T SPECTACULAR"



PENNY ARCADE
(WEB COMIC)
jerry holkins & mike krahulik

In the world of online comics, geek-strip *Penny Arcade* is one of the forefathers, standing alongside institutions like *Dilbert*.

Based around gaming duo Tycho Brahe and Jonathan "Gabe" Gabriel, the pair's arguments echo the interests of writer Jerry Holkins and illustrator Mike Krahulik, rather than being a straight autobiographical representation.

The art of Krahulik is stylised but instantly recognisable, and their online success has even led to them being commissioned for game-related comic strips by a number of

major software houses.

PA is not afraid to criticise or offend and company or group, and hits the spot on most occasions, in just four or five panels. It's actually surprising the only legal threat has come from anti-game lawyer and conspiracy theorist Jack Thompson, giving rise to the 'I hate Jack Thompson' T-shirt available from the site. And if it upsets Thompson, it's obviously worth a look, right?

www.penny-arcade.com/comic

Dan Thornton



"IT'S SURPRISING THE ONLY LEGAL THREAT HAS COME FROM ANTI-GAME LAWYER AND CONSPIRACY THEORIST JACK THOMPSON"



GREEN ARROW #71, #72
(DC)
judd winick & scott mcdaniel

The Emerald Archer has long been a fan favourite, and putting him alongside Batman is a great way to give free reign to his liberal sarcasm. But although the interplay during the Seeing Red storyline raises an occasional smile, Green Arrow has been in enough team-ups, including as a member of the Justice League, that it takes more than that for a double act to really stand out.

Judd Winick's storyline, pitting the pair against the former Robin, Jason Todd, is a convoluted affair, involving not only Green Arrow,

Batman, and the Red Hood (Todd), but also Arrow's sidekick Speedy, former ally Brick, and master assassin Drakon.

The art of Scott McDaniel is adequate, but feels blocky and surprisingly basic. It's a pity it doesn't all match the two-page sword fight between Arrow and the Red Hood.

Hopefully Winick can tie up the loose ends and stop this runaway train picking up an ever-increasing cast list.

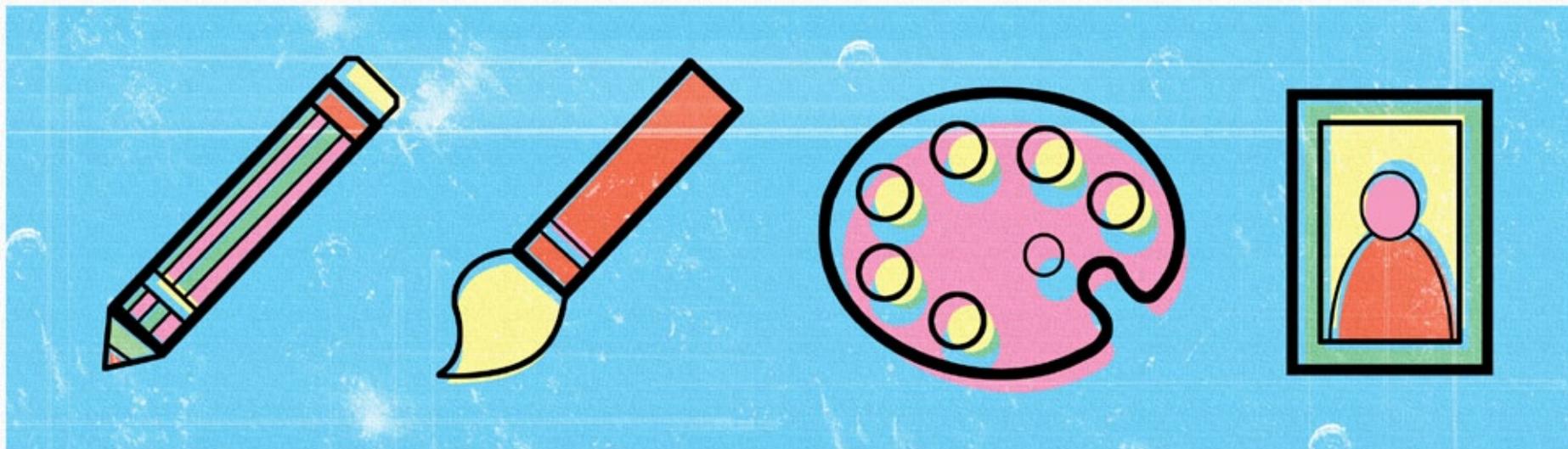
Dan Thornton



"PUTTING GREEN ARROW ALONGSIDE BATMAN IS A GREAT WAY TO GIVE FREE REIGN TO HIS LIBERAL SARCASM"

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gallery

welcome to the disposable media gallery...

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



Leigh Young

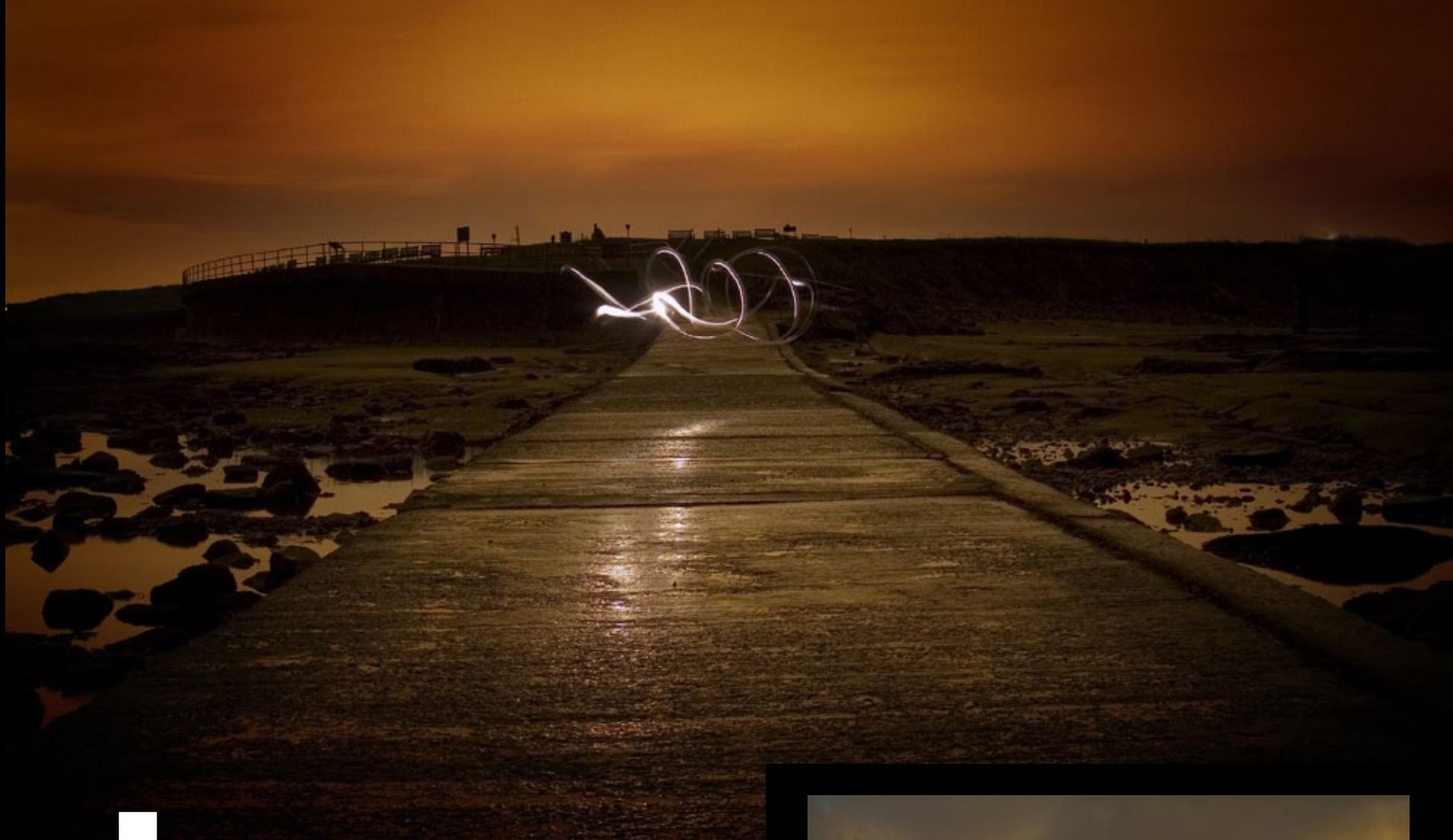
Characters © The Mighty Boosh, BBC



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paul mongan



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