



TREYARCH have released a trailer for Operation Absolute Zero — the first big DLC pack for Call of Duty: Black Ops 4. It adds multiplayer maps and new Zombies, Madagas-

car and Elevation maps. The highlight has to be Dead of the Night, with all new zombies types. And with Brian Blessed, *left*, as one of the cast, what's not to like?



CELTIC'S latest signings have made their mark on the virtual pitch. Italian Suprema Ettorito (Ettore Giannuzzi) beat S-Venom to be named Season 1 PES LEAGUE 2019 European cham-

ption. The virtual Hoops also scored as part of Broken Silence — Gian-nuzzi, team-mate Luca Tubelli and Barcelona's Alex Alguacil — winning the co-op crown.

EXCLUSIVE
by **BEVERLEY LYONS**

FORMER BGT winner Jai McDowall reckons he's now reaching his potential as an artist — thanks to Simon Cowell.

Jai and G4 frontman Jonathan Ansell have just announced a 55-date tour, called Les Musicals, taking in venues around the UK next year.

And they plan to give audiences in Sürling, Aberdeen and Dundee a taste of the classics — from Phantom of the Opera to The Greatest Showman and many more.

For Jai the tour announcement comes as the 32-year-old, from Tarbolton, Ayrshire, is experiencing a newfound confidence since he won the TV talent show back in 2011.

He says: "I've definitely matured and gained confidence as a performer since winning BGT. I've given up making plans and relied more on what life has thrown at me and it's now working. A lot of doors are open now and I've managed to see parts of the world I'd never have got to see.

'I'm getting to the end of bumpy time'

"I went on China's Got Talent as a guest. I've been all over the world, in the Caribbean and Mediterranean on cruises where I've been very well paid to sing, and I sang for The Queen in Glasgow for the Jubilee in George Square. It's been incredible."

And despite reports of friction between himself and Cowell — who dropped the Scots singer from his Syco label after just one album — Jai insists that he's eternally grateful to the BGT mogul.

He says: "Everything I am doing is all down to me being on a TV show."

"If I saw Simon Cowell at an event I'd shake his hand and thank him."

"He signed me for an album and I was only meant to get the Britain's Got Talent prize money and a spot on the Royal Variety Show."

"He gave me more than I was supposed to have."

Jai — who is starring in panto in Redhill, Surrey this festive season — has always kept his feet firmly on the ground and admits he's been through ups and downs as a performer.

He adds: "I came



STAR REBORN
... Jai is looking forward to tour with Ansell, *left*, next year. *Below left*, Cowell and, *inset bottom*, Jai on BGT in 2011



I've got no beef with Simon...he made me a star

from a wee village in the west of Scotland and things like this don't happen for folk like me. At times it's not been an easy road but I'm getting to the end of a bumpy time and have got panto this year, plus lots of Christmas light switch-ons."

Despite his busy

performance schedule, Jai is now keen to get into more theatrical productions and is consulting with experts to remove a tattoo in order to boost his chances of winning a West End role.

The 32-year-old says of the large inking on his back: "I've auditioned for a couple of West End shows but may need to take my T-shirt off. It can be difficult for make-up people to cover up tattoos."

"Leading roles in Jesus Christ Superstar or Joseph

require you to be either topless or in leincloths." Jai's future is also brighter now he's travelled to LA to meet with film producers and taken some serious acting lessons. And he's in talks about soundtracking some films. He says: "I'm not allowed to talk too much about it just now, but it's been exciting meeting with the Sony Motion Picture people in LA."

● Tickets and information for Jai and Jonathan's Les Musicals tour are available at jaimcdowallofficial.com

VELVET

WHO: Scott McIntee (guitar/vocals), Aidan Glass (guitar/vocals), Christopher Walls (bass), Simon Simone (keyboards), Sean Johnstone (drums).

WHERE: Glasgow.

FOR FANS OF: Arctic Monkeys, Joy Division, The Vaccines

JIM SAYS: It's early days yet for young indie rockers Velvet, but they show a load of promise with their first recordings. The teenagers only got together just over a year ago and have steadily been making an impact on the scene.

With only university student Simon over 18, and the others 17, one of the challenges for the band is they can only play over-14s shows. A positive though is that they can utilise school facilities, borrow equipment and use computers to record and edit videos.

Christopher said: "It can be frustrating being under 18 with the amount of gigs being held specifically for over-18 bands and audiences. There are some really great promotion companies though, such as RCMS, who gave us our first chance." Velvet have been building their reputation playing



NEW MUSIC
By **Jim Gellatly**

venues such as Broadcast, Stereo and King Tut's in Glasgow. On Friday night they played their biggest headline show to date at The Garage.

These opportunities have been a big boost for the lads and helped build their fanbase. Aidan told me: "Having our songs sung back to us live for the first time was amazing. It really encouraged us to keep on writing and recording our songs."

With the addition of Simon on keys a few months ago, the sound of the band continues to develop.

Sean said: "Our influences have broadened and with the introduction of keys it really adds another dimension and fills out our live performances." Last month Velvet released their debut EP Every-



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

body Wants To Be Famous in Japan. It's raw, with the feel of a demo recording, but that really appeals to me. No need to polish it up with fancy production. There's bags of potential and the four songs on offer give a great overview to what Velvet are about. Scott told me: "I think we're just a very good pop band. It's very accessible. We don't try to over-think our songwriting."

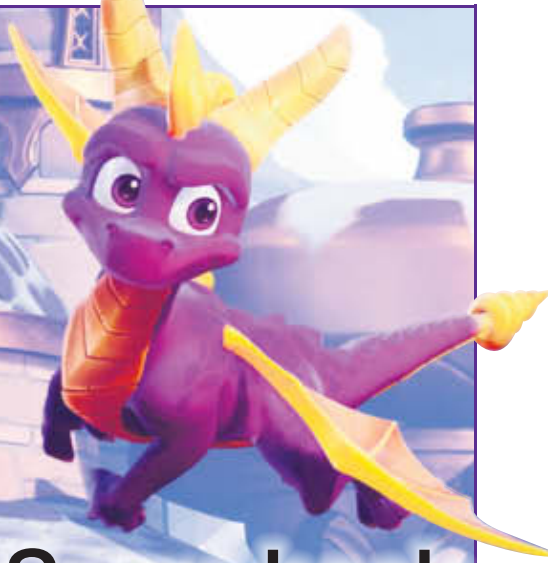
He's probably doing his band a disservice. While not overcomplicated, it does have a level of sophistication. Underglow, the first single from the EP, hints at early Libertines. Honey has a bit of a Nirvana feel. Emergency Light and Ladybug Lighter between them recall acts like Radiohead and Blur, and there's a bit of The Smiths in there as well.

Some cool, if lazy, references but in truth Velvet are successfully forging their own sound. As for the title of the EP, Everybody Wants To Be Famous in Japan, it shows that the band are looking further than just breaking out of Glasgow.

Aidan explained: "We came to the conclusion that it's a common thing for bands to want to be famous in Japan. It kind of shows you've made it!" If they keep the momentum up, Velvet could well have the whole world at their feet.

● **More:** www.velvetglasgow.com

● **Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm. www.amazingradio.com www.jimgellatly.com**



Spyro back and on fire

Spyro Trilogy Reignited

Xbox One and PS4 £29.99

NOSTALGIA is big business in gaming right now — and after Activision's success with the Crash Bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy, it was only a matter of time before purple dragon Spyro returned.

The Spyro Reignited Trilogy takes the first three games in the platforming series and totally reworks the graphics while keeping the core fun gameplay.

And as you get Spyro the Dragon, Spyro 2: Ripto's Rage! and Spyro: Year of the Dragon in one package, you can attack them in any order as there's no overriding story. Nine times out of ten, your main goal is to save the world wreath by collecting dragon crystals or eggs.

The storylines are all light-hearted affairs with a real Saturday morning charm to them and the gameplay takes what made them so much fun first time round, just tweaked slightly.

So you'll run, bash and fly around a good mix of areas you would expect in a 3D-platformer from snow, lava and water levels and everything in-between.

And each game sees extra layers of gameplay added at a nice steady pace. The second kicks off with powers-ups and new machines, while the third lets you play as different characters as you try to find all of the seemingly never-ending supply of collectibles.

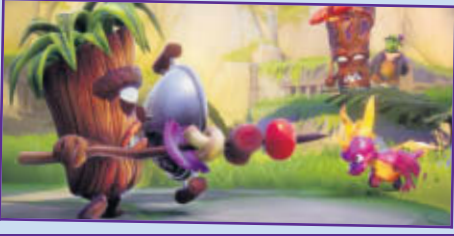
There's also a fast travel system across all three games as well as a skill points which will let you unlock concept art along the way.

Graphically, it is stunning and pops with a lovely cartoon-like style with good voice acting.

On the downside, the first two games do show their age at times and are maybe a little overly simplified. The camera feels on occasion that it is just too close to Spyro. Not a deal breaker but it does block your view some times.

If you're a huge fan of the dragon Spyro Reignited Trilogy is a must — but it's also worth introducing younger gamers to his adventures.

★★★★



● **PSYONIX** have teamed up with McLaren for the latest DLC for Rocket League.

The new Car Pack has been added across all platforms with the McLaren 570S Coupe in Battle-Car form as well



as a selection of McLaren-themed items available now for £1.69.

Psyonix have also teamed up with mobile brand OnePlus to release the 6T McLaren Edition phone, which costs a cool £649.

'This is a bike game made by bike fans'

VARIETY is the spice of life and Matteo Pezzotti, lead designer on Ride 3,

couldn't agree more as he feels that his team at Milestone have delivered a real smorgasbord of two-wheeled delights. He said: "We work closely with all manufacturers included in the game — it's all designed to make sure that any bike model in the game is perfectly reproduced as in reality. In Ride 3, we've added 77 new bike models."

"And thanks to both Ride and Ride 2, we already had a strong partnership with all the most-important gear brands in the motorcycle world — Dainese, Alpinestar, AGV, Arai, etc. So selection was quite easy — we just opened the new season catalogues and added the most beautiful new gear to the game."

We've also added a total of nine new bike brands — Gilera, Benelli, Fantic Motor, Norton, Paton, Vyrus, Moto Guzzi, Walt Siegl and Praem."

Milestone are already looking to the future as Pezzotti sheds some light on the post-launch content.

He said: "The game will be strongly supported — we plan to add 77 new bikes and 195 new racing events that will be split among premium and free DLCs."

Working with so many manufacturers brings its own challenges but Pezzotti feels their love for all things two-wheel will see

Milestone right. He added: "Manufacturers tend to focus on realism and fidelity with the reproduction of their bikes. Ride 3 is a game for bike fans, developed by bike fans. We're on the same page and our collaboration with the different brands was fantastic."

But when it comes to the tracks in the new game, Pezzotti admitted that the fans were the driving force for the ones that made the cut.

He said: "This is the third chapter in the series, so we had a lot of feedback from our players about just which kind of tracks they wanted in a possible new game. They asked for

more iconic GP tracks, so we've given them Laguna Seca and Daytona. They said they'd love to have BSB tracks, so we added Oulton Park, Brands Hatch and Cadwell Park."

"They wanted more road racing so we've added more tracks. They asked for an off-road section in Supermoto tracks so we added them."

Pezzotti feels that the new installment strikes a perfect balance between SIM and casual and that Ride 3 has something for everyone looking for two-wheeled thrills.

He said: "Thanks to many game setting and options, you can customise the level of the simulation in game to match your favourite game style."

STUART CULLEN



WHEN it comes to two-wheel gaming, one developer is at the forefront of pushing motorbikes.

Italian firm Milestone Studios are back with Ride 3, the latest installment in a biker's version of Gran Turismo, with loads of detailed machines to throw around different tracks across the world.

Milestone have a real passion for this mode of racing, with the attention to detail — right down to the kit your rider wears — shining through.

You have 230-plus bikes to get your virtual leg over, including new and vintage models from the likes of Aprilia, Honda and Suzuki.

It's no secret that getting the balance between arcade and SIM in bike-based games spot on can be a nightmare.

But in Ride 3, each bike has its own handling which introduces fresh challenges as you jump from one to another. There are options for you to

RIDE 3

Xbox One, PS4 and PC £42.99

tweak the bike handling to get it just how you like it, which adds some depth to the gameplay.

The main meat of the game is career mode, which has seen a lot of work done to it, and you move through a number of different tiers that are unlocked depending on how well you perform in races.

It gives you a taste of different classes — from two-stroke to supersport — and you'll race to win bank credits, unlock upgrades with those credits and do it again until you have enough to buy a different bike and unlock a new racing class. This starts out fun but could feel a bit of a grind at times.

The 30 tracks include UK favourites such as Brands Hatch, Cadwell Park and Donnington Park along with international offerings such as Daytona and Imola. Graphically the bikes look amazing at times but beyond that it's all a bit

rough around the edges from the buildings in the distance to the crowd in the stands.

The sound is light, and while the bikes do sound a bit like their real-world counterparts, the whine of an engine for two or three hours may get on your nerves.

On the downside the AI is all over the shop at times — if they touch you just a little bit you'll

be going sideways across the tarmac and it feels as if they have Jedi powers as they know just how and when to move to stop crashing themselves.

Ride 3 shows that Milestone have taken what they have learned over the years and have made a solid racer that is a both fun and challenging — but unless you're a bike fan there isn't really much here to hook you.

Milestone have a habit of coming so close to landing a truly great game but just falling short — and Ride 3 is a perfect example.

STUART CULLEN

★★★★



THE

new teaser pic for the upcoming Sonic The Hedgehog movie is already dividing fans. The movie, starring Ben Schwartz in the lead role, is scheduled to hit cinemas on Boxing Day.

●

If you're looking to grab a last-minute Christmas present for the retro gamer in your life, one word: Atari.

There's the Plug & Play Joystick (£24.99) which comes with 50 classic Atari games including Asteroids, Pong, Centipede, Missile Command and Breakout.

If you prefer old-

school gaming on the move the Atari Retro Handheld (£34.99) packs everything that was great about the Atari 2600 into a portable handheld unit with a 2.4in colour screen. And it is preloaded with the same 50 classic games that the

Plug and Play Joystick has. Get them at funstockretro.co.uk



TOP 5 GAMES THIS WEEK

- 1 Super Smash Bros Ultimate
- 2 Red Dead Redemption 2
- 3 FIFA 19
- 4 Battlefield V
- 5 Mario Kart 8 Deluxe

●

IT'S been a big week for Monster Hunter fans as Capcom have announced a host of upcoming updates and features.

The first big expansion will be called Iceborn and see the band of beast slayers heading to the ice and snow.

And it will add a new quest rank, new monsters and new areas to the game as well as fea-



ture a storyline that carries on from where the main Monster Hunter World tale left off.

But on top of this news it was announced that The Witcher 3 hero Geralt of Rivia will be joining the game as well.

And monster Kulve Taroth is returning from December 19 to January 3. Phew!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

● **EMMANUEL** Floret, the lead designer on SBK Team Manager, has ticked off one of his bucket list goals.

He said: "I had a conversation with a friend back when I was working at Ubisoft Montreal. He asked me what would be the top three games that I would like to develop before I die."

"I answered that I would love to create a motorcycle team management game. The next day I went on the Google Play store and realised that no such game existed at the time, so I decided that I should do everything to make it happen."

The jump to a management game brings new challenges for players.

He said: "Having fast riders is important, but so is having good crew chiefs, mechanics, amenities and a balanced budget. It shows that success is based on a team effort and not only rider skills."

"The player could start by managing a team in the Red Bull Rookies Cup for example, and then progress through the different series to reach the MotoGP category, the pinnacle of the sport."

He added: "We will update the roster, bikes and tracks for the next two seasons, as it's part of our contract with Dorna and our publisher, Digital Tales."

STUART CULLEN



SBK Team Manager

iOS and Android £1.99

The goal is simple — take your team from the bottom to the top of the SBK Championship through your management skills.

Gameplay is boiled down to you having to push and hold your riders on track and knowing when to pay the bills for the month and repair the bike or risk having the team going under.

By no means is it an easy game and it will no doubt have you swearing on the daily commute as you juggle all the elements of your team. But the better you get the faster your team gets.

As mobile games go SBK Team Manager is a fun and challenging tea-break blast that will take a bit to get to grips with before you get to the top of the podium but is a must for management game fans.

★★★★★

