

the **Sunday**

GAMES & MUSIC



● IT'S been a good week for the PTG Forza community — paint maestro Stuart Baird won an official competition which will be gifted to racers in the near future.

He admitted the livery was his third attempt to create an entry as well as being on the second car — a 2018 Porsche 911 GT2 RS. Stuart said: "It still took me about four

hours to create, with about 30 hours into the vinyls that made it up." The good news doesn't stop there — Forza's own version of Ken Block, Joe Leech, has joined the

team of painters, tuners and photographers. Team principal Carl Cooper said: "We have known Joe over the years and him joining the PTG family is a great addition!"



Try this Rising star

TRIAL and error is a staple of gaming and when you cut back all the fancy graphics and neat tricks, most games can be boiled down to the baseline challenge.

And no series quite sums this idea up as well as Ubisoft's Trials. On the surface it looks nice and easy — get from the start line to the finish in the quickest time without falling off.

But the reality is far different as Trials is all about trial and error. The latest instalment, Trials Rising, looks to push not only your skills to the edge but you as well.

The game has always had a misleading 'easy to play' appeal that lures you in before hitting you with the real thing. You're faced with a number of ever-challenging tracks while all the time having to control your balance as well as moving the ride back and forth to complete jumps and the like.

Mastering this pool of movement techniques is the key to success in the game but will take time — and you WILL fail a lot getting there.

But fear not as you'll not get thrown right in at the deep end. If you fail or fall off you can now respawn at well-spaced checkpoints. The tracks also get steadily harder and as you learn the move set you can revisit any of the 100-plus stages.

In the past, unlocking new tracks was linked to your number of medals, which was nice and easy. For instance, you needed 50 golds to unlock the

Trials Rising
Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC £27.99

hard tracks. Now progress is linked to player level, which sees you having to replay sponsor contracts to level up. It's a bit of a grind as you try to move forward but are held back by this tick box system.

They do however add some interesting challenges — from doing a set number of flips to making it through while being on fire. Completing them will bag you extra points to level you up.

It's worth giving a shout out to the new tutorial system — the University of Trials — which for the first time in the series teaches you the know-how needed to do the high-end skills required to master the most challenging tracks.

Add to that a solid level editor (where the community can build more over-the-top tracks) and an odd ghost system multiplayer and there is plenty of fresh challenges here.

On the downside it can be a bit rough and a bit unstable at times, which leads to everything from graphic glitches to long loading times to full-blown crashes but hopefully a few patches will fix these issues.

Trials Rising has done the rarest of things and listened to issues fans had with the last game and have built on them in some ways, which is great. But it also has picked up a few issues along the way that hold you back. If you're a Trials fan though you'll love the new challenge — and it's the most accessible game so far if you're a newcomer.

★★★★

STUART CULLEN

Retro fun is so Groovy

IF you are old enough to have owned a Mega Drive back in the day, odds are you'll know who ToeJam & Earl are.

But it's a safe bet that a generation of gamers have never heard of these cool aliens.

HumaNature Studios — founded by series creator Greg Johnson — aim to change that with new release ToeJam & Earl: Back In The Groove.

This is the fourth game in the series and it embraces its 90s roots (think equal parts Fresh Prince Of Bel Air and Nickelodeon).

The story sees the duo, along with their girlfriends Latisha and Lewanda, cruising space in a borrowed ship which crash lands. Cue missions tracking down lost pieces of the craft to get it back up and running (yes, it's very similar to the original but it's a light-hearted tale and does well to frame the adventures).

As for gameplay it's a real mix



ToeJam and Earl: Back in the Groove!
Xbox One, PS4, Switch and PC £16.74 (there's even a dash of stealth and rhythm thrown in).

The game has two main modes like the original — the fixed world where you go around pre-made levels or the randomised mode where it's pot luck what you'll find on your journey.

Graphically it pops with 90s style and is like an after-school cartoon that's come to life while the soundtrack fully embodies its hip-hop funky roots too.

There is some solid voice-acting on show as well.

On the whole, ToeJam & Earl: Back In The Groove is very much a love letter to a time long lost and fans will love it from start to finish, whereas newcomers will get to discover two classic gaming characters.

★★★★

STUART CULLEN

'V holds key to success'

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

MATT Walker has been something of a Capcom crusader over recent years.

He has worked on the likes of Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City, Resident Evil: Revelations 2 and Street Fighter V and is now a producer on their latest hit Devil May Cry 5.

Matt, below, tells STUART CULLEN how the UK plays a big part in the game's success.

He said: "The story takes place in a fictional city called Red Grave, which may or may not have been inspired in part by London. The game's director, Itsuno-san, made many trips between Japan and the UK when working with Ninja Theory on DmC: Devil May Cry. When it came time to make a Devil May Cry 5, he remembered the feeling he got from seeing the way London's architecture exudes its history from the first floor up, while displaying modern elements like McDonald's and mobile stores on the ground floor.

"He felt that would provide a wonderful base to give a modern look to Devil May Cry, while retaining the atmosphere the series is known for.

"I think you'll notice that the biggest change since the last game is the approach we've taken to the graphics. By scanning real-world models in Hollywood-level costuming, we've created something that looks incredibly realistic. It's almost comparable to what you'd see in movies and on TV."

In the past the game has only ever let you fight as two main leads, Dante and Nero, but now V joins the party.

Matt added: "V provides a completely different approach to gameplay, but within the same framework as Dante and Nero.

"The impetus for V came from separating the portion of the character that you would have to protect, and what attacks. Rather than attacking demons directly with swords and guns of his own, he summons three demon familiars to attack for him. Shadow is his version of a melee attack, Griffon is his long-ranged attack, and Nightmare is his Devil Trigger.

"Shadow and Griffon will attack as soon as you press the corresponding button, just as you'd expect when controlling Nero or Dante. Nightmare will tear into demons automatically when called by the Devil Trigger button, though you can also jump on with V to control him directly.

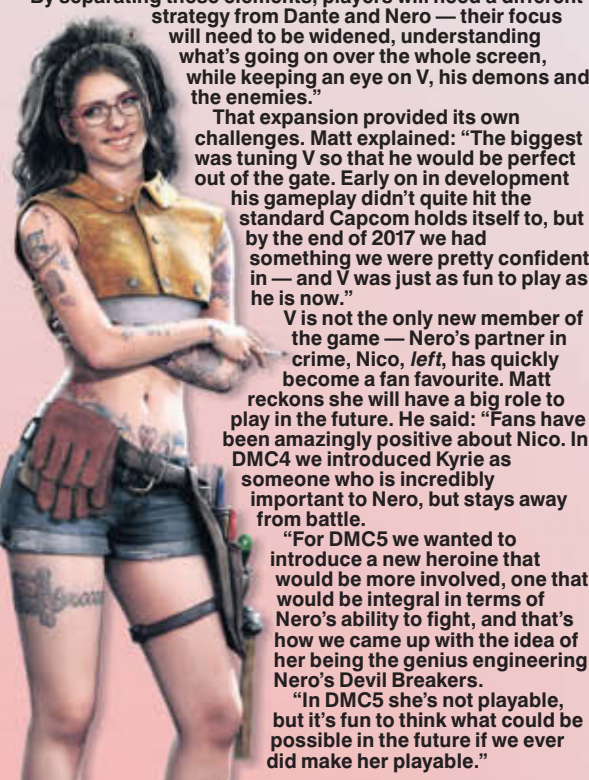
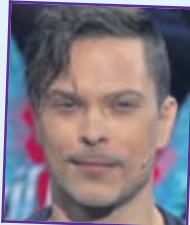
"By separating these elements, players will need a different strategy from Dante and Nero — their focus will need to be widened, understanding what's going on over the whole screen, while keeping an eye on V, his demons and the enemies."

That expansion provided its own challenges. Matt explained: "The biggest was tuning V so that he would be perfect out of the gate. Early on in development his gameplay didn't quite hit the standard Capcom holds itself to, but by the end of 2017 we had something we were pretty confident in — and V was just as fun to play as he is now."

V is not the only new member of the game — Nero's partner in crime, Nico, left, has quickly become a fan favourite. Matt reckons she will have a big role to play in the future. He said: "Fans have been amazingly positive about Nico. In DMC4 we introduced Kyrie as someone who is incredibly important to Nero, but stays away from battle.

"For DMC5 we wanted to introduce a new heroine that would be more involved, one that would be integral in terms of Nero's ability to fight, and that's how we came up with the idea of her being the genius engineering Nero's Devil Breakers.

"In DMC5 she's not playable, but it's fun to think what could be possible in the future if we ever did make her playable."



It's Devilishly good

DEVIL May Cry was, in many ways, the first in the 3D hack-and-slash genre when it came out in 2001.

The series has had some real ups and downs along the way so the news of a fifth game in the core series had fans chomping at the bit.

It has been 11 years since Capcom made a full-fat instalment, with the last DMC game being handled by Ninja Theory back when Capcom gave a number of their series like Lost Planet and Dead Rising to western developers to see what they could do.

So hopes are high to see if Capcom can grow and evolve the series — which is as much about killing monsters and demons as it is about looking uber-cool while doing it and bagging Smokin' Sexy Style!! rank with every encounter.

And right off the bat, Capcom have smashed it out the park.

The game is set seven years after the events of Devil May Cry 4 and starts with a full-blown battle where you first meet our demon hunter gang of heroes — Nero, V and Dante.

Like most epic tales this is just the end of the beginning, as from here the game jumps back a few months and starts dishing out the details of how and why you got there.

And for a game that is about smashing a big lump of steel into monster's foreheads, there is a real feeling of mystery to the tale. You never really know if you can trust new kid on the block V and it keeps that intrigue running over the 10 or so hours it will take you to complete the tale.

But if the story sets the scene, the gameplay steals the show. It is like wiping your bum with silk — it's that smooth.

As each character has a different set of moves and attacks, finding your favourite is half the fun.

There's Nero with his blade and hand cannon, as well as over-the-top robot hand which comes with a variety of tasty moves.

Then there is long-time fans' favourite Dante. He is the most-traditional of the trio, blending different attacks with his signature blade and gun combat style.

Then we come to V who, well, is like a breath of ice cold air. He is totally new for the series. He summons creatures to do the fighting for him while he reads a book or two — though they leave it up to you to deliver the killer blow at the end.

And he takes what you know about Devil May Cry and turns it upside down. It does feel odd to start with but eventually clicks. Due to the game jumping between the three characters you never feel like you spend too long in anyone's shoes overall.

For hardcore fans Devil May Cry has always had a skill bar and with that comes difficulty. But this time there seems to be a shift from full-on hard to a more accessible core game.

Graphically the game is lovely to look at. From broken cities to demonic landscapes, everything is bursting with style — even the way enemies and characters move is a pleasure to the eye. And when it all kicks off, a true ballet of death ensues.

The soundtrack is very traditional. Devil May Cry 5 bounces from full-blown orchestra fare to some heavy alt-rock vibes and it lands perfectly more often than not.

Voice acting is solid, though long-time fans will spot a few cast changes.

But since it is 11 years since we last heard these characters, odds are this will be most gamers' first journey into the world (they'll not clock it).

With a long and well-established history and fanbase, Devil May Cry 5 was not one the easiest of comeback roads.

But Capcom have doubled down and looked at what makes the series such a hit and built on that — from the over-the-top tale to the sublime combat.

If you're a fan it's a must. If you're a newcomer this is a benchmark that all hack-and-slash games will be judged by from here on. It's a true joy from the first sword swing to the last bullet fired.

★★★★

STUART CULLEN

● CRACKDOWN 3 may have had a rocky start but there is good news — the second game is now backwards compatible and it's FREE to download just now.

Developed by Scottish studio Ruffian — who took over the reins from Dundee-based Realtime Worlds after the first game — Crackdown 2 felt more like a chunky DLC than a full-blown sequel. It added zombies which is fun but, like the third game, it really lacks any real point in staying around beyond the co-op high-links.

This news means the trilogy is now available for Xbox Game Pass subscribers.



● YAKUSA spin-off, will hit PlayStation 4 on June 25. Developer Ryu ga Gotoku Studio are behind the game which follows Takayuki Yagami, an ex-lawyer turned private tec.

● REAL-LIFE action man Ross Kemp has seen everything from drug cartels to pirates — and even the dangerous streets of Walford in EastEnders.

So who better for Ubisoft to turn to as a narrator of gamer tales from the Dark Zone in the first game and the sequel?

The series is on Ubisoft's social media channels



ahead of the new game's launch this week. Kemp is seen sitting in a decimated Oval Office, which is fitting as the sequel is set in a post-apocalyptic Washington DC.

Kemp said: "I am thrilled to be involved in the Clancy universe, bringing the incredible stories of The Division community to life in a world that has a real sense of tension and jeopardy."

● THE Sinking City has been delayed. The developer, Frogwares, say the Lovecraft-inspired open-world detective adventure will now be out on June 27 instead of March 21.

● NINTENDO are set to join the VR race . . . well, sort of. They have revealed the next Labo kit will turn the Switch into a pair of VR goggles. The Toycon #4 VR Kit is due on April 12.

You build a Switch headset that works in a similar way to the Google Cardboard system. You can also build a number of add-ons, including a Blaster, Camera, Bird and Elephant. It all looks bizarre but is bags of fun. It is Nintendo's first go at a VR headset since the short-lived Virtual Boy in 1995.



TOP 5 GAMES THIS WEEK

- 1 Devil May Cry 5
- 2 Red Dead Redemption 2
- 3 Mario Kart 8 Deluxe
- 4 Anthem
- 5 FIFA 19

● IT has been a tough time for E3, with a string of top names insisting they will not be holding press conferences at the June expo. And that trend shows no sign of letting up as EA is the latest to pull the press conference plug.

The publisher reckons it gets a better return from the pre-E3 fan event, EA Play, where gamers in Los Angeles can get hands-on time with a selection of new and up-and-coming titles. The key is that the event is also live-streamed across the globe.

They are following PlayStation and Nintendo, who have done direct video the past few years. Sony have already said they won't be there.

It is a blow to the traditional format, but there is still plenty of fun and excitement expected at the event.



NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

STAR ROVER

WHO: Davy King (vocals/guitar), Dave MacDonald (bass), Mike Johnston (drums).

WHERE: Edinburgh.

FOR FANS OF: Weezer, Ash, Idlewild.

JIM SAYS: Exciting indie rockers Star Rover were originally conceived by frontman Davy King.

He'd been writing and recording solo under the name since around 2008, but a quick search flags up the fact that they aren't the only Star Rover. They share the name with a Brooklyn duo, and did once get offered a gig in New York by mistake.

Drummer Mike said: "It occasionally causes confusion with the digital side of things. People thinking we're them or that they're us."

"We've actually had a few chats with them online and they're really nice guys. A few years ago they played Glasgow O2 ABC supporting Albert Hammond Jr and asked us to come down.

"If it ever becomes an actual problem for either band, then it'll be a good problem for one of us to have."

Though now based in Edinburgh, Davy's a Kirkcaldy lad. Mike is from Belfast while bass player Dave hails from Aberdeen. But they all have connections to the Granite City. They've all lived there, but their paths didn't cross until they moved to the capital and started to look for musical collaborators.

Davy said: "When I moved to Edinburgh, I thought it would be a good opportunity to turn Star Rover into a band. Mike and I met up first. I got in touch with Dave through a mutual friend and things fell into place."

After a handful of online releases, they debuted proper in 2016 with the Self EP, produced by Catholic Action's Chris McCrory. The self-produced double A-side Liars/Oxymorons followed, before recording an eponymous first album, with Mark Morrow producing.

Star Rover are now set to release the follow-up Minor Miracles, recorded with Graeme Young at Chamber Studios in Edinburgh.

Mike said: "Pretty much as soon as the first album came out, we wrote four or five songs in quick succession. We soon realised there was a consistent theme throughout the new stuff both lyrically and musically so arranged to get into the studio last year and get it recorded."

It's a great listen, an angsty melodic affair. Davy said: "I think at its core our music has always been guitar-based pop but played quite loud and fuzzy. Over time though it's definitely matured. We've focused on writing simpler songs too. Songs like Annemarie and What Can I Say are centred around good, strong pop hooks."

Ahead of Minor Miracles' release you can grab a copy when the band play Broadcast in Glasgow on Wednesday with Remi & The Mortals and Home Economics. Star Rover then have a launch party on Friday at Leith Depot in Edinburgh, joined by Golden Arm, PAL and Bloom.

MORE: facebook.com/StarRoverBand

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

amazingradio.com
jimgellatly.com



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