

TIME IN

Had enough time out on the town? Check out these home entertainment options

GAME REVIEW



STILL SO GOOD

It's not the newest kid on the block, but *Mass Effect* is still worth the money

Mass Effect

Xbox 360 / PC

I wanted to review *Mass Effect 2* this week, but I find I can't really discuss *Mass Effect 2* without touching on its forebear (I'm also nowhere near *ME2's* end).

Mass Effect is the game I put in my Xbox 360 when I want to show folks what modern games can do, mostly because it's one of the most watchable games around. *Mass Effect* begins by allowing you to finely customise the face and head of its lead character, Commander Shepard (who can be male or female), a process honestly more fun with a couple of people back-seat gaming: "No, not that hairstyle, the other one, and move his lips down!"

Then it shifts to a fantastic piece of space opera cinema generated

entirely by the game, putting your Commander Shepard on the bridge of a sleek starship departing our solar system for a distant star in spectacular fashion.

Finally, instead of immediately dropping Shepard into combat, the game allows you to change the course of the conversation between Shepard and his or her fellow crew. It's several minutes and two conversations before your Shepard even starts fighting; by this time the *Mass Effect* game has explained Shepard's place in its streamlined space future, where humans are

the newcomers in a galaxy of politicking aliens.

By the end of chapter one, Shepard has uncovered a plot masterminded by the dastardly Saren, one of the galactic council's Spectre agents, that could doom the galaxy. Shepard must reveal Saren's duplicity, prove he or she has what it takes to join the elite Spectres, then scour the galaxy for clues to the rogue agent's next move.

It's hard to highlight all the good stuff in this huge game, but the coolest thing is that developer BioWare puts *Mass Effect's* plot on equal footing with its game elements. It's a giant, complex "Choose Your Own Adventure" book with every line of dialogue voiced by an actor.

CD REVIEW

Planet Country

Lee Kernaghan

★★★★★

(ABC Music)

BY ROBYN RANKIN

FIRST chance you get, make sure you get yourself the new Lee Kernaghan album, *Planet Country*. Why? Because it's going to be another classic Kernaghan album and your collection will be poorer without it. It has that typical Kernaghan sound we've come to love with rock riffs and anthems about country people we can all relate to. About Jack McGrath who drives a truck to make a living and about the girl who's waiting for him back in Emerald. It's my new fave.



CD REVIEW

Folk Uke

Folk Uke

★★★★☆

(SANDCASTLE MUSIC)

BY ROB MELLETT

ONCE in a while an album astounds you. This is one such case. The daughters of music royalty's Willie Nelson and Arlo Guthrie (son of Woody), Amy and Cathy, combine on this album of traditional folk and angelic harmonies. That would be enough you may think, but the girls also throw in enough edgy humour and acerbic lyrics to make this one unforgettable album. Packed with heaps of caustic verse and sounding as if it were recorded in a lounge room, *Folk Uke* is an absolute gem.



BOOK REVIEW

Dog's Eye and Dead Horse

Graham Seal

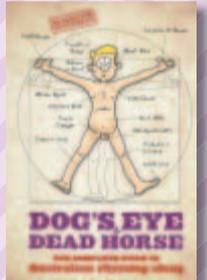
★★★★☆

RRP \$24.99

HARPER COLLINS

BY ROB MELLETT

DOES a "dog's eye" and "dead horse" make you hungry for a "pie and sauce"? It's more fun to say "What's the John Dory?" instead of "What's the story?" But rhyming slang can have a darker side, like a secret code – perhaps that's why criminals have always been fond of it. Since colonial days, Australians have used rhyming slang with style. The addition of "Britney Spears" (beers) shows this form of slang is very much alive.



Get involved: *Mass Effect* lets players choose their own adventure from the look of their character to the dialogue.

Almost every conversation can end slightly differently, causing characters to respond in different ways to Shepard later. They even affect precisely how the story ends: Do you take the high road, saving the galaxy for all, or ruthlessly ensure that humanity is in charge when the dust settles? And with whom do you fall in love on the way?

On the negative side, the third-person shooter combat controls are a little awkward, driving the APC around planets is frustrating

and it's sometimes hard to tell how best to improve your characters. Nonetheless, I thoroughly enjoyed *Mass Effect's* vast universe and entertaining story, discovering new planets and interesting people, righting wrongs and saving the galaxy.

Mass Effect is available for around \$50, and although the graphics have aged some it's still worth the money.

Come back next week for a review of *Mass Effect 2*.

TO
- ROB FARQUHAR

CAIRNS REGIONAL GALLERY

Exhibitions

KICKING UP DUST:
From Grass Roots to Centre Stage.
The Laura Dance Festival as documented by acclaimed photographer Kerry Trapnell.
Exhibition Launch: from 6.00pm Friday 5 February.

RIVERS RUN
An installation exhibition by Julie Gough.
Exhibition Launch: from 5.30pm Friday 5 February.

SENTINELS
A solo exhibition of new work by Leith Maguire.
Exhibition on display until 7 March.

Public Programs

KIDS ART DAY - 6 FEBRUARY
Presented by the Queensland Art Gallery.
10.30am - 2.30 pm.
FREE ENTRY. FREE ART ACTIVITIES.

TINY TACKER TUESDAYS ARE BACK!!
Hosted by Kate Hard.
Art activities for 2-5 year olds.
4 week terms commencing 2 March & 9 March.
\$50 per term. Bookings and payment essential.
Tel 4046 4888 for full details.



OPENING TIMES

MON-SAT 10am-5pm
SUNDAY & PUBLIC HOLS 1-5pm
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