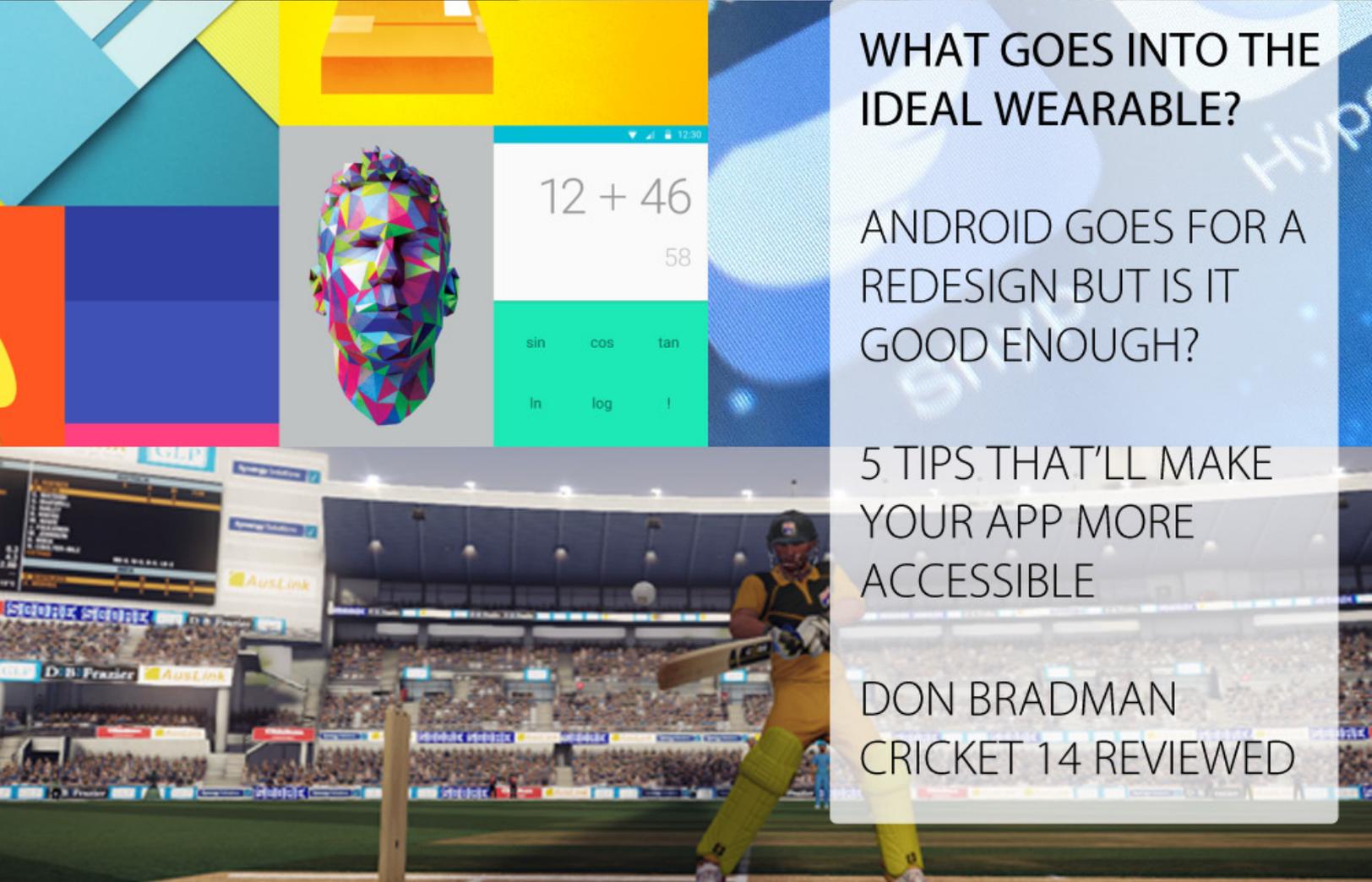WHAT'S INSIDE

WHAT GOES INTO THE IDEAL WEARABLE?

ANDROID GOES FOR A REDESIGN BUT IS IT GOOD ENOUGH?

5 TIPS THAT'LL MAKE YOUR APP MORE ACCESSIBLE

DON BRADMAN CRICKET 14 REVIEWED

THE VALUE OF SOFTWARE

Vidit Bhargava

Over the last few years a lot of iOS and Android Apps have come up. Mobile App Making has quickly become one of the most lucrative startup options of all time. But since last year a resurgent fear of of the app business has taken form.

A lot of paid apps are becoming free. Free with In app purchases or Free with Ads sells big. Paid apps find it hard to get buyers. What was once a reasonable price for an iPhone App is now too expensive. People fear that the App Making business might be going out of the door, with free getting so much traction, its going to be hard to build quality software.

People have argued that Free is the future of Apps, that Apps and Mobile Software in general lacks tangible value for which the person would want to buy an app. But is it the case? I think not.

Every app that is built carries a certain value, longitivity and cost to build. Every app has a price. The better quality you provide the higher your app is valued. Moreover, an idea to has value associated with it. Something like photo filters is a hard sell but something like 1Password is an indispensible utility that you'll be willing to pay for.
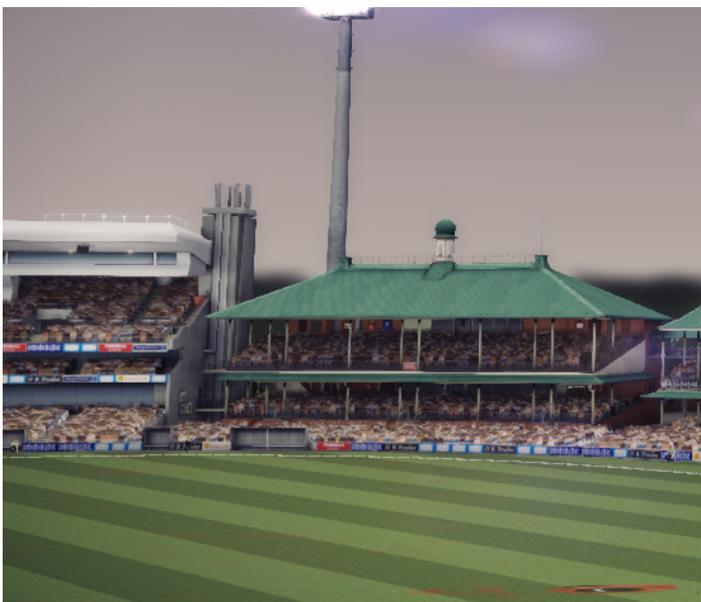
In my opinion when you create a piece of software, you must make it something valueable and make people realize its value. Spend sometime on advertising, encourage a wider press coverage, concentrate on quality. An idea worth billions shouldn't be hard to sell.
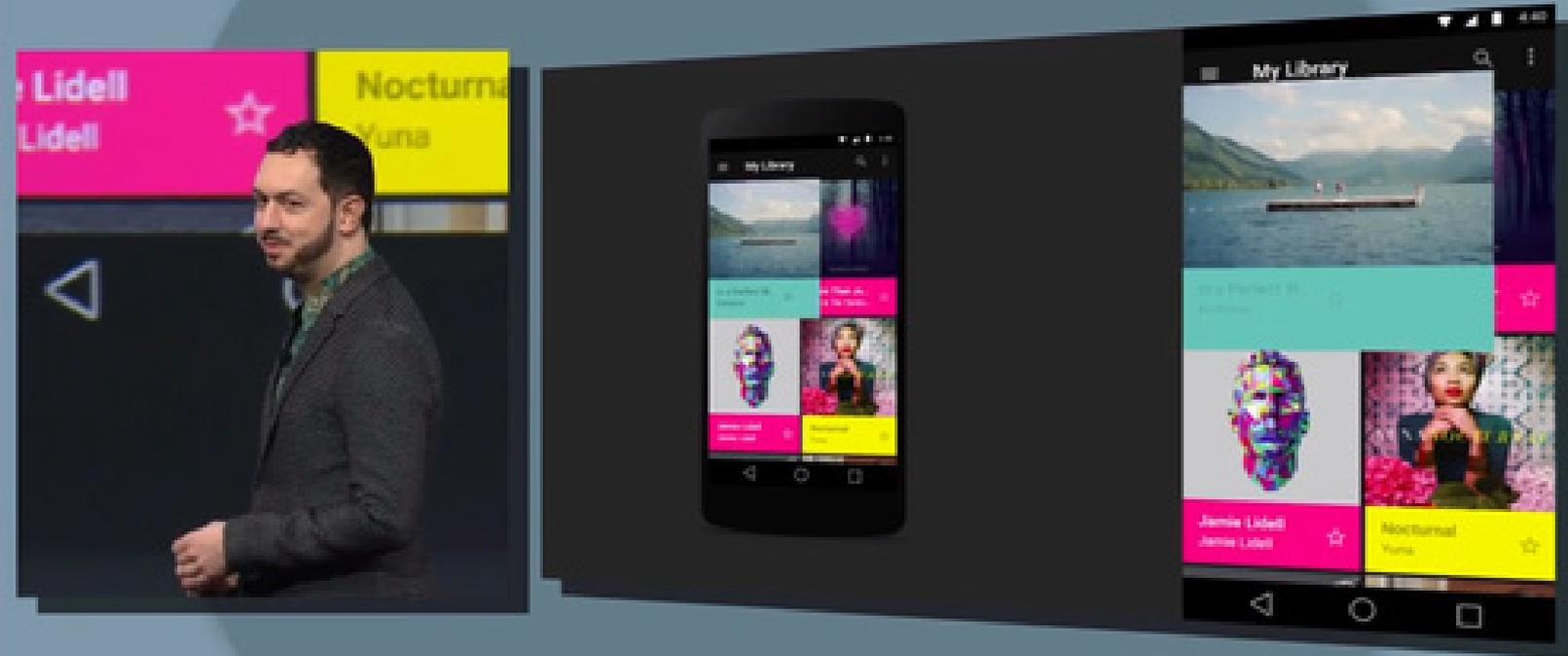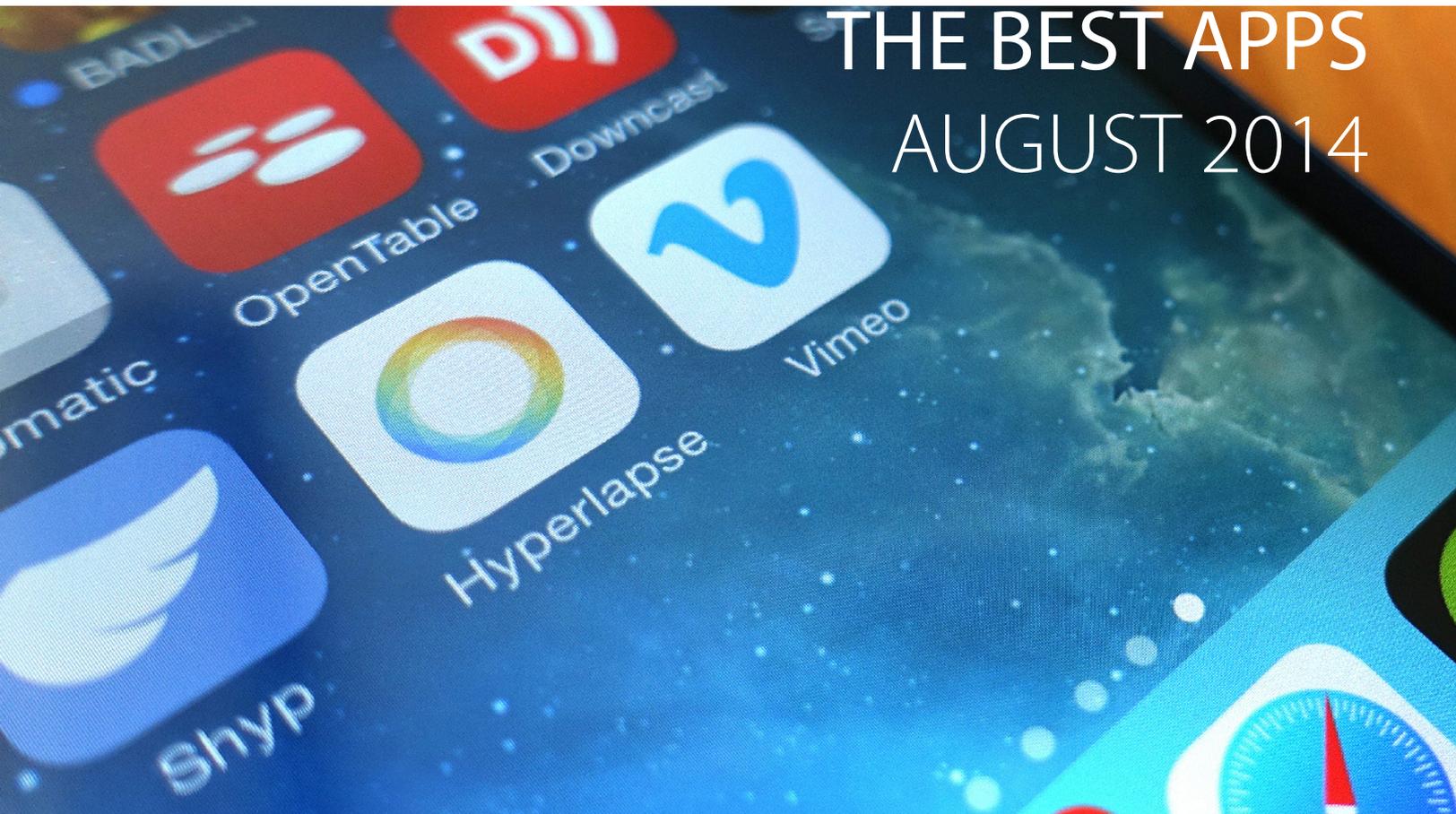
CONTENTS

The New Android Design

THE BEST APPS
AUGUST 2014

THE IDEAL SMART WATCH

Vidit Bhargava

There are a ton of fitness wearables and smart watches in the market but none of them are actually being used by "consumers", all of them show great demos, sometimes great design and promise more productivity but the initial craze of using a new smart wearable finishes soon after a few quick battery drains and these devices are seldom used again. What exactly do these devices lack? In my opinion these wearables lack enough value for them to be indispensable objects. Here's what I think a smart watch / wearable "must" have:

1. Be the greatest "Watch" ever.

Using a wrist watch at all times, I certainly feel that a wearable band must be able to show you time, I really can't imagine wearing an extra band just for a fitness or security purpose. Just being a watch is not enough though, the smart object must go the extra mile and be better than a regular watch. This is where I feel that there's a lot of scope for innovation. A regular wrist watch shows time, has a compass, an alarm clock, a stop watch and sometimes a timer, but apart from the time they aren't really good at these things. The interface is crummy, unintuitive and basically painful to use. This is where a touch screen or even a simple display of a smart watch could triumph.

> For a Smart Watch to succeed, it must be a good watch first!

Remember the 6th Generation iPod Touch which many wore as a wrist watch? It solved some of the interface problems that a normal wristwatch faces but the interactions weren't best suited for a wrist watch. You had to press a button to check the time, the touch screen interface (though improved in the next generation) could have been way better and it lacked things like a compass or any support for third party apps.

In my opinion a great wrist watch would have to be a good time piece wtih support for things like international clocks and a great interface which makes the basics of a watch far more usable and convenient. To replace a wrist watch you really must go an extra mile to make it better than the one others have today.

PROVIDE A LITTLE EXTRA

Fitness
Fitness bands are quite popular, you wear a band and it gets to read a whole lot of data which can help you improve your health. With iOS8 and HealthKit Fitness bands do get a second life. They can send a lot of data to your phone which it can than use in a lot of different ways. But instead of a separate band of sensors I'd much rather use wrist watch which had all these sensors and sent the data to my phone for further manipulation and health related help. The more accurate these fitness sensors are, the better and more indispensible a fitness wearable gets.

Recieving Notifications on your wrist can actually be a helpful feature for anyone fond of travelling

It's futuristic too!

Notifications
We receive notifications at all times, a lot of times though, we cannot really take out our phone and check them. It will be interesting to see a convenient interface to let notifications be displayed on a wrist watch.
Notifications being interactive are also going to be helpful. So for example you get a message, you could tap on your notifications to send a preset message to your friend or dismiss the notification for a later time.
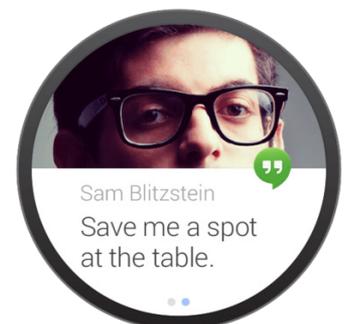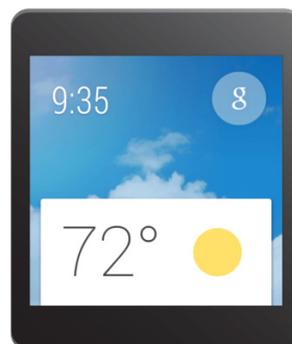
Security

Finger Print Scanners are a good way to verify security. But imagine your wrist band being your password. It's a great idea! You check the Byo Nym's demos on the matter. Its really about verifying with your heart rate and other biometric data to ensure that you are the person authorized to access a certain area. So if you are wearing your wrist watch you could unlock the doors you are authorized access into, or even make payments without really needing your credit card the wrist watch could tell the data. Security is one feature which being on your wrist will take it to the next level.

Byo Nym's Nymi is a great security wearable

Home Automation and Proximity Sensors

A lot of Home Automation is about security and proximity sensing, so if your wrist band is your security hub it become infinitely more easier to authenticate and unlock your doors, or for smart bulbs to detect your proximity and turn-on or off accordingly. Its also easier to be notified that where your car is parked in a parking lot. A wrist watch does have the potential to let the world of home automation finally take the much needed flight.

App Extensions

To realize the full potential of a wrist wearable, anyone making a wrist watch must make allowances for App Extensions. Basically allowing apps installed on your phone to give an extension of a UI for your wrist as well. So ESPN's Score Center App could provide a tiny extension showing the current scores on your wrist or an extensions from the moves app telling how many calories you've burnt in the entire day.

DON'T BE UGLY

Believe it or not, most of the smart watches or even fitness bands that have come recently are terrible looking gadgets which are directed at a select few tech nerds. For a product to be successful it must appeal to everyone, it must not look intimidating or an eye sour. With a wearable it gets even more important to not

look horrible. Everyone takes notice of what he's wearing on his wrist. It's simple, the most appealing thing goes on the wrist. Even if your smart watch is the most indispensible wearable on the planet and it doesn't look good, there's a high chance that it might fail to be on anyone's wrist for long.

People don't want to wear a smart watch because it's ugly.

4. Battery Life is important
Even if you add enough value to your smart watch it's still not acceptable to be charging it every day. Its just too cumbersome. Adding value to a watch does help in greater engagement and once a device is in regular use, you don't want it's battery to be dead, you make sure its fully charged when you leave the house in the morning but in my opinion if you need to charge something like your smart watch every day, its a little too cumbersome

to do and the lure of a regular wrist watch is always at bay. I'd like atleast 2-3 Days of Battery life for any wearable, be it a fitness band, a smart watch or even a smart headphone.

Coming back to the wearables currently in the market. There are a lot of good smart watches and fitness bands but they fail at a few key things that stop them from being the super engageable gadgets they can be.

The Pebble Wrist Watch and Jawbone Up are too devices which I like in particular but I feel they could be way better than they are in their current state, I also liked the concept of fitbit force, it's a pity that its not selling anymore. Basically we're still waiting for the loyal accessory to you phone which you'll end up wearing. The wait may end though, I hear Apple's readying up a wearable for a September reveal. It could be a fitness band, a smart watch but its also highly likely to be a fitness headphone!

Don Bradman Cricket 14

Vidit Bhargava
Game: **Don Bradman Cricket 14**
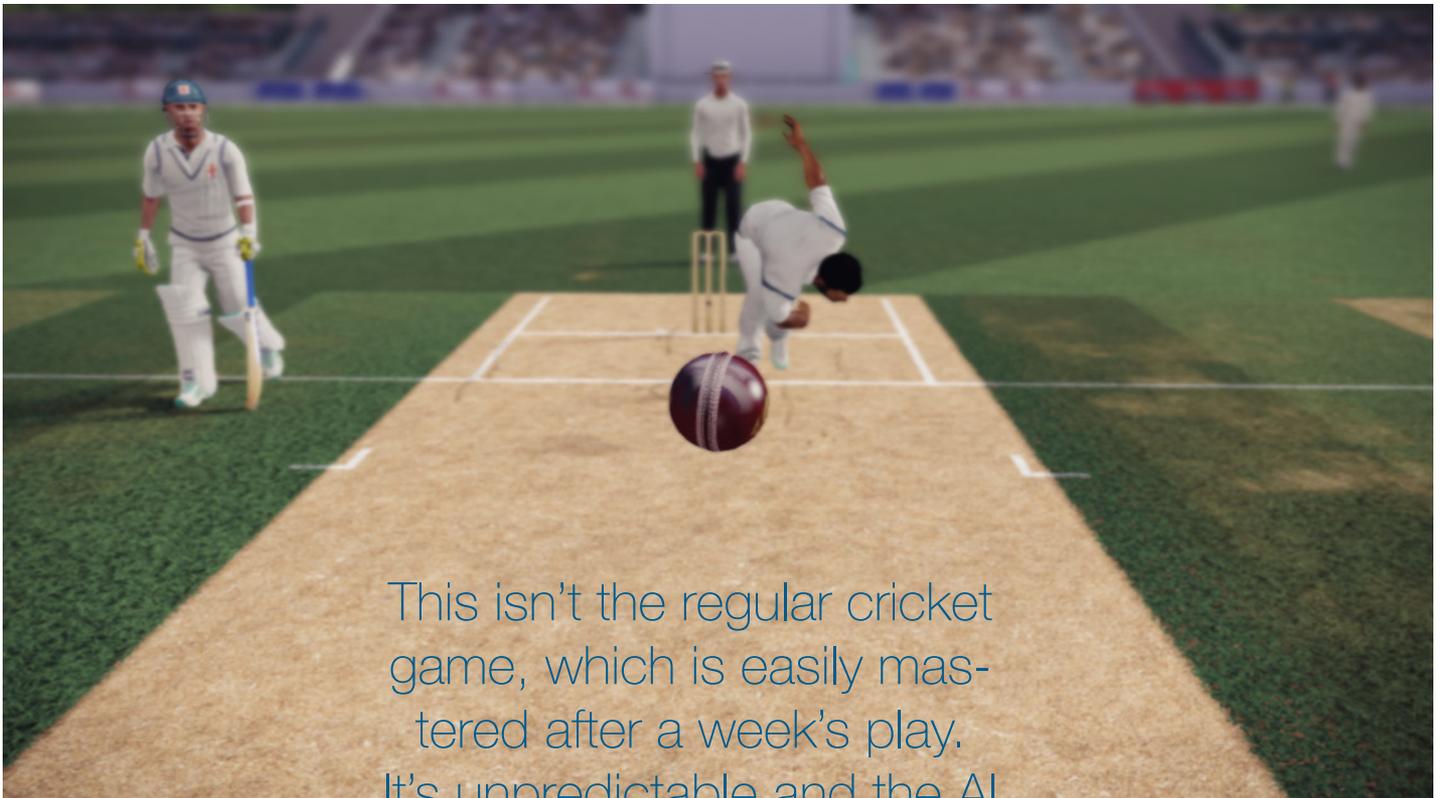Developer: **Big Ant Studios**
Platform Reviewed on: PC
Others: XBOX 360 , PS3
Available: Steam, DVD

> This isn't the regular cricket game, which is easily mastered after a week's play. It's unpredictable and the AI hardly ever fails to put up a fighting performance!

It's been a long time since PC gamers had a cricket game. With the last few games setting the standard very low for cricket games, there were slim hopes from this one. Out of the box, Don Bradman Cricket 14 has 1 licensed team, 2 licensed stadiums and a Licensed Don Bradman. Now this isn't very encouraging especially if your Licensed team is Russia (I'm not kidding! Russia has a cricket team). But out of the box, it also comes with a "Best Teams" feature which makes use of Don Bradman Cricket 14's Online Community to pretty much by pass any licensing woes for at-least the most popular teams. Further more it's got an extensive editing feature which let's you edit everything, from Team Kits to Match Types. Users can also download other players or even Umpires from the Online Community. In many ways Don Bradman Cricket 14's biggest strength is its online community which makes the game feel much more authentic!

Gameplay
Don Bradman Cricket 14 brings in a lot of changes from the previous cricket titles in its gameplay. For starters the animations are much more realistic, be it batsmen nicking

the ball or taking an easy single, everything is pretty much authentic. Little details like ball wear and tear and bowler fatigue have also been kept in mind.

The difficulty level varies too, it's not extremely easy to just start hitting sixes at will over here. The batsman needs to have significant confidence to do so. If a bowler is too fatigued, he'd find it hard to bowl the desired line and length. Even AI Confidence comes into play here, so if a bowler from has taken some quick wickets he's bound to trouble you a lot more than someone who's being hit around the park.

This isn't the regular cricket game, which is easily mastered after a week's play. Its unpredictable and the AI hardly ever fails to put up a tough fight!

Just like the real world UDRS, it's best to keep BARS switched off.

The game also features a Decision Review System (UDRS) which it calls (BARS), it lets you challenge the umpires decision. Here things like Hawk-Eye, Snicko and Hot-spot come into play. My experience with UDRS hasn't produced very satisfactory results, while a couple of times it did give the right decision, a lot of other times the decision was completely biased towards the computer, which can soon become frustrating.

As for the control set, the batting controls are pretty straight forward and impressive. The 360 degree shot selection is a welcome change given that 360 degree shots in previous games meant shots in just 8 directions! That being said, the 360 degree shot selection comes at a cost, it prevents the game from being played using a keyboard.

The bowling controls are a little underwhelming though, since there's only limited stuff you can do with them. There's no option to try and reverse swing a ball or to ball a zooter. In fact there's little you can do decide where you want to pitch it. However, they aren't much of a deal breaker.

In Depth Detail and Customisation
There's a lot of detail to be found in Don Bradman Cricket 14. As the match progresses you'll find the ball wear and tear making it more suitable for spinners. Bats to get red marks after playing for long hours. You also get to see a neat little presentation ceremony on winning a tour! Tiny details like these make the game quite enjoyable.

Game Modes
There are a lot of game modes to be found

here, from complete international tours including practice matches to round robin of knockout tournaments all them are customizable and can tweaked to suit the users need.

The game also features the entire ICC future tours program schedule for preset tours. There's also a match type editor in here, so you can go ahead and create exciting five over matches or even day / night test matches.

Career Mode
A career mode has been on pretty much every cricket gamers wish list ever since the advent of cricket games. This one finally grants the wish.

Basically you start as a 16 year old in the

> Bowling Controls are pretty basic. But not much of a deal breaker

domestic team of your country and then move up to eventually playing in the national team. It's about 20 years of cricket that you play with your cricketer.

Don Bradman Cricket Academy
Don Bradman Cricket 14 is one of the most customizable games I've ever played. In many ways Don Bradman Cricket Academy's online community makes the game the brilliant game it is.

With just a single licensed team one would

A Career Mode. Yay!

authentic jersey.

There's nothing you can't customize here. Players, Teams, Kits, Jerseys, Match Types and even Tours & Tournaments are all extensively customizable. All this also adds up to the longitivity of the game.

Pro Mode Cameras
There's some innovation to be seen in the in-game cameras too. Specially the batting ones.

The pro mode allows you to get right behind

IND 0/0 | OVERS 0.0 | 43 RUNS TO WIN OFF 30 BALLS

think DBC 14 would never reach the authenticity level of a fully licensed game like FIFA. But it's cricket academy covers that and brilliantly!

The options to create a player and a team are extremely customizable and easy to use. You'd be surprised how easy it is to create a certain player with complete likeness and a team with a completely

Pro Mode is gimmicky but its fun to be behind your favorite player's helmet and bat like in the real world!

the helmet and experience the game as it is. It's nothing more than a gimmick though, as it's extremely hard to bat that way in a cricket game when the visibility is restricted to certain angles only.

The camera behind the batsman is perhaps the most comfortable way of playing the

game. Similar to Stick Cricket's batting camera. This one allows you to place the short in the right direction with so much more ease.

The regulars exist too, like the broadcast and behind the bowler view.

Differently styled Teams
Another big move in Don Bradman Cricket 14 is the ability to play the game like it was played in the old times. You can go on to create teams with vintage, pre / post war jerseys and kits, You'll even find a WG Grace bat in there. And believe it or not you can play with a lagaan style team complete with the bizarre match format!

Graphics
The games graphics aren't the best of the recent times but are farely good. At least they aren't as bad as something like Ashes Cricket 09 or EA

Sport's Cricket 07, the last two significant PC cricket games.

Decent graphics aside, the game does have a few fun elements to it. As the day progresses the stadium shadows change, the flood lights appear slowly and even the sky changes color as the sun sets.

Stadiums
While Don Bradman Cricket Academy adds the missing authenticity of players and teams it fails to tackle the problem of unlicensed stadiums.

Don Bradman Cricket 14 comes with two licensed stadiums, the Sydney Cricket Ground and Bradman Oval. They've know doubt been done beautifully, easily blending into the game.

You can play in the Lagaan style kits, bizarre match format included!

But the unlicensed stadiums stick out like sour

Most unlicensed stadiums lack the grace of real world stadiums

thumbs.

Most of the unlicensed grounds are plain ugly. Especially, the Delhi Park stadium which is pretty much unplayable. Thanks to the hideous dressing room.

Commentary
Commentated by David Basheer and Matthew Hill, Don Bradman's Commentary is a sour reminder of the previous games we've played. The commentators chat very little about the match situation, have only a few preset punch-lines and run out of steam very quickly.

Also, the commentary is a bit unnatural in a lot of places. Like the commentator getting super exited about a Double Hat-trick ball, which is quite bizarre as I've never seen a commentator do that! or the slight sense of irritation when the commentators exclaim that the Batsman wouldn't be pleased after the bowler cancelled his run up mid way, it isn't a big deal but the commentary makes it look like the bowler committed a grave mistake.

The Commentary runs out of steam very quickly.

The Two Commentator system is old now. I've seen a lot of cricket games stick to it but its so old that it feels un-natural now. While, Ashes Cricket 09 did do a good job with commentary where it had about 4-5 commentators out of which two would be picked randomly for a match and you'd hear them chat about their times as a cricketer. It was fun to hear it even though it grew repitative after a while.

Ideally there should be a about 3-4 commentators who are rotated randomly during the match and we should actually hear them talk. Not just shout out what's happening in the game but I guess we are a long way away from that time.

Summary
Don Bradman Cricket 14 isn't perfect. There are bugs to be fixed, gameplay flaws which could be improved, the graphics need severe improvements to catchup with the best in class PC games. Then there's a lot to improve in the game's bowling control system too.

But despite all that it misses, Don Bradman Cricket 14 is a delightfully addictive game

for followers of cricket. It's also the by far the best cricket game I've ever played. (The closest next would be a 17 year old classic called Cricket 97).

This is in many ways the first real attempt at making a cricket game which isn't just a bad promotion for a popular cricket rivalry. It isn't perfect but Don Bradman Cricket 14's solid gameplay makes it a game that you can cherish for a long time to come.

Requires a controller to play. If you are looking for a controller just to play this one game, I'd suggest Logitech F310. Its cheap and gets the job done or you could by the special edition DVD which comes with a gamepad included.

Don Bradman Cricket 14 isn't perfect but its the best cricket game I've ever played

8

out of 10

An Impressive debit for DBC 14

5 Accessibility Tips for Mobile Apps

Vidit Bhargava

Accessibility in Apps isn't just a thing for the differently abled people. Its for everyone who would find some assistance from the App helpful in finding the way through his or her app. Be it some one who needs a larger text or just some one new to such kind of gadgets (People generally in their late 50s or 60s), everyone finds it helpful if his / her app is accessible. Moreover making an app accessible doesn't take a lot of resources, time or money. Its just a few steps to ensure that your app is easy to use for everyone

1. The Grey Scale Check

Whenever we create an icon related button with an on and off state. Its a good practice to go through a grey scale check. Basically you are ensuring that the app is just as easy to use for those with color recognition issues as those who can clearly distinguish between different colors. Here's a good and a bad example of this technique:
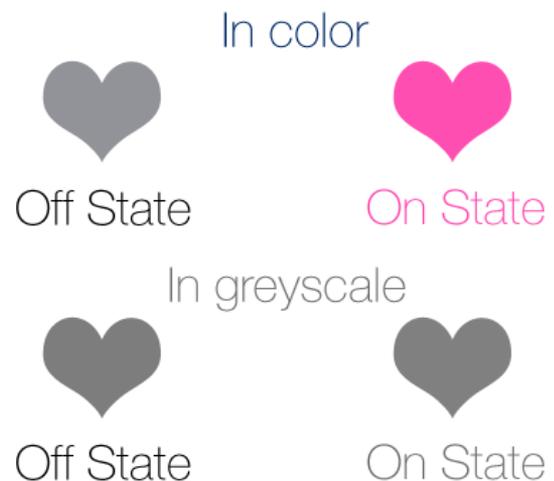
2. Dynamic Text

People sometimes prefer a large text to be displayed on their phones. This is due to an eye condition that naturally develops at a certain age. Operating Systems like iOS have support for dynamic text for third party applications as well. This allows the user to adjust the text size on his phone according to his needs. For Reading Heavy apps dynamic text is a must! However, since a Dynamically Resizable text might harm the UI in certain cases, causing more damage then benefit for

Good for Accessibility

In color

Off State — On State

In greyscale

Off State — On State

Bad for Accessibility

In color

Off State — On State

In greyscale

Off State — On State

the users, its advisable to choose dynamic text only when needed.

3. Correctly Labelled Buttons

Having correctly labelled buttons is a big advantage for those who rely on the voice over accessibility feature of iOS. Basically, when a person taps on a button with voice over turn on, the phone speaks out the button label. It really helps if it goes like this "Star Button: Save your favorite word by tapping here" instead of "Button 2".

4. Speak Functionality

Something that a lot of great apps seem to be skipping these days is an option to speak selected text. This is incredibly useful for people with reading disabilities but its also a great utility for those who'd quickly like to read something. I too am an avid user of this accessibiltity feature. Its just too convenient for reading just about anything, specially long articles.

5. Following Platform conventions

Following Platform conventions is a secret accessibility tip. Its often discussed as a good design practice but using the platform conventions like System like Navigation, appropriate Sharing buttons for different platforms and generally following the platform's conventions file designing the User Interface for a mobile app significantly reduces the learning curve. When the user is able to navigate through an app as easily as he's able to navigate through his phone's system apps, it builds a great level of trust in the user.
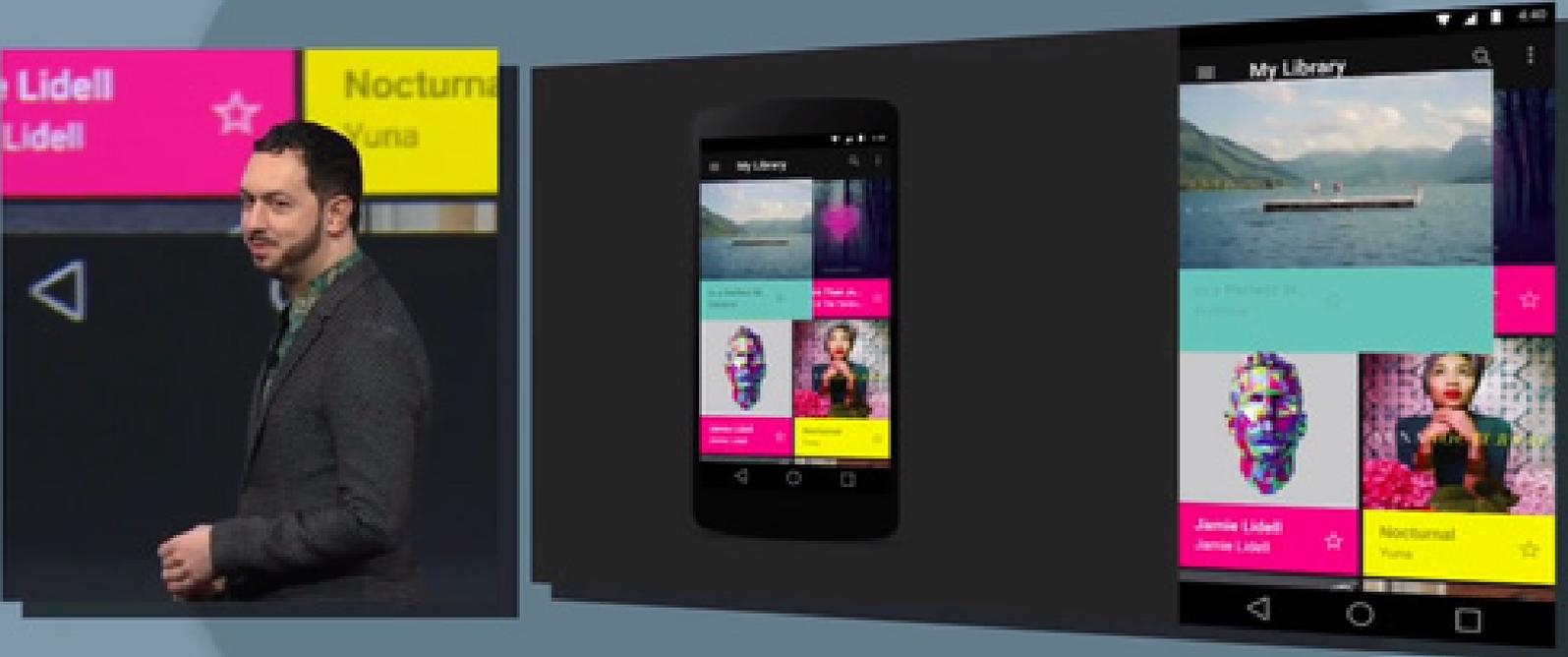
Platform Conventions
Share Buttons
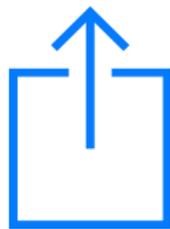
easily recognised by iOS Users
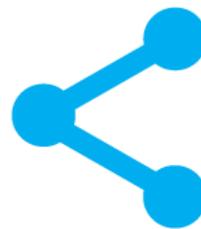
easily recognised by android users

The New Android Design

The First thing you'll notice when you dive into Google's New Design for its device, is that its got a splash of colour. Those Colours do look great. But the meaning they are trying to convey is either non existent or not easily apparent, For example the photos app has a big blue navigation bar, why? I have no idea. Which is the entire essence of Google's New Design language for Android. It looks good but is still as confusing as ever.

Buttons Lift on touch: If there's one thing that I just can't get passed in the new look, is the state of buttons after they get pressed. They Rise Up! Which is quite non intuitive. Generally when we press something it has a tendency to push down instead of rising up. This absurd choice can be easily confused with the drag states of the operating system.

Ripple "Animations" are a subtle enhancement to the press action of the button. Though, not needed, the animation is still less absurd than Lifted state of a pressed button.

The Design guide which Google published on their website does the job well. It teaches newbie designers and developers with no design experience to quickly build a decent looking application. Though it leaves a lot of User Experience to the developers choice.

The New Android L Interface itself is neat and good looking. But here's the thing, A pretty interface is not always the best interface.

Google's choice of Arbitrary elements like

> Buttons Lift on Touch When in Reality they should just push down

a Square, Circle and a Triangle to represent Multitasking, Home & Back buttons respectively, make an already complex system of navigation into a further more complicated one.

Back   Home   Multitasking

These icons unless labelled don't convey anything and they happen to be the basic navigational elements of Android

This is the paint spray this operating system had long waited for. Its now got a splash of colour. Its got some fancy new animations, but Android as the operating system is still the same. Its got all this geeky stuff which normal people will find hard to understand. The perfect example of what I am trying to say is this particular image:
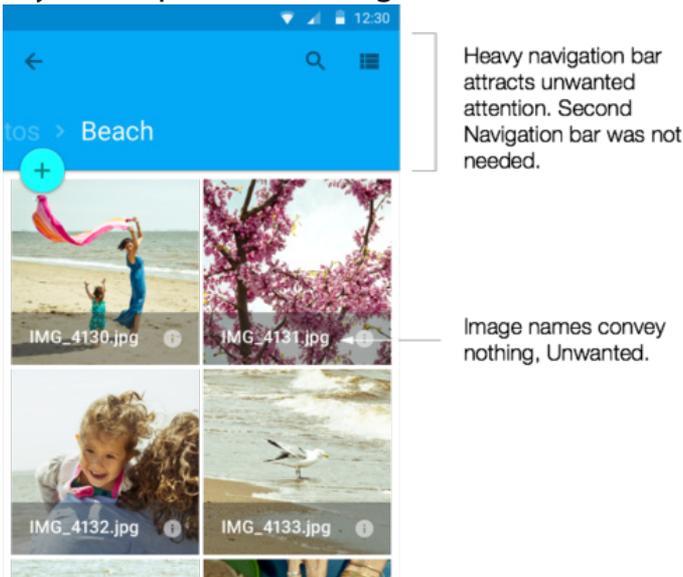
Heavy navigation bar attracts unwanted attention. Second Navigation bar was not needed.

Image names convey nothing, Unwanted.

It looks pretty. But is it a good design? Well No, Notice the Image Names. IMG_4130 tells me practically nothing. Either it should have had something more meaningful or its should have not been there at all.

Further more Google pays little heed to simple good design practices like providing accessibility support by making icon states distinguishable even after removing the colour

RGB   How it appears to people who are colorblind.

Inactive   Inactive

Active   Active

Notice this image, I can tell little difference if its active or not after grey scaling it. It usually passes the normal people test, but fails the accessibility test bitterly

Basically, I'm not a very big fan of Material Design Aesthetic. Much Less Its implementation.Its a bit gimmicky and leaves a lot for future updates. Though, I do like the neatness that Google's brought into Android this time around. This kind of neat interface for android is unheard off and I hope will gradually improve into something much better than Google's previous attempt at creating a great user interface.

Good Looking Design does not always translate to the best User Experience

Vidit Bhargava
Hyperlapse by Instagram
Hyperlapse allows you to easily take time lapse videos and share it with your friends over facebook or instagram

Available on: iOS   Price: Free

Albums by Caleb Thorson
Albums is a music management app that takes an entirely new route to music management. Its opinionated and enjoyable!

Available on: iOS   Price: $2.99

Contact Center by Contrast
A twin to the Launch Center Pro, Contact Center allows you to do a host of quick actions like group messaging or contact searching.

Available on: iOS   Price: Free (with in-app purchases)

Hanx Writer by Hitcents.com, Inc.
Want to enjoy the vintage experience of typing on a typewriter? Then Hanx Writer's the app for you.

Available on: iPad   Price: Free (with in-app purchases)

Pixel Quiz August 2014

Vidit Bhargava

Q1. X is a successful kickstarter campaign for a piece of hardware developed by Eric Migicovsky, the earlier prototypes of which were meant to work with Blackberry Handsets only. What is X?

Q2. One of Hartmut Esslinger's first design was a green colored television set. This eventually became the inspiration behind the name of a famous industrial design company, known to design many consumer electronics. Name the design firm.

Q3. X is a weekly show hosted by an English comedian Y who also appeared in the Simpsons as Wilkes John Booth and was the voice of the character "Vanity Smurf" in The Smurfs series. X is an internet sensation these days. Who is Y, and What is X?

Q4. Founded by Phil Haus & Or Arbel, X is a popular social messaging platform which received $1.2Million in funding recently. X also became an "automation" hit after it's integration with IFTTT. What is X?

Q5. Internally codenamed as "Sirah", Names like Weed & Rancho Cucamonga were also considered for it. What am I talking about?

Q6. The idea of this came to John Romero under the influence of Super Mario. The similarities are easily noticeable, such as the secret levels etc. What am I talking?

Q7. Which popular technology did the Roke Manor Research Limited develop?

Q8. Lou Gehrig's disease is characterized by rapidly progressive weakness due to muscle wasting. How would you associate the Lou Gehrig's Disease to the world of internet campaigns?

Q9. Which brand of Bosch, started with the name that means or is "Ideal"?

Q10. Jerrold Manock, Dean Hovey, David Kelley and Steve Jobs collectively hold the patent for which famous commodity in the world of technology?

Answers to the Pixel Quiz June 2014

1. Myriad Pro   2. Tangerine Inc.   3. Boston Dynamics   4. D-RAM   5. GoalControl
6. Microsoft   7. Aereo   8. Jelly   9. Leica   10. Elon and Kimbal Musk

We encourage you to not print this eZine.

mvdit tech book & pixel posts are brought to you by the tangible inc.