



EXCLUSIVE
by **MATT BENDORIS**

FORMER schoolteacher Nina Bhadreshwar saw it all while working for Death Row Records in Los Angeles.

Nina edited the legendary hip hop label's magazine *Uncut* during the height of its fame in the mid-90s, when it was raking in more than \$100million a year.

Her glam job saw her interview star artists such as Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg, *bottom*.

But after being left traumatised by the drive-by murder of rapper Tupac Shakur, *below*, the journalist and author returned to the UK to retrain as a teacher – and work in Dundee.

She jokes: "Death Row Records was probably a good training ground for Dundee."

"But being in Scotland really did help me find myself and my love of music once more."



Ipswich-born Nina lived in the City Of Discovery for four years from 2008.

She taught English at Lawside Academy, St John's RC High and Harris Academy.

But it was her devotion to Dundonian indie rockers The View – fronted by wildman Kyle Falconer – which brought her north of the border.

She explains: "I was attracted to the innocence of these people who simply had a love of music, whereas at Death Row it was commercialised from the get go – it was all about the money."

However her pupils had no idea of the colourful life their English Miss had led which took her to the heart of the gangsta rap empire.

And she admits Death Row Records was a real eye-opener for a devout Christian girl with a mixed-raced background who grew up in Barnsley.

She says: "People would say to me 'What are you doing there? You must be such a naïve girl', which I was. It was chaotic when I joined."

Her journey from South Yorkshire to Southern Californ



A DIFFERENT TUNE . . . Nina, left, and with The View, above, the journalist used to edit Death Row Records mag *Uncut*, right

I swapped Death Row for Dundee cos I love The View

nia began when she became penpals with Tupac, long before he was a hip hop icon. He even wrote to her when he spent nine months in a New York state prison in 1995 for rape.

One of his prison letters to Nina sold at auction three years ago in the US for nearly \$250,000 (£191,000).

The rapper spent his days behind bars reading books on political philosophy.

Nina, 46, explains: "We were penpals. I wrote to him for three years and we built up this relationship."

"I was never **IN** a relationship with Tupac. I was a very good friend. That was it." In the note

to Nina, Tupac asked her to spread his 'advice to young black men in America,' while he also discussed his plans for a "new chapter in his life."

But in September 1996 he was blasted four times in a drive-by shooting in Las Vegas. He died six days later in hospital, aged 25.

His killer has never been caught.

Now Nina has written about her own incredible experience in new book *Finding CC*. And despite the traumatic ending to her time in L.A, single Nina still has fond memories of Death Row. She says:

"I socialised with the rappers, who were really welcoming. Guys like Snoop invited me to their homes for a barbecue or baby christenings."

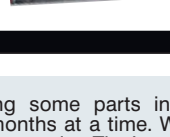
Nina returned to Dundee last week to launch her book.

She says: "I love the passion Scottish people have for their bands – it really is phenomenal."

"Death Row Records and Dundee had their challenges – but both also have gems in the grime."

● *Finding CC*, left, costs £20. Order from bhaddpublicity.com/books

● *Uncut*, right, costs £10. Order from matt.bendoris@the-sun.co.uk



TROOKERS

WHERE: Lerwick, Shetland
WHO: Robert Balfour (guitar/vocals), Chris Thomson (guitar/keys/vocals), Chris Cople (bass), Erik Peterson (drums/vocals)

FOR FANS OF: Teenage Fanclub, Ben Folds Five, Super Furry Animals

JIM SAYS: "If you thought Shetland was just about fiddles, look no further than Trookers. Sure, a fiddle does appear on their track Bards, but the album The Temporary encompasses several styles."

Folk music is probably at the core of what they do, but Trookers veer into country, jazz, rock and alternative territory.

The key is some wonderful harmonies. Blended with top class musicianship and some incredibly catchy songs, they are on to a winner.

Their roots lie in First Foot Soldiers, the covers outfit Robert Balfour and Chris Thomson also play with. Chris explains: "In late 2012 we got together to try and write some songs for that band. It soon turned into a thing of its own."

"For the first couple of years Trookers was a duo, playing mainly



NEW MUSIC
By **Jim Gellatly**

at local festivals and singer/songwriter events." Chris Cople and Erik Peterson joined in autumn 2014 to beef up the sound.

With all of them playing in other bands, and juggling full-time jobs with family life, it's perhaps no surprise that the album has taken a while to materialise. With Erik now living in Edinburgh, it's even more of a challenge.

Robert says: "This is our first record and has been six years in the making! Other commitments got in the way a little."

Chris adds: "Once Erik and Chris C were on board and we'd begun to gel, we began recording in September 2015. We hoped to have it done within the year. We picked away at it for a bit, record-



Watch a video of the band at: thescottishsun.co.uk

amazingradio.com
jimgellatly.com

ing some parts in short spurts separated by months at a time. We then got the offer of a gig supporting The Lone Bellow at the end of August."

"With Erik now living down south, and the band essentially on hiatus, it made sense to put everything into finishing the album in time for the gig. We're really proud of what we finally achieved."

With all four of them in their early 30s, The Temporary has a "growing up" theme. Robert says: "It is a very honest piece of work. Chris and I wrote these songs in our mid-20s when we were in that transitional phase of life. Leaving behind our childhood and getting ready to be engulfed by adulthood."

"If people give the record a chance they will hear the pride and effort we have put in to each track."

Trookers are delighted by the response. Chris says: "It seems to have got to folk on an emotional level. I even get teary listening to the finale, Sister Sister, which is a miracle given that I listened to it hundreds of times during production and mixing!"

"Hopefully this won't be the last we hear from Trookers, and they'll be tempted back into the studio and onto the live stage. Even if we have to wait another six years it should be worth it."

MORE: www.trookers.co.uk

● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm.



Shenmue I & II

Xbox One, PS4 and PC £29.99

THERE have been loads of massive hits for Sega down the years — from Sonic to Outrun. But nothing gets fans drooling like the epic Shenmue series.

The original landed on the Dreamcast back in 1999. The sequel followed two years later, then nothing. The demand for a third game was loud, especially as the second instalment ended on a real cliff-hanger. But, no, nothing.

Finally, the word was heard and episode three is in the pipeline, so Sega reckoned it was time to stoke the fires with a slight HD nip and tuck for the first two games.

The Shenmue series blends lots of different styles of games. Originally, this was groundbreaking stuff — an action role-player with a heavy splash of life sim thrown in along with fighting and light driving.

The living is the hook. There is very little hand-holding. You need to work out where locations are from signposts or ask people. Gradually, you learn the landmarks and understand the layout.

In the first game you are Ryo in 1986 Yokosuka. You are out for revenge as he tracks down Lan Di, who killed his father. But that mission soon gets side-tracked as he has to help other people and get more information on where Lan Di is and why he committed the murder.

So that's the story, but you can track down gangsters for info, play darts or master a classic arcade game like Afterburner. Or you could train to become a better fighter or work a part-time job to raise some cash. It's really open-ended and that is where the game shines.

Stick strictly to the story and the credits will roll in about 10 hours. But you will be missing out. Play this to the full and live the journey.

As you would expect game two keeps the solid foundations of Shenmue I but moves the action to Hong Kong and ramps everything up a notch. The world is bigger and you can do more. There are also fight arenas to test your skills.

This is a 20-year-old game so the graphics are always going to look a bit retro, but the games actually hold up well.

The music is a decent standard, but the voice acting is a real mix of good and bad characters. If there was a gripe, it is that the lack of hand-holding is fine . . . if there is an obvious route.

But, if the route is clouded, then you spend ages floundering around in trial-and-error mode. It also changes aspect ratios without warning, which is a bit of a pain.

The series is rightly considered to be a jewel in the Sega crown, especially when you think this was out 20 years ago. It was way ahead of its time. However, you have to wonder whether newcomers would be drawn in. We would like to think they will, but they will need to be open-minded because some of the best bits are actually when nothing is really happening.

STUART CULLEN



● **DECK 13** are jumping on the cowboy bandwagon with the new DLC for *The Surge 2*. It's going all West World. The Good, the Bad, and the Augmented

is the first meaty DLC addition since the amusement park-focused *A Walk In The Park* last year. It's out on Xbox One, PS4 and PC on October 2.



● **SQUARE** Enix are adding a feast of Final Fantasy classics to the Xbox One and Switch. Final Fantasy 7, 9, 10, 10-2, and 12: The Zodiac Age are all arriving in 2019. FF 15 Pocket Edition

HD is already available, while the Switch will also get *FF Crystal Chronicles Remastered* and *Chocobo Mystery Dungeon*. But no Final Fantasy 8. Controversial.

SUPERVILLAIN SLAMMER RAFT NOW OPEN

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SPIDER-MAN: FRIEND OR FOE?

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DAILY BUGLE

NEW YORK'S FINEST DAILY PAPER

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SEPTEMBER 23 | 2018



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

'Spidey is now a pal'

THE Insomniac Games team have been eating and breathing Spider-Man so much that you almost expect marketing director Ryan Schneider to be wearing a Spidey suit at his desk.

He has revealed the pressure they felt to get the story and the gaming experience right. He told STUART CULLEN about the hours spent perfecting each part of the game.

He said: "Working with Spider-Man was every bit as thrilling as you'd expect. What was unexpected though was feeling like we became friends with Spidey throughout development. That's because of our close collaboration with Marvel and Sony. We learned so much more about the character and what makes him so beloved — his profound sense of reliability and likeability. "If Spidey can handle the pressure of several million New Yorkers counting on him to protect their city, the least we can do is focus on doing him justice in a video game!"

That partnership with Marvel opened up the full Spider-Man kitbag, so the team wanted to cherry-pick the best bits. Ryan said: "It's true that the Marvel Spider-Man universe is an embarrassment of riches when it comes to the seemingly endless array of characters."

"That was honestly our biggest challenge, to pick which characters best fit the story we were trying to tell."

Conflict

"So we looked at enemies who had compelling emotional backstories where their sinister worlds and their more human reasons for breaking bad were in a real feeling to New York."

They also wanted a real feeling to New York. Ryan added: "The in-game New York City is exponentially larger than any other city we've created in a game before, which was a challenge we were eager to embrace."

But there were still plenty of challenges. Ryan admitted: "It all starts with web-swinging, because that's what Spider-Man is known most for."

"We wanted players to experience the rush of what it must feel like to fly through a densely populated Manhattan, while also empowering players to feel like they are a superhero. We even made ground traversal satisfying by adding a parkour system. Hurling through fire escapes, over cars and debris and around barriers is such fun!"

"As for the combat, next to traversal, it was the most important part to nail in creating the game. We were laser-focused on creating an experience that made Spider-Man feel like an acrobatic improviser — meaning, he was eight years into being Spider-Man and the equivalent of an athlete in his prime. He could make any number of gameplay choices spontaneously, such as how to use throwable objects, call upon gadgets, chain combo enemies, or use the environment around him. That's why our favourite compliment is when someone says, 'I felt like I was Spider-Man.'"



Marvel's Spider-Man

PS4 £49.99

clocks in at around 15 hours and never loses that Sony cinematic feel. It is a compelling story that makes you care about the characters."

But you can add to the fun by dipping off into side missions like stopping crime to collecting old backpacks to err . . . chasing pigeons.

The success of this game is all down to how Spider-Man moves and fights.

Master the arts

The team at Insomniac have really nailed. Swinging from building to building is a fast, fluid motion. You really feel like you are Spider-Man."

The next box to tick is the villains. You can't have a Spidey game without having rogues — and Insomniac have compiled a gallery to be proud of.

There are some well-known foes and some newer names to battle. Each one adds a different challenge. Each one has to be brought down in a different way so you can send them back to



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● **NINTENDO** is bringing out classic controllers for the Switch.

It is a modern take on the original as it will be wireless and it can be recharged by being attached to a side of the Switch like the Joy-Cons.

They are designed to offer the most authentic experience when playing the library of NES titles that are coming to the Switch.

Subscribers to the new online service will be able to buy a bundle of two controllers for £49.99.

The NES library is also building nicely — with 20 NES games set to land, including classics like Super Mario Bros 3 and The Legend of Zelda.

Nintendo have promised to add more titles in the future.

TOP 5 GAMES THIS WEEK

- 1 **Marvel's Spider-Man**
- 2 **Shadow Of The Tomb Raider**
- 3 **NBA 2K19**
- 4 **Crash Bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy**
- 5 **Mario Kart 8 Deluxe**

● **BETHESDA** are joining forces with War Child UK to hold a special concert at London Eventim Apollo in Hammersmith on November 3. You'll get to hear tracks from games like Fallout 3 and 4, the up-and-coming Fallout 76 and The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim.

The concert will be led by composers Inon Zur and Jeremy Soule and performed by the Parallax Orchestra and Choir. Tickets are from £45 at metropolismusic.com. There are upgrade options that can bag exclusive seats, merchandise or a post-show meet-and-greet with Inon.

DEAD

Or Alive 6 is out on February 15 for Xbox One, PS4 and PC. Pre-order and unlock fighter Nyotengu. While PS4 users get an exclusive theme Xbox gamers get Ryu Hayabusa costumes.



● **SONY** have gone all mini the firm is following Nintendo (and releasing a PS1 mini) which will come with 20 preloaded games.

The PlayStation Classic, as it is known, will be released on December 3.

That makes it a cert for many Christmas lists.

It will set Santa back £90.

The game list hasn't been revealed yet, but we expect it to include the likes of Final Fantasy 7, Ridge Racer Type 4 and Tekken 3.

The mini wonder will also come with two controllers as well as HDMI cable.

Interesting fact: The launch date is the same as when the PS1 launched in Japan way back in 1994. Yeah, we should get out more.