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ANGRY BIRDS
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THE SILLY, RANDOM, WEIRD GAME
TAKING OVER THE WORLD 10



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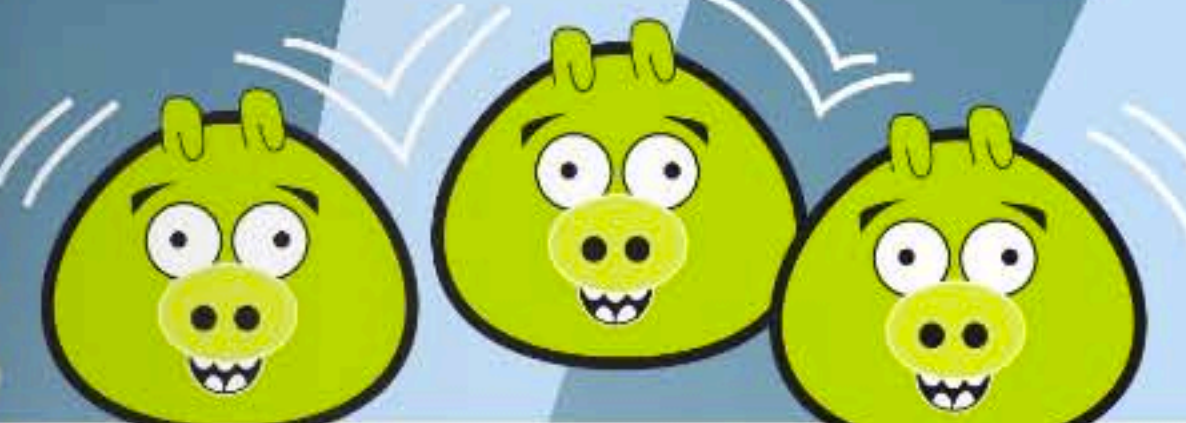
YOUR SAY

What famous bird should make a cameo in Angry Birds?

- The Oriole bird
THEBROKENPLATE VIA TWITTER
- Big Bird, hands down. He'll be a bonus bird that uses his enormous height to just kick the whole puzzle down. Game over
BMOREARSD VIA TWITTER
- Larry Bird
HARRYHAMMEL VIA TWITTER
- Birdo from "Super Mario Bros. 2!"
ANNMARIEBROK VIA TWITTER
- Woody Woodpecker!
SCENEZITSAUN VIA TWITTER
- The Aflac Duck. He's angry because his voice was taken away.
BRANDON LINTON VIA FACEBOOK
- Road Runner. Beep, beep.
ROB NOZEIKA VIA FACEBOOK
- Foghorn Leghorn! I got chills just thinking about it. LOL
CARRIE HUTZLER SHEARMAN VIA FACEBOOK
- Poe!
PAT GAVIN VIA FACEBOOK
- [Sam] the Eagle from the Muppets.
BRYON BEEZY GRAY VIA FACEBOOK
- The albatross from "Rescuers Down Under"
JOSH MCHAMARA VIA FACEBOOK
- Toucan Sam. Haven't seen him in a Froot Loops commercial in forever, so he's obviously angry [and] unemployed
MARKLIN POSTER VIA FACEBOOK
- Lady Bird Johnson
MEEKAN HOPKINS VIA FACEBOOK
- The Tootsie Roll Owl [or] Looney Tune's Beaky Buzzard. "Nope. Nope. Nope."
JUANITA IGNACIO VIA FACEBOOK



DEATH TO PIGS



ANGRY BIRDS: SQUAWK AND AWE

BY JORDAN BARTEL, B

Angry Birds players don't care what you think. They don't care if you judge them as they play everywhere — as they wait for a table at a restaurant, a doctor's appointment, a drink at a bar. All they care about is using their cadre of birds to fend off evil pigs who stole their eggs. I have experienced Angry Birds obsession without ever having played the game. I recently met up with a group of friends for dinner in Federal Hill. When a couple of more people arrived and joined us, one of them sat down and within seconds whipped out her phone. "I'm sorry," she said. "I have to finish this level." Cocktails and conversation would have to wait. Everyone nodded in silent acceptance. We hadn't played ourselves but understood its power. We watched her play for a minute or two, her eyes widening and fingers flickering as she slung her birds into pigs. All we could do was wait.

FLOCKING TO ANGRY BIRDS

Who's playing Angry Birds these days? "Everyone," Peter Vesterbacka, the marketing exec for Rovio, which created the game, said at this month's South By Southwest conference in Austin, Texas. This month, Angry Birds reached 100 million downloads across its mobile platforms — including the iPhone and Android-powered phones. Since its debut in December 2009, Angry Birds has sat stop

paid app sales on iTunes in the usual-suspect countries, such as the United States and China, but it's also the No. 1 paid game in areas most cannot locate on a map — Macau and Malta and Moldova. Rovio, based just outside Helsinki, has reported profits of \$70 million from Angry Birds and recently secured \$42 million in financial backing. The company was on the brink of bankruptcy just two years ago. An animated TV show is in the works. So is a board game. People

congregate, share tips and search for game news on fan sites such as angrybirds.net and angrybirdsnest.com.

On a basic level, Angry Birds is a clever game that's easy to play, portable and challenging without being complicated. It's cheap (99 cents via iTunes; free for Android phones), but seen as a quality mobile gaming experience. It's silly and random and weird, and that's exactly what people like about it.

"Everyone wants to unleash their inner child and break stuff," says Dylan Kates, a 27-year-old Angry Birds addict who lives in Middle River. "I love video games, but I've never been sucked into a video game like I have with Angry Birds."

It's no longer just a game. It's a whole world.

"We're building an integrated entertainment franchise where merchandising, games, movies, TV, comics, cartoons and comics all come together," Vesterbacka told the U.K. version of *Wired*. "Like Disney 2.0."

If they can take on mean green pigs, surely Angry Birds can give a vermin like Mickey Mouse a run for his money.

HOOKED

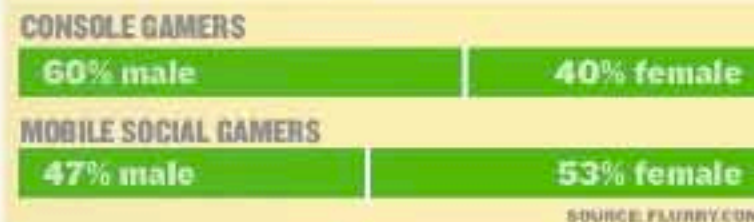
Kates downloaded Angry Birds last August, and he's been playing every day since then. "It's just totally addictive," he said. "I probably played it four hours straight the first time. You just get sucked in."

He gets engrossed and distracted. "One night I was kind-of stuck in the game and all of a sudden my wife



ROVIO'S CEO MIKAEL HED (LEFT) AND PETER VESTERBACKA. THANKS, GETTY

GENDER BREAKDOWN



walked into the room, did a bird dance and dove on me like she was an Angry Bird. I think it was the only way to get my attention," he said, laughing.

Ty Brown also became instantly hooked after being introduced by a friend who was addicted. "It's a ridiculously fun way to relieve anger," said Brown, 34, who lives in Bolton Hill. "The first time, I played

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POPPING INTO CULTURE

Just a few of the odd, awesome ways Angry Birds has invaded pop culture

1. CONAN DESTROYS KIM

Conan O'Brien, ever the savvy pop-culture referencer, used a life-size Angry Birds setup earlier this month to wreck a boombox blasting that god-awful Kim Kardashian song. "The only way to make this horrible song stop is by using the Angry Birds to destroy it, and the sooner the better," he said.



2. BEST. DAD. EVER.

British gent Mike Cooper decided to create a playable Angry Birds cake for his son's 6th birthday. The tech blog he writes for, electricpig.co.uk, features a video and a how-to guide. Dad, we're not too old for this gift.

3. MOVIE/TV?

Rumors have been floating around for months that Angry Birds will be adapted into a movie or TV show. Hey, if NBC can give Paul Reiser a job again...

4. FAMOUS PEOPLE LOVE IT!

"Mad Men's" Jon Hamm has expressed his dorky Angry Birds love. Salman Rushdie has called himself "something of a master." (Whatever, Rushdie. Bring it!) But our favorite famous fan is Dick Cheney, who, in a recent "Today Show" interview, said his 3-year-old grandson was teaching him how to use an iPad to play games.



"Angry Birds" or something like that," he said. That's the Cheney version of a ringing endorsement. **JORDAN BARTEL, B**

continued from page 11

an hour. The second time, it was an hour and a half. I think I played the entire time the Oscars were on."

And even more casual players fall for the game. Laurel resident Acacia Sears, 27, played "non-stop" for a few weeks after her iPhone download last November. Joe Sterne resisted the game as much as he could because he heard how addictive it could be. Now when he was a free moment, 10 minutes to fill, he plays. "I liken it to the 'Legend of Zelda' effect," says the 25-year-old Federal Hill resident. "If you can get appeal through a wide variety of audiences age-wise, anywhere from a 6- to 80-year-old, that pivots over to pop-culture consciousness."

Angry Birds has been an interesting case study in mobile gaming for Jason Farman. An assistant professor at the University of Maryland College Park's digital cultures and creativity program, Farman studies computing culture and mobile technology. He says Angry Birds demands low time investment and yields high, personal reward — you earn stars and developing trajectory strategies as the game progresses. And there are two divergent social aspects to it.

"On one hand, there's an antisocial aspect. People use mobile phones to cocoon themselves in public environments, and you see people playing the game on the



BIG BIRDS, BIG BUCKS

\$284 million
value of Rovio, according
to Finnish business
website Taouselama

\$42 million
total funding Rovio has
received toward
its expansion

\$70 million
Rovio's profits from
Angry Birds

SOURCE: ROVIO

metro," Farman said. "On the other hand, there's a real pleasure in watching each other play the game. The story is thin here, but it's enough to keep us going."

CHANGING THE MOBILE-GAMING GAME

And it's enough to sustain the ever-expanding Angry Birds brand. Players like Angry Birds because updates are frequent — the game launched with 63 levels and now boasts 240. People love the characters so much that they'll buy an \$11.99 plush bird or a \$70 Angry Birds-themed iPad 2 cover.

"With Angry Birds we have successfully launched not only a strong brand," said Mikael Hed, who founded Rovio with cousin Niklas Hed, "but also a whole new entertainment franchise," according to *The Hollywood Reporter*.

"One thing that Rovio has done so well is create this mass-market appeal at a really important shift in mobile culture," says Farman. "We're using our phones in ways we haven't before. It has become a common article that defines your everyday life."

At last month's Game Developers Conference, the

big question was "How do we become the next Angry Birds?" Farman said. Prior to the iPhone, your typical cellphone came pre-loaded with standard fare (poker and more poker). That has all changed. And now the industry is changing as well. "The gaming community sees the popularity of games like Angry Birds and admires it but also sees it as a threat," Farman says.

Rovio isn't happy just keeping Angry Birds mobile. It comes to Facebook in May, and a version for Windows Phone 7 is in the works. Though Rovio's flirting with Nintendo DS and Xbox360 (Angry Birds is already on PlayStation3), Farman says Angry Birds has helped usher in a new era of mobile gaming.

"Tablets and mobile phones are now seen as a viable medium for game design," he says. "You'll be seeing more and more complex and well-designed games for that media."

'I WOULD GET THAT SHIRT'

"There is this shirt. My wife found it," says Kates. "It's on Threadless. They made true-to-life Angry Birds on a pig."

A quick search uncovers the coveted shirt. It's \$20 and depicts a green pig head on a platter. Innocent-looking red, blue and yellow birds perch on the head.

"I would get that shirt," Kates says. "I would watch a TV show. I would get a set of plush dolls."

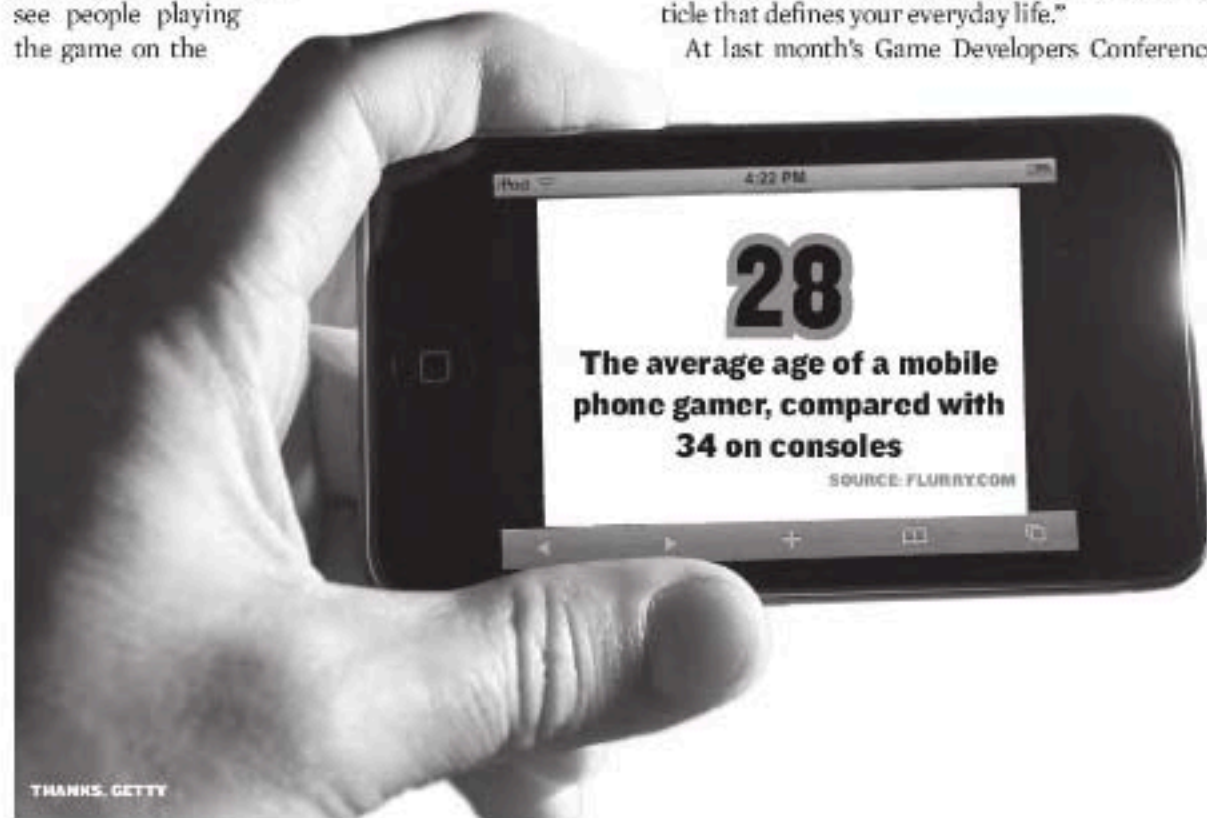
To Kates, Angry Birds can do no wrong — or has done no wrong yet. Even when a phone malfunction forced the deletion of a game, Kates looked at it as "an excuse to play the game again."

Kates is the type of player Rovio loves. He's not frustrated when he's stuck on some levels for three days in a row — he loves that challenge. He's utterly devoted to this silly, random game. He holds on for every update and celebrates after every level mastered.

He could sling those damn birds all day long.

"It's one of the first things I do when I take out my phone," he says. "I check Facebook and then go to Angry Birds."

Jordan Bartel is assistant editor at **b**. Email him at jordan@bthesite.com or follow him on Twitter, @jordanbartel



THANKS, GETTY