



PORTABLE GAMING STYLE

TECHNOLOGY HITS THE PAVEMENT AND LEAVES AN IMPACT

text by Gerard T. Barry

What is the purpose of technology? While the question is generally posed rhetorically, it doesn't prevent one from attempting to answer it. While the scope of answering this one question is beyond the pages of a single article or a single issue of this magazine, I would like to talk about the impact of technology on the urban landscape and—to narrow it even further—the impact of mobile devices in our everyday environment.

Recently, New York legislation has tried to curtail the pedestrian use of electronic devices while crossing busy city streets. This proposal developed in response to recurring incidents in which walkers were struck and killed by cars while crossing the street. The crime: victims being preoccupied by electronic devices.

If the legislation introduced by New York State Senator Carl Kruger is passed, using an electronic gadget such as a Blackberry or a video game while crossing the street will result in a \$100 fine. Whether it will reduce pedestrian fatalities is yet to be determined. The underlying question—aside from where the responsibility for these deaths truly lies—is whether or not mobile electronic devices are becoming a safety hazard for users. How have mobile electronics changed our world, and how will they impact us?

The greatest explosion of electronic communication since the invention of the telephone has been the Internet. The “killer app” of the Internet, beyond the abundance of information it provides, is certainly electronic mail (or e-mail). Instant, free correspondence anywhere in the world with only a few keystrokes has, not surprisingly, become society's choice connection. Slowly e-mail has crept into the business world and achieved dominance; even older generations that resisted it initially have given way.

Now, online users possess “friends” in parts of the world they have never and will never travel to. While the Internet broadened our view of the world and is the closest we've come to compiling the sum total of human knowledge, it has also gave us choice: the choice to both broaden our horizons and knowledge base or to narrow our experience and block out the world.

Nowhere is this choice more prevalent than when you look at the genre of mobile electronics. From phone conversations in restaurants and public spaces to the ability of an mp3 player to occupy your mind while you walk across city streets, electronic devices allow buyers to reduce their sensory intake from the world around them.

One very involved way to make your world more self-centric is with

mobile games. While phones may immerse your ears and thoughts in conversation, games are more likely to engage your ears, thoughts and vision. The leading mobile game manufacturers, Nintendo and Sony, make wonderful products that can easily help you pass the time. Perhaps they are a little too good.

The Nintendo DS has been the best-selling mobile game unit for a long time, recently outselling others by about a two-to-one ratio. In part, this can be attributed to both the lower cost and the demographic it attracts. The DS Lite unit by itself can sell for as little as \$130 with games. Many of the games are reminiscent of “old-school” Nintendo, with titles such as Yoshi's Island, Super Mario and Pokemon.

The DS stands for “Double Screen.” This unit opens like a small book; there is a screen on either side of the interior. Both have great colors and the bottom screen is touch-sensitive for commands that will coordinate with the upper portion. Additionally, you can connect with nearby DS units by utilizing the multi-player feature using a wireless connection. Lightweight and fun, this unit is easy to play immediately. Like the Nintendo Wii, young audiences and newer gamers will find an instant attraction.

The Sony PSP, though larger and heavier, is a truly integrated portable entertainment system at a price one step higher than Nintendo. A PSP Entertainment Pack from sonystyle.com is \$250 and includes the unit, a game, a movie and a memory stick. The device plays games, music, videos and movies and displays pictures on a mobile high-definition screen.

More than any feature of the PSP unit you will notice the screen. It can display nearly 16.8 million colors and makes you feel like you are walking around with the smallest HDTV ever invented. With additional software you can even download TV shows from your TiVo to watch while commuting. Additionally, over 400 movies are available from Sony Entertainment. Lots of power and extras for a serious and seasoned gamer.

For all the purported negative effects of video games (they are fingered as a cause of obesity, for example) there are sectors of society that benefit from gaming. Two examples are the US military and the medical profession.

A modern aspect of US military recruitment is to recruit not only soldiers, but soldiers with electronic expertise to handle the increasingly digitized nature of warfare. This can be seen in the Army's release of its own computer role-playing

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game called America's Army. The Air Force also has plans to develop unmanned, remote-piloted fighters. Does these sound like video games to you?

The medical profession has also seen the benefits of video gaming. Researchers at Beth Israel Medical Center in New York released findings in February of 2004 that laparoscopic surgeons who play video games are better at their craft. The report concluded that surgeons who have played video games for more than three hours a week at some point in their lives out-perform those who have never played. Of course, this study is confined to "keyhole surgery" where operations are done through tiny incisions that allow a thin remote camera, a non-heat producing light source and instruments to be inserted. This type of operation calls for great dexterity, quick decision making and precise hand-eye coordination as surgeons manipulate instruments remotely and guide them by looking at images on a television monitor. Again, does this sound like a video game to you?

Like all technological improvements, mobile electronics allow for a variety of potential experiences, including the possibility of both positive and negative consequences. Admittedly, while there is shared responsibility in most accidents, electronic device users need to be aware of the repercussions for their actions. The ability to tune out and enjoy a game, phone conversation or song is a privilege, not a right. Enjoy yourself, but also be aware of the dangers that surround you at all times. As the instructor in my motorcycle safety class once instructed, "Enjoy the ride, but be in the moment."

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his film is being seen by his countrymen and emboldening people to speak out. Still, he dreams of his film being shown in an actual Iranian movie theater one day. In the meantime, he says he's sure that he will be able to find ways to keep making movies despite the government restrictions Iranian filmmakers always face.

"Movies that try to find answers or offer solutions are often misguided because no one answer can fit all problems," Panahi says. "I want my movies to be thought provoking. I want people to be moved by my movies into thinking about their own situation and the situation surrounding them. I'm not misguided in my ideals to think I can change the world with one movie, but I think that if I make my movie, it's enough for that movie to create a line of thought and push the viewer to think about a particular situation in a new way."

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for reflection. "You can sit in the space and contemplate, yet it's a beautiful world," Everitt reveals. The scaffolding supplies the necessary "roughness" that the Rough Sleepers name suggests while also providing structure and doubling as the clothing rack.

Upstairs the shopper is again invited to contemplate stereotypical notions of displacement. Stylish mannequins push shopping carts filled with the same pieces you see hanging on racks. "I would be on the bus or in the street, and I found homeless people are searching for the food

inside the rubbish bin," recounts Obuchi. "If you are below [on the first floor] and looking up at someone searching inside the shopping cart, it is like the view I had [of the homeless]."

Since her experience designing the boutique, Obuchi's view has changed. "Novas changed my life. Before I started this project I had no idea how to communicate with homeless people... Now I don't have any more doubt how to talk to them." This is the experience that Rough Sleepers hopes to reproduce for all its clientele. "We want to give people positive opportunities to help other people," says Everitt. "We want to provide them with the quality experience of being able to have what they want while at the same time helping someone else."

So it's simple: no more nickel and diming. For those who want to play their part in breaking the social and economic cycle of homelessness, stop being reactionary, and proactively indulge in that \$180 pair of exclusively designed "Zest for Rough Sleeper" jeans.

Rough Sleepers: 43 Chalk Farm Road, London NW1 8AJ Phone: +44-207-485-4848

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As you meander through what seems like endless buying options, there is eventually an arena of bars and restaurants where you can grab an aperitif, sit back and listen to live music. Though the area is hard to get your head around, gems abound when using a discerning eye. Les Puces, Porte de Clignancourt, 18th arrondissement, Paris, France

GARIFUL RESTAURANT, HVAR, CROATIA Soak in the Dalmatian sun at this outdoor, islander restaurant replete with good vibes and endless selections of meat. Choose from spit-grilled lamb, chicken with gorgonzola sauce, your choice of seafood from a pool, or a decorated tray of ice. Hvar is the fourth largest of the Croatian islands, and in many ways the most enchanting with its unique mix of Mediterranean chic and rich cultural heritage. Once you've satiated your inner-carnivore at Gariful, make your way over to the Sunset Bar where impromptu parties tend to unfold once the sun finally sets. Gariful, Riva, Hvar +385 (0) 21 742 999

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wall. Like, "Oh, I hate music after 1971." Or "I hate Jazz." Or whatever.

Does rock and roll have a future? Sure. Because it doesn't really have any meaning. You can call anything rock and roll. It's like art. In the same way that people say, "Well, I can put anything on the wall and it's art." Well, that's the same with rock and roll. It's already been Duchamp-ed. It's no longer hillbilly music mixed with the blues. It's completely open. And that's why we're discussing it. It's not salsa music. It's not like merengue music, or cha cha, or romantic music or classical. It's rock and roll and it has a thousand different meanings and permutations.