Game Tech

Nintendo's GameCube

Go get your gameware

SYED TASHFIN CHOWDHURY

THE eruption of gaming consoles in the market has pitched gamers in Bangladesh and elsewhere in the globe into the delightful dilemma as to which one to refer to as the ultimate gaming device-- PlayStation 2? Or is it Nintendo GameCube (GC) or 'the X-Box' by Microsoft?

The 128 bit PlayStation 2 continues to build upon the legacy of the PlayStation and PlayStation 1 by taking gaming to heights which are merely unbelievable. At its heart is Sony's unique 300 MHz CPU -- the Emotion Engine -- that delivers amazing graphics and stunning sound effects that would let any 'gamer' feels like he is part of the game itself rather than just a spectator.

And with the new games, some of which incorporate the latest 'Dolby Digital' and 'DTS codecs', gamers can experience sound and music effects that will more or less satisfy their 'gaming needs'. But even with the new system, gamers do not have to worry much about their previous PS and PS1 games since the PS2 is fully 'backwards compatible'.

With the X-box, Microsoft has entered the gaming console scene and is having a tough time trying to compete with the likes of PlayStation 2 and the Nintendo GameCube. Even though, the X-box along with its 600 MHz CPU, 64 MB memory and 300 m/sec polygon performance is the best gaming console till date, it still cannot attract the already loyal gamers of the Sony PlayStation 2.

Nintendo GameCube has 24 MB's of unified-standalone 1T-SRAM, along with 3MB's on-chip, and a supplemental 16MB's of SDRAM(AKA A-RAM("A" for Auxiliary)for a total of 43MB's. GameCube, can stream textures in and out requiring less memory, and putting less strain on the CPU/GPU/MPU whose main job is to do calculations.

In terms of games, a comparison between X-box and PS2 shows the advantage that Sony has for being in the game market for longer period. The recent titles available for PS2 such as Devil May Cry are true second-generation Playstation 2 games and certainly don't look and play any worse than the new X-Box games. Nintendo has a smaller range of GameCube games available, but the ones that are available are of high quality. Most of these games are conversions from existing X-Box or PS2 titles.

With all the specifications, it is supposed to be a lot tougher for anyone to decide which is the best gaming console at the moment. The gamers of our country prefer Playstation 2 over its two competitors. "The games of GameCube are quite rare. On the other hand, the games of X-box, offer better graphics but the games themselves are inadequate." commented Barshan, an 18-year old gamer of the city.

"And whatever Playstation 2 lacks through good graphics like the GC or X-box, it makes up through its wide range of good quality games." said Barshan.

Playstation 2 is reportedly *the* popular gaming console in Dhaka alone, since the Playstation 2 games are widely found in the shops of Eastern Plaza and the Stadium Market. Even though, these are all pirated, such games are found the very next day, after their release in the US.

When one needs like to buy a gaming console like the Playstation 2 here, he can perhaps buy the 'pirated' PlayStation 2 of Eastern Plaza. The 'pirated' device is sold at Tk 25,000 and is more expensive than the 'original' PlayStation 2, which is Tk 15,000; this is due to the fact that the 'pirated' version contains 'mod-chips' which would enable gamers to play the pirated PlayStation 2 games. The price of any Play Station 2 game in Dhaka is around Tk 800 while the 'pirated' version of that very game is only Tk. 200.

But the 'pirated' game would not work in a PlayStation 2 until and unless it contains a 'mod-chip'. Such pirated PlayStation 2 games are sold as 'DVD games' in Eastern Plaza and at the Stadium Market. Reportedly, GameCube also costs Tk. 15,000 while the Microsoft X-box has a price ranging from around Tk. 26,000 to 30,000.

As was reported in Gamepro.com by Dan Elektro, PlayStation 2 was the best-selling game console during December 2001 when 1.4 million PS2s were sold despite the launch of GameCube and X-box. Microsoft had sold 934,000 X-Box consoles while Nintendo had sold 615,000 GameCubes. The decision is pretty much the same where our city gamers are concerned.

Sony's Play Station 2

Microsoft's X-Box

Top ten games for summer 2003:

Soul Calibur II (X-box, PS2, GameCube)
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness(PS2)
Shaun Murray: Wakeboarding Unleashed(PS2, X-box)
Wario World (GameCube)
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic (X-box)
Midnight Club II (PS2, X-box)
Brute Force (X-box)
Ultimate Muscle: Legends vs. New Generation(GameCube)
Alter Echo (PS2, X-Box)
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution(PS2)

Dr. Tech

Dear Dr. Tech
How can I protect myself from the latest virus 'Sobig.F' which is quite a threat at the moment? How can I remove it if I am infected?
Hamid

Dear Hamid
This is what I read about Sobig in ABC News, hope it will help you. The Sobig.F worm is a variant of June's Sobig.A worm. The worm is also known as I-Worm.Sobig.f, W32/Sobig.F-mm, W32/Sobig.f@MM, and WORM_SOBIG.F. Sobig.F only affects Windows systems, and it has been spreading rapidly since earlier this week. Machines running Windows 2000, Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows NT, and Windows XP are all susceptible to the worm.

On an infected system, the worm scans various documents for e-mail addresses. The worm then distributes itself to other inboxes using a built-in SMTP engine.

The worm also has a built-in shutoff date. It'll stop working on September 10, 2003.

How to protect yourself

1. Delete any e-mail with the following subject lines, even if they're sent from a familiar name:
*Thank you! *Your details *Re: Details *Re: Approved *Re: Re: My details *Re: Thank you! *Re: That movie *Re: Wicked screensaver *Re: Your application

2. Don't open any email attachments, especially those with the following names.
*your_document.pif document_all.pif *thank_you.pif *your_details.pif *details.pif *document_9446.pif *application.pif *wicked_scr.scr *movie0045.pif

Remove Sobig.F from your system
Several anti-virus software makers have released tools that will help remove the bug from your system. If you think your Windows PC has been infected, visit these sites:
McAfee's free Stinger virus cleanup tool http://vil.nai.com/vil/avertto ols.asp#stinger
Symantec's free Sobig.F removal tool http://securityresponse.symant ec.com/avcenter/venc/data/w32. sobig.f@mm.removal.tool.html

dailystartech@yahoo.com

Tech Toon

"I found a solution to your spam problem. I've set up your e-mail to automatically delete any message with a vowel in it."

Star Tech Quiz   54

Check the box beside the correct answer
1. Changing computer language of 1's and 0's to [...] that a person can understand.
- [ ] clip art
- [ ] encode
- [ ] decode
- [ ] highlight

2. To carry out an instruction
- [ ] decode
- [ ] highlight
- [ ] select
- [ ] execute

Name: _____ Occupation: _____
Address: _____
Contact Number: _____ E-mail: _____

Last week's answers
1. 4004   2. PSI

Winners: Shamim Chowdhury
2B, Eastern Housing, 79, Indira Road, Dhaka.
Please fill this up and send your answers to Star Tech Quiz, The Daily Star, 19 Karwan Bazaar, Dhaka 1215 by September 2, 2003.

Tech Paper

Hi-tech tome takes on paperbacks

BBC ONLINE

A new gadget could spell an end to books as we know them.
Researchers at Hewlett Packard have developed a prototype electronic book, which can hold a whole library on a device no bigger than a paperback.

The brushed metal device is about one centimetre thick and looks like an oversized handheld computer.

The technological tome is dominated by a screen and a series of touch sensitive strips that allow the reader to navigate through the book.

E-books are loaded on to the device using a standard USB port on a computer.

Page-turner
The developers were keen to retain features of traditional books that people like while trying to dust off their out of date image.

"We've been looking at the power of the book as a way of consuming information" said Hewlett Packard's Huw Robson.

"We've been using them for so long that we're very comfortable with the idea of paging through something".
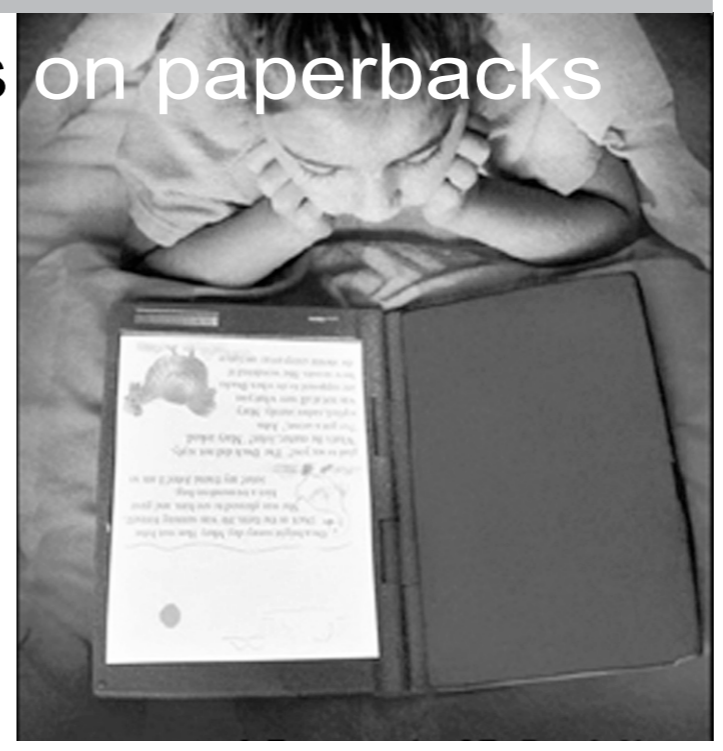
To keep page turners happy, Mr Robson and his team have fitted the e-book with a small but powerful computer that animates a turning page when the reader is ready to move on.

The pages are turned by running a finger along one of the strips. Stroking the strip at different speeds allows the reader to speed read or casually browse the book.

Paper feel
The display can also be used to read broadsheet newspapers.

The reader scans the page for something of interest and then uses the touch pads to zoom in on the story.

Particular pages can also be assigned a bookmark or an electronic finger allows you to flick between two chapters immediately.

The market for electronic books is still to take off. The main problem with them is that the screens - like computer displays - cause eye strain.

However new advances in electronic paper displays may get around this problem while making the prototype device slimmer and more powerful.

"Radical new display technologies are on the horizon which will give a much more paper like feel", said Mr Robson.

"When this comes along we need to have researched all aspects of how we will develop new displays so that we're ready to rock and roll."

The gadget could hold books or newspapers

You can turn pages with the flick of a finger

NASA's Eye

PHOTO: AFP

This artist's rendition obtained from NASA on July 9, shows SIRTF (Space Infrared Telescope Facility) satellite orbiting the Earth. NASA's new infrared space telescope, strapped to a Delta II rocket, soared into the sky over Florida early August 25 on a mission to peek into the corners of the universe and unveil objects that have eluded existing observatories, officials said.

Tech News

Moon colony 'within 20 years'

Humans could be living on the Moon within 20 years, says a leading lunar scientist.

According to Bernard Foing of the European Space Agency, the technology will soon exist to set up an outpost for visiting astronauts.

However, political will is needed to inspire the public to support the initiative.

"We believe that technologically it's possible," said the project scientist on Europe's first Moon mission, Smart-1.

Ion drive
The unmanned Smart-1 craft, which is due to be launched in early September, is flying to the Moon to demonstrate that Europe has the technology for future deep space science missions.

Its main form of propulsion is an ion engine powered by solar-electrical means rather than conventional chemical fuel.

When it arrives at the Moon, after a 15-month voyage, it will search for water-ice in craters and determine the abundance of minerals on the surface.

In the process, it will look for landing sites for future lunar exploration such as a sample return mission planned by the US space agency (Nasa) for 2009.

Any long term plans to set up a lunar base are bound to rely on international co-operation.

They could include India and China, two nations which have recently pledged to send astronauts back to the Moon.

-BBC Online

Tech Snaps

Skywatchers ready for Mars fest

On Wednesday at 0951 GMT the Mars and Earth will be 56 million kilometres (35 million miles) apart - about the closest they can get. Countrywide Mars Festival Committee has already started their long awaiting 'Mars Festival' on August 14 throughout Bangladesh, says a press release. Anushandhitsu Chakra, Bigyan Jonopriyokoron Samity and Astronomical Society have jointly taken this initiative.

As a part of this a grand sighting will take place at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) auditorium at 4:00p.m. and BUET ground at 8p.m.

Not only in Dhaka the festival is also taking place in Chittagong, Sylhet, Panchagar, Dinajpur, Chandpur and many other regions of the country.

Mars has been visible as a bright orange object in the night sky for many weeks now. The event will be a feast for astronomers who, with a small telescope, will be able to pick out surface details on the planet such as its southern ice cap. It will be a treat even with the naked eye.

Photo Tech

PHOTO: AFP

This NASA Mars Global Surveyor (MGS) Mars Orbiter Camera (MOC) image released August 20, shows a field of dark sand dunes trapped on the floor of a crater near Cerberus on Mars. This image covers an area 3 km (1.9 mi) across.

Best 10 Websites   Category: Search Engine Ranking Resources & Tools

Search Engine Watch
Excellent resource providing great insight into search engine issues & ranking strategies.
URL: http://www.searchenginewatch.com/

Rank Write Roundtable
Search engine ranking & optimisation discussion forum.
URL: http://www.rankwrite.com/archives.htm

Meta-Medic
Check your websites meta-tags with this top tool.
URL: http://www.northernwebs.com/set/setsimjr.html

SearchEngines.com
Web marketing tips, info & tutorials to help optimise your site & improve your search engine rankings.
URL: http://www.searchengines.com/

Keyword Counter
Useful keyword frequency analyzer.
URL: http://www.keywordcount.com/

Grantastic Designs
Copywriting for top search engine placement & other optimisation strategies.
URL: http://www.grantasticdesigns.com/copywriting.html

Search Engine Guide
Large search engine knowledge base, search engine news & articles, top search terms & over 3,650 search engines to explore.
URL: http://www.searchengineguide.com/

Search Engine Forums
Community forums covering all the top search engines. Tips to improve search engine rankings.
URL: http://searchengineforums.com/

Search Engine Showdown
Search Engine Showdown, the users' guide to Web searching, compares and evaluates Internet search engines from the searcher's perspective.
URL: http://www.searchengineshowdown.com/

Copernic
Cutting-edge information management solutions for professionals and enterprises.
URL: http://www.copernic.com/