

Chris Cornwell's Days at Sea

Hyphenated Identities Biking Bolivia's Death Road The Paris Agreement EA Games: An industry interview

Top 10 Albums of 2015

PLUS

- Eye-Tracking Tech
- Sports Streaking
- Getting Thrifty
- Outdoor Gear Guide



Not so lost anymore, now are you Lagoon.



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on the cover: Chris Cornwell charts a course for a career as a captain. (photo by steph brosky)





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EDITOR'S LETTER Rest in Space.

When we heard the news of David Bowie's death, my bandmate and I were just in the middle of combining a loop pedal with an old 90s synth – something Bowie had probably done before us (though we thought we were quite clever). His 25th studio album, *Blackstar* had been released just one week prior.

To the people in the 70s, David Bowie was just as prominent in art pop culture as someone like Lady GaGa is today. Sorry for the comparison — obviously the two are nowhere near each other in terms of music sense – but nonetheless, Bowie was as huge figure then as GaGa is now. But he wasn't only a crazy, intricate being who shrugged at things like sexuality or identity. Bowie was an amazing musician.

I first heard "Heroes" on my Dad's stereo in the living room as a toddler, though it wasn't until it was played on a mixtape while en route to Kamloops for a fishing trip that I *truly* heard it. The wailing guitar, a simple catchy beat – it was hopeful and unquestioned in its ability to be free. When I turned 17 and got my license, it was track three on the 'Classics' mixtape that I burned on a CD for my first drive. And when I moved to Vancouver in the summer of 2013, it was track one, 'Teenage Wildlife' from *Scary Monsters* that I played on repeat while trying to wire new speakers for my turntable.

David Bowie was the word 'experimental' in the flesh. He changed sound in the 70s and continued to do so right up until this most recent release of *Blackstar*.

He's a 'Starman' now, waiting in the sky – though he's already blown our minds, and he's certainly let us 'lose it' and 'boogie.' Bowie, you will undoubtedly be missed.

> – Calvin A. Jay Senior Editor

FACES TO NAMES



Alice Han

Business Information Technology Management

Alice is an avid reader and a stereotypical dork. Her daily interests include watching niche shows like *Mr. Robot*, while waiting on R.R. Martin's last book in the *A Game of Thrones* series to be finished. Aside from attending BCIT, she hopes to live vicariously through others' stories, as well as to experience new things.



Alexandra Lamb

Broadcast Journalism

Alexandra has been passionate about controversial matters for as long as she can remember, and is notorious for never being shy to provide her personal opinions about things. She hopes to become a documentary filmmaker in the future, to help educate the public about interesting and important topics that affect society that the public might not be aware of. In her spare time, she is an avid fiction writer (with three novels and several other projects on the go), and a hobbyist visual artist, guitarist and photographer.



Colton Davies

Broadcast Journalism

Second-year journalism student. Write hockey and talk hockey. Love the game. Passionate about getting correct and accurate opinions and facts out to people. I only get it right with sports though (at least I think I do).

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A Resolution for Everyone

Do you think the internet is a nasty place, and the often hatefilled comments section of most blogs only proves that you shouldn't even bother trying to say anything deep online? Try telling that to blogger Kal Opré who recently opened up on our site with a touching personal experience and a bit of advice for becoming a better human being.



Michael Pinter continues his guest to eat all of the food, sharing his thoughts about some of his favourite restaurants including: Via Tevere Pizzeria, Marutama Ra-men, and Tacofino. So as you can see, Michael is on a diverse gastrointestinal journey, and invites you to join him in stepping outside your ethnic comfort zone, to discover some new culinary cravings of your own.





REVIEW: "Vitals" by Mutemath

When James Flory's sister came back from a music festival in 2007 talking about a great little band called Mutemath, she got her brother's attention. Since then James has been an avid fan and was delighted by the recent release of their first album in four years. Head over to our site to find out what James thinks of Vitals.





@geemeghan

Reading positive feedback for a project that is your baby is such a great feeling. Hard work pays off. #BCIT #Termproject #TeamMC

@juliadfoy

Compassionate stories from Judy Graves on tragedies and triumphs of people In #DTES #bcit journo students thank you

@Kailabertoia

Just found out my books this semester are going to cost \$700... thank you #BCIT #brokestudent #tryingtosaveforEuropa

EDXBELT

You're not rich and fancy. But you *are* smart, and you *are* curious about the world, and you *do* want to meet other people like you, which hopefully leads to you forming some sort of bond, or network with them which could lead to you getting a job, or starting an organization that satisfies your desire to do something good in the world and effect positive change.

I'm not guaranteeing this will happen at TEDxBCIT in March, but anything is possible, and the tickets are way cheaper than those big TED Talks you've always wanted to go to. Plus, the whole thing is being organized and presented by actual BCIT students, so you already know that you're sharing an experience with likeminded people, and not some phoney investor looking for his next big startup to exploit.

This year's theme is "Think Again," and ticket quantities are limited, so if you were thinking about holding out to see if it fills up, you better [ahem] think again.

tedxbcit.com

Extra! Extra! Read all about it... Powerball lottery reaches \$1.5 billion and BCIT gets a nap room.

NAP ROOM

BCIT

Sometimes I wonder how future civilizations will remember us. If six local news outlets on the morning of January 13, 2016 are to be trusted, we were a people desperate to get rich quickly, because going about it the hard way had been causing youth around the Lower Mainland to suddenly drop in fatigue.

But in all seriousness, the SA and BCIT together have opened a nap room in SE16 where you can catch a few zees between classes, which *is* better than a couch in the Great Hall, but then ask yourself: Did the Egyptians have a nap room for the labourers of the Great Pyramid? No, they didn't, they were forced to work non-stop and look at the cool things *they* made. Just sayin'...

> www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ bcit-nap-room-1.3401171



The way I see it, you've got two options:

Take the bus to school. It can be a long ride, crammed together with a bunch of strangers; everyone grumpy because they have to get up early for school, plus that person totally butted in line, and like, "For the love of god what's wrong with people?!!" But sometimes you get a window seat, and a chance to read a book, or disappear into a podcast.

Drive to school. It can be a long ride, stuck in traffic, watching (or being) an impatient jerk jockeying for position, darting from one lane to the other, only to get stuck beside the same people at the same red light. And "Oh my god, how can there literally not be a single parking space available," and "I'm gonna be late for class," and "Holy crap, I'm so sorry, are you okay? I didn't see you there." But sometimes it's like: wide-open HOV lane, first parking spot near the door, favourite song comes on the radio.

VOTING OPEN JAN. 18 - 22 My.Bcit.ca

As with anything in life, there are two sides to every story. An up and a down. Pros and Cons. You've got your own reasons for choosing to either drive or take the bus, as does everyone else around you, and systems like the UPASS (or just taxes in general, to which we all contribute whether we use all the services or not) are designed to be fair and have everyone contributing to the greater good, because there are certain things that you *do* use that need payin' for, and your time will come, and when it does, you'll be glad you chipped in.

BCIT is holding a referendum on the UPASS this month, asking you whether or not you want to continue in this fashion, or abandon it altogether in favour of some other socio-economic solution. Do your homework, make an informed decision, then cast your vote on your **my.bcit account Jan 18-22**.



"All of a sudden you're being interviewed for a job that can take you around the world."

234 DAYS AT SEA

"Let me come back to that one," replies 3rd year Nautical Science Cadet Chris Cornwell. I had just asked the sailor to describe his experience in the program using just a single sentence. He's finding it nearly impossible to articulate the growth, knowledge, and perseverance he faced during the 234 days he spent at sea as part of his program's practicum. However, fresh off an eightmonth stint aboard a cruise ship owned by Royal Caribbean International, and after all that time sailing around the world, there is one thing that still remains true to Chris: there is no place like home.

interview calvin a jay

portraits steph brosky

You grew up in Ladysmith on Vancouver Island, but soon moved to Squamish when you were a teenager. How have your roots on the Island and the North Shore helped shape your love for the sea? When I was young, we had a boat when I was growing up . My dad and I would always go out in the summer fishing and basically boating all over the water there in the Howe Sound. When we moved, we brought the boat with us, and we further explored the mainland side of things. I grew up watching the ferries go by. Additionally, I was really young and my parents noticed I was always really eager and excited to be on the ferry. They ended up talking to the crew that was onboard, and they ended up getting me on the bridge one day. I was eleven years old when I got my first bridge tour.

You say you prefer to call yourself an Islander rather than a Mainlander. What is it about your personality that helps you identify as an Islander?

Whenever I'd come over to the mainland while I was on the Island, everything was just so crazy and busy, and I always feel a sigh of relief when I head back to the Island – a different pace over there, really. Everyone says I'm such a laid back guy.

What was it about the program that enticed you to enroll?

It opens up opportunities. You get signed up for the program and all of a sudden you're being interviewed for a job that can take you around the world.

As part of your program, you've just endured 234 days at sea. What kind of stress does that have on you and your loved ones?

That was really daunting at first, to be honest. My family was a little unsettled about it, they didn't really know where I was going. One of the places on the itinerary was Russia, and of course with the things that have been going on there, my parents were extremely worried about me going there. Luckily it was all safe for us. It's been hard, but everyone has been very understanding. They know I'm trying to chase my dream, so that kind of boosts your confidence.



What was going through your head on day one as you sailed out of port?

My first really thought was, this is going to be where I'm living for the next eight months. I was overwhelmed, it was the biggest ship I've ever been on. It was crazy trying to meet all the people I'd be working with. There was such a wide range of nationalities, you just wonder how you're going to cope with it all. You've been put onto a ship where there's really cramped living quarters, but you just learn how to adjust.

Do crew members every butt heads? Do you guys ever get off on the wrong foot?

Yes, definitely. Working with so many different nationalities, everyone has their different style of work ethic, and I found that some like to push a lot harder to get things done faster and more efficiently as opposed to other styles that like to take it a little more laid back. You just kind of had to be on your wits with every task onboard.

What was your onboard focus?

The ship I was on was called Brilliant of the Sea. I was called a deck cadet. Basically you start at the lowest position in the deck department which manages the actual ship operations – getting from Point A to Point B. You start off painting and doing maintenance, then you work in the safety stuff; anything to do with fire extinguishers, lifesaving equipment, and distress signals like flares. By the end of it all, I was almost 100% working on the grids, learning about navigation. Then I got a little bit into ship handling, how to maneuver the vessel itself.

Did you ever consider joining the navy?

The navy definitely did pass my mind. I guess what scared me away from the navy was the military lifestyle. I like a little more laid back work environment.

Have there been any crazy experiences at sea like *Moby Dick*, a giant squid, or a big storm?

We had some rough weather in the Bay of Biscay, between Portugal and Spain. We were on a transatlantic crossing from Norfolk, Virginia to Cork Island – it was a seven day crossing. On about day five or so, we went from calm seas to seven or eight metre waves. The ship has stabilizers, but they only do so much when the waves get pretty big. There were unfortunately some pretty sick people onboard.

Do you get seasick?

I don't get seasick. But I was pretty close one day, there had been some pretty rough waters.

In those rough seas, what are some hardships that you face out there?

If it's really rough outside, it makes doing anything onboard a real challenge. On a big ship it may feel like you're walking uphill for a split second, then all of a sudden you're walking downhill or side to side. I've always heard people say you're almost in an intoxicated state in a rolling ship. I had never really felt that until I was on this ship. Your body copes with it really strangely. You feel really weird. The bathroom can be hard sometimes. I also found the shower very challenging on days it was real rough. If it gets real rough, things start flying around. A bunch of plates went flying all over the galley [kitchen] floor.

When you're alone for such a widespread amount of time, how do you deal with loneliness and homesick blues?

Luckily, in this day and age, we have the internet and social media. We have satellite internet on the ship; there were only a few spots where we didn't get it. Some places you'd have to buy it. Once or twice a day I'd buy half an hour of time for \$2.50, check Facebook and see what everyone was up to. I'd post where I was and see everyone's reaction to that. Basically telling yourself you'll get back home, and that you're not stuck there forever.

Through your BCIT Co-op Coordinator Jeff Otto, you've become the curator of your own "Update" column at BCIT's Commons webpage. Has that helped you stay connected?

Yeah, definitely. I noticed that when I first started that blog, I was posting a couple links to it, and I got a wide range of people looking at it. Some commented on it, but I never noticed how far it reached until I came home and heard people say, 'Oh my god, I can't believe where you've been!'

What is your dream job coming out of the program?

I'd like to become a captain. I think realistically I'd like to work with BC Ferries as a captain, stay local. I already work for BC Ferries as a deck hand. After working abroad on a crew ship for so long you appreciate any sort of home time.

Now, back to that first question. How do you sum up your experience in the program? How have you grown as a person and what have you learned about yourself while taking this program, and more importantly, being at sea for this long? I guess I've sort of learned how to continue maintaining a focus on what you want to do for the rest of your life; being extremely motivated for a career you enjoy or are passionate about and keeping on it all the way

through. Sometimes there are some short-term sacrifices, and you have to buckle down a bit, but the experiences you gain in the end are fantastic.

"You're almost in an intoxicated state in a rolling ship."

Here, Cornwell mans the tugboat simulator at the BCIT Marine campus. With the stroke of a key, the operator can dial up gale force winds, rogue waves or a sunset cruise into English Bay. My only question is: how do they stop those god-like powers from going to their head?

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

HYPHENATED IDENTITIES

words alice han portraits steph brosky

2004, my last year in elementary school and my last year in mainland China. It's been 11 years now since I immigrated with my parents. China: the place where I was raised for the first twelve years of my life, the place that held vivid memories, no longer feels familiar...

Mom loved to invite her Chinese friend Auntie Zhao to dinner, and the topics always revolved around the same crap: how her only child got into a prestigious university in the States, how her husband neglected her, how us women have no lives outside of husbands and children. She saw that I wasn't like any other stereotypical, teenage mainland Chinese kid back then. She felt the need to "straighten me out" every time she intruded our place.

Only one time, I argued back.

POV

"So Fang Yu [my Chinese name], you're already 16. Given any thought about what you want to study in university yet?" Auntie Zhao reached over to grab a pair of chopsticks. "No knives and forks?!" she exclaimed followed by a semi-laughing snort.

"No. We're not *that* Westernized," Mom said, smiling over the kitchen counter briefly before coming over to join us at the dinner table. I averted my eyes as Auntie Zhao picked up a piece of tofu with her chopsticks and slurped it into her mouth.

"I think I will go into journalism when I am of age," I casually added, finally gathering my thoughts. "I do really like writing and writing-related majors after all."

Auntie Zhao put down her chopsticks and straightened her back like a courier with an important message to deliver. She scrunched her eyebrows all the way to merge with her existing forehead lines, and spoke.

"That's a very unconventional choice for a Chinese person. My son is currently studying electrical engineering because it's in demand in the States. You should smarten up like your parents and major in something very practical, like Human Resources, or maybe even accounting. Both choices are good for girls."

"Why must I choose something practical, like any other stereotypical Chinese kid?" I responded.

"Because no matter where you are and how long you've lived in a Westernized society, Caucasians will always see you as what you are – an Asian with Asian features and traits associated with being Asian, like being naturally good at mathematical anything." Mom got up and shook her head. "It's really warm in the room. Maybe we should turn the music on?" She paused briefly in front of the audio system.

"Just don't make me listen to any Eagles' songs ever again," said Auntie Zhao. "I don't get your family. How is it that your folks can be this westernized and devoid of Chinese values after just six years?"

"Because we adapted and integrated," I said. I stared for awhile at the imaginary spot above the audio system and proceeded. "I have Caucasian friends who are very aware that I am actually not only Chinese, but part Canadian. My parents and I never identified with any traditional Chinese values and instead, listened to rock music of the 1960s and onwards. I grew up reading *Jane Eyre*, *Little Women*, and Charles Dickinsons' works."

"How very bourgeoisie instea," Auntie responded. "I bet the Canadians love your servile attitude."

Thinking back on that conversation now, I am more perplexed about why Auntie Zhao felt that my family has a servile attitude. Is it because we integrated into Western society too well? To what extent can we integrate, without having to sacrifice some of our motherland heritage?

lask, and nobody answers.

BIKING TOWARDS THE DEATH ROAD,

by diego gonzalez

And there it was: that vast blue, the white peaks as background, the cloudless sky, and the greatness of Titicaca. We were standing at La Isla del Sol at 3,812m above sea level. That's how Bolivia started for us.

We were in the middle of our South American trip. Espil and I were leaving Perú through Puno and entering Bolivia. We didn't have high expectations. How naive we were.

Titicaca is an 8,372 km² lake divided between Perú and Bolivia. It hosts La Isla del Sol (the Island of the Sun), which is supposed to be where the first Incas emerged. The rocky island, with ruins everywhere, and surrounding by the marvelous lake, was a great beginning for this amazing country.

We took a bus to La Paz, the de facto administrative capital of Bolivia. At 3,650m above sea level, it is higher than Quito and Bogota. I could just stay in the bus looking at the sky. With daylight you will see blue skies contrasted with snow peaks or green hills; at night, the starry sky will give you four to six shooting stars every night.

In La Paz, we started at the tourist hub El Mercado de las Brujas (the Witches' Market): a street full of alpaca wool merchandise, bird skeletons, love potions, medicinal herbs, and even rituals, performed by Yatiri (witch doctors). We walked around, we bargained for some Alpaca scarves, enjoyed the local colonial architecture. We ate some peanut soup, and visited some museums. Next day, we were choosing which bikes to ride. Where? The Death Road of course.

The Death Road, a single-lane road, working both ways, with no rail guards, and cliffs up to 600m, was named one of the most dangerous roads in the world, with 300 people dying per year in the 90s. Now it is just used for downhill enthusiasts.

Our guides took us to La Cumbre at 4,600m, surrounded by rough land and snow, and we started a four-hour trip with 64 kilometers ahead of us. We climbed our bikes and started with a 60 km/h downhill speed in the first part of the trip. It is just a regular paved road for the first half of the trip, that takes around 40 minutes, followed by a 30-minute uphill ride, where we stopped, drank some water, ate a banana and a chocolate bar to regain energy. Then we entered the real deal. The Yungas. So The Yungas is a region where the Andes Mountains becomes the Amazon. Here we will ride for three hours, always downhill, in an unpaved road. Our tour guide started the main explanation on how to survive. We were never to be close to the edge. We have to give way to everything that is larger than us, and we were to follow his hand signals, as he knew where the sudden curves and narrowest paths were. There have been many cyclists before us, some who had traveled too fast to able brake in time, giving their name to the curve where they had just welcomed death. The Italian, the French, the Israeli curves, and so on.

So that is where we were, and we loved it. We loved the adrenaline as it pulsed in our veins. We have always been keen of everything extreme and threatening. And the landscape was marvelous; the different shade of green mountains as far as we could see. Little waterfalls here and there. We pulled the bike saddle higher than our hips to counter the rocky terrain, and took our jackets off. We were ready.

It is steep downhill again, and from time to time our tires skidded on the loose gravel. We focused only on the road the first few kilometers, just to be sure where we were, and how to deal with it. We sped across many crosses, shrines and memorials, reminders of where we were. We biked in the winding road, across many narrow paths, steep curves, and water puddles – reminders of the winter that just had finished. And then we were done.

We crossed snow-covered plains and dropped 3,600m, defying death. Our tour guide recorded us and took pictures of us while riding, giving his back to the mountain. Now *that* is brave, but he had the experience. We stopped at the main highlights to take pictures and enjoy the scenery. We finished in a hotel, having beer and swimming in the pool. That was Bolivia for us.

After that we set our trip towards Chile, and we knew we had missed something. The salt, the lake, the volcanos, that place where no matrier where you look, it is white. The Salar de Uyuni. But there was a strike going on in the road, and we could not go. So, that was as far as made it. We would come back and finish our trip one day. We loved Bolivia. You were an amazing and, almost, a deadly surprise for us. Thank you.



Craig Hennessey, (Ph.D., P.Eng.) is an instructor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering department in the School of Energy at BCIT and a researcher at the iCord Spinal Cord Injury Research Center. He's also the co-founder of **Gazepoint**, a company that has all eyes on a new tech toy with huge implications.

interview by jarell alvarez

What is Gazepoint and how does it work?

Gazepoint is a technology company developing eye-gaze tracking systems. Eye-tracking allows a computer or other device to know where a user is looking on a display, like a monitor, which can then be used for analysis and control... The eye-tracking systems developed at Gazepoint use infrared lights and a machine vision camera to illuminate and image the user's face. High speed image processing techniques track features of the eyes to subpixel accuracy, and advanced point-of-gaze algorithms then determine where the user is looking.

What inspired you to create Gazepoint?

My graduate research at UBC was on developing improved methods for eye-tracking. Throughout my Master's and my PhD I became aware of the potential for gaze-tracking technology and the need for a high performance yet low cost system in the market. At the time, an eye-tracking system from a leading company would cost upwards of \$40,000. I felt that new innovations using eye-gaze were rapidly becoming a reality and there was a need for a lower cost system to allow developers to harness this technology into new products.

I formed Gazepoint together with an excellent team of colleagues, in part to commercialize eye-tracking and in part to learn about non-academic aspects of engineering and entrepreneurship. There are many aspects of running a company that can't really be learned from a textbook. My engineering education provided a good foundation, but only by building a company could I fully appreciate the challenges of creating, shipping and supporting a product. Starting a company also provided an opportunity to develop skills in small-scale manufacturing and supply chains, customer support, financing, accounting, legal and corporate structuring. Entrepreneurship is also a very risky proposition and there is no better time for it than while you are student or newly graduated, as you really have nothing to lose. It's good to remember to go in with realistic expectations and to get advice from varied sources.

What exactly can this Gazepoint be used for?

Eye-tracking systems are typically used either for analysis or for control. In the case of analysis, gaze information is recorded while a subject performs a task, such as browsing the web, watching TV, or even during research experiments. The gaze data is then analyzed to determine what caught the attention of the user, how long they looked at certain regions of the scene, what objects were looked at; when, for how long, and in what order. This analysis can be used to improve the usability of software interfaces, advertising effectiveness, and our basic understanding of cognitive behaviors.

When used for control, the point-of-gaze on a screen indicates where a user is looking in real time which can then be used as a human/machine input. When tied to the mouse cursor, the gaze point can be used to interact with a computer desktop with only the eyes. Eye movements are one of the fastest movements a human can make and so a gaze cursor is extremely fast, and there is great potential for integration with video gaming, for example. However gaze is not as accurate as a hand-controlled cursor, so one has to weigh the benefits and the downsides when considering an application. One of the main applications currently for gaze input, is use in assistive communication for individuals with limited mobility. People with ALS, MS, quadriplegia or other neurological issues that limit their hand mobility can use gaze-tracking to interface with a computer using an eye pointer and an on-screen keyboard to type.

People with ALS, MS, quadriplegia or other neurological issues... can use gaze-tracking to interface with a computer.

What are some aspects you find challenging with entering the emerging market for new products, such as Google hololens and other eye peripheral technology?

Gazepoint is a relatively uncommon startup in that the company products include both software and hardware. In the past, it has been challenging to start a small technology business with hardware due to the significant upfront costs to produce physical devices. However, a number of recent innovations such as 3D printing, low-cost PCB manufacturing, and the DIY / Maker movement have really enabled small-scale manufacturing and Gazepoint has been very active in harnessing these innovations.

I believe that the ability to develop software is critical for almost all technology products. However, the added ability to develop hardware provides an opportunity to create amazing new products that perform useful real-world tasks.

What is the challenge of making your device more consumer friendly?

Our focus at Gazepoint has been on improving the performance of the system for existing users of eyetracking, and lowering costs to increase access to the technology. The form factor of the hardware is acceptable

to the current users of gaze-trackers. At this time, performance increases in parameters such as field of view, update rate, accuracy and precision are of greater utility. In a mass consumer environment, we are moving towards a significant amount of miniaturization and integration.

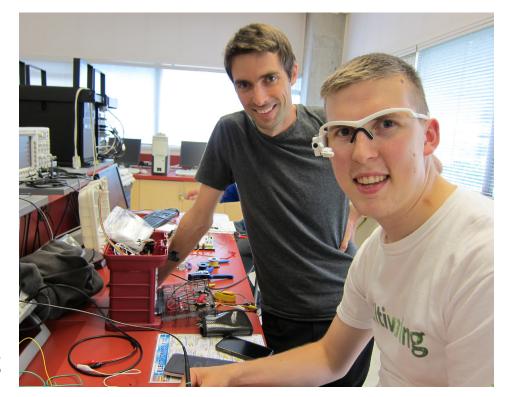
Would you ever consider licensing this technology to companies such as Oculus or Playstation?

Integration of our technology with existing ecosystems is definitely a good path forward for gaze-tracking. On its own, the gaze-tracking output is just a point on the screen, however, it's the novel integration of gaze with applications such as video games, word processors, browsers and other applications that will really be the next step in human/machine interaction. This deeper level of integration of eye-gaze will require partnering with the developers of the applications and other hardware to reach the next step in the evolution of the technology.

What are your future goals for Gazepoint? What would

you like to achieve in five, ten years down the line? In the near term, our goal is to roll out a full suite of eye tracking products for all the existing applications. Longer term, we are very excited about all the potential applications which could benefit from the addition of gaze information and look forward to being a part of the solution.

Overall, I am thrilled to see the commercialization of the technology. Every day is an exciting new challenge, and I'm always pleased to share the highs and lows of entrepreneurship with my students at BCIT. I encourage all of you to investigate entrepreneurship as a potential career path, there is no better time than now.



Craig Hennessy (on left) takes a break from testing the product to fix his gaze on the camera.



The Paris Agreement.

Who's in, who's out & where do we go from here.

by alexandra lamb

Il around the world, the recent Paris Agreement is being celebrated for setting a firm environmental goal for nations to achieve. American president Barack Obama, among others, is calling it a "historic turning point" in the fight against greenhouse gas emissions. Negotiated between November 30 and December 12 during the 21st annual session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement is the most significant and ambitious attempt to limit climate change the international community has ever agreed upon. But while it cannot be denied that we are making significant progress, we still have a long way to go. Historic evidence and the agreement's lack of legal obligations suggest that the Paris Agreement will not be the success we need it to be.

People are excited about the Paris Agreement, and for good reason. The goal it set was, overall, realistic and crucially important to combatting climate change. It calls for zero anthropogenic (human-produced) greenhouse gas emissions to be reached during the second half of the century. This is entirely feasible, as we have a variety of other means of naturally sourcing electricity that do not take a toll on our planet. Breakthroughs are being made with nuclear energy, and wind, solar and hydroelectricity are all highly effective means of generating electricity. Parties that have signed on to the Agreement will strive to reduce the worldwide temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the average temperature prior to the Industrial Revolution. These targets can be met, but the celebration is still premature. The Paris Agreement is full of gaping holes as to how they are going to be reached because it lacks firm commitments. It contains no country-specific goals and detailed timetables like previous negotiations did, and no legal repercussions for the countries that don't meet their targets.

The Paris Agreement will only become legally binding if it is signed by at least 55 countries which together create more than 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and they will be able to sign the agreement between April 2016 and April 2017 in New York. This means that if the world's biggest polluters don't sign the agreement, this will be hard to attain. According to the EPA, China, the United States, and India are the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases. Individually, they're responsible for 28%, 16% and 6% of emissions, and together, they're responsible for 50% of the world's emissions. If these three nations don't sign, the agreement cannot become legally binding.





"It isn't good e n o u g h a n y m o r e for nations to create targets by themselves"

What these countries also have in common is the fact that historically, they have backed down from other similar binding agreements to combat climate change. None of them ratified the Kyoto Protocol, which had been the most significant attempt to combat climate change prior to the Paris Agreement. The Clinton administration supported the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, but never submitted it to the Senate for review because they didn't think it would be successful. When George Bush became president in 2000, he firmly opposed the Kyoto Protocol, stating that "it exempt[ed] 80% of the world, including major population centres like China and India from compliance [ed note: the two most significant emitters of greenhouse gases at the time] and would harm the US economy." If China or one of the other major emitters does not ratify the Paris Agreement, then other countries may try to use this as an excuse to not sign it themselves.

The Kyoto Protocol and other previous, less ambitious agreements like the Copenhagen Agreement, did not prove to be successful, which gives us good reason to be concerned about the outcome of the Paris Agreement. Only 37 industrialized nations signed the Kyoto Protocol, and while overall the countries that signed it were successful in reducing their emissions, carbon dioxide levels in our environment soared upwards of 35% since it was signed in 1997, because the biggest polluters did not adopt it. After the protocol's first round of goals expired in 2012, many countries that were originally a part of it withdrew or did not set new goals, such as Russia, New Zealand, and Japan. Canada withdrew as well because the Harper government prioritized tarsands development over the environment.

The Copenhagen Agreement was intended to be the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, but also proved to be dissatisfying. Almost all the countries that signed it voiced their dissatisfaction with it. Brazil's environmental minister stated the agreement was "disappointing," and Australia said they "wanted more." This agreement was considered to be a failure because it was not legally binding, and allowed countries to create their own goals which are two key aspects of the Paris Agreement that could prove to be weaknesses. On the bright side, the Paris Agreement did learn from one of its major flaws: It set a global emissions reduction goal, which was considered to be the most significant aspect the Copenhagen Agreement lacked.

Every country that signs it will be required to set their own target for emission reduction under the Paris Agreement, similar to the Copenhagen Agreement, and that target can be whatever they want it to be; there is no minimum rate. The new agreement offers no mandate on how countries must reduce their emissions, and no means of punishing countries that don't do their part or live up to their own standards. The agreement basically requires countries to set their own goal and provide a plan for how that goal is going to be reached, but they won't face any repercussions if they don't meet it. We can only hope that all countries that sign on to the agreement will do their part, and that their targets will get more and more ambitious with time.

If we really want to see change on a global level, we need change to happen quickly and immediately. We need to create an agreement which states one solid, global goal, and that outlines what all countries need to do individually to achieve this goal. It isn't good enough anymore for nations to create targets by themselves that are too convenient for themselves. All nations must get together to discuss what their roles are in global warming, to set targets that are feasible, but which will still prove to be significant. We need a strict timetable to reach these goals, and countries that do not meet them at the right time should be fined. The proceeds from these fines should go towards developing countries to help them reduce their own emissions.

The Paris Agreement is a good start, and it got a lot of things right. It bought 195 nations together to discuss the state of our global environment. It stated a realistic worldwide target, which will be highly effective in slowing down the effects of climate change if achieved. What we need now is real commitments and real action to make sure it doesn't fade into history as a nice dream that wasn't fully realized, the same way the Kyoto Protocol and the Copenhagen Agreement did.











PHOTO // ESSAY

by Calvin A Jay

Pitt Lake, British Columbia, Canada

We had barely just parked the car before I grabbed my camera and hopped out into the grey. The west coast wind was ferocious and bit at my winter lips, cracking them with the cold air. In front of me stood a set of mountains, one for each face of a compass, creating a basin of wind and rain. My girlfriend was back there behind me somwhere. I called into the wind for her to follow, but the unrelenting weather peppered her with rain and she soon retreated back to the car in search of lukewarm 'road' coffee and the salvation of an extra sweater. I waved to her and pressed on.

The journalist in me kept a finger poised on the trigger of my Canon 550D, and through gritted teeth I fought off the elements and trudged around the dike towards the unmistakable bosom of water belonging to Pitt Lake. The diffused, omnipresent light from the sun lowered all colour into a greyscale world with a matte finish. All shadows and shade blended together. Though faded through the fog, the mountains towering above Pitt Lake like the lips of a bathtub, remained visible. There was a vacant vessel docked in the marshy bay, so I stepped down to the dock and gingerly made my way to the boat for a quick snap. I was freezing and I cursed at my slow fingers while they toyed with the aperture settings on my monitor. On the horizon I spied a structure along the dikes that ran parallel to the shore. I squinted through the fog and rain and wiped my nose with the back of my hand. This was no wintery mirage, but a wood tower seemingly out of place in the storm. I set out for it, ignoring the temptation of half-working car heat from a vehicle made in the 90s. I started at a stumble, collected myself, and then picked up speed en route to the strange structure.

On the wind, the melody of warmth serenaded the back of my neck in an effort to entice my cold body. I ignored it. I ignored everything that awaited me back in the car. I would need gas. When I was back in town, I'd have to call my boss. I'd have to grocery shop. I'd have to do laundry. I'd have to clean my kitchen. I'd have to check my inbox for a highly anticipated email. At least those puny woes would be dealt with in the warmth, but I had to investigate this structure; to test myself, to see if I could beat the world and win a small victory. I had to do it. For the photograph. For myself. And so I pressed on, the wind under my armpits, down my neck, and up my pant leg; cold air was in places where cold air should not be.

Through gritted teeth and squinted eyes I made it to that damn structure. It was a set of three platforms conjoined by three flights of stairs and a roof at the top. I started up the first flight. It creaked and groaned, buffeted by the wind, surprised at its brave visitor. I kept climbing and as the second flight began to rumble, I wondered if the whole thing would collapse on me. On the third flight, I pondered the possibility of a lightning strike sending my charred body summersaulting into the lake; a pile of timber landing in my wake. But the structure kept its ground, and the universe decided not to condemn me. I made it to the third platform and looked out upon the lake. The mountains still looked the same and I was still cold, yet somehow I felt victorious, as if I had successfully ran away from home and found a new one amongst the timber and floorboards of the tower. And even so, while I fought my way back to the car, I felt providential.

PHOTOGRAPHY

DUTDOOR GEAR GUIDE by calvin a jay

I've been working at an outdoor store for two years now and can rifle off specs like a regular ol' Rain Man. Which is nothing to be proud of by the way - I've become a gear snob/nerd. But, it puts me in a good position to help you make some decisions about your outdoor gear. Here are just a few of my top picks, based on your budget.

Waterproof Jackets

Arc'Teryx Beta SL (\$\$\$)

A favourite among staff. A bit pricier, but it's made with Gore-Tex (a super durable material that's equally as breathable) and should last you at least a decade.

Marmot Precip (\$\$)

My personal favourite. Super lightweight and compactable; even comes with a built-in-pocket stuff sack. Great for those who want a jacket that doesn't quite have the price tag of an Arc' teryx coat, but will still hold up for excursions and adventures.

The North Face Venture (\$)

The Venture combines a city slicker waterproof jacket, with classic hiker wear to create a comfy and stylish piece. Lined with mesh, this jacket is comfy even in the most volatile of climates.

Mid Layers

Men's

Thermoball Down jacket (\$\$\$\$)

Excellent warmth vs. weight. Easily washable. Heavy duty durable. Good luck affording this on a student budget though. Mom/Dad? How about an I-passed-my-finals present?

Columbia Turbo Down Jacket (\$)

If you want a real warm layer, but you don't want to break the bank, give this guy a try. It's a little bulky, but reflective circles inside help preserve body heat without the added bulk or price.

Atom LT Hoody Jacket (\$\$\$)

My all-time favourite outdoor clothing piece. Light as a feather, yet toasty warm. Even slimmer than the Thermoball, the Atom will revolutionize your entire outdoor sports wardrobe.

Atom LT Hoody Jacket (\$\$\$\$)

Throw a waterproof jacket atop this

Whistler. Bulky, not heavy, but bulky.

piece, and you have an outfit suitable for

Thermoball Down Jacket (\$\$\$\$)

pea coat (#stylecompromise). Perfect to slip on in

the morning before the car warms up, or perhaps

that sweet rush of hot air on the millennium line.

Marmot Freya 700 Fill Down Jacket (\$\$)

Women's

Pack it up in the purse or backpack. Has a water/ wind-resistant coating. This piece will last you a long time, if not forever. Future hand-me-down?

Base Layers

Icebreaker Bodyfit 300 Base layer (\$\$\$\$)

Icebreaker is awesome. Made with New Zealand Merino Wool, these bodyfit sweaters are designed to be worn under everyday clothing, mountaineering, or ski/board wear. Unfortunately, this stuff is pricey, but guaranteed to last.

Helly Hansen Warm Base layer (\$\$)

Made with synthetic fibers that are known to wick moisture real well, they're usually a little lighter than Merino Wool base layers. Great bang for your buck.

Arc'teryx Phase AR (\$\$\$)

Made with an Under Armour-style fabric, Arc'teryx base layers are known to manage moisture really well. Doubles as a fall jogging top.

Day Hiking Shoes

Men's

Merrell Moab GTX (\$\$)

This ol' faithful is perfect for day hikes on the North Shore or taking the dog up to Burnaby Lake. It's worth mentioning that this model hasn't changed in years, for good reason. On the downside, it's a wee bit heavy.



Men's Scarpa Moraine MID GTX (\$\$\$)

Great treads, Vibram sole, and a Gore-Tex membrane for waterproofing. A perfect pair for any traverser taking on day hikes and even multi-night adventures.

Salomon Speedcross 3 CS (\$\$)

It's original use was for trail running, but when the company introduced a waterproof membrane, this running shoe took on a whole new level. Treads are super thick and deep, which provides excellent traction in muddy conditions.

Women's

Merrell Siren Sport GTX (\$\$)

A waterproof pair of kickers that can be worn around Buntzen Lake, or a drowning parking lot at the grocery store. Similar to the Men's Moab GTX, this shoe is a fan favourite as well, which is why it hasn't changed much over generations.

Scarpa Moraine MID GTX (\$\$\$)

What makes this shoe great is its terrain possibility: day hikes, dog walks, Mt. Garibaldi, and everything in between. It's cut isn't too high and clunky, but it's not flimsy and too low. Great for anyone looking for their second pair of shoes.

The North Face Hedgehog Fastpack (\$)

An easy rocker. Lightweight, thick treads. This shoe comes with a 'cradle' feature, which is designed to help hold your heel in place.





HIJIIII

by frances leigh

AIT

Thrifting came about not just as a fashion phenomena started by Mackelmore's "Thriftshop" or from the show *Portlandia*, but as an anti-fashion trend. People who thrifted were more inclined to create their own style at an affordable price with people's unwanted clothes and accessories than to make it a fashion trend. Nowadays thrifting is cooler than it was five years ago and is my favourite thing to do when I want to go shopping for unique items. So here's the stitch when it comes to the best places to thrift in Vancouver:

The SPCA Thrift Store (Victoria Dr and E 36th Ave)

This place has great cheap finds. Don't let the small store and dim lighting fool you, this place is really a diamond in the rough. My favourite part about it: Fill up a bag and take it to the register and they estimate how much it should be. I kid you not. One time I brought up a Safeway bag filled with at least seven sweaters and a belt, and the cashier looked at the bag and estimated \$7! You can't beat that deal.

Value Village (Hastings St. and Victoria Dr.)

This store is <u>always</u> busy and for a good reason: they have tons of great finds! Out of all the Value Villages I have been to this by far is my favourite when it comes to finding old retro jackets, big comfy sweaters, high-waisted A-line skirts, and combat boots. The prices aren't as cheap, but let's face it, most Value Villages aren't. For instance, I found a Forever 21 sweater with the tag still on and they still charged me \$7.99 when the tag read \$9.98. *But*,Tuesdays are senior days, so if you want to bring your grandparents, parents, or anyone you know who is that golden age, then bring them along and make a day out of it.

Front & Company (Main St and E 22nd Ave)

This place is more of a consignment shop than a thrift store. The difference being? People go to consignment stores to resell their old clothes for money while at thrift stores they're all donated to the store. This place is great because it sells old and new items and the store is divided accordingly. It also sells local merchandise from East Van vendors and has tons of stuff to choose from. It's also at a great location. Be wary though, it's not as cheap as the other places.

Salvation Army Thrift Store (various locations)

My favourite one specifically is the one on E 12th Ave and Sophia St (near Kingsway). Great finds for clothing and kitchenware at affordable prices. It seems there are more Salvation Army stores than there are Value Villages so if you run into one don't be afraid to pop in and have a look.

TOP 10 ALBUMS

1. Father John Misty/Love You Honeybear For intellectual smartass types like myself, it's not too often an artist emerges with something we

For intellectual smartass types like myself, it's not too often an artist emerges with something we can rally behind with all of our society-loathing energy. *I Love You Honeybear* is our call to arms. *Honeybear* is a long, sarcastic dissection of our society, but Josh Tillman keeps his feet planted on earth; he never comes off as preachy or conceited. His biting social commentary is strung together with heartfelt odes to his wife. Tillman seems resigned to the world and how it is, and through the love songs he seems to announce that his only consolation is that he'll get to ride through this chaotic irritating life with somebody he loves.

2. **Courtney Barnett** Sometimes 1 Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit

It's a sound I've always loved: sloppy stoner punk, or 'slacker rock.' Courtney Barnett has come seemingly out of nowhere with an album that is driven and convincing rock and roll. Barnett spouts rap-like lyrics over gritty riffage and then effortlessly slips into slower sloppy grooves with tired red-eyed observations of tedious suburban life. It's not that she's a good player, or even that she has firm command of melody. It's the earnestness and the rawness of her playing and singing that makes this record special. She's doing a Dylan impression, but in the land of soulless pop and profane rap tunes, a Dylan impression this legitimate is a breath of fresh air.

3. **Destroyer** *Poison Season* Old Vancouverite Dan Bejar has followed up his semi-breakout album *Kaputt* on his own time

Old Vancouverite Dan Bejar has followed up his semi-breakout album *Kaputt* on his own time and it has majorly paid off. *Poison Season* is a Broadway-style art-rock opera with eccentric instrumentation, singing, and vocals from Bejar and company. Bejar has talked often with a kind of reluctance about this album. He seems to think that in some way he has sold his indie soul for a pop hit. This album is the capitulating sigh from somebody who has fought for years to stay neatly tucked behind the curtain – and it's a glorious sigh. The album is many things at once. It's rainy and washed-out, it's grandiose and huge, it's sarcastic and bizarre, it's dreamy and hopeful. If anything, Dan Bejar is an enigma; having now seen the band live, I'm no closer to unraveling exactly what makes him tick.

4 Kurt Vile B'lieve I'm Goin' Down...

Kurt Vile is known for his 'outsider looking in' persona and his sunbathing anthems awash in reverb and slow slapping bass. This time around he's cut the reverb down and soaked his sound in brandy and moonlight. *B'lieve* is darker, moodier and condensed. The Vile sound remains intact as he rambles through introspective lyrics and slops around on his rhythm, but he's gained *and* lost something. This album is a transition. His lyrics, as always, are written to be sardonic and humorous, but this time the humor takes on a tragic vibe. It's the voice of somebody trying to find some humor in a life that is devoid of true humor. The irony creates a tension in his music that was previously hard to find. The rock and roll is fleeing the body of Kurt Vile and floating away like a spirit, and this album is an hour-long lament of that. Vile is becoming a singer-songwriter, not just a rock and roller.

5. Beach House Depression Cherry

Beach House pumped out two great, completely different albums this year, but *Depression Cherry* made a bigger splash, and for good reason. Beach House has been at it for a while now, and this year they have somewhat predictably tumbled down the ass-end of the traditional rainbow shaped trajectory every band eventually must reach. After making some huge, complex albums, they have boiled down their sound and simplified everything. The tunes are mellow and they unravel slowly, revealing more and more minutiae and emotion. The beat is pulsating and smoky and the hooks don't come as easily. For some, this might be too far a departure – one step forward, two steps back. But for me this album achieves exactly what Beach House wanted it to achieve. *Depression Cherry* is a magnificent distillation, and let's hope they keep finding ways to twist their sound.





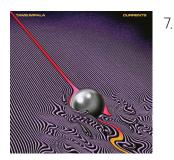




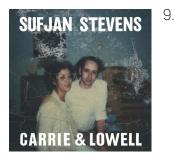


// 2015 by Jakob Schmidt











6. Kendrick Lamar To Pimp a Butterfly

It's like some strange fever dream. One of the most popular hip-hop artists working today decides to put out a jazz-funk fusion record with spoken word tunes ala the 1940s beat scene – but he never strays from rap. Kendrick keeps it contemporary and relevant. This record is a masterpiece from an artist who has been waiting for years to emerge with full props. Kendrick has proven he can create transcendent art. This album is designed to be challenging. The Swimming Pools have been drained—most of the beats are far from being traditionally poppy and danceable. He barks like James Brown and spits like nobody else. For a plain old white boy, this album is a fascinating series of vignettes into a world I don't know enough about.

7 Tame Impala Currents

Tame Impala is essentially just another name for Kevin Parker, who plays all the instruments and mixes this album. I'm not often impressed by these one-man-show kind of bands. Whereas some might applaud his multi-instrumentalist talent, I'm usually quick to notice a kind of uniformity in the sound that I find unpleasant. It's too mathematical, too calculated. There are very few artists that can surpass this feeling. Previously, I would have at least partially lumped Tame Impala into this group. This time around, Kevin Parker has made a smart move by shifting his sound even deeper into synths and danceable electronic beats. The album is dreamy and spaced out, but titanium-like in its groove. *Currents* is deeper, heavier and less rock and roll – but with a loss of guitars, Parker has gained a truly astounding command of his music.

8. **Kamasi Washington** *The Epic* The best jazz album of the year also happens to be one of the best albums of the year. In a time

The best jazz album of the year also happens to be one of the best albums of the year. In a time where Jazz is completely dead in almost every conceivable way, Kamasi Washington has kicked down the door and presented a new generation with something illusive: forward movement in Jazz. Buckle down and listen to each of the hour-long discs in this three hour-long colossus. Kamasi never runs out of steam for each almost standalone album within the saga that is *The Epic*. Horns explode, string sections wail, and Kamasi blows like a 21st Century Bird, flailing through solos, blaring down his instrument like a wounded soldier in a jazz battlefield devoid of life. It's utterly brilliant. The track "The Magnificent Seven" will make you cry.

9. Sufjan Stevens Carrie & Lowell

After the death of his Mother in 2012, Sufjan Stevens recorded a handful of songs that would become this album. With the context of death and loss in his mind, Stevens has created his darkest album yet. It's about as far from the electronic bounce of his last album as one could get. Another return to form from an artist with considerable technical talent; this album cuts deeper than most of his other albums. *Carrie* is a funeral march punctuated with quiet guitars, reverb-laden piano and grief-stricken moaning. It's not a lot of fun, but it's deeply moving and it's a step in a different direction for a songwriter I have to marvel at.

10. Sun Kil Moon Universal Themes

People don't like Mark Kozelek – and he does little to change that. Just search his name on Google. He's an asshole to everybody and he knows it. This year his pride was damaged by a rock press that at best only blinked twice at his new album and only he is to blame. *Universal Themes* is his most challenging record yet. It's loud and obnoxious and steely eyed in its darkness. Mark wrestles with death and aging – not subjects many people like listening to. He's not getting any younger, and this album has a kind of furious desperation about it. Despite its long, winding songs and occasional bursts of angry electric guitars, the quiet beauty of Mark's songwriting remains. The more I listen to this album the more I start to understand it is deeply human. Unflinching. Ferocious.

> Did we miss an album, or is there one you think deserves another listen? Tweet us @linkbcit. We're all ears...

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There is something to be said about the immersive nature of video games. Few things have the ability to transport you to other cities, worlds and galaxies the way a controller can. Video games are one of the fastest growing industries in the world. In Vancouver, large companies like Sony are moving in, and the call for animators and programmers is high.

Darren Rudy is a Senior Technical Artist with EA Games in Burnaby, working on all the major EA titles like NHL and FIFA. He specializes in 'Rigging' bringing characters to life by creating skeletons, so the characters can be moved like puppets. Darren recently sat down with me to talk about how he got started in video games, his advice for those looking to break through, and insight on the ever-changing landscape of gaming in Vancouver.

Tell me about how you first got started in the video game industry.

I was interested in video games since I was a kid. My parents and brother would be watching TV and I'd just be sitting there with a Nintendo. I've never watched TV, I've always loved video games. I got into this industry because it's what I wanted to do since I was a kid.

How did you end up with EA?

I went to art school and got a general Computer Graphics degree, because it would work for games or film. I got my first job doing commercials. I went from commercials to an animation house doing DVD movies. From there, I got hooked up with a position at EA through my peers (networking is very important) and I've been here for 11 years.

How much has the video game industry changed since you first got into it?

The complexity of the games is crazy, because of what the consumers demand. When you look at the screenshots online and see how much better games look compared to 10 years ago, it's a significant change. Games are more expensive to make, that's why we have such a bridge between mobile and AAA titles – there's hardly any in between anymore. It's either blockbuster games or indie games, we're not seeing much in between anymore. 10 years ago, there were a lot more independent developers that had not been bought out by the big corporations. I find there was a little more creativity 10 years ago in that regard. Now I think companies are playing it safer because there's more invested. That's my take as a gamer, because I'm a gamer first.

What advice would you give to people wanting to break into the industry as programmers or animators?

For programmers, nothing beats a computer science degree. Know how computers work; if you know how computers work you know how to code form better. That way, you're not pigeonholed into just video games, you can start anywhere and grow into video games with more experience. For game design, you kind of need to design your own game – whether it's a card game, board game, even an iOS or Android game. And as a game artist, which is the path I took, you need to be a good artist and make good art using 3D programs out there. You have to be able to create content from nothing into this crazy monster with polygons, textures, lighting and all that. "Now I think companies are playing it safer because there's more invested."

GAMES

For a large company like EA, what are they looking for when you first try to get an entry position? For modelling, it's likeness before anything. That's one of the hardest things to do in modelling. You see all these crazy monsters that have been sculpted and they look amazing, but that's not what we're making – at least at EA. We're making sports titles here in my department. We're looking more for the ability to create likeness. If you model Tom Cruise and someone looks at it and says "that's Tom Cruise," that's the most important thing for being an artist in our department at EA. In terms of tech work, which again was my path, you need to have good experience with Rigging. It's good to know a programming language like C# or Python.

Is Vancouver a growing market for jobs in this industry?

Yes! Last year, Sony shook things up by moving their headquarters into the Nordstrom building downtown. They hired about 700–1000 people, so that was pretty awesome. The low Canadian dollar, compared to the US dollar, means that any American company with Canadian satellite offices has significantly cheaper wages. That's always growth in our industry. I'd say right now, we have more work than people can handle here at EA and it's crazy.



Colton Davies weighs seven NHL teams against their pre-season expectations.

O V E R A C H I E V E R S

Washington Capitals

It's been a banner year for the Capitals so far, who are beginning to run away with the entire Eastern Conference. As of Christmas, the Caps this season were on pace for 62 wins and 129 points (note: no team has ever had more than 62 wins or 132 points in a season). They're doing it with an offense that was the league's second-highest at Christmas, and defense and goaltending that helped them to the lowest goals-against average in that same time. Perhaps this could the year the Caps get past the second round of the playoffs, something they haven't done in 18 years.

Dallas Stars

It shouldn't be a huge surprise to see the Stars atop the NHL standings at Christmas. Dallas already has elite forwards Tyler Seguin and Jamie Benn in their arsenal; two players on pace for well over 100 points each. Add trading for another star forward in Patrick Sharp and the emergence of John Klingberg as an offensive defenseman, and it's no surprise Dallas led the league with 123 goals in their first 35 games. And thanks to picking up goalie Antti Niemi and improving defensively, the Stars have allowed almost 0.75 less goals-against per game compared to a season ago. Sounds like a winning formula.

Los Angeles Kings

After missing the playoffs last season, the Kings have returned to form and are quietly ruling a weak Pacific Division. As of Christmas, the Kings sat first in the Pacific — six points ahead of the second place Sharks in one less game. They've been stingy defensively as usual, with the second-fewest goals-against in the NHL, and their goaltending tandem of Johnathan Quick and Jhonas Enroth has been lights-out all season.

Boston Bruins

Remember when the Bruins were written off after trading away the likes of Milan Lucic, Dougie Hamilton, Reilly Smith and Carl Soderberg, to acquire assets for the future? Well Boston sat second in the Atlantic Division at Christmas. They've been carried largely by their top forwards. David Krejci, Patrice Bergeron and Loui Eriksson have been nearly point-per-game producers, and Brad Marchand leads the team in goals. The Bruins were third with a 3.09 goals-for-average at Christmas.

UNDERACHIEVERS

Anaheim Ducks

They were a sure-bet to be Stanley Cup favorites this season, right? Well the Ducks have without a doubt been the most disappointing team in 2015-16, sitting second last in the NHL at Christmas. The Ducks averaged a league-worst 1.85 goals-for at that time, which including starting the season with an ugly six goals in eight games, a span where they were shutout five times. Anaheim may have been one of the luckiest teams, statistically, in 2014-15 when they were first in the Western Conference: the Ducks set an NHL record last year with 18 wins when trailing at any point in the third period, and also set a league record with 12 wins when trailing after two. The luck has clearly run out this season for this floundering Ducks.

Tampa Bay Lightning

The Eastern Conference champion Tampa Bay team from a season ago was expected to be just as strong this year, but as of Christmas they sat on the outside looking in from a playoff spot. Currently, Tampa Bay is on pace for only 40 wins this season after posting 50 last year. A big reason may be the controversy surrounding captain Steven Stamkos' future with the team. The superstar is set to be a free agent after this season, and it seems he and the Lightning aren't close to a new contract.

Pittsburgh Penguins

For the Penguins, with what has been expected this season, their results have been disastrous. Despite a roster loaded with superstars, Pittsburgh was well outside of a playoff spot at Christmas. Sidney Crosby has been far from dominant offensively, Phil Kessel has been a major let-down, and many other players have been injured or simply lack-lustre. They had the third-lowest goals-for at Christmas and their poor results led to head coach Mike Johnston getting fired. It can only get better for the Pens, right?



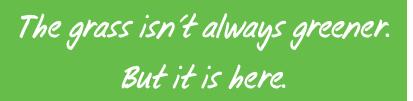


Carolina Panthers: 14-0 Start

The Carolina Panthers had never won more than 12 games in a season heading into this year. Their 15-1 finish was good for the franchise's best ever, as was their start to the season by winning their first 14 games. The Panthers became just the third team in NFL history to start their regular season 14-0 - the others being the '07 Patriots and the '09 Colts. Their shot at a perfect season came to an end with a road loss to the Atlanta Falcons on Dec. 27th.

Four NFL Teams Start 7-0

Previously, no more than two NFL teams had won their first seven games of a season, and in 2015-16 a record four NFL teams started 7-0: the Panthers, New England Patriots, Cincinnati Bengals and Denver Broncos. It marked the first time the Panthers and Bengals respectively reached this mark. The Broncos streak ended at seven, while the Bengals streak ended at eight. The Patriots reached 10-0 before suffering their first loss, while the Panthers went the longest without losing with their 14-0 start.



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No personal streak has been more coveted in sports this season than Chicago Blackhawks' forward Patrick Kane's 26-game point streak. His streak that lasted from Oct. 17-Dec. 13 was the longest since Mats Sundin had points in 30 straight games in 1992-93 with the Quebec Nordiques. Kane's historic run inspired me to take a look at other historically impressive streaks that have already come this season in professional basketball, hockey and football.



Golden State Warriors: 24-0 Start

The night before Kane's point streak came to end, the Golden State Warriors undefeated start to the 2015/'16 season also came to a halt at 24-0. The Warriors shattered the NBA record of 15-0 to start a season (set by the '48/'49 Washington Capitols and the '93/'94 Houston Rockets). Their overall count of 28 regular season wins, dating back to 2014/'15 was also the second longest in NBA history . Only the '71/'72 Los Angeles Lakers had a longer streak (33-0).



Montreal Canadiens: First Nine Wins in Regulation No NHL team in history had started a season 9-0-0 with all nine wins coming in regulation - that was until the Montreal Canadiens set this mark at the beginning of the 2015-16 season. Winning their first nine games was a franchise best for the Habs. In fact, none of the legendary cup-winning teams in Montreal ever started a season with more than four consecutive wins. This year's Canadiens fell just short of matching an NHL record 10-0-0 start to the regular season, and it was (who else) the Canucks who stopped them in their tracks, thanks to 5-1 win at home for Vancouver on Oct. 27th.

Florida Panthers: Franchise Record Win Streak

Look out Carolina, there's another professional Panthers team making headway. As of January 9th, the Panthers held the longest win streak in the NHL this season at 11 games, which was also a franchise-record. Dating back to late-November, the Cats were 17-3-0 in a 20 game span. Florida's winning ways propelled them to first place in the Atlantic Division; it's a good position for a Panthers team that has made the playoffs only once in the past 14 seasons.

Un-Honourable Mention

Philadelphia 76ers: 0-18 Season Start

The Philadelphia 76ers matched the NBA's most unwanted record, historically. The 0-18 start by Philly was matched only by the 2009–10 New Jersey Nets. The Sixers also set an NBA record with 28 consecutive losses, dating back to last season. The win that ended their historic losing streak came against a Los Angeles Lakers team that, at the time, had the second worst NBA record at 2-14, and the Sixers followed that win with 13 consecutive losses. Imagine how bad their losing streak could've gotten - they can thank the schedule makers for avoiding that.



MUSIC



CAGE THE ELEPHANT Tell me I'm pretty



In Cage the Elephant's *Tell me I'm Pretty*, we are introduced to a slightly different sound than on previous albums. Although still holding true to their alternative, melodious style, they seem to have traded their characteristic punky angst for that of a more mature variation: the angst of love. **TELL ME I'M PRETTY** cage the elephant (rca records)

Not to say that the band has lost their edge — they are actually mostly examining the darker corners of desire. "Cry Baby" opens the album, a song which laments modern society's misled ambiguity. Then, in "Mess Around" and "Sweetie Little Jean," we are introduced to the muse, an intriguing antagonist. "Too Late to Say Goodbye" explains that bond in a potent, powerful love song that describes a rabbit hole of lust.

"Cold Cold Cold," "Trouble," and "How Are You True," hauntingly explore the fears of loss and failure that accompanies a relationship. The tempo picks up with "That's Right," an ode to fun-loving freedom worthy of a dance. Another social issue is then presented in "Punchin' Bag" which addresses domestic violence from an empowering angle; the rocking mantra being "[she said] I'm not your punching bag." "Portuguese Knife Fight" is the final kick, a hot song on mutual desire.

Although their sound may have changed, Cage the Elephant has still managed to fill this album with an awesome variety of musicality and lyricism. A must-hear for alt fans.

- jaylene matthews



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