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TV&Radio



Synth you've been gone

Gary Newman and the pioneers of electro-pop star in TV's Synth Britannia

THE 2009 TIMES

Playlist

Your essential cultural week

October 10-16, 2009

Games



Spore Hero
EA/Wii (£39.99, 7+)



Travelling inside a meteor, you crash-land on a strange new planet and pop out of an egg. You must then build the best possible creature from various body parts. Simultaneously, a red meteor hits the other side of the planet, the impact of which seems to corrupt the planet's inhabitants. As the hero of the title, it is up to you to rescue the world by completing various tasks such as solving puzzles and fighting to gain new limbs and skills. To make friends with other creatures you also have to learn to sing and dance to a standard only seen in the early stages of *Britain's Got Talent*.

Spore Hero doesn't have the best graphics and there are occasional glitches where you can get stuck in the scenery, but it's a joy to play and difficult to put down. If you played the original *Spore* game for the PC and Mac, this is an entirely different beast – and all the better for it.

David Hutchinson

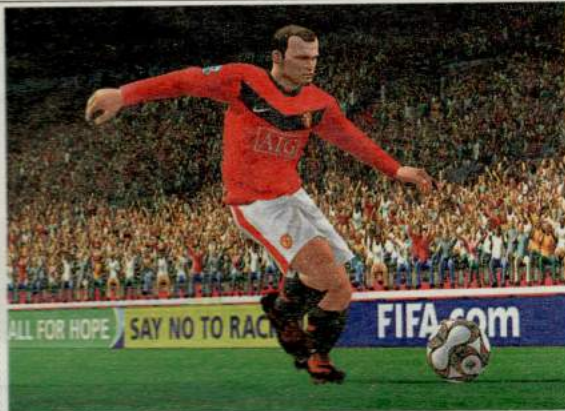


Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Smash Up
Ubisoft/Wii (£29.99, 12+)



Since it is made by the same company that created the fabulous one-on-one fighter *Super Smash Bros Brawl*, it's no great surprise that the gameplay here is pretty much identical. This is no bad thing, as the button-bashing fun of its inspiration has translated well to the reptilian ninjas.

Unfortunately, where the turtles come unshelled is with the lack of variety. The game has just 13 characters which, with most other fighting games having more than twice as many, feels a little sparse. *T.M.N.T.* is faithful to the abilities of the pizza-loving scrappers, but this means the fighting styles of all the available players lacks variation, with none of the wacky moves seen in *Super Smash Bros Brawl*. This is by no means a bad arcade fighter, and if you are a big Turtles fan (they do exist) you'll love it. The problem is that it doesn't offer anything to set it apart from its superior older brother. **DH**



Fifa 10

EA Sports/all consoles & PC (£29.99-£49.99, 3+)



The opening salvo from a roomful of journalists questioning David Rutter, the line producer on *Fifa 10*, concerned the possible inclusion of diving and handballs in future editions of the game. The inference was that EA has created such a complete football sim, only such relatively minor additions could improve it. Last year's version was the best yet, and it was hard to see what more *Fifa 10* could upgrade, yet it does offer all-round enhancements. The biggest change is the 360-degree dribbling system, which makes for smoother gameplay. Aside from that, there are refinements in shooting, goalkeeping and tackling that add to the sheen of the game. Can EA up the ante and do better next year? It's a tough task – almost as hard as that facing Konami. The latest version of its *Pro Evolution Soccer* series is out towards the end of this month. **John McNamara**

Sitegeist

Michael Moran hits the web

Art is a funny business. Everyone has at least one skull, but cover one (ideally a disused one) in diamonds and it's worth £50 million.

Perhaps you don't need Damien Hirst to pimp your remains, though.

iArtist is a website offering "do it yourself" Damien Hirst crystal skulls as well as authentic-looking Banksy stencils, Marc Quinn congealed blood heads or Tracey Emin camping equipment. The site was originally created by the artist Naoia Lizar for a degree project, but the public demand for these flat-pack artworks has been so high that she's planning to start real production of these imaginary objects in the very near future. For a look at the original art project, or to register your interest because you're looking for an unusual Christmas gift for the artist in your life, go to iartistlondon.com



Gadget of the week

Take a photographic trip down memory lane

VFS-002M slide & film scanner



Reasons to buy A dainty device that will convert your old neglected negatives into high-quality JPEGs. The installation process is easy: insert the Media Impressions software disc, connect the scanner and place your 35mm or 110mm film into the special tray. Once the negative image appears on the screen, wait a few seconds for the light to

stabilise and then press "capture". You can then see the forgotten image you photographed all those years ago. The shutter sound is a nice touch, too. **Reasons not to** The lightweight tray is stiff to insert and heavy-handed users will find re-aligning a pain. It would be far smoother and quicker if it fed through automatically rather than manually. The instructions could be made easier, rather than hunting

for a tiny icon that says "acquire" when you are ready to capture the picture. Comes in an unattractive plastic tube, leaving loads of bits for flinging in a drawer.

Price £69.95

Verdict I've seen sexier scanners, but the picture quality is impressive and it is a likeable way of taking a trip down memory lane. A great gift for photo-hoarders.

firebox.com

Laura Westcott

