

# EDGE

WII | NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | PORTABLE

## BANG! GOES PS3





### WII MUSKETEERS

The Wii Remote: if international media sources are to be believed, Nintendo's new controller may be the most lethal device man has created since the H-bomb. Injury lawyers will be delighted to know that the team from USMechatronics have been doing their best to make the Remote even deadlier, by using it to control a KR16 industrial robot. An impressive technical achievement, shaky video footage reveals what looks disturbingly like sandbags propped around the base of the machinery, which suggests that the Wiibot could be fatal even without the optional sword or tennis racquet attachment. Whether it makes it to a tribunal or not, the results seem likely to prove the adage that a Wiibot may wobble, but if it falls over it will presumably kill you.

• <http://www.usmechatronics.com/usmgarage/wiibot.html>



### EVENT

# Devs head to Vegas for a roll of the DICE

Top designers, developers and business leaders get together to discuss the state of the industry, its trends and the future

The Green Valley Ranch Resort, minutes away from the Las Vegas strip, saw the seventh annual DICE (Design Innovate Communicate Entertain) summit take place from February 6 to 9. But it wasn't all poker and strippers, there was serious videogaming discussion to be had as well.

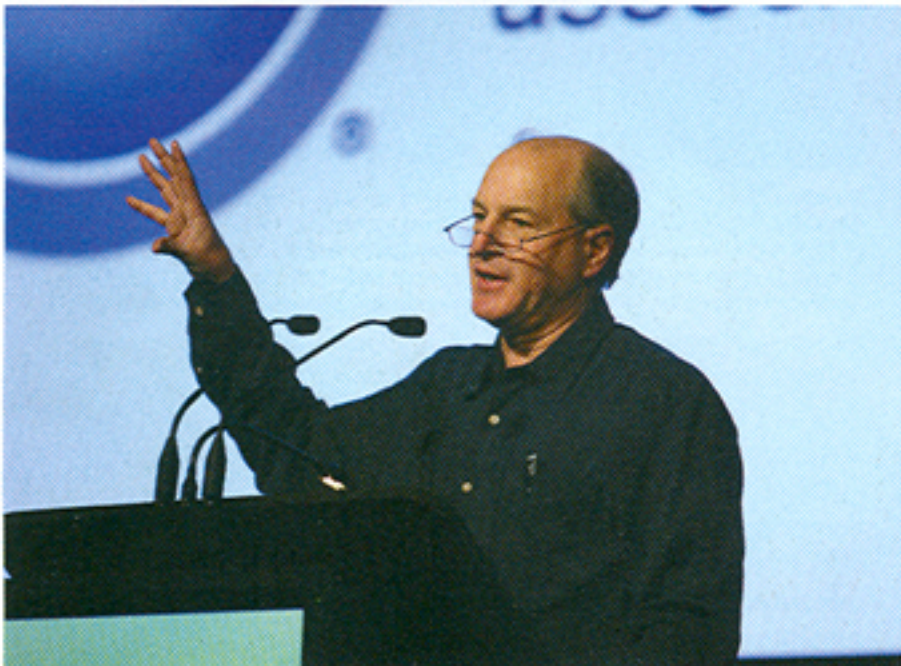
A very different show from the Game Developer's Conference that follows in March, DICE attracts the upper echelons of both business and creative people to discuss things in a relaxed setting. Because fewer than 600 people attend each year, there's a strong feeling of camaraderie – and while attendees teed off with a morning golf tournament, the content didn't begin until the evening keynote.

Giving the summit's opening address, president of Sony Pictures Digital, Yair Landau observed that games haven't quite reached the point of fully telling stories, but noted that working in one medium will be able to extend to another as their skills will easily translate.

The next morning began with an emotional speech by outgoing president of the Electronic Software Association Doug Lowenstein. His address to the industry he served for 12 years began with a retrospective look back, and ended with some thoughts for the future. He recalled his experiences on Capital Hill during the first US States Senate hearing on videogame violence, a catalysing event that led to the rise of an industry trade association. In 1994, he founded the Interactive Digital Software Association and the association was renamed as the ESA.

Lowenstein also spoke about the E3 trade show which he claimed help put the industry on the map, saying that without a central event, the industry would never have drawn mass media. He also spoke of the importance of First Amendment rights, the American ratings board (calling the ESRB the industry's shield), as well as the fight against piracy.

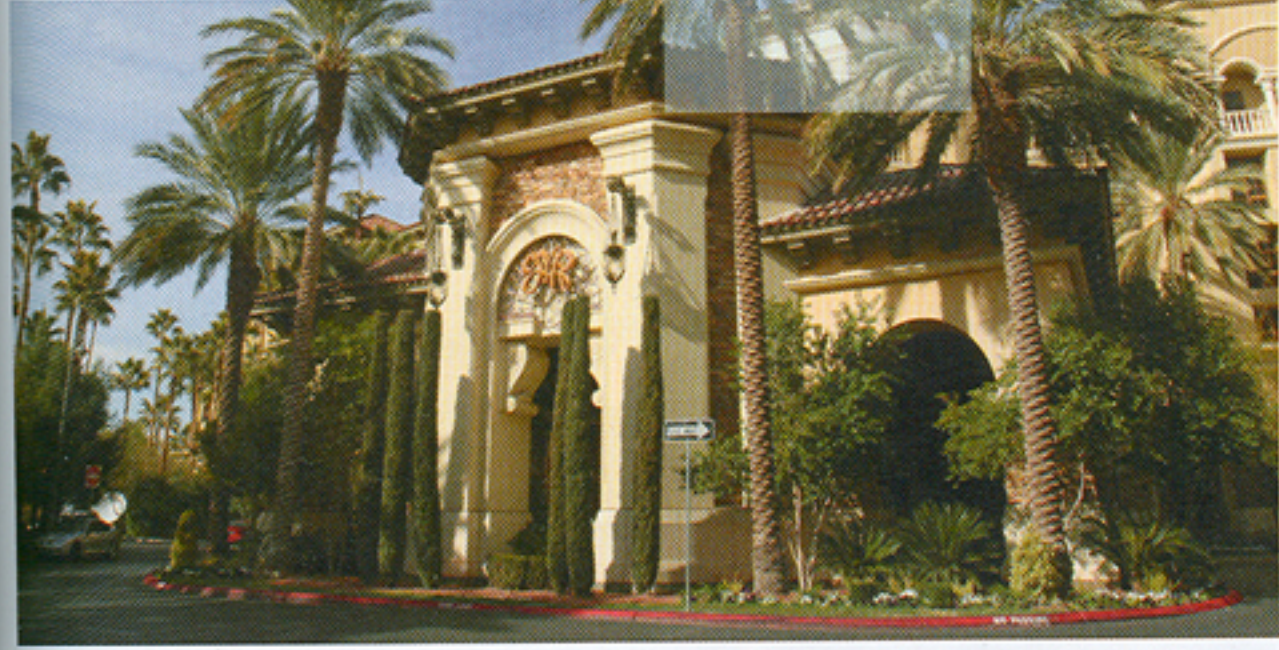
"There is nothing more important than defending the first amendment," he said.



If the ESA's outgoing president Doug Lowenstein intended his speech at the summit to go with a bang, he managed it, with an impassioned defence of developers' artistic freedom and his association's role in ensuring that this US constitutional right is not trampled on



The Green Valley Ranch offered summit-goers a wealth of distractions including a spa and casino should the games discussion become too much



fight worth fighting, it's a fight I'm proud to fight, and we need to keep fighting. But in my view there has been nothing more important than the ESA has done than putting its money and resources out there to defend your artistic freedom. And sometimes that's not easy. Plenty of things are put out there that are art, that don't necessarily ennoble the culture, but they're protected. We made a decision at the ESA that we're going to defend constitutional freedoms no matter what. And I think we've done that, and we'll continue to do that."

But the best material was saved for last as Lowenstein listed his pet peeves. His first salvo was directed towards the chorus of industry insiders who expect this industry to grow and prosper, but are not willing to put the time and effort into helping it do so. The people with the most at stake, he noted, are apparently too lazy. He closed with a broadside at the gaming press, explaining that it needs a higher level of maturity, and a need to take itself seriously: "The game industry press has the ability to push this industry to greater heights and greater success."

When the day was done, it was time for the Interactive Achievement Awards, held on the Las Vegas strip at the Hard Rock Casino. The awards,



which are voted on by the Academy of Interactive Arts and Science's 9,000 members, are held yearly in conjunction with the DICE Summit.

A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to former Nintendo of America executives Minoru Arakawa and Howard Lincoln, for significant contributions in guiding the industry to the prominent position it holds today. Presenting the award on stage was Larry Probst, chairman of Electronic Arts. "Not so long ago," he said, "The future of the industry wasn't certain." After the crash of the games market in America, Arakawa and Lincoln introduced the NES, the Game Boy, the N64 and eventually the GameCube.

**Lowenstein's first salvo was directed towards the industry insiders who expect this industry to grow and prosper, but are not willing to put the time and effort into helping it do so**

"And let's not forget Virtual Boy," Probst said, drawing cheers from the crowds.

"The impact of the work done by Minoru Arakawa and Howard Lincoln can still be felt today," said Joseph Olin, president of AIAS (the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences). "The creation of the licensed publishing model, quality approval for third-party games and peripherals, and the fostering of innovative sales and marketing programs, played a significant part of Nintendo's success then, and are at the foundation of the consumer interactive entertainment business."

When asked if he'd played the Wii yet, Arakawa's face lit up. "Yes," he said. "I have



Epic's Cliffy B was celebrating taking eight awards at the AIAS awards, including outstanding achievement in art direction for Gears' 'destroyed beauty'



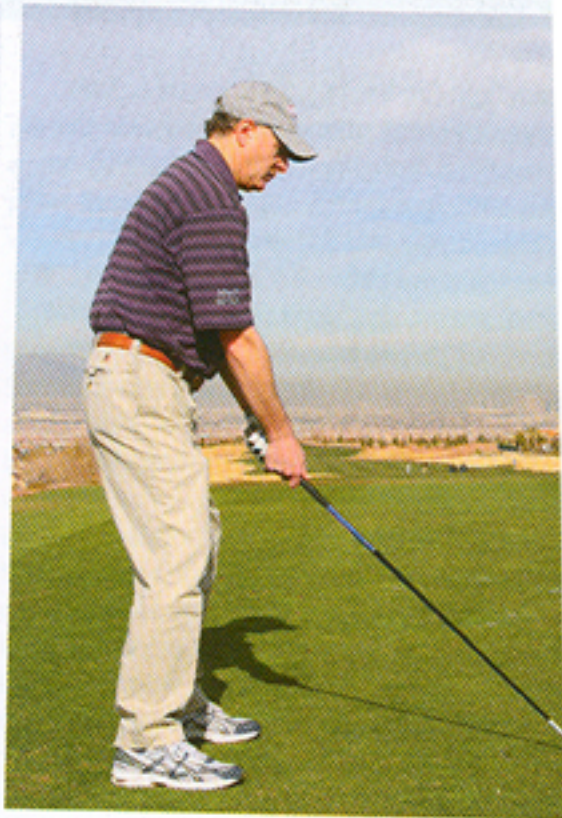
**The Spore team**

Will Wright introduces his team and defines their roles

I am not alone in the world: Will Wright introduced key members of the Spore team on stage, as each demonstrated particular elements of their anticipated game. "My role as lead designer is really more traffic cop than anything else," conceded Wright, who says his realization of the project's sheer scale led him to delegate. As a classic Wright touch, each member of the team has a nickname describing their role. The crack designers are reputed to hate the nicknames, but the detailed demonstration only proves they're in the right roles. Wright jokingly describes the game, "You can basically have an interstellar war between the Care-Bears and the Klingons." Above, from left to right: Alex Hutchinson is known as the Cowboy; Jenna Chalmers as the Mastermind; Ocean Quigley as the Scientist; Chaim Gingold as the Toymaker; and Will Wright the Traffic Cop.



Gas Powered Games' Chris Taylor made a highly personal speech looking back over his 19-year career in videogames, from initial inspiration in a games shop to making Supreme Commander



The summit's leisurely first day began with a golf tournament at the Rio Secca gggolf club, sponsored appropriately enough by Electronic Arts, who provided 'power-up' bonus games along the way. Although Woods didn't make it, a number of game industry golfers showed up, including Microsoft's Kim Shane, Louis Castle (*Command And Conquer*), Don Daglow (*Neverwinter Nights*), and Ted Price (*Ratchet & Clan*).

### Newsire



### Live elsewhere

Another of last month's unexpected departures saw Greg Canessa, the man who pioneered Microsoft's Xbox Live Arcade, quit both the service and the company to join casual game developer PopCap as vice president of videogame platforms. If the move came as a surprise, however, the destination did not: Canessa's relationship with PopCap saw the distribution of six of its games via XBLA. Microsoft Casual Games group manager Bryan Trussel replaces him at Redmond. The announcement came shortly before that of Microsoft's latest big-name recruitment, with ex-EA executive Don Mattrick joining the company's PC and Xbox game divisions in "an advisory role."

one in my home and one in my office, and I am playing almost every day." Before the Wii came along, he admitted, he had almost given up playing videogames. "Because it's very complicated. But Wii makes me back to play again. It's very easy to do."

But the rest of the night overwhelmingly belonged to *Gears Of War*, which took a huge eight awards out of ten nominations, including

### The night overwhelmingly belonged to *Gears Of War*, which took a huge eight awards out of ten nominations, including console game of the year and overall game of the year

console game of the year and overall game of the year, in which it was up against *Oblivion*, *Twilight Princess*, *Wii Sports* and *Guitar Hero II*.

Epic president Michael Capps appeared absolutely stunned: "These are our peers. When game developers, game designers say we've done well... having our peers say it's the best game of the year? That's insane." And for designer Cliff Bleszinski, it never gets old. After countless acceptances on the stage, he told the audience,

"I realised I forgot to thank my mom, so thank you, Mom."

The morning after, Gas Powered Games' Chr Taylor gave an inspirational talk to a still bleary audience. In a stylistic combination of stand-up comic and new-age motivational speaker, Taylor delivered insights from his 19 years developing games. He told the story of breaking down in tea during a meeting in December, when Taylor was telling a colleague how he felt about this business: "I broke down. Because this business is that challenging. And it can do that do you," Taylor said adding that he is normally equipped for such things.

Taylor started the process of changing how he worked and lived, putting his family and health first. Initially ashamed because he was afraid the publishers might object, but soon learned that people at publishers have families, too. "This is the secret that's getting out: we're growing up." In the process, he happened across a level of sophistication he hadn't anticipated. "Creative people don't stop creating once they leave the office. They keep solving problems when they go home."

Taylor exhorted the audience: "Let's get back to the love for the art. Let's love our customers, let's



love our families, let's love ourselves." If you don't love the thing you're making, he cautioned, nobody else will.

On the third day, Harmonix Music Systems' CEO told the story of *Guitar Hero's* runaway success, and how most people think they're living the dream. Alex Rigopulos started by showing a slide of the company's profits over the last 12 years, which were mostly negative until 2006. But along the way, there were moments of small victory. "I feel like we've been living this dream for 12 years now," he said.


And in the last five minutes of his speech, Rigopulos captured all of the spirit and power of game development. We're in control of these games that we're crafting, he said, but in real life there's also always a next level. "There's a kind of never-ending cycle of pursuit. Lasting fulfilment – it never comes from any one success or one achievement, but rather from this ongoing sense of forward motion," Rigopulos stated. He spoke of feeling the familiar anxiousness and urgency, self-doubt and stress, and everything else that has always been prevalent during the company's history.

Rigopulos thinks it's key to constantly recognise that this all flows from something profoundly positive, namely is the very great degree to which developers genuinely care about the games that



One of the key elements of DICE's smaller size, and relaxed setting, is the networking opportunities it presents. As is so often the case at gaming events, these tend to be as much about having a good time and getting to meet life-long heroes as they are about bending a potential business associate's ear about a project, or desperately pitching your ground-breaking game idea

they're creating. He concluded: "There are few blessings in life that are quite so great as to be able to spend one's days labouring creatively in the service of something that one genuinely loves. And this, I think, is the dream that all game creators are living all the time."

With the close of the conference, attendees scattered to the four winds. In the lobby, one attendee offered a piece of advice that both served as a warning and an impetus. "Don't let the suits get in the way of your love for games." 



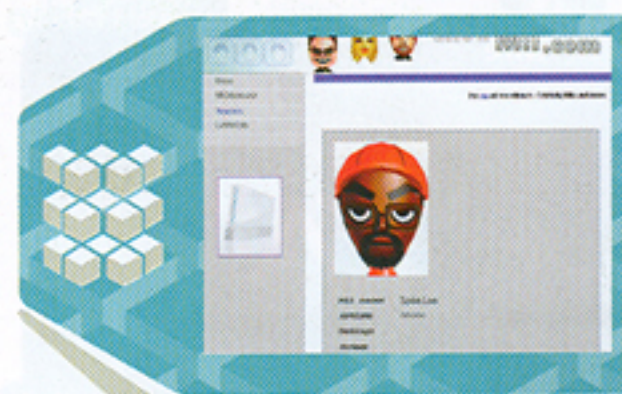
Everyone who attended the summit was invited to the Texas hold 'em poker tournament: a meeting, networking and fleecing opportunity with a \$200 buy in. With prizes for the top ten players, the overall winner wasn't a game publisher or developer, but a DICE staff member



## Twenty questions

### Phil Harrison defends the PS3 launch on stage

Newsweek's resident gamer N'Gai Croal took the stage with Sony's president of Worldwide Studios Phil Harrison to ask the tough questions. An interview in which Valve's Gabe Newell had called the PS3 launch a total disaster was brought up. Harrison responded by asking, "By what measure is the launch of PS3 unsuccessful? We had people lined up in stores in three continents." Citing the fact that more PS3s have been shipped to Asia and North America than during the launch of either previous consoles, Harrison pondered the sheer negativity, adding that the European launch is on track with units currently en route from China. Moving on to lighter topics, Harrison also took the opportunity to show off his latest title, *Super Rub-A-Dub*, a new downloadable PS3 game that uses the Sixaxis controller (see p30).



## WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Although their in-game use may still be fairly limited, Nintendo's Mii's remain, for the time being, the best reason to turn on the Wii everyday. Mii fansites are already cropping up all over the internet, like a very endearing strain of measles, and Showmii is one of the best yet at capturing the uncomplicated, quirky charm of Nintendo's own interface. Essentially nothing more than a submissions-based gallery of celebrity Mii's, the site's appeal lies in the fact that, like hip-hop lyrics, even when the entries aren't good, they're still hilarious. Our award for technical excellence goes to the Spike Lee and Chuck Norris efforts, which are both almost uncanny. The award for the most entertaining failure, however, is for Han Solo, who looks more like Barry Scott from the Cillit Bang adverts.

Site:  
Show Mii  
URL:  
[www.showmii.com](http://www.showmii.com)