

Marvel superheroes coming to new mobile game

Lonely hearts seek virtual girlfriends at HK fair

HONG KONG, July 29, (Agencies): Virtual reality games usually promise shoot 'em up adventures but in Hong Kong Friday lovemom tech fans donned headsets to go on imaginary dates.

The city's annual Ani-Com and Games fair sees thousands queue to try out the latest consoles or buy up comic book collectibles, often dressed up as their favourite characters.

But for those who had spent too long alone in their rooms, a new VR smartphone app offered some romantic solace.

Users can choose between four female models and spend a vacation with them in either Japan or Thailand, joining them on trips to cafes, hot springs and karaoke.

They slot their phones into a plastic headset and are then immersed on a date, during which they can choose options for activities.

Promoters of the Hong Kong-made app, which is known by its Cantonese name "leoi yau" or "VR travel friend", said it was to help what they called "Otakus" to practise their dating skills.

The name is a Japanese term for obsessive manga or anime fans.

"We want to allow more people to try out what it's like to date a girl because there are a lot of Otakus who don't know how to communicate with girls," Margaret Ming, the app's communication officer, told AFP.

"This game can teach them how to get to know girls," Ming said, adding that there is some flirting involved in the story arcs with the models.

Student Wong Wing-yeung, 14, said he enjoyed trying out the app at the fair Friday as it could be hard to interact with the opposite sex in real life.

"Maybe it can help those who are shy with girls," he said.

Apple kills iPod Nano, Shuffle

'Synthesizing Obama' tech to feature at SIGGRAPH

LOS ANGELES, July 29, (RTRS): A paper set to be delivered at next week's SIGGRAPH 2017 conference has garnered a lot of pre-confab attention because the technology could possibly be used to produce fake news videos. But the technology described in the paper, "Synthesizing Obama: Learning Lip Sync From Audio," could have many more beneficial uses, especially in the entertainment and gaming industries.

Researchers from the University of Washington have developed the technology to photorealistically put different words into former President Barack Obama's mouth, based on several hours of video footage from his weekly addresses. They used a recurrent neural network to study how Obama's mouth moves, then they manipulated his mouth and head motions as to sync them to rearranged words and sentences, creating new sentences.

It's easy to see how this could potentially be used for nefarious purposes, but the technology is a long way away from becoming widely available and it would be fairly easy to detect in fake videos, according to Supasorn Suwajanakorn, the lead author of the study. "It would be relatively easy to develop a software to detect fake video," he

says. "Producing a truly realistic, hard-to-verify video may take much longer than that due to technical limitations."

SIGGRAPH's conference chair Jerome Solomon, dean of Cogswell Polytechnical College, notes that any new technology can be used for good or bad. "This is new technology in computer graphics," he explains. "We're making things that might not be believable believable and worlds that don't exist exist. And I think people potentially using any technology out of our industry could use it for bad purposes or good."

Plus, Solomon says echoing Suwajanakorn, "I think it's a ways away from being available to everybody. Our conference is really a place where new technology comes in through our technical papers program, but it takes awhile for the technology to appear in the tools. Developers have to go and create the software to actually take this research and get it into the tools."

And there are a wide variety of uses for this particular technology.

"Automatically editing video to allow accurate lip-sync to a new audio track is a novel advance on a very hot topic with many practical applications," says Marie-Paule Cani, SIGGRAPH's technical paper chair. "It

could be used, for instance, to seamlessly dub a movie in a foreign language, or to correct what people said in video footage and no cost." A number of papers and exhibits of new technology will be on display at SIGGRAPH 2017, to be held July 30 through Aug. 3 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Also:

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple Inc said Thursday that it will discontinue the iPod Shuffle and iPod Nano, the last two music players in the company's lineup that cannot play songs from Apple Music, its streaming service that competes with Spotify and Pandora Media Inc.

The two devices are the direct descendants of the original iPod introduced by then-CEO Steve Jobs in 2001, widely seen as putting Apple on the eventual path toward the iPhone. They can only play songs that have been downloaded from iTunes or from physical media such as CD.

Apple said the new iPod line will consist of two models of the iPod Touch ranging from \$199 to \$299 depending on storage capacity. The iPod Touch is essentially an iPhone without mobile data service and runs iOS, the same operating system as iPhones and iPads.

ultra-realistic models of Wonder Woman, Thor and the Hulk at the stall for Hot Toys, a local firm famous for its figurines.

Others posed for selfies with people dressed as Star Wars stormtroopers.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Marvel Entertainment characters will be featured in an all-new multiplayer mobile game being developed by FoxNext Games' recently acquired Aftershock studio.

The companies are staying mum on many details of the forthcoming game -- including its title, release date and storyline. For now, here's what Marvel and Fox are saying: It's going to be an action/role-playing game chock-full of fan-favorite Marvel Super Heroes and Super Villains, which will let players from around the world fight each other in a "unique gameplay experience."

The game is being developed at Aftershock's Los Angeles studio, headed by GM Amir Rahimi. That's the same studio that is creating a multiplayer mobile strategy game for James Cameron's "Avatar" franchise in partnership with Lightstorm Entertainment and 20th Century Fox.

Aftershock was previously part of Kabam. It formed as a spinoff following Netmarble Games' acquisition of Kabam's Vancouver studio and other assets in late 2016, after which 21st Century Fox's FoxNext snapped it up.

"Aftershock is creating something special, and we are thrilled to finally announce this news," said Jay Ong, Marvel's senior VP of games and innovation. "The game will be the full package: an exciting storyline, epic moments with Marvel Super Heroes and Super Villains, and incredible visuals that truly bring our characters to life."

The app is free, while the plastic headset and magazine introducing the women to date cost HK\$48 (\$6).

The show at the city's harbourside convention centre is one of the biggest of its kind in Asia and was packed with teenagers, many of

them in coloured wigs and costumes mimicking their favourite Japanese comic book heroes. Die-hard comic fans posed with life-size

Lifestyle



Vanessa Castagnoli, of Tentsile, shows Eric Hanson, the stingray tree tent, at the Tentsile display during Outdoor Retailer show on July 27 in Salt Lake City. (AP)

Outdoor enthusiasts embrace unique way to sleep under the stars

Tree tents get campers off ground, into air

click

General

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please get in touch with us. We would like to invite you to register with the Ugandans in Kuwait (UIK) association, an informal organization of Ugandans living and working in Kuwait. The purpose of this exercise is to get together as Ugandans and to consider taking the first steps to establishing a more formal organisation. This association is voluntary. It is designed to create a forum for Ugandans in Kuwait to foster a sense of community, to communicate more effectively with each other and to encourage Ugandans out here to work together. We are also planning a celebration to mark 50 years of Uganda's independence this year. If you have any questions regarding this association or if you are interested in registering, then please send us an email at ugandansinkuwait@gmail.com. We hope to hear from you soon.

Free drum music classes: Free professional drum music classes are available at Salmiya for all age groups from beginners to advanced by a well experienced drum teacher. For more details: 94974295.

Indian Embassy SPDC notice: Attention of all Indian associations/Indian schools in Kuwait is once again drawn to Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC) which was introduced by Government of India in the academic year 2006-2007 with the objective to make higher education in India accessible to the children of overseas Indians and promote India as a centre for higher studies. Under the scheme, 100 PIO/NRI students were awarded scholarship of up to US\$ 4,000

By Brady McCombs

Campers and outdoor enthusiasts are embracing a unique way to sleep under the stars while in the mountains or at the beach — dangling between trees on hybrid hammock-tents that get them off the ground and into portable treehouses that soothe their inner child.

Some of the gravity-defying devices were on display this week in Salt Lake City at the Outdoor Retailer show, which brings thousands of people for a business-to-business expo that allows retail store owners to meet with companies and manufacturers that display products.

The so-called tree tents are still too small of an industry segment to track sales separately. But retailers report they are generating growing demand from customers, said Matt Powell, sports industry analyst with market research firm NPD Group.

"The millennial camper is looking for products that are going to keep them dry and comfortable, which is one thing these do," Powell said. "Millennials are also attracted to versatile items that have more than one purpose, as these do."

The hammock-tents, which can be broken down stored in bags like normal tents, are de-

signed to be used anywhere a person can find trees, boulders or rock crevices sturdy enough to anchor them.

Tentsile's colorful polyester hammocks and tents that stretch between three trees are the creation of an English treehouse architect who started the company four years ago with another designer based on his childhood dream of creating something resembling the Ewoks' tree villages from the "Star Wars" movies.

The company's flagship model is the "Stingray" tent that holds at least three adults up to 880 pounds, selling for \$650. It has a front entrance as well as hole in the middle you can climb through. The company sells five other models that range in size and design and sell from \$150 to \$550. They are tied around trees using straps and ratchets.

Creepy

"You're in the trees so you're shaded, and it's nice and cool. It also keeps you off the ground from snakes and spiders and all that creepy stuff," said Melissa Benjamin, a company representative.

Sales have skyrocketed from 10 in 2013 to about 10,000 last year, Tentsile spokeswoman Kirstie Grego said.

Treepod makes teardrop-shaped hanging

treehouses with a large open entrance that allow people to lounge or sleep in them while they swing from side to side. The Boulder, Colorado-based company formed in 2015 after company President Ricardo Bottome's brother challenged him to make the fun idea come to life.

They sell three types ranging from 4 to 6 feet and selling for \$200 to \$300. The canvas treehouses hook onto trees by throwing a rope over a branch and through a steel quick link hooked to the top of the tent. They can be used at the beach, the mountains or your own backyard or porch.

They hit retail stores for the first time in 2016, with the company doing about \$1 million in sales, Bottome said. They are on pace to double that this year, he said.

"Picture yourself in this one, you're at a beach, you're getting the breeze, you can see out and you have a shade," Bottome said. "It's like paradise."

Michelle Ennis, owner of paddle board rental company in southern Utah, stopped at the Treepod display because she and her husband are considering buying some to rent to customers by the hour. She and her husband and her two sons lounged in the largest of the

swinging treehouses as her sons begged their mother to get them one for the backyard.

"I love how easy they are to set up. I love their comfort," Ennis said.

While Treepod and Tentsile are new, Canadian industrial engineer Tom Hennessy has been selling his hammocks since 1999. His company, Hennessy Hammocks, has developed 24 different models that range from \$79 to \$350, he said. They allow a camper to get inside and zip up inside a mesh cover that is covered by a rain tarp.

Their slogan is, "It's a tent... It's a hammock... It's a chair... It's a lounger... It's a supershelter!"

Hennessy, who said he grew up sleeping in hammocks, said what sets his apart are an asymmetrical diamond design with a ridgeline that doesn't change shape to give people a comfortable sleep. He said his customers are diverse, including backpackers, soldiers, Boy Scouts, motorcyclists and long-distance hikers.

Powell of the NPD Group said he expects to see other companies come out with their own tree tents in the coming years. "When a good idea comes along, the industry responds by trying to make it better or less expensive," he said. (AP)

per annum for undergraduate courses in Engineering, Technology, Humanities, Liberal Arts, Commerce, Management, Journalism, Hotel Management, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and some other courses.

The scheme is open to NRIs/PIOs from over 40 countries (including Kuwait) having substantial Indian Diaspora population.

The Scheme was revamped and launched in

July 2016. Under the revamped Scheme, number of scholarships has been enhanced from 100 to 150 with introduction of 50 scholarships for children of Indian workers employed in the Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries. The Scheme is now applicable to four categories of applicants:

- (i) Persons of Indian Origin
- (ii) Non-Resident Indians

- (iii) Children of Indian workers working in ECR countries (including Kuwait).
- (iv) Children of Indian workers in ECR countries - studying in India

The institutions that are covered under this Scheme are:

- (i) NITs, IITs, Schools of Planning and Architecture
- (ii) "A" Grade institutions accredited by Na-

tional Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and recognised by University Grants Commission (UGC).

(iii) Other institutions covered under Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) scheme.

Income criteria will be applicable to all four

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