

Star Citizen releases promising additions

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OPINION EDITOR

In the golden child of crowd funding, a space simulator called Star Citizen has hit a major milestone in its development. Just a few weeks ago, Arena Commander version .9 was released. While merely being an alpha stage exclusive peek of a single module, Arena Commander shows the potential of Star Citizen and the greatness Chris Roberts is leading it towards. This newest update includes more game modes (including racing), cooperative play, and critical back-end components that will lead towards the persistent universe (all change to the universe are permanent) of Star Citizen.

Arena Commander was the first module of Star Citizen to be released to early backers of the project. Arena Commander represents an arcade cabinet to hone your skills and test your metal against other players. While being a mere toy in terms of the persistent ever changing universe that visionary Chris Roberts intends to make, this module was the beginning of stress testing the servers and estimating player count. By giving access to players so early, critical balancing of the space flight system with six degrees of freedom and ship customization is being fixed before the regular public sees the game in late 2015.

This most recent update includes flashy goodies for the alpha testers and behind the scenes infrastructure. First up, the hangars are all new and have been redesigned. Whether you're an established citizen who enjoys the luxury of "Revel & York" or a priva-

teer on the fringes of space in your "Industrial" home, the new look with enhanced Physical Based Rendering (PBR) is a site to behold. Next we have the coveted racing modes. What started as a fanfiction about the first races in space has become one of the most looked forward to elements in the Star Citizen universe. The "Murray Cup" will be the premier league for pilots who can master the complicated intricacies of having six degrees of freedom in flight.

Cooperative play has just been introduced; your friends can now jump into any active game with open slots to lend you a hand or make the fight more interesting. Last, but certainly not least, the 7GB patch now includes leaderboards. Leaderboards seem like a trivial addition, considering the huge amount of progress made in terms of play, but this is probably the most exciting addition. Leaderboards represent the beginning of server side persistence. Up to this point, everything has been local data and single serving bouts. With this new update we are inching towards a universe which can be changed and molded by the player base.

All of these additions are gorgeous, and I for one am glad to be a part of the community to help make this the game to envy. Being in Alpha, there are major improvements to be made.

Many point to Star Citizen's over \$53 million in crowd funding and say there's little to show for after nearly two years of development. There are some who are wary of the size of Star Citizen, but for those participating in the alpha, it's clear this game will reach Chris Robert's vision of being one of the best space simulators ever made.

Essential Listen: Nick Drake's Pink Moon

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To begin, Drake was a folk singer-songwriter from England who, during his career in the late 1960s and early 1970s, officially recorded three beautiful albums, although he did not gain a substantial fan base in his lifetime. He died from an overdose of antidepressants at age twenty-six and this album is the last in his discography. The album is absolutely enthralling in its minimalism, it is more than the sum of its parts; it transcends simply being good music in its simplicity.

"Pink Moon," in all its quaintness, shuns the mere idea of the orchestral, wall-of-sound style as a piano concerto does, but his voice, so apathetic and quiet like the ramblings of an old man, yet so powerfully emotional and sincere, makes it more than wonderful; it is depressing despite of itself. From the beginning to the end, there exists a subtle sadness, but it is more of an unconventional sadness. As I listen, a rush of some unknown emotions from the beauty overcomes me.

Each of the eleven songs seem to be the same, as if they are all one song emanating from the same neural key Drake has so brilliantly discovered, but each one is so uniquely conceived, all conveying their different melodies of stunning humanity, and what is so truly amazing is the softness of his lyrics. These are not songs that came from a musical genius with an amazing power to look at the qualities of each instrument and the spectrum of sound and craft a projection of their mind into music. What makes him brilliant is his ability and comfort with what he is saying and his closeness with what he is. He has a profound gift to

do so much with so little, and this album is so much with so little. The minimalism of the folk guitar music allows him to play and, somehow without explanation, even the most insignificant of words and notes show the signs of not only creativity, as if Drake himself has custom made them for each song, but with beauty that only rivals the nature for which he pulls so much of his inspiration. It is not even that he is trying to convey his feelings to an audience, it is as if he plays to ease his mind, he sings to his life, and the microphones merely catch the aural presence that he radiates, a quiet fire he isolates within himself and lets show throughout the course of the album.

Experiencing the music is like listening to a musical representation of a Shakespearean soliloquy, but that doesn't do it justice. Behind all Drake's words reflects his own shy pity, and he sings as if he knows of its existence, but refuses to let it overtake him, because it might truly kill him. Though he may have wanted to pursue methods of producing his music that would have been more in line with the industry, which is just a lengthy way of saying, in a sense, selling-out, the indefinable, unconventional, personal manifestations of peace and despair of his works, and this album in particular, was all he could bear doing. And his tone; no more perfect voice could be chosen to sing his words.

By the end, one understands what folk music is and could be: a mind transitioning in and out of a reflection of self and an observance of nature. The idealist 60s respect bordering on worship of nature is a theme that intertwines with Drake's expression of his own soul, and as he fades away to with his ending song "From the Morning," he leaves as if allowing us to exit from that soul.

Adler After Dark features robot exhibits

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Chicago is an excellent city for museum fans. With several world-class institutions just a short train ride away, many Chicagoans are very familiar with the exhibits that the city's museums have to offer. Adler Planetarium is America's first planetarium and part of Chicago's Museum Campus near other favorites such as the Shedd Aquarium and the Field Museum of Natural History.

"Adler After Dark," a monthly event held at the Adler, is a unique way to interact with one of Chicago's great museums. According to Adler Planetarium's website, Adler After Dark is an evening event that is held exclusively for adult patrons over the age of 21. The

event offers access to the museum as well as shows and entertainment that coordinate with a theme that changes every month.

Tickets for Adler After Dark are available for advance purchase for \$15 for planetarium members and \$10 for non-members. Tickets are also sold at the door for \$15 for Adler members and \$20 for non-members.

The event is held on the third Thursday of every month from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m., and September's Adler After Dark event, held on Thursday, September 18, was themed "Hops n' Bots." The event sold out early, and for good reason—Hops n' Bots offered an exciting evening of entertainment for all that attended.

Upon entry to the event, all attendees received 8 tickets for 8 free beer samples from several Midwest craft breweries in atten-

dance, including Solemn Oath Brewery, Lake Effect Brewing Company, Revolution Brewing, and more. In addition to the free samples, the event also offered a reasonably priced cash bar. A complimentary cheese buffet was also offered, courtesy of Cabot Cheese, and food for purchase was available throughout the evening from Adler's Café.

In addition to the refreshments, there were also several robotics organizations present at the event to show off their creations. Exhibitors at the event included representatives from the IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems, Chibots, Robot City Workshop, and Illinois Tech Robotics at IIT. Attendees got to take a look at each organization's robots and demonstrations, and several got a chance to drive a robot or two and share their enthusiasm for

robotics and engineering.

As a huge fan of museums, Adler After Dark is worth attending at least once. It gives you a chance to visit the planetarium in a more laid-back and mature way, without any children running around. It makes an excellent date night idea or a fun night out with friends. And, for those who purchase tickets early, it's a great deal; general admission to Adler After Dark costs just three dollars more than everyday general admission, and includes some perks and extras.

There are also a huge variety of themes for every interest and background. The October, November, and December Adler After Dark events are themed "Dead Space," "Galactic Gastronomy," and "Santa Saves Mars," respectively.

