

OH MUM, YOU'VE CUT OUT ALL THE *@!#!* GOOD BITS

Digital filters remove sex and swearing from DVDs and Blu-ray discs to allow children to watch grown-up films safely — and soon they will be available in Britain, says Mark Harris

Family film night no longer means having to choose between The Little Mermaid and Harry Potter for the 50th time. You will soon be able to sit the children safely down in front of Twilight, the hugely popular but sometimes disturbing teen vampire romance, or The Reader, in which Kate Winslet bares all for the sake of high art.

New technology arriving from America promises to transform films with adult themes into U-rated flicks suitable for innocent audiences. Two new systems work with DVDs, Blu-ray discs and even live broadcast television to censor bad language, nudity, violence and more automatically.

ClearPlay, which launches in the UK in July, requires a particular DVD player and digital filters stored on a USB memory stick. Staff at ClearPlay watch every major new release (the company has more than 4,000 titles in its catalogue), flagging up each time a drop of blood is spilt or a negligee slips to the floor. “We have probably the largest existing database about events in movies,” says Randy Staggs, director of product management at ClearPlay. “For instance, if someone is shot, we also record who it was and which character did it. Was it the good guy or the bad

SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL

Why stop at filtering television content? Technology can now sanitise all kinds of digital media.

MICROSOFT REAL-TIME RADIO FILTER
microsoft.com

Microsoft has patented software to edit live radio broadcasts as they go out. The automatic censoring filter checks the sound of individual words against a dictionary of profanities. If it spots “undesired

speech data”, the program will either mute the sound or scramble the word to make it unintelligible. The system has yet to be used by any radio station — although we might not know if it had been.

WINDOWS LIVE FAMILY SAFETY
download.live.com/familysafety

An easy way to keep your children from straying into the darker reaches of the internet is to install

the web filtering system within Windows. It can restrict them to child-friendly sites and block social networking.

GOOGLE SAFESEARCH
google.co.uk/preferences

Ensure that you don't get a nasty surprise in your search results by setting Google's adult content filter to “strict”. This should prevent explicit text and images from being returned in search queries.

GAMES

New titles this week

BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger
★★★★☆
Xbox 360, PS3; £45. Age 12

Street Fighter, step aside; the head-to-head fighting game genre has a new contender. And like the most recent edition of its rival, BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger cleverly combines impressive 3-D backgrounds with hand-drawn cartoon combatants. Even though the action all takes places within two dimensions, the ornately animated arenas create the illusion of depth and the results do not look dated. The fighting itself is fast, fluid and skilful. BlazBlue allows you to easily control some of the trickier moves by simply moving the analogue joystick or shoulder trigger-buttons on your console gamepad. This means you won't need the manual dexterity of a heavy-metal guitarist to win a bout. The roster of fighters you can play as is intriguingly varied too. Alongside all the typical generic-looking warriors are buxom doctors, shape-shifting spectres and even a young witch. A little more visual polish, along with a proper tutorial for newcomers, would not have gone amiss — and the less said about the bizarre background plot the better. Still, what matters is the calibre of the grappling, and whether you're playing the computer, challenging a friend on the sofa next to you or being battered online by a pre-teen, BlazBlue is a fine reminder of what made the old fighting greats so enjoyable. **Stuart Andrews**



Rune Factory: Frontier
★★★★☆
Wii; £30. Age 12

Fans of the Harvest Moon farm-simulation games will recognise this spin-off series, which has a more sword-and-sorcery focus and was originally for the DS handheld console. Frontier is the first Rune Factory title for the Wii and has the same anime-style graphics and free-roaming structure. Your character, Raguna, begins by tending a farm. You must grow crops, converse with other characters and run errands. This doesn't sound so exciting, but you do eventually get to battle with monsters and domesticate them to work on your smallholding. You can choose whether you prefer to cultivate seeds (and relationships with local womenfolk) or slope off to slay beasts. An interesting element is the internal clock whereby a minute ticks by each second — if you stay up too late one day, your character will feel rough the next. The controls are simple, but it's infuriatingly tricky to pinpoint a location. The lack of clear goals and slow-loading scenes can also make it feel as though you're watching grass grow. Even so, Frontier's sedate pace and depth of gameplay somehow make it oddly compelling. **David Phelan**



IPHONE GAMING

Stuart Dredge reviews games for the iPhone and iPod Touch

SCRABBLE
★★★★☆
£1.79

It is a sign of the times that you can now play Scrabble head to head on a pair of iPhones, rather than sitting at a table with a board. This faithful recreation has excellent touchscreen controls, letting you shuffle the tiles, zoom in and out of the action and even look up questionable words in a built-in dictionary. The two-player mode uses wi-fi but works only within a room — you cannot play online against people around the world. Good score-tracking saves you the bother of a pen and paper, but if you have more than two players it is back to real life.

MONOPOLY HERE & NOW: THE WORLD EDITION
★★★★☆
£2.99

Monopoly has come a long way since the days of boots, scottie dogs and jostling for London train stations. In this cosmopolitan iPhone version, each property is a city (Old Kent Road is now Gydnia, in Poland, and Park Lane is Montreal) and the counters are animated penguins and windmills. The 3-D spinning board adds a nice visual touch as you roll virtual dice and travel round the world. Up to four people can play, either over wi-fi (everyone will need to buy a copy of the game) or simply by passing a single iPhone around. As with Scrabble — the games share a developer — there is no online mode.

SHAKE!

CLUEDO
★★★☆☆
59p

Who killed Cluedo? We say: Electronic Arts, with a clumsy adaptation of the much-loved detective classic. The software maker, responsible for all three games here, has not done a straight conversion of the board game but has created a graphic-novel-style adventure featuring the original six suspects. The idea is still to explore a mansion, looking for weapons and clues to a murder, but new elements include grilling animated characters and judging from their digital twitches whether they are lying. Although this one-player game is fun and every mystery is slightly different, the novelty wears off quickly. It's no match for the multi-player cardboard original.

CRIME MAP



Getty

The censorship categories in the ClearPlay system include sex, violence and drugs and can be set at different levels

PLANET OF THE APPS

Matt Bingham

WIKIPANION Free; iPhone, iPod Touch
Much to the annoyance of pub quizmasters, any smartphone with a browser and an internet connection can access the mobile version of Wikipedia. But its 3.2m entries can be hard to read on a small screen, and links and references are down at the foot of each page, meaning a long scroll down. Previous Wiki apps — such as the iPhone's official one — claim to make browsing easier, but this new one is among the best. Buttons at the bottom of the screen instantly bring up a contents menu for each entry — making it easier to navigate bigger pages — as well as a list of related links. The app lets you save images and change the font size, and it keeps a browsing history. The £2.99 Plus version adds the option to download and store entire entries to read when you don't have internet access.

WIKIPOCK From £9.99; Android, BlackBerry, Nokia, Windows

For just under a tanner you can download and store Wikipedia on your phone, but you'll need at least 4GB of available memory to accommodate it. Wikipoack provides two obvious advantages: you'll no longer need an internet connection to look through Wikipedia, and searches are far quicker. On the downside, you have to save the file to a computer before copying it to a suitable memory card for your phone. Alternatively, you can buy it pre-installed on a card (for more money). The cheapest version won't allow updates, but it's still really cool to be able to carry a real-life 1.7 billion-word Hitchhiker's Guide around on your phone.

WIKI TAP Free; iPhone, iPod Touch, Android
Wiki Tap adds YouTube video and other multimedia content to Wikipedia pages, displayed as

thumbnails at the foot of each page. These are extras found and linked by WikiTap users, but many of them won't be relevant to the subject you're browsing. It's still worth it for its search prowess, though — you need type in only part of a word to get results, and it's quick and accurate.