

# Star Citizen celebrates 3rd birthday

**Austin Gonzalez**  
OPINION EDITOR

Star Citizen is the most successfully crowd funded project in history, achieving 93 million dollars and not showing signs of stopping. The space simulator has recently turned three years old with respect to development and to celebrate this, Cloud Imperium Games had some presents for the community at the annual Citizen Con.

There are many crowd funded projects that are marred in controversy over where and how funds are being spent. Star Citizen is no exception. Recently, a competing games developer has leveled complaints that have grabbed headlines on popular gaming news outlets. The accusations come after a near three-month hiatus, during which Chris Roberts was directing the performance capture of the single player section of the game Squadron 42. Chris Roberts and his wife addressed these concerns, both before and during the event in strong and heartfelt messages. Despite the threats and insults, the team set up to show the claims are unfounded.

The event started with a look back on how the project has grown. At first launch in

October 2012, a team of seven game developers were funded on Kickstarter by 60,000 fans. The development team has grown to 270 and is now trusted by over 1 million backers. Cloud Imperium Games now has offices around the world in Santa Monica, Manchester, Frankfurt, and more, all of whom are looking to hiring more talent.

This team showed off the second part of a first-person multiplayer demo they've been working on. The next update will be the most substantial one yet, adding EVA, FPS, Social elements, 35+ missions, and local physics grids for the interior of ships. This huge jump is a move from alpha 1.0 where the players are confined to their single-seater fighters to a part of the sandbox universe the community has been promised. The overworld map in this demo is 1 trillion square kilometers and 200,000 kilometers high. For comparison, renowned open world RPG Skyrim's map is less than 26 million square kilometers. This is the play area of only one planet of one of the over 100 promised systems. Even more exciting, inside this, each ship will have its own local physics grid which essentially makes it a map within a map.

The demos were played in real time from current developer builds. This differs

from a typical demo you might see where the game developer has polished a small section with the explicit purpose of being shown at a show like E3. Even without the final detailing, the map looks amazing and performed without a hitch. The team completed several missions showcasing all of the new game mechanics being introduced with the next build. The small test world's built in missions, pirate raids, and PvP areas will be a baby step towards the ultimate vision for the Star Citizen universe.

The most exciting updates were those coming from the Squadron 42 team. Star Citizen's single player story driven campaign is much akin to the original wing commander series. After displaying an amazing cutscene and detailing the next generation VFX involved, the crowd was introduced to the first moments they will experience once they get their hands on the game. The talent working on this video game include the likes of Gary Oldman, Mark Hamill, Mark Strong, John Rhys-Davies, and many more. These names are only the first few on a list that spans so many A-list actors. The final game will be completed with over 10 hours of professional performance capture film. The difference between motion capture and performance capture is more than a pedantic one. Traditional motion capture only follows the

positions of the head, body and limbs. Performance capture goes one step above and captures the facial expressions on top of this. Then each actor has to mimic a set of 19 expressions which are captured from every angle to map every detail in their face from slight asymmetry in muscle lines to differences in coloration of the face due to capillary contraction. The final SQ42 script is around 8 times longer than a traditional movie script and twice as long as the last wing commander game.

Aside from the multiplayer and single-player gameplay developments, there have been a number of smaller additions. There's the new star map detailing the whole of the known universe. It will serve as the Google Maps and information gateway to the world. It's free to access on their website and is worth taking a look at. New ships were announced, a referral system was introduced, and so much more was packed into the two hour event.

After Citizen Con, the vigor of the Star Citizen community was renewed. The work that was shown clearly laid out the amazing work that is being done, and that the ever growing team of game designers at Cloud Imperium Games will not disappoint their now over 1 million new fans.



Reviews:

## New music review: 'Mister Divine' by Naytronix

**Soren Spicknall**  
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Nate Brenner's association with tUnE-yArDs at this point in his musical career has been, to use a clichéd phrase, both a blessing and a curse. Serving as the only permanent member of that group aside from central figure Merrill Garbus, Brenner has already gained experience performing and promoting across the country as part of an in-demand act. His first album under the solo moniker Naytronix, 2012's "Dirty Glow," had a PR advantage right out the gate due to the tUnE-yArDs connection. On the other hand, perhaps the tUnE-yArDs link put Naytronix at a critical disadvantage, with writers from publications like Uncut and PopMatters evaluating that initial double 10" in the context of Garbus's work and finding it somewhat lacking.

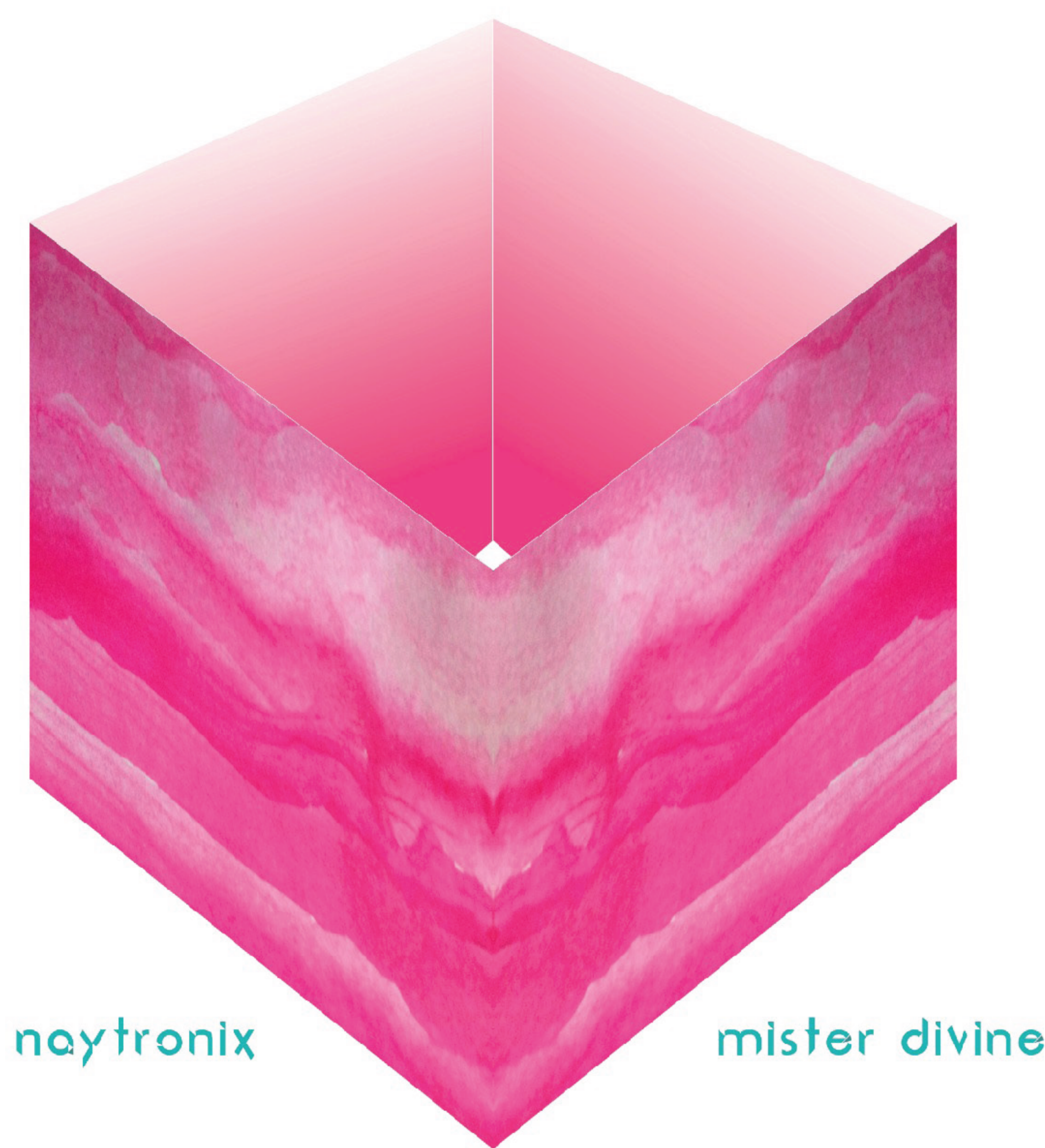
At the time, Brenner was still developing his solo style and reigning in his own voice, which was at times unstable on "Dirty Glow." Today, though, after moving from small L.A. label Plug Research over to international indie institution City Slang, Brenner seems to finally have hit his stride with his latest LP, "Mister Divine," which is out October 16. While "Dirty Glow" was a fun but somewhat scattered trip through a variety of genres with little to connect each track, "Mister Divine" starts to give a sense of the Naytronix sound and functions much better as a unit than Brenner's previous work.

"Mister Divine" begins with its title track, which was released as a single with accompanying music video back in August. The video features an orange-hued sixties beach scene witnessed through a filter of digital video corruptions, a fitting representation of the track itself, which juxtaposes a quiet surf-era lounge melody with passages of percussive, glitched-out electronic rhythms.

Unlike the songs of groups like Django Django or Coves, the goal here doesn't seem to be to modernize surf pop. Instead, the track deconstructs and distorts the genre's cues

in a way that comes across as both fundamentally experimental and effortlessly familiar at the same time. Most of the album's nine tracks follow a similar formula, with Brenner's voice serving as a relatively passive component as various electro-psych elements rise in and out

His voice itself is often filtered in certain passages, and generally doesn't reach for quite the same volume level or high tenor notes as it did in "Dirty Glow" tracks like "Nightmare" and "Robotic." This works out to the new album's advantage, since Brenner's pipes are at their



*Image courtesy of floodmagazine.com*

smoothest and most inviting when kept relatively subdued.

While the development of the eclectic, electric soundscapes on "Mister Divine" set it firmly apart from "Dirty Glow," a few things have remained the same, in a good way. Infusions of Seventies funk are present throughout

the LP, with many tracks built on danceable underpinnings and punctuated with horns both live and sampled. An experienced multi-instrumentalist himself, Brenner has expertise working complex arrangements into his songs without ever overwhelming the overall atmosphere of each track or losing any one instrument in the background. However, there are times when the number of layers seem to be the focal point of each piece, rather than the bones of the track itself (e.g. the slightly too passive "Future"). Whether that's positive or negative is up to the listener, but some of the whimsical lyrical content on previous Naytronix work seems to have gone by the wayside.

Though there are moments on "Mister Divine" when Naytronix seems to be drawing from tUnE-yArDs for influence, nobody will mistake any of the compositions contained here for the product of Merrill Garbus's creative process. While Garbus thrives on frenetic live overdubs and her own fast-paced vocal prowess, Nate Brenner takes a more measured approach to songwriting, reminiscent of Tame Impala's Kevin Parker or Junip's José Gonzalez. New songs like "Mister Divine" closer "Shadow" prove that Brenner has evolved impressively as an artist since 2012, drawing the listener in like nothing he's released before. While tUnE-yArDs is music for moments of empowered activity or even inspired anger, the songs on "Mister Divine" are more quiet and introspective, never demanding attention but rewarding those who listen closely. Though nearly every review of this album will draw endless comparisons to tUnE-yArDs (this one being no exception), in the end it's not a truly apt narrative to force. Naytronix doesn't sound like the spawn of Brenner's work with Garbus; it sounds like something else entirely. Nate Brenner has found a sonic groove that exhibits his strengths in a unique and innovating manner, and stands out positively with or without the connection to his first group. 8.3/10

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