rAge draws large crowds

The annual rAge gaming expo, held recently at the Coca Cola Dome, drew its largest crowd, 28,930, as the sho celebrated its 10th anniversary. The growth of 8% builds on the previous unprecedented 29% growth in 2011.

The show offered a range of international developers, the latest video gaming and entertainment technology as well as interactive competitions, games and a diversity of stands.

"The growth is unbelievable. Just when we think that the show cannot get any bigger, we experience another one and we completely blown away. This show celebrates and feeds South Africa's gaming culture and without our visitors' passion an dedication, it would not be the success that it is today," says Michael James, senior project manager at rAge.

"Growth like this does not come without a few negatives here and there. We are already in discussion with the venue's fire and safety team about widening the aisles to ease congestion. We are adding more tellers at the front for the 2013 show, process the queues, as sometimes the wait was up to an hour. We will be adding more ATM machines and insisting that a exhibitors use hard lines for credit card machines. As for the LAN, we'll be doing a completely different configuration for th Internet and network to ensure gamers in the LAN have a flawless experience. I really want everyone to have the best time possible at the show and my team and I will not rest until it's perfect."

NAG LAN packed

Not only was the latest gaming hardware and software on display, but there were live eSports events, gamer lifestyle exhibitions, including cosplay demonstrations, the Artist's Alley and opportunities for visitors to get hands-on with a variety collectible card games.

The NAG LAN was in full force this year, where over 2500 gamers were hooked up to one network to engage in a 53-hour gaming marathon. Apex Interactive brought visitors a chance to take on Angry Birds in real life in the Angry Birds Alley. T competition got heated as 50 Pokémon TCG players competed for the National Championship crown in the senior, master and junior divisions this year. They also held 'Learn to Play Pokémon' workshops with Pokémon professors available to gu visitors through the game.

Another competition was the Entelect Software R100K Challenge. Requiring skill, experience and good old-fashioned guts win, the R100K Challenge saw candidates writing an artificially intelligent program that had the ability to play against an opponent in the game of light-bikes, as seen in the film Tron. Hosted by NAG Magazine and Entelect Software, the finals o the competition were presented at the show and, in an adrenaline-fuelled finale, Jaco Cronje walked away with the R100K with Gustav Mauer taking the runner up position. Cronje, an image processing researcher in the Optronic Sensor Systems group at CSIR, was thrilled and said "I enjoy working on difficult programming challenges with my experience ranging from embedded software development to game programming, 3D graphics, virtual-reality simulator development and more, so th challenge and winning has been the most amazing experience."

New games

Over 40 new games were showcased at the show and visitors were able to get hands-on with game titles that are set to be released in the forthcoming months. Megarom, EA, Nintendo, Xbox and PlayStation were all there in full force providing visitors to the show with an opportunity to play exclusive, unreleased preview code.

"The amount of positive feedback that we have had and the attention from the media, positions the show firmly on the international gaming scene. This is an exciting time for South Africa's community. Without the dedicated sponsors, exhibit and fellow gamers, South Africa's gaming culture could not possibly be where it is today. Keep on gaming and keep on growing!" concludes James.

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