

NBA Jam: On Fire Edition a slam-dunk

By Erik Johnson
STAFF WRITER

I don't understand sports at all. If you were to ask me what a Zamboni is, I'd guess it is a name for the guy that plays shortstop in a football game. In high school, I did everything I could to get out of gym class (I even faked menstruating once - didn't work out). Essentially, anything involving knocking balls about in a large open space makes me sweaty and nervous.

That's why it's all the more miraculous that I love NBA Jam: On Fire Edition. See, I don't know anything about basketball beyond that guys wearing expensive shoes knock into each other and try to chuck a lumpy orange ball into a dangling basket. The last time I was aware of what was going on in the NBA was when the Bulls were doing so well that if one were to walk through an urban area wearing a Bulls jacket, you were likely to get jumped and have your sweet Bulls apparel stolen.

This new NBA Jam is an Xbox Live Arcade title that released recently and is available for only fifteen of your hard-earned smackers. It focuses on the classic NBA Jam two-on-two gameplay, which, for those unfamiliar with the series, is a fast-paced arcade take on

basketball. There's no such thing as a foul and teams punch, dunk, and alley-oop their way to victory. It has an old-school magic with new-school graphics—heck, the game has big head mode unlocked from the start.

Despite being a ratty arcade title, it's still an engaging game with lots of content to enjoy. There is an array of unlockable players and teams that includes classic basketball players, video game characters and celebrities. There are also large amounts of less exciting unlockables including visual filters, icons, backgrounds, and more. These unlockables are accessed by leveling up and gaining an in-game currency which is used to purchase them. This extends gameplay quite a bit and some of the wackier unlockable teams are pretty awesome. Beastie Boys? Politicians? They're all there.

NBA Jam can be played single player, either in an instant action mode or a campaign mode. Really, those modes are only worth playing if one is grinding to unlock items. Things can get repetitive and the AI opponents seem to cheat a bit. That doesn't matter too much though, because this is definitely a game that's meant to be enjoyed with friends. There is online play over Xbox Live, but I recommend playing with pals on the couch. It harkens back to the good of days of split screen classic play, when



Image courtesy of videogamewriters.com

instead of just cursing out opponents, they were also within punching distance.

NBA Jam: On Fire Edition is definitely worth the price of admission. Boomshakalaka!

Apple, Android go head-to-head over operating systems

By Lakshamanan Raman
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Google unveiled the latest iteration of their popular Android OS, named 'Ice Cream Sandwich' in Hong Kong on October 18. Google chose Samsung Mobile as their hardware partner for Android 4.0 and displayed

the new 'Galaxy Nexus' smartphone running Ice Cream Sandwich. The OS looks crisp and beautiful, with a native resolution of 1280x720 (HD quality) and no physical buttons! Yes, all of the buttons required are in the software. The new OS has a plethora of features starting with a new typeface (Roboto), offline search in Gmail, improved multitasking, an advanced browser, a new facial unlock feature and NFC radio. This is a significant upgrade to the Android platform

and will compete against Apple's new iOS 5.

Prior to the ICS event, Apple had already sold 4 million iPhone 4S handsets. Apple's latest iteration of iOS contains 200 new features, including a ground-up redesign of the notifications system, a new iOS-to-iOS messaging service called iMessage, the integration of iCloud (a cloud computing and storage service for iOS), Twitter integration and wireless sync. iOS 5 will be available for the

iPhone 4S, iPhone 4, iPhone 3GS, both versions of the iPad, and the fourth and third generations of iPod Touch.

The smartphone market is highly competitive and a fiercely fought one. Google's Android and Apple's iOS are the major players with Microsoft and Research In Motion both trying hard to gain a foothold. For now, the battle is between Ice Cream Sandwich and iOS 5. Who will be crowned the victor?

Bertrand Goldberg exhibit glorifies local architecture

By Ryan Kamphuis
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When it comes to Chicago architecture, one of the more well-known names is that of Bertrand Goldberg - the architect who popularized the urban model of 'a city within a city' and designed many iconic Chicago buildings, most notably Marina City (which is more commonly called 'those corn cobs buildings along the river in the Loop').

Recently, the Art Institute has opened an exhibition of Goldberg's work entitled 'Bertrand Goldberg: Architecture of Invention.' The exhibition brings together many of Goldberg's architectural drawings, photographs and models into one place, and allows the viewer to see into Goldberg's mind, witnessing how his ideas and styles have changed as his career progressed. The exhibition also showcases several photos and drawings depicting Goldberg's furniture designs.

The exhibition is a fascinating one, allowing the viewer to see the creative process in each project that Goldberg worked on, and

how his priorities changed as he got older. While his early work is mainly composed of houses and other simple things as he became more popular and America started looking for ways to spur urban development, his projects began getting increasingly lofty, with each larger than the last. The exhibition is almost a testament to America's view towards urban development in the 50s, 60s and 70s. Initially, all of Goldberg's massive urban projects are built, but as suburbs became prevalent in the 60s and 70s and deurbanization became a trend, you start to see Goldberg's grand initial plans being stripped down before being built or never built at all.

The exhibition promises a good time for anyone who is interested in witnessing the creative process and seeing how landmark Chicago buildings were born - you don't need to be an architect to enjoy this.

The 'Bertrand Goldberg: Architecture of Invention' exhibit is running at the Art Institute of Chicago until January 15, 2012. More details about the exhibit can be found online at <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/Goldberg/overview>.



Image courtesy of artic.edu

Blue Man Group wows audience with visual effects

By Karthik Chalasani
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The Blue Man Group might not be a typical theater show that depicts high glamour content. Instead, it is a collaborative form of fine art which combines comedy, music and multimedia theatrics to enthrall the audience with their antics. From the organization of the group in 1987 by Matt Goldman, Phil Stanton and Chris Wink, the Blue Man Group has

entertained around seventeen million people, extending their base to all parts of the world.

One of the defining aspects of the show is that the group evinces a unique type of interaction with the audience throughout the one hour and forty five minute long show, whether it be through the pre-show cellphone message drill to tune-up the audience to the group's rhythm or with the sudden appearance of the trio of bald, black-clothed, blue skinned performers on the stage along with the equally magical band backstage. The show is never

short of excitement. It is not just the facial gestures that keep the audience spell bound but the coordination and ease with which the group performed their tricks with the support of the band. Their facial antics are backed up by innovative tricks such as Qi-pads, which give insight into modern day relationships after the advent of smartphones.

The show also comprises the rare art of delivering music through pipes in unison in a symphonic tone which captivate the mind and body. Apart from this, the show also

promises many 'live' tricks that involve the audience, where a particular person is called up to participate. These acts include the human paint brush, the dining act or the so called hilarious dining act. The show usually ends with a glittering light show or the hot air balloon act creating a party atmosphere marking the end of a truly energizing performance by the three maestros.

Considering the entertainment they provide, it is indeed a privilege to witness the Blue Man Group.