

retro radar

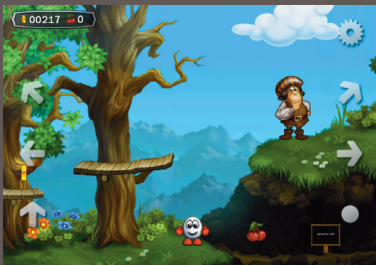
>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> So, here we are at the start of a brand New Year.

Blaze has unveiled its interesting GameGadget, which has the potential to be very exciting, while Paul Ranson explains Dizzy's recent iOS comeback. Enjoy!

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THE IPOD OF RETRO?

BLAZE ANNOUNCES A NEW MULTIPLE-EMU GAMING DEVICE AND ITUNES-STYLE DOWNLOAD SERVICE FOR CLASSIC GAMES

Since its launch on January 9th 2001, iTunes has significantly changed the way we buy and listen to music, offering a library of millions of music tracks and videos that can be accessed instantly.

Similarly, Apple has transformed the landscape of mobile gaming through iOS and the App Store, offering a new platform for affordable original games, classics and homebrew development.

Clearly watching the meteoric success Apple has seen in the entertainment space, and the recent resurgence of classic retro games, console manufacturer Blaze has announced plans to release a new open source gaming device it is billing as a 'go anywhere - play everything' games console, which it has called the GameGadget.

"What we've done is basically develop a dedicated gaming device, but along similar lines to an iPod, so you've got the ability to add content to it, from a variety of different platforms, developers and publishers, and play games in the way that they

were intended to be played," explains Mark Garrett, General Manager of Blaze Europe.

Blaze feels that there is one area where Apple's ultra-successful hardware is lacking when it comes to offering retro fans the chance to play classic games on a portable device.

"Ultimately, the iPod isn't the greatest gaming device in the world," says Mark. "Most of these games weren't developed with the touch screen in mind, so that whole gaming experience of not being able to feel because of the buttons is sorely lacking."

The GameGadget will therefore be disregarding touch-screen controls and use the time-honoured D-pad-and-button control scheme instead. Inside it has 2GB of on-board memory, but it offers portable expansion through the use of SD cards, which can be used to store not only games but also music and photos too.

At the heart of the device is some clever multitasking firmware, which operates a number of emulators that can automatically recognise

various extension types, and this has been especially designed to make emulation and emulator switching simple, easy and seamless.

"We've used open source code," explains Mark, "but we developed it specifically to work with this device, so everything is pretty much built from the ground up, and while we haven't got the emulation at this stage, it will go up to 32-bit."

Of course, open-source handheld consoles capable of playing multiple emulators aren't anything new, but Blaze's strategy is to work with game developers and publishers to offer them a way to monetise their classic games and IP, while at the same time providing consumers with a safe and simple way to emulate classic games through the console and the customised firmware.

It also hopes to achieve this by launching the GameGadget with its own iTunes/App Store-style software service: gamegadgetgames.com.

Blaze's thinking behind the online portal is twofold: to use the service to streamline, sanction and simplify game downloads, and also help



>> iTunes for classic games, you say?

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

generate a community of dedicated users and developers to really get behind the device. So how exactly will the download service work, and how much are the games likely to cost?

"Access happens through the gamegadgetgames.com website," explains Mark. "It is like iTunes, in that the software is installed on your computer and then links to the online store to allow for purchases to be downloaded. You simply register

But Blaze also faces a challenge in trying to sway people away from illegally playing game ROMs for free. Its hope is that the device will appeal not only to retro fans but also people who have never played the games before, and who are looking for a simple, safe and easy way to purchase and experience them.

"What we've developed is a solution, where you're able to store the content that you purchase, and

Angry Birds, who haven't necessarily experienced *Space Invaders* or *Pac-Man* or any of the simple retro instant experience games rather than the more drawn-out extended experiences you get with the current handheld market."

Whether classic retro games have the same mainstream pull as film and music – and are popular enough to sustain an iTunes-style service – remains to be seen. However, if Blaze can secure the support it is hoping for from the major publishers then an official channel to legally download and play classic games certainly sounds like an interesting and significant step.

The GameGadget (1.0) will be available exclusively from www.gamegadget.net SRP £99.99. GameGadgetGames is scheduled to launch some time in January. ★

“ You can add content from a variety of platforms, developers and publishers ”

your device against that account, and manage it in that way. With regards to price, we're looking at the iTunes model. *Pac-Man* is £2.99 on iTunes, and as publishers won't need to invest anything when adding games to our platform we hope to be more competitive both on single titles and bundle packs."

Blaze is currently in talks with a number of publishers, and the GameGadget's success will rest in their support.

download it to your device or PC," says Mark. "It's through that we think we can start to open up into a much broader market, where you've got a younger audience that have pretty much grown up in the last couple of years playing



Through the download service gamegadget.com, Blaze hopes to create an online database of retro gaming and a forum where its users can converge and converse.

Open source alternatives >> We take a look at the competition

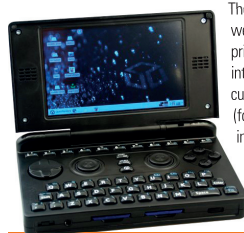
Company: GamePark/
GamePark Holdings series
Device: GP32/GP2X/GP2X Wiz/
GP2X CAANOO

These open source handhelds are the most established out there. After releasing its first machine, the GP32, in November 2001, GamePark divided in 2005 and a number of its staff formed GamePark Holdings, which released the GPX2. GamePark filed for bankruptcy in 2007 and its next unit, XGP, was never released. GPH then released the Wiz, the Caanoo and download service www.fungp.com. Word is GPH has decided to stop manufacturing hardware to concentrate on creating software.



Company: Open Pandora
Device: Pandora

One of the things that makes the Pandora special is that its design incorporates a QWERTY keyboard. Making it the Blackberry of open source gaming, this not only gives it the feel of a tiny netbook, but also opens up the machine's versatility – little wonder its creators consider it 'the smallest portable Linux PC'. But all this concentrated power comes at a price.



The Open Pandora website lists the price at €375 (for international customers) or €445 (for EU customers, incl. 19% VAT), plus shipping.

Company: Dingoo Digital
Technology Company
Device: Dingoo A320

Released in 2009, this open source handheld from China can be seen as a good solid alternative if you're working to a tight budget. The mighty Dingoo supports video playback, and comes with a text reader, an inbuilt radio receiver and a voice recorder too. Coming in two colours, white or black, it has 4GB of on-board memory, and boasts a long battery life as well as solid and varied emulation support. But the best thing about the Dingoo is the price; you can currently pick one up on eBay for around £70.



theantmeister

It's certainly a good idea, but I think they might struggle to get support from the major publishers.



IronMaidenRule

Like other similar devices, I think it is a good idea, but the price point has to be right.



Black Ridge

Hope it works and gets lots of support from developers to provide a decent catalogue of games. I won't play illegal emulators or hacks on other consoles so I will definitely keep an eye on it.



DreamcastRIP

Having to pay to download ROMs of old games in a world where Android, jailbroken iPhones, hacked firmware PSPs, R4 cards on DS, Dingoo, Pandora, et al exist? Challenging, to say the least.



Nemesis

It could be a good alternative to modding your PSP. I don't fancy mucking around with firmware so this could be what I'm looking for.



r0jaws

I honestly can't see it going anywhere; there are just too many readily available, and proven, alternatives. But if they get a reliable, simple and reasonably priced marketplace for downloads, then maybe.



thevulture

Brave move releasing something like this in an already crowded handheld market where people can get all manner of devices to do same or similar job, but not even think of having to pay for the games.



crusto

It's got legs, but only if it does everything extremely well and extremely competitively. I'd be interested as I don't really do jailbreaking, et cetera. I like my devices to do exactly what they say on the tin.



FatTrucker

Any portal that offers the ability to purchase retro games legally is a good thing in principal. As always, it will be largely dependent on pricing, ease of use, quality of the emulation and the variety of titles on offer.

FORUM OPINION

iTunes for classic games, you say?

