



BEST *of* 2015

The Best of
MOBILE SOFTWARE
&
EMERGING
TECHNOLOGY

“If you do something and it turns out pretty good, then you should go do something else wonderful, not dwell on it for too long. Just figure out what’s next.”


- Steve Jobs



PEOPLE



SOFTWARE



TECHNOLOGY





Person of the Year STEWART BUTTERFIELD

Stewart Butterfield is a popular name in the world of technology, internet in particular. Butterfield started Flickr about 11 years ago. The website's been known as a hub for some really amazing photos for a lot of years. Sometime back though, he began on an internal team collaboration tool for the development of an online game. That tool turned out to become Slack.

Over the year, Slack has grown up from being just a collaboration startup to be a giant in the space of business management. Nearly every team I've been associated with, has switched to Slack for work.

Slack makes email less relevant. According to Butterfield, "The Entire Spectrum of communication within a company can take place inside Slack." This makes Slack a tool, much better than email for working across groups.

Butterfield has been great at spearheading groups to make great products. First with Flickr and now, with Slack. And much of the team from Flickr was reunited with Butterfield in forming the group that would ultimately be responsible for Slack.



Butterfield's startup brings a dash of joy to the world of team collaboration. According to Carl Handerson, co-founder of Slack, "Stewart is such a jokester, and that voice comes through in Slack—his wit and his playfulness." Slack sure has some personality to it. Look no further than the onboarding experience on Slack's iOS App.

Slack's strong character and in general a pleasurable experience, makes it great service to have & I don't know how much of it would have been possible without Butterfield's input.

A photograph of two young men, one on the left and one on the right, looking intently at a chessboard. The chessboard is made of light-colored wood and is set up with white and dark wooden chess pieces. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

EMERGING INTERNET STARTUP 2015 CHESSCADEMY

Learning a skill on the internet has always been an exciting experience. You can gain relative expertise on anything you want. You can learn how to click professional pictures, you can learn how to design interface and all the other things that you want to do, but aren't part of your curriculum, all for a relatively small or no amount of money.

Playing Chess is often been associated with intelligence, but as is the case with nearly all the things that seem to be intelligence

driven, chess, as it turns out to be, is also just a matter of practice and algorithms. In short, a skill that can be learnt.

Playing Chess is often been associated with intelligence but as it turns out, it's a matter of practice and algorithms!

Chesscademy, an online startup that began in 2013 has been on spreading to a wider audience gradually. I have a feeling that 2016 is going to be a big year for specific learning experiences, and some-

thing like Chess that's traditionally not been easy to learn, is going to have big opportunities to go to a wider audience!

Best of 2015 MOBILE APPS



It's really hard to point out one clear winning application this year. There were a lot of great apps this year. We did see a lot of cool services spring up, both internationally and within India.

Here's a list of my 5 favourite applications.

These are the one's that I thoroughly enjoyed using. To begin with a few honourable mentions; apps that were amazing but couldn't make the cut:

Giphy, Persicope, Vurb, Sofa (Movie Catalog) and Focus (Content blocker) by Mozilla.



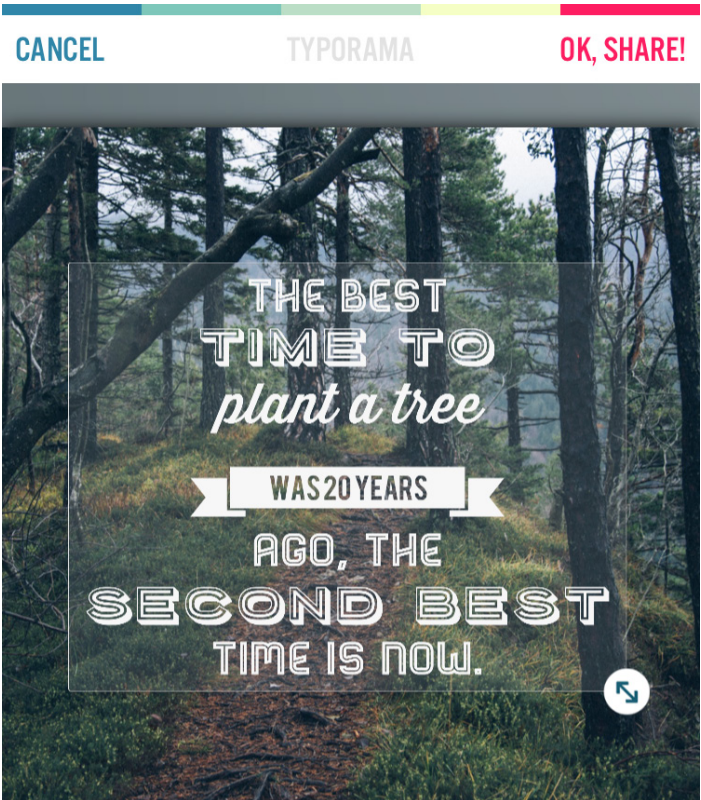
TYPORAMA

Developer: Sarp Erdag Platforms: iOS

Typorama makes it easy to make cool graphics with text overlays. Their idea is pretty simple. Just pick an image, either stock or something that you clicked yourself add a text message. And they'll make it beautiful for you. The sheer quantity of beautiful typographic styles at your disposal is overwhelming.

I've had much fun throughout the year, making playlist artworks, season greetings and personalised messages. The best part is, there's so much for the user to tweek and customise that this doesn't feel like a dumb filters application.

Typorama is just as much a must have as something like Instagram or Skitch!



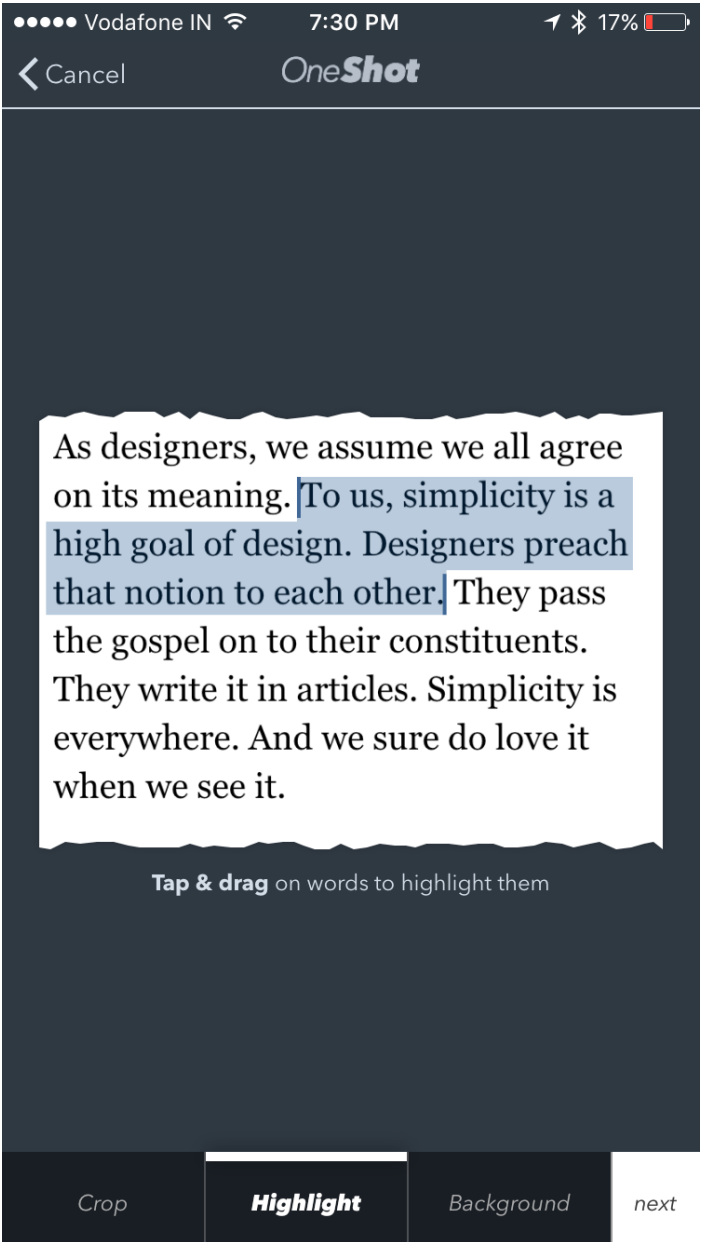
ONESHOT for SCREENSHOTS

Developer: Ian Ownbey Platforms: iOS

Oneshot for Screenshots has a simple idea: Sometimes we just want to highlight a particular part of an article for the people to read, but it's never easy to provide proper perspective with a quote.

oneShot lets you highlight the text in the screenshot of an article, automatically recognizes the article and helps you share the

relevant parts with complete perspective. The solution seems inelegant at first. But I've found that it's the best way to put up a quote. At a time when micro-blogging is so popular it's extremely easy to be misquoted.



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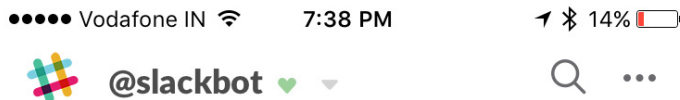


SCANBOT 5

Developer: doo
Platforms: iOS & Android

There's a ton that you can do with OCR recognition. Scanbot lets you scan

documents and QR Codes. With Documents there's some excellent OCR Text Recognition. Scanbot also provides automation workflows and sharing across multiple cloud storage services. It's probably the best document scanning service I've seen in a long time.



Welcome!

This is the very beginning of your direct message history with Slackbot

Slackbot tries to be helpful, but is only a bot, after all.

Tip: use this message area as your personal scratchpad: anything you type here is private just to you, but shows up in search. Great for notes, addresses, links or other things you want to keep track of.

Atop a great service, there are some amazing Interface animations as well, which make the app a total delight to use!



OUTLOOK

Developer: Microsoft
Platform: iOS

I never imagined that I'd use Microsoft Outlook again on any other platform than Windows (where it's

still horrible). But outlook on iOS has taken the application on a completely different level. Filled with some of the most amazing features that one needs for a professional mail application. Outlook is easily one of the best email clients. Certainly the best to come out this year.



SLACK

Developer: Slack
Platforms: iOS & Android

Slack has really grown on to become a great service over the years. The

sheer size of the service makes the Slack app an important application to have on your phone.

Slack is one of the best mobile apps of 2015 and it's not because of the quality of the application (that's pretty good too!) but it's because of the utility that slack as a service provides!



Best of 2015 iPAD APPS

Every year, when I look for the iPad Apps, I look for content creation applications. There are always the content consumption apps that pretty much everyone uses, but what I feel is that, over the years the iPad's biggest strength would be in prosumer applications. Applications that can be used by everyone. For beginners these are fun to play with. For professionals these applications can be used to produce quality work.

This year though, I've gone with a bit of a variety. There are content creation applications in the list and there are content consumption apps too!

But first Honourable mentions: I really liked

Autodesk Graphic this year, PDF Expert Ulysses, Overcast and Yousician. These were great apps that are extremely fun to use!

uMake

Developer: uMake

uMake is a very specific productivity app for Digital Technical Drawing. The field I realise, is very very specific. In all probability a generic consumer might never use. But for those it's made for. It completely disrupts the market on the iPad. In fact, it makes it extremely easy to do CADlike drawings, sometimes faster Solidworks for Desktop as well!

TWEETBOT 4

Developer: Tapbots

Tweetbot 4 is thousand times better than the Official Twitter App for the iPad. The Official Twitter app has a terrible single stream layout that makes it feel like a blown up iPhone application. It's so neglected that you feel as if the developers of that app are on a leave.

Tweetbot 4 not only provides the good design of Tweetbot but also offers a much more iPad tuned experience for a twitter app. The activity and stats tab are the highlights over here. They are extremely useful to keep a track of all the activity over your tweets. It's hands down the best twitter application you can get for the iPad at the moment.

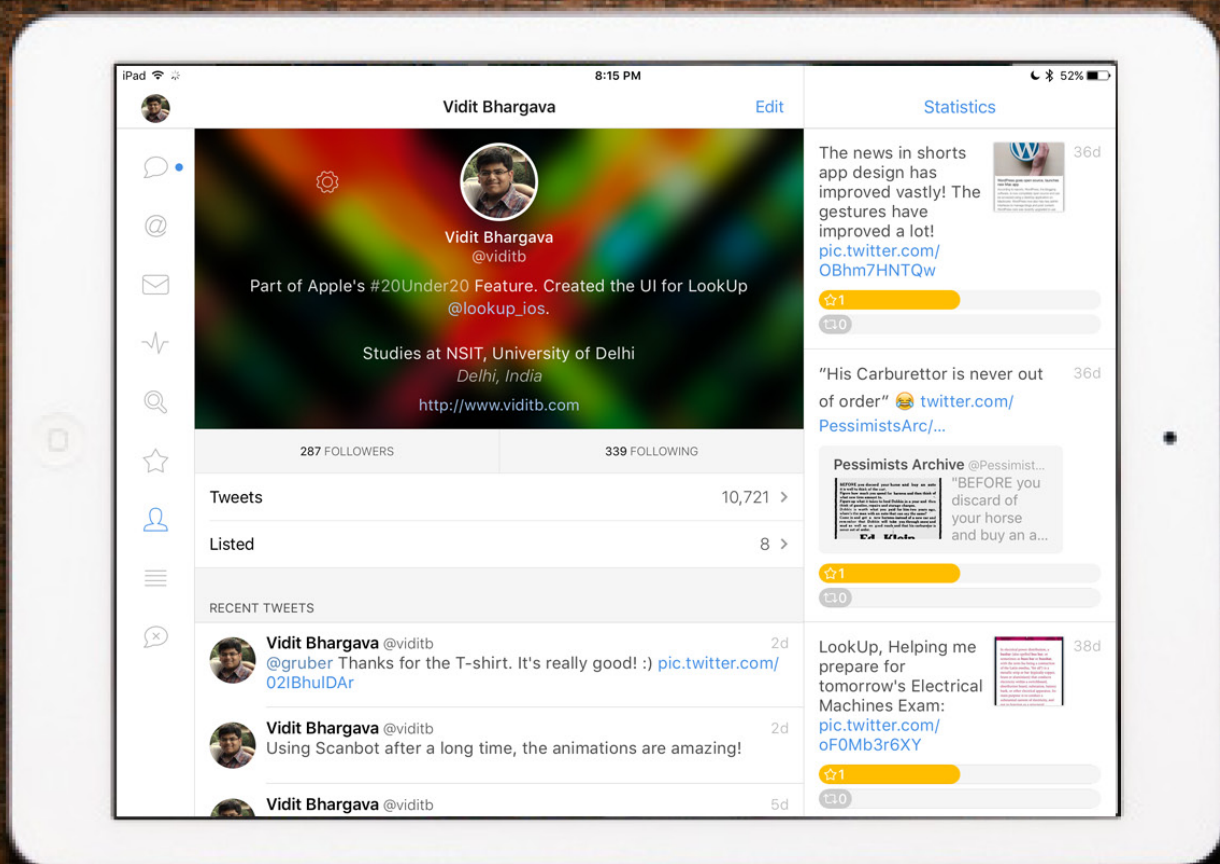
ASTROPAD

Developer: Astro HQ

Astropad converts the iPad into a Wacom styled tablet, making it extremely useful for illustrators.

It's the classic professional application, adding immense value to the existing hardware, even more so on the iPad Pro, which coupled with the Apple Pencil converts the iPad Pro into an indispensible gadget for Graphic Designers and illustrators.

Astropad is a first of it's kind application. That offers a top-notch quality, and is a must have for Designers. I really enjoyed using Astropad for the iPad and deserves a place in the iPad apps hall of fame!



CODA

Developer: Panic

If you are a web developer, there's probably nothing better to have than Coda for iOS. It's a fully featured text-editor with Syntax Highlighting and remote file management.

Coda supports Syntax Highlighting for Markdown, Python, CSS, HTML, SQL and many more languages. Making it the best tool you could have for editing your files on the fly.

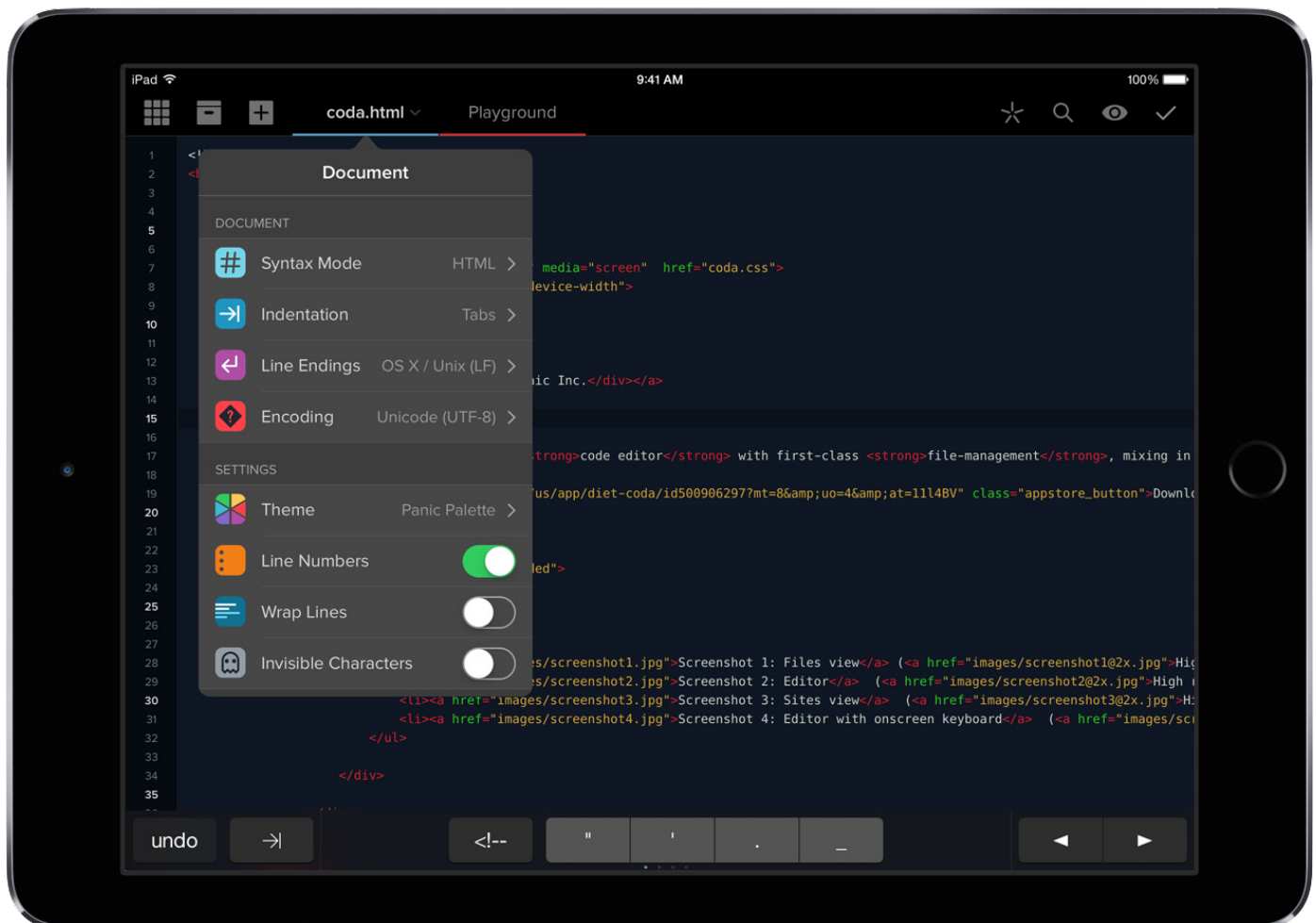
This is an app that I've been looking for, for a long time, but up until now, Coda for iOS was a pretty limited application. They've really upped the game this year, though!

TIMELINE

Developer: Timeline.com, Inc.

Timeline was another fascinating content consumption app this year. It's a news app with context.

It's more than just news articles. They've got full pages with appropriate historical context to the news. This is something that I've felt the need for, a lot of times, especially when a piece of news continues to go on for a very long time, sometimes we do loose context in the midst of flashy headlines (for example the Free Basics issue with India and Net Neutrality). I find Timeline to be a deeply satisfying experience for that sort of stuff.



Best of 2015

MOBILE GAMES



ALTO'S ADVENTURE

Developer: Snowman

Platform iOS

If there's one category where I can say, we have a clear winner, it's the Best Game of the year. Alto's Adventure is a winner on all platforms. The gameplay slightly familiar to anyone who has played Tiny Wings before but the experience is just as much and probably more satisfying. Alto's Adventure is extremely engaging and the prime reason why this eZine is coming this late into the month! :)



DOES NOT COMMUTE

Developer: Mediocre AB

Platform: iOS and Android

The game comes from the makers of last year's hit Mobile game "Smash Hit". Does Not Commute calls itself is "a temporal paradox in which you have no one to blame but yourself." and that's pretty much what I can say about the game itself, it's highly complex and is played better than explained. Again extremely addictive!

OTHER GREAT GAMES from 2015



ORPH

Developer: Prismatic
Platforms: iOS and Android



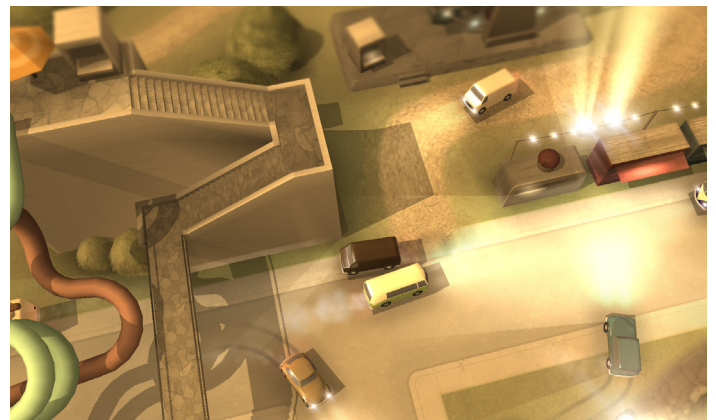
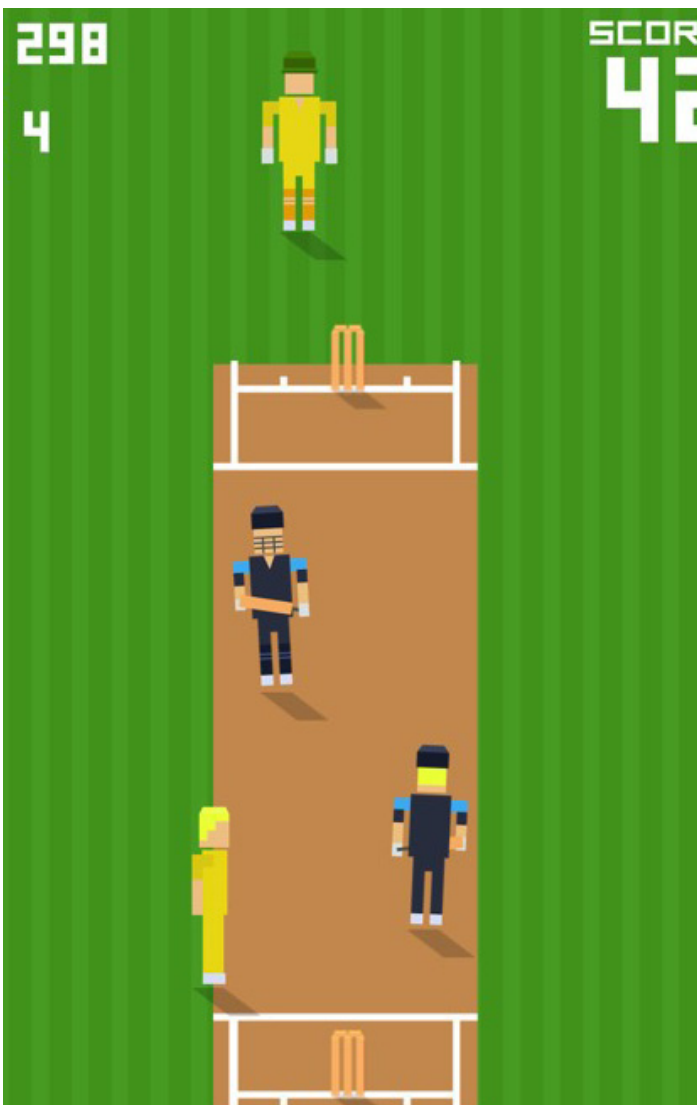
SHADOWMATIC

Developer: Triada Studios
Platforms: iOS



ONE MORE RUN

Developer: SuperSike Games
Platforms: iOS and Android



Best of 2015 WATCH APPS



PCALC

Developer: TLA Systems Ltd.

PCalc is literally on every platform. A twenty-two year old application that began its life first as a Macintosh OS application, PCalc is a solid calculator option for iOS users. But what I never imagined was the fact that Pcalc is actually amazing on the Apple Watch.

The taptic feedback is pretty much the best implementation i've seen on the Apple Watch, The Tip Calculator extremely handy.

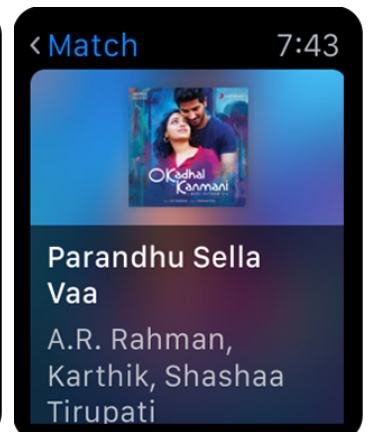
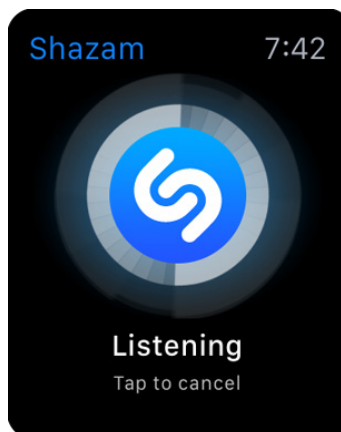


In fact, over the last few months, PCalc is my most used application! Early on the platform Pcalc is the best calculator you can get for the Apple Watch! Clearly the best App for Apple Watch at the moment.

SHAZAM

Shazam is another extremely useful app on the Apple Watch. It's fast (probably the fastest Apple Watch, i've seen), responsive, and very well designed.

The entire process takes less than a minute to recognise a song, which is something that's extremely essential to a wearable device application.



UBER

Uber's a rage. It's the fastest growing service that I've ever seen. It's also the service that makes a lot of sense to be on your wrist.

One needs the experience of booking a cab to be quick and simple. No one wants to go through a chain of processes to just get a cab. Uber for Apple Watch provides just that. I'm a fan of Uber's one button action approach over here!

To be honest though, I feel they could improve the app's speed and the design a little bit, just as much convenience the app is, I'd like to have more control. Given that it's not always the nearest cab that I need to get.

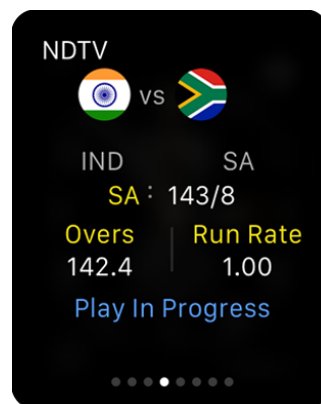
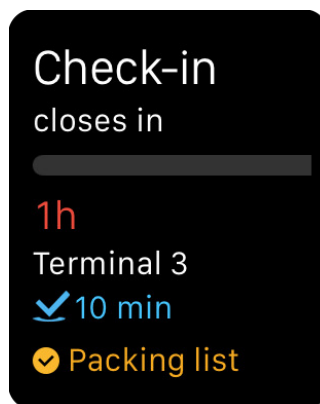


APP IN THE AIR

Developer: AITA LIMITED

App in the Air is a great app to have, if you are travelling or tracking a flight, It gives you a complete information about the check-in times, boarding times and whether or not the flight is delayed. They even pack a handy to-do list.

I'm particularly a fan of the Glance it provides. I did a bit of travelling this month. And App in the year for Apple Watch was a complete blessing!



NDTV

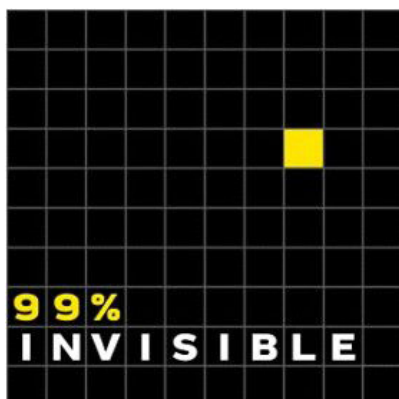
Developer: NDTV

This one's a local pick. NDTV stands for New Delhi Television Limited. They have this great Apple watch app that provides timely news notifications and a glance to check Cricket Scores.

I found the Cricket Score's glance to be extremely handy. It's something that's helped me stay upto date with the sport.

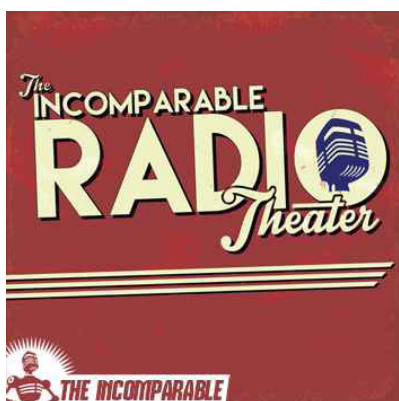
It's an overall impressive app, if you follow Cricket or just news in general!

Best of 2015 PODCASTS



WINNER 99% INVISIBLE

99% Invisible Narrated by Roman Mars began life as a design podcast but has quickly gone on to become a storehouse of valuable knowledge. From Bone Music in the 1950s Soviet Union to the Milk Carton Kids, 99% invisible relatively short episodes just deserve a listen!



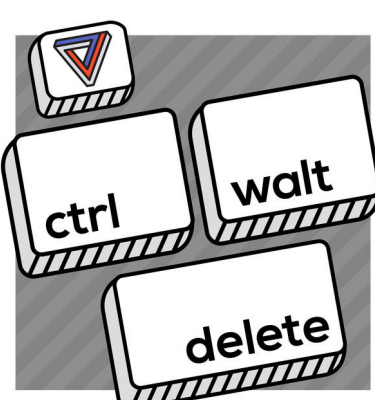
INCOMPARABLE RADIO THEATRE

What's more fun than having a new story to hear every week? Incomparable Radio Theatre is just the podcast for that. Radio Theatre's genius lies in the carefully crafted and presented stories that are just as interesting as some of the TV Shows. And wait till you hear the ads! They're unconventional and just as fun as the rest of the show.



HELLO INTERNET

CGP Grey and Brady Haran



CTRL WALT DELETE

Walt Mossberg and Nilay Patel



CLOCKWISE

Relay FM | Jason Snell



Emerging Technology 2015

THE TAPTIC ENGINE

Much has been said about the Apple Watch and the new iPhones over the year. Everyone seems to have strong opinions about the devices but there's a piece of technology that I've feel is all set to change the course of how it's implemented on Mobile Devices of any kind. It's the taptic engine.

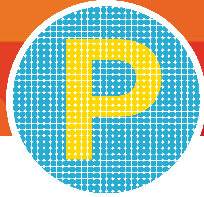
Mobile Devices have had frustrating vibration motors for a long time. They are extremely noisy and inelegant. This is where the taptic engine comes in.

The Taptic Engine provides nuanced taps on your wrist with the Apple Watch, Provides silent but noticeable vibrations to the iPhone and is responsible for the generation of the "feeling of a downwards tap" on the trackpad for the Macbook.

Everyone of these experience is magical. Apple's tech has faced a lot of flack in the recent past for not always working as intended, but the taptic engine just works.

It's a revolutionary mechanical device that's changed a lot about current Apple Devices and this is what makes notifications on the apple Watch not a nuisance but a pleasant experience (Because everytime your watch vibrates, it doesn't generate noises!)

And this is just v1.0 for the taptic engine. Much like the TouchID (which also got massive improvements this year), I'm really hoping that this technology compells other hardware manufacturers to do something better or just as good for their devices as well and make the UX better!



Pixel Quiz December

Vidit Bhargava

Q1. Neverending was an online, massively multiplayer game that didn't have an end-point and had no real objectives, but it was the conceptualising point for X, because the founder needed an ancillary project to keep paying his employees. X turned out to be a big internet service in the 2000s. What is X?

Q2. X is a 1989 classic video game developed by Jordan Mechner. The video game is immensely popular, and was even adapted into a movie. A reboot to X is scheduled sometime soon, by Ubisoft. What is X?

Q3. The Radio Act of 1912 is a United States federal law that required all seafaring vessels to maintain 24-hour radio watch and keep in contact with nearby ships and coastal radio stations. Factors that led to this included an ongoing conflict between amateur radio operators and the U.S. Navy and private corporations, that included the amateurs forging naval messages and issuing fake distress calls. What was the main impetus for this act?

Q4. You might recall X as the guy who gave the famous Vista copies OSX presentation at a former WWDC. However, X has been hidden from the limelight for a long time. Sometime back, X came up with an innovative Cloud Service Offering (still in Beta) Y. Y calls itself a Cloud Computer that combines the power of a smartphone with the storage of the cloud. Who is X and Name the upcoming Service Y.

Q5. Karthik Balakrishnan is a 22 year old Engineering Student at VIT Vellore. His work, X has been in news throughout the year. X is essentially a "one button" website for a specific reason. Balakrishnan's twitter profile links to two of his popular works, X & chennaiRains.org. What is X?

Q6. At the age of 19, Sam Altman cofounded Loopt, a location based Social Network. In 2014, he became the President of Y-Combinator. This year, Altman along with X started a new non-profit research company Y. What is Y and Who is X?

Answers to the Pixel Quiz October 2015

- | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|----------------|---------|---------------|
| 1. BlueJacking | 2. W: Heisenbug | 3. Thor Hammer | 4: Free | 5. Y: Twitch |
| 6 Sphero | 7. Y2K | 8. Alan Turing | 9.:// | 10. X: Burn-E |