SOPA/PIPA
User Freedoms vs. Intellectual Property

Fatima Ali
Staff Writer

Anxiety struck many college students last Wednesday, January 18th, when everybody’s go-to-source, Wikipedia, blacked out its webpage for 24 hours. The blackout sought to raise awareness and encourage people to share their views on the proposed anti-piracy efforts in Washington. Among other sites speaking out against these acts were Reddit, Google, Facebook and Twitter.

In effort to curb the illegal downloading and streaming of media, major entertainment companies such as Disney, Time Warner, CBS and much of the recording industry backed two Bills, known as the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) in the house, and the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA) in the senate. The legislations sought to battle online trafficking, particularly on foreign websites, of intellectual property and counterfeit goods. Provisions include barring of advertisements and removal

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The March to November
Understanding the Politics behind the Ballot

Luis Gonzales
Staff Writer

And here we go NJIT. It’s that time again when we sit back and watch political candidates enter in to an all-out brawl in order to get your vote. I’m not talking about Student Senate elections either; I am talking about the Presidential election of 2012. Come November, every American citizen (minus minors and those with criminal records) will be given the opportunity to cast their ballot for which candidate they feel is best suited to lead the country. and with the current state of the nation, whoever is selected as the next president of the United States undoubtedly has their work cut out for them.

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Controversy over
Presidential Appointment
NJIT Faculty vs. Board of Trustees

Monica Pajdak
Managing Editor

In a memorandum released on January 10, 2012, the NJIT Board of Trustees announced its unanimous decision to appoint Interim President Dr. Joel Bloom, EdD, to the position of President of NJIT. Having served the university for over twenty years in a number of leadership roles, Bloom is “an experienced leader... a highly regarded statewide and national professional who is most qualified to serve as president”, according to Kathleen Wielkopolski, Chairperson of the Board.

The rapid decision came unexpectedly just over three months after the resignation of former president Robert Altenkirch. As per NJ.com, a reported thirty-five applicants and eighteen nominees were screened, with fourteen out of sixteen members of the presidential search committee casting votes in favor of appointing Bloom.

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Chances are that in the last couple of weeks you’ve heard of something called SOPA and something called PIPA. If not, you may have been made aware of SOPA and PIPA last Wednesday when popular websites such as Google and Wikipedia “blacked out” their webpages in protest of them.

SOPA and PIPA are two bills currently being discussed in the United States Congress concerning internet piracy and copyright infringement. SOPA, the Stop Online Piracy Act, is meant to expand the ability of law enforcement to combat the illegal trafficking of intellectual property and copyrighted material online. PIPA, the PROTECT IP Act (or Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act if you prefer) intends to give the United States government and copyright holders more tools to limit access to websites that infringe on copyrights and deal in counterfeit materials.

So what’s the big deal? Copyright infringement and the selling of materials that are not licensed to sell are bad; on that we agree. Companies have the right to protect their products and intellectual property from misuse on the internet. The unfortunate side effect of these protections through SOPA and PIPA is that many average citizens will suffer the loss of some freedoms and liberties.

For many younger people who regularly use the internet, the free and expeditious spread of information on the internet is something that is inherent to the medium. In a sense, it is impossible to slow down the spread of information on the internet. It is the nature of the beast. Copyrighted material and intellectual property therefore spread rapidly on the internet.

Of course, blatant piracy and reselling of the material is what we want to avoid, but how do you deal with someone who presents portions of this material in a video on YouTube? How do you deal with someone who presents parts of another’s intellectual property on their blog? SOPA’s answer – essentially treat the website that the pirated material was presented on as the criminal.

SOPA deals with such criminal websites by removing the host website’s name (such as www.google.com) from the Domain Name System (DNS), or servers that turn our human readable website name into numbers that a computer understands how to locate and present to you. This greatly undermines the usefulness of the DNS, as it would force internet service providers to deny filling requests made to the server, as well as prevent the request from finding that information on servers run by other internet service providers. This is a fundamental breakdown of how websites are located, as well as an enormous restriction on the content users are allowed to view.

We share loads of information on the internet. Whether it is pictures, articles, or videos, we want to share content with others. Regardless of the personal use of copyrighted materials, SOPA and PIPA would categorize use as criminals and restrict our ability to share things by blacklisting the sites we use and penalize others for linking to them.

To detail a bit more about PIPA, it specifically deals with how websites would link to other sites that have been judged to infringe on copyrighted material and distribute illegal copies of products. In short, these sites would be force off the internet by becoming no longer accessible by conventional means.

Currently, online and internet service providers only have limited liability when a user is in violation of a copyright, and the restrictions for what is a violation of copyright are sparse. In truth, the process for judging what violates a copyright and how that violation is dealt with could stand to be improved. Piracy hurts the entertainment industry in particular (largely in the form of movies and music), and producers of such content do deserve to reap the rewards of selling it. But restricting the ability of average users to share content due to the fear of piracy and infringement galore will ultimately cripple the internet. Another form of law enforcement must be devised, and perhaps we users of the internet must develop a new view for the use of copyrighted material. What forms of use are acceptable, and what rights does the government have to restrict my use with consideration to the copyright owner?

Further discussion and voting on SOPA and PIPA in Congress have been postponed until February, and during the interim changes are expected to be made to each. If you would like to hear and excellent overview about SOPA, you can view the TEDTalk by Clay Shirky, a writer and consultant on the social and economic effects of internet technologies titled “Why SOPA is a bad idea” at www.ted.com.

The internet is a daily part of most of our lives, and we all have a stake in how it is governed and policed. I urge you all as users that share and hopefully care to further develop your opinion on SOPA and PIPA.
Over 75% of NJIT students commute to and from campus, and while some seek more personal modes of transportation, others prefer to utilize public transit. For many this means regular use of shuttles, trains, light rail and/or buses. NJIT and Rutgers students can take advantage of the shuttle service that takes students to respective campuses and major transit systems.

One of the difficulties with utilizing these systems however is time management, something that is absolutely critical for commuters. Forced to adapt to their transportation, say instead of jumping in a car when it’s convenient and making the technology work for them, commuter students must rely on and act in time with train or bus schedules. This can be burdensome, but there are programs out there that can help!

Thanks to an innovative use of satellite technology and advanced computer modeling, Nextbus.com tracks vehicles on their routes. Featuring patented technology, Nextbus was established in 1996, and ever since it has been delivering transit management to over 90 locations across the nation including those of the municipal, university and corporate levels.

Nextbus currently integrates NJ Transit bus information with the Rutgers Newark College Town Shuttle schedules. Focusing more on the College Town shuttle, as it is used by many NJIT-Rutgers students, this service provides students with the latest information on when the next shuttle will arrive at their location.

There are several ways to find out when your bus or shuttle will arrive directly from your mobile phone. Students can enroll to receive notifications several different ways: SMS, web access, and the app available for Android and iPhones. More information can be found on the nextbus.com website regarding these methods.

It is safe to say that many colleges and universities realize their students are rarely without their cellphones, most of which are smart phones with web browsing capabilities. Because students are so cellphone dependent, many universities and colleges use cell phone SMS and or E-Mail messaging systems for emergency notification.

Although Nextbus.com is an independent site which can benefit to our commuters, NJIT has its very own Campus Wide Notification System, to alert students of any emergency situations that may occur on or near campus. Based on the same principle of students’ dependability to their mobile devices, the CWNS is a good way to keep students informed about happenings at NJIT.

To register your mobile device, simply login to your Highlander Pipeline account with your UCID, select the Campus Wide Notification System link and continue with the device registration process. For more information on the CWNS, visit www.njit.edu/campusnotifications/index.php.

Cheers to a new layout and the first all-nighter of the semester.

Throughout the years, we have been given feedback on how to improve the Vector from our readers, and their biggest concern was: “too many words” and “too much clutter”.

To resolve that problem, the Vector has experimented with many layout styles the last semester and decided to implement a “game informer” look to the paper.

This layout adds much needed white space, spreads articles more neatly, and allows for the implementation of photos to add to the design.

Another advantage of this layout is it’s loose style that allows for the quick addition and removal of content without being meticulous to spacing and uniformity.

Of course, the Vector will still be experimenting with this layout to ensure that the best possible quality of the paper is given to you on a weekly basis.

Enjoy yourselves and thank you for reading the paper.
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**Controversy (cont.)**

Though there appear to be no doubts as to any of the parties involved, it is acknowledged that Bloom is the optimal candidate for the position of President, the NJIT Faculty Council has expressed concern that the selection process was too hasty and not in accordance with the by-laws set forth by the Faculty Handbook.

As per their handbook, the faculty’s role in appointment of senior administrators is to be as conduits to participate in a presidential search committee, which is additionally composed of administrators, alumni, students, and trustees. This committee then must invite candidates to meet with the board, which must then meet with the faculty, after which the council sends the board an unranked list of recommended candidates to be potentially appointed with tenure.

In response to the Council’s objections, the Board of Trustees compromised on a timeline that would allow the faculty to submit a list of candidate recommendations to the by-late January. As reported by NJIT Director of Public Relations, Sheryl Wolfe, this timeline was to be followed by a community forum with the final candidates for the position, and the subsequent decision to be made sometime in February.

With regard to Bloom’s appointment, the 20-member search committee was initially inclusive of five faculty members, three of whom reportedly resigned secondary to the hastiness of the process, during which no candidates were interviewed. The Board of Trustees, whose authority is inclusive of five faculty members, three of whom reportedly resigned secondary to the hastiness of the process, during which no candidates were interviewed.

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The current status of higher education in New Jersey is an unstable one, and the Board reports that with the restructuring of UMDNJ and subsequent threats to NJIT’s independence, further development of the Governor’s Strategic Plan for New Jersey Economic Development, and the $150 million dollar NEXT campaign, strong and steady leadership are paramount to the continued success of NJIT’s growth and overall improvement.

The Board further states in the resolution that it gives due recognition to the “stability, alliance, cooperation, and collaboration among the entire university, including students, administrators, and the community at large, and in particular faculty” that is necessary to maintain the standard of excellence set forth for NJIT. This statement, of course, was made in reference to the shared governance initiative that was set into motion last spring.

In an effort to improve parallel but non-intersecting lines of communication within NJIT’s governance structure, NJIT is exploring a shared governance system that will help increase cohesion and efficiency among the various constituencies that partake in the decision-making processes that affect the university.

Ideally, this will elevate NJIT to a position in which it can effectively meet the fourteen standards for excellence in higher education that have been established by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the accrediting body that will be conducting its routine, decade-long review of NJIT’s accreditation status this spring.

The initiative was being led by the Shared Governance Steering Committee, which was in favor of establishing a governance structure consisting of Faculty Senate, Senate, and a Special Senate that would both have representation in a Joint Coordinating Committee charged with the task of making executive decisions for the university.

With the general structure agreed upon, the steering committee had yet to delegate the specific responsibilities of the two Senate, as of the October 26th Senate meeting on Wednesday, which was attended by the faculty. However, the commission found that a foreign site was largely devoted to piracy, it could compel payment processors and online advertising companies to stop doing business with it.

OPEN also strives to encourage alternatives to piracy such as Spotify and Netflix, thus allowing the technology industry to do what it does best: innovate.

Dr. Bloom was appointed to the position of President without tenure, with a term that is set to end on June 30, 2014. At that time, which will likely be more a more stable period for higher education in New Jersey, another search committee will be made regarding a permanent presidential selection with tenure.

Some have deemed this whole issue as a battle between Silicon Valley and Hollywood. However, it is more than just a monetary endeavor, it encompasses individual values and perspectives on constitutional freedoms.

SOPA and PIPA are not dead. The bills are sure to undergo extreme scrutiny. Some who oppose the bill see compromise in the co-sponsors the PIPA Act, which would put cases of copyright infringement under judgment of the International Trade Commission. If the commission found that a foreign site was largely devoted to piracy, it could compel payment processors and online advertising companies to stop doing business with it.

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The March to November (continued)

For the next 10 months or so, the American people will be bombarded with images of candidates kissing babies, political campaigns that make them all seem not worth voting for. That being said, it has become too easy for ignorance to control elections. People often speak on the topic of an election with much bias and inaccuracy, so I urge all voters to pay close attention to the assertions made by any individual during election season, as misinformed or not downright false claims abound.

Equally important is not to be a bandwagon voter. Vote for the candidate who presents political ideas you agree with, rather than the person who friends may vote for, the person who happens to belong to the same party as yourself, or whom the media claims to be the frontrunner. The people of this country have a tremendous responsibility in electing our president, and it is one that should not be wasted given that there are many who came before us that have died for that right.

The following is to serve as guide for the looming battle that will take place from now until November. This guide will not be littered with jargon and written as though everyone picking up The Vector is an expert; rather, it is where the students of NJIT will be given the chance to understand the simple terms surrounding a complicated election season.

In no way does this author or the NJIT Vector endorse one specific candidate or subscribe to any political agenda; our purpose is instead to report on the notable issues and to present stances that opposing sides represent.

American Jobs

The perception that government does not care about people's financial situation has led to a widespread lack of jobs. Unemployment rates are at an all-time high, and many are calling for tighter border controls and a crackdown on businesses that employ people without documentation. This has become a very low priority.

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From January 17th to the 21th, students and staff celebrated a Week of Winter hosted by the New Jersey Institute of Technology’s Student Senate. NJIT Students proved that they did not need snow on the ground to have a good time! From comedians to hypnotists, to gingerbread houses and Christmas lit fraternity houses- NJIT was vibrant with life, laughter, and a fun filled beginning to a new semester.

Tuesday night’s event kick-started the week with a talented comedian who kept everyone laughing all night. Wednesday night brought the mesmerizing talent of Chris Jones; the young hypnotist had the entire audience in hysterics, watching friends dancing across the stage, posing for the “camera”, and offering dating advice to the student body. Once the event had ended Jones shared the memories with the hypnotized bunch, whose priceless reactions made an unforgettable ending to the fun night.
Greek life lit up the heights on Thursday night with festive Christmas lights strung around their houses. Tau Delta Phi brothers showed their excitement by going a step further, hanging lights around one of their own brothers who stood outside to greet the judges! Thank you to Father Brian and the NJIT Public Safety officers for judging the Light Up the Heights event!

During the Light Up the Heights contest, Senate held a gingerbread house contest. The activity brought out quite the crowd as friends and clubs gathered together, frosting and sprinkling their houses in festive wintery colors. Every house looked scrumptious! Congratulations to the winners and all who participated! All the creative work can still be seen on the third-floor Campus Center/ Fenster Hall bridge, where the gingerbread houses are currently on display.

Once the houses were decorated, gingerbread and fraternities alike, everyone gathered in the Highlander Pub to hear the winners of that night's events. Congratulations to Alpha Sigma Tau for placing first in the Light Up the Heights event! Tau Delta Phi took second, and Sigma Pi came in third – congratulations to all who participated!

With Friday night came a fun filled event of games hosted by on-campus clubs. From board games to Twister – there was something for everyone. Saturday night came bouncing in with a Men's Basketball game versus Texas Pan-American. The game was close, but NJIT pulled through with their third straight win. Congratulations to the Men's team!

Looking back, everyone at NJIT had quite the fun-filled week to start of our 2012 Spring Semester thanks to the Student Senate. Hopefully NJIT can keep this momentum rolling to continue to have a fun-filled, low-stress semester!
Meme: Y U NO Guy

Continue exploring your internet neighborhood this semester with the Vector’s Meme Expert

Hello once again Internet enthusiasts. The semester is finally coming to a close and the countdown to finals has begun. As you begin preparing, I have another meme to distract you from studying. As this is the last issue of the vector for the semester this will be the last meme review for this year. Be sure to keep an eye open next year for more reviews. Now on to this week’s meme…

“Y U NO” Guy. Y U NO Guy, also known as “Y U NO [“]”, is an image macro series that use text message shorthands and carefree grammar to bring someone’s attention to a particular subject or issue. The meme consists of a stick figure guy with a very unique facial expression and text explaining the situation. The origin of the character’s facial expression, one full of frustration and rage, can be found in a Japanese Sci-Fi manga entitled Gantz. It was originally released in February 2002, with an English translation in June 2009.

The original instance of the Y U NO Guy was first posted via LOLTumblrWallpapers, which gained over 10,000 reblogs and likes on Tumblr. It was set to a light brown background and the character was placed in the center with text above and below reading “[X] TXT U, Y U NO TXT BAK!” During its spread throughout the Internet an exploitable version was uploaded onto MemeGenerator. This spawned hundreds of derivative images based on the formula of the meme. This formula is: “[subject noun], Y U NO [verb]?”

In the span of few weeks, Tumblr and Meme Generator had gathered up a sizable collection of the macro series, either as the image, or in text form without the face. It has also been featured on FunnyJunk and other culture-related blogs. It also had its own “plz” account at DeviantART so that users can use the picture in comments without having to upload the image each time. The phrase “Y U NO” is also popular in YouTube comments, Omegle chartrooms, and it is very popular on Reddit. It has also been used in advertisements on billboards and magazines, and it has been used on signs in Libya asking their government Y U NO?

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Moving from iron man to iron mind, Downey portrays Sherlock Holmes with quick wit, cunning and kookiness perfectly. He balances the detective’s intellectual acuity with a childhood ridiculousness that makes this action-mystery just as much about playful banter and verbal fencing as it is about fights, explosions, and puzzles.

Directed by Guy Ritchie and adapted to the screen by writers Michelle and Kieran Mulroney. Sherlock Homes: A Game of Shadows is yet another snapshot extrapolated from the saga through which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made Sherlock Holmes a household name. It takes many liberties that deviate from the refined tone of Doyle’s popular series, but presents the essence of this brilliant investigator and his crew with a level of freshness and entertainment that are worth the departure.

The film leads with many of the characters we saw in its 2009 prequel, without giving undue focus to old relationships and tensions. We see Holmes interact with his beloved Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams), but before their story develops any further (SPOILER ALERT!) she dies in an incident coordinated by this episode’s villain.

Even Dr. James Watson (Jude Law), who in this movie plays more of a partner than a sidekick to the eccentric Holmes, is separated from his now-wife Mary (Kelly Reilly), whom Holmes throws off a train to save her life (and probably her nerves), leaving the focus on the mystery at hand.

The villain (Jared Harris) is dubbed by Holmes to be the most formidable criminal mind in Europe, “the Napoleon of Crime.” Professor James Moriarty is an Oxford intellectual who secretly plans to incite World War III through a twisted plot involving the staged suicide/actual-murder of several European diplomats and a French underground gypsy revolution. Ultimately Moriarty’s role is to profit from the war financially.

Moriarty is a villain that is equal to Holmes in virtually every capacity except in his evil, and over Doyle’s series, he is Holmes’s number one arch-nemesis. In an interview with HitFlix entertainment news, Downey says of the character “We got really thoughtful, and we put a lot of time and energy in, and at the end of the day we got really lucky with our casting ‘cause Jared Harris is the reason that Moriarty works.” Harris plays the villain in a different way, giving the character a unique disposition that is well-illustrated in his final face-off with Holmes.

Moriarty’s intellectual war with Holmes culminates in a game of chess where each move is laden with a deeper meaning connected to the greater plot of the movie; meanwhile, he delegates the dirty work – murders and explosions – to lesser villains.

Overall, Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows is a successful movie. It keeps the pace varied with hard action scenes punctuated with slow-mo action and steady, medium paced periods of diligent waiting and quiet analysis. The departure from the typical Holmesian style is not a detriment to the film’s artistic merit, but rather a refreshing adjustment that gives audiences a good laugh in addition to a good puzzle.
Hello fellow otakus! As if to mark the start of the new semester at NJIT, a slew of new shows have been released for our amusement. In the effort to save you time in finding shows worth your while, I will report a couple of the prospective animes that are currently vying for my attention. This will of course include why the anime caught my attention and the reasoning for investing your time into your new shows! With permission from Moetron.com I will be partially using their 2011/2012 winter guide to both introduce the anime and depict an example of the animation style. Be sure to visit them for the full comprehensive guide! I am super excited at the lineup of this season, so let's get started in our introductions:

Winter 2011/2012 Picks!

**Kill Me Baby**

Although this title is definitely a very weird one, this show is definitely a winner, in terms of how unexpected the first episode turned out. Everything from the beginning to the end was refreshing, enjoyable, and unique to my veteran level standards.

The opening theme and style of animation definitely caught my eye, so if your first reaction to the opening is a "wow", consider watching the rest of this episode and adding this show to your roster this semester.

Episodes are split into smaller mini segments that seem to have a comedic slice-of-life focus that is certainly unique so far. The main characters in this anime also give the viewer laughs because of how completely conflicting their personalities are.

If you're looking for a fun show that will give you plenty of amusement without hardcore plot development, this is definitely a good show to try. Contrary to the title, the show has not killed anyone off so far, but I am really looking forward to how the show will relate the title to the plot.

**Nisemonogatari**

This highly anticipated anime was recently released as a sequel to the popular Bakemonogatari, with a character roster that has a very high amount of the same familiar characters. Anyone that was awed by the flavorful animation in combination with a wonderful plot and stimulating music in the first season will certainly love to start this up as the sequel, which certainly does not miss out on those key notes.

This is an anime that you watch to be impressed, and this outlook does not fail the viewer as it fulfills the anticipation expected from an anime of this genre. The key factor determining whether it will be as much of a success as its predecessor is whether it can maintain or set the bar to new level of quality. Given the first episode's start, I am confident it will give me both entertainment as well as something to eccentrically talk about with my otaku friends.

**New Prince of Tennis**

I did not expect a continuation of this series after the first season, but was pleasantly surprised to find that it indeed was in production to be released this semester. This is an anime that focuses on a tennis team called Seigaku seeking to become the best in Japan while sporting flamboyant signature tennis moves that are overly exaggerated.

The animation in the second season obtained a significant upgrade when compared to the first season, while the music has changed to a much more action-oriented feel. This change is more than welcome, and is very fitting for a modern sports oriented anime.

Although some of the moves that the team's individuals perform seem humanly impossible, it is a very enjoyable and exciting sports anime that I welcome to the fray!
ACROSS
1. A type of carpet
5. Refine metal
10. Sediment
14. Vagabond
15. Become narrower
16. Murres
17. College
19. A formal high school dance
20. A gesture of assent
21. Apprehend
22. A river through Paris
23. Latticework
24. A writing implement
31. Apple or orange
32. Deliver a tirade
33. Underscore
35. French for ‘Good’
36. Hindu princess
37. Unexpired
38. Countertenor
39. Terminare
40. A pinnacle of ice
41. Visitor
42. Forever
44. A grinding tool
45. French for ‘Queen’
46. Tooth doctor
50. Water balloon sound
52. Medical professional
54. Neither _____
55. Gave money
57. French for “Summer”
61. Bambi was one
62. Wear away

DOWN
1. A type of carpet
4. As acknowledged
5. Sea eagle
7. Sea
8. Languorous
9. Governor (abbrev.)
10. A narrow channel of the sea
11. Sweeping story
12. Sail supports
13. Languorous
14. Bypass
15. Alligator
21. Renegade
22. Sail supports
23. Fastens
26. Frail
27. Camp beds
28. Disadvantage
29. Native American dance
30. Clove hitch or figure eight
31. Apple or orange
32._nothing
33. Underscore
34. Started
35. French for “Good”
36. Hindu princess
37. Unexpired
38. Countertenor
39. Terminare
40. A pinnacle of ice
41. Visitor
42. Forever
44. A writing implement
45. French for “Queen”
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A good tower defense game can be hard to come by. Using defenses to halt wave upon wave of enemy assault is wonderfully entertaining when done right, but when poorly executed makes a naturally long game more tedious and less rewarding.

Defense Grid: The Awakening (or just Defense Grid) is one of the former. It is a well-executed example of what tower defense games should be. But for those of you unfamiliar with what “tower defense” is I should elaborate. Tower defense requires that a player build a variety of different “units”, whether it is people, structures, or something more abstract to defeat enemies that try to assault some critical area on a game board. The player generally only loses when their base is either destroyed in some fashion by the enemy. To provide an example that many readers have likely heard of, Plants vs. Zombies is a basic form of tower defense. That being said, Defense Grid is an excellent game that sticks to the fundamentals of tower defense while adding many interesting and fun tweaks. In particular, Defense Grid requires you to defend a set of “power cores”, or just “cores”, at an established spot on the board from a specified amount of alien attacks. If an alien makes it to the cores, he must them make it back to the entrance of the stage to successfully escape with the player’s core.

Before the waves of aliens actually attack, the player receives a “grace period” where they can first view the board and strategically assess where placing towers will be valuable. Once the player places their first tower the alien assault begins. In Defense Grid, your defensive units are literally towers, just to be clear; this is not always the case, such as in Plants vs. Zombies, where the player uses plants to defend their home. There are ten different tower types, and each can eventually be upgraded three times for increased strength or efficiency. Aliens on the other hand come in a variety of different types, such as some that have shield from particular types of damage or move faster than other types unless slowed down.

Over the 20 boards that the game offers, they increase drastically in difficulty from start to finish; at first they only require the player to deal with a pre-established path for the aliens to attack from, but later levels allow the player to shape the path the aliens will take by clever tower placement.

To be fair, after reading a number of other reviews about Defense Grid, many others proclaimed the last board to be the hardest. I disagree in that there is one board about halfway through the game that was an immense struggle for me to pass. Take that however you will, for I want you to see how varied the difficulty can be, or at least how we all approach problems with weaker/stronger strategies. There is high replay value here; one can come back to almost every board and approach it with a different strategy to achieve a high score. The player is rewarded at the end of each stage by achieving one of three ranks, bronze, silver, or gold, and to obtain either silver or gold the player must lose no cores to the aliens.

The player is also ranked on such factors as how many resources have been recovered from killed aliens, and simply how many aliens have been killed. Beyond that, since the game is available on Valve’s Steam store there are Steam achievements associated with in-game tasks as well. If the player chooses, there are a variety of increased difficulty scenarios to play on each of the 20 stages, such as a limited amount of total resources to spend on building towers and increased alien strength.

Defense Grid has five DLC’s - four “Resurgence” map packs that offer two new levels a piece and one larger expansion called “You Monster” featuring two new levels and a new story with an appearance by GlaDOS from Valve’s Portal series.

Also, I have failed to mention up to this point the story of the game. Your home world was conquered by aliens, and you are tasked by the computer that runs the planets defense grid with getting it up and running. Simple, right? The story is not the driving factor here obviously, although the computer that directs you speaks in a rather convincing British accent, which is a nice touch.

Defense Grid is a great tower defense game that doesn’t redefine the genre, but will eat up plenty of your time if you let it. It has a unique charm that can quickly catch you at a cheap price of $10 for the base game, and $16 when including the DLC. It is available for purchase on the Steam store and Xbox Live marketplace.
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