

Monday, May 12, 2008

### **This is Vegas**

I'd seen plenty of screenshots, which in themselves were enough to get me very excited, but only just discovered this gameplay movie of the forthcoming video game This Is Vegas.[http://www.videogamer.com/xbox360/this\\_is\\_vegas/screenshots.html](http://www.videogamer.com/xbox360/this_is_vegas/screenshots.html) I thought I'd be more interested in being able to drive around a neon-lit virtual world of fake casinos than the clubbing elements, but the dancing missions do look pretty special. I particularly like the way the character's walk changes the minute he sets foot on the dancefloor. If it's possible to connect a dance mat controller, this definitely has the potential to be the best game ever.

Posted by luckydonut in Las Vegas at 11:03

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

### Time is money

Harrah's are labelling their decision to delay the final table of the World Series of Poker Main Event until November an "enhancement". From a player's point of view I really can't see why it's a good thing. Taking a day or two off in the middle of a marathon tournament is one thing. Indeed, if you are drawn to play on Day 1A you already have to take a 4-day forced break before day 2A begins, then everyone gets at least a day off before all the players merges into a single Day 3. Another day off before the final table after 6 long days of poker is probably a welcome break. But a four month hiatus once the end of the road is in sight - and when you must be In The Zone to have got that far - is just a bit of a nonsense. The point has been made that you could use this time to get some coaching and study the play of your opponents, but how exactly are you going to study the play of the eight other unknowns who haven't played a single hand on TV yet. That's actually the whole point of this stupid rearrangement - to accomodate ESPN. Are they really going to give the players a few hundred hours of unedited tape to wade through? I doubt it. What I really wanted to know though was just how much the players might be losing in potential interest on their payouts as a result of having to wait nearly four months between Day 7 and Day 8. This is the richest "sporting" event in the world, after all, and the prize pool is pretty hefty. I'm going to base the calculations on last year's field, because that means the full payout information is readily available and there's no reason to assume there will be wildly different numbers this year. In 2007 there were 6,358 entrants, each paying \$10,000 to play. There's a total 6% taken from the prize pool for the house and tournament staff which, according to my calculator, is about twenty grand more than the \$59,784,954 prize pool published. I have no idea how this number could end in anything other than two zeros. It's must be just good old-fashioned skimming. Just over a third of the total prize pool is given to the top 9 spots - \$22,019,901 in total. This year, once the final table has been determined, each of the remaining players will be given 9th place money straight away and when they return in November they'll be playing for the difference. 9th place last year was worth \$525,934, so, based on last year's numbers, that would be a further \$4,733,406 paid out in July. Therefore the amount of the prize pool left unpaid during the hiatus is \$17,286,495. A cool seventeen million - or about \$1.9m per player - still to play for. The interest rates for savings on the US Dollar are far from great at the moment. However, after a quick shop around the net I found a certificate of deposit product that offers 3.3% APY, but over a four month fixed term. That's almost a perfect example - the delay before the final table is 117 days. I just plugged these numbers into an online interest rate calculator and the answer comes in at round about \$180,000. That's 18 Main Event buy-ins. Or, it's twice as much as the nine remaining players will have paid for their seats in the first place. Although it pales in comparison to the \$3.8m total rake taken out of the prize pool for this tournament, \$180,000 is hardly insignificant. Quite what it's worth to Harrah's for hanging on to it for the same amount of time I couldn't really say. \$17m is probably just a drop in the ocean to the world's largest gaming corporation, but nevertheless it's money that doesn't belong to them, yet they know that they will have custody of it for a fixed - and reasonably long - period of time. It's certainly investable, one way or another. Suddenly the offer of an all expenses paid trip for two for each of the finalists to return to Las Vegas in November to play out the end of the Main Event doesn't seem quite quite as generous. Even I can get a free suite at the Rio!

Posted by luckydonut in WSOP, WPT, EPT at 11:38

Saturday, May 3, 2008

### **Happy donut day to me**

Even though Krispy Kreme's invasion of the UK is well underway with about 40 proper stores - and a number of Tesco supermarkets also stocking their products - it's all down South still. There's just four stores North of Oxford. So today we drove to Manchester to buy donuts. Well, it is my birthday. I know for a fact I didn't ask for the two chocolate ring donuts, I think we missed out on glazed lemon filled at the expense of those, but it doesn't really matter. They're all good. I've learned that the Krispy Kreme at Trafford Park is open as a drive thru until 2am some nights, and they bake fresh until 11pm every day. This is the actual definition of temptation. The question of whether a 90-mile round trip is far enough to put me off returning without any other reason for being in Manchester has yet to be answered.

Posted by luckydonut in Random Thoughts at 23:46

Thursday, May 1, 2008

### Next stop: Blue Man Group

A month ago, I started playing the drums. OK, that's a bit of a romanticisation. What I actually mean is I started playing the drum part on the video game Rock Band. Still, they reckon that if you can master the songs on "expert" level, you could sit down at a real drum kit, make the same movements and you'd be actually playing that song. I'm sure that if real drum kits only had four things to hit, all of them being the same shape and each one always making the right sound at the correct volume no matter where or how hard you hit it, and with a couple of them doubling up as tom-toms and cymbals, then this would be true. However, for someone of my limited co-ordination - and having never picked up a pair of drumsticks in my life before - I consider it something of an achievement that I got my first 100% score on hard level today. The photo is horrible, sorry - I only had my phone to hand. It just about shows Claire getting 99% on guitar (apparently just one silly mistake away from perfection, she's done it 100% before) and my massive 100% with a 1016 note streak, both playing hard level on The Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go". I will almost certainly make the effort to fetch a proper camera the first time we both nail it at the same time. That has happened before, but only on medium difficulty (Pixies "Wave of Mutilation" is pretty straightforward for both parts) and we've already gained as many virtual fans in the "world tour" mode as we can without moving up to hard level. I'm not unhappy at acing The Clash, but I actually wanted my first 100% song to be Weezer's "Buddy Holly" so I had an excuse to embed that video rather than just link to it. Or Nine Inch Nails, because that sounds like it should be a lot harder than it actually is. I've been very close on both. Or for bonus cheese points, it could have been The B-52s "Roam". I don't care what you think, it's great fun to play and I already had a 1600+ note streak and came within one brain fart of doing it perfectly! So, for the next step in my drumming career, I need to decide which route to take. Should I aspire to be as great as this guy, who owns every song on expert level, and has made many top quality videos to prove it? Yes, he has socks strapped to the drum pads. This is strangely appealing. The only modification I have is a set of Hard Rock logo drumsticks painted with a flame pattern. Or, should I paint my face blue and start hitting other things? How would that be for a career change? There's already an official "stage kit" with lights and a smoke machine due out this summer, but I haven't heard anything about a paint drumming kit yet. It's inevitable though, I'm sure.

Posted by luckydonut in TV, Movies, Music at 22:58