

WHAT'S HOT

MOBILE GAMING

Mobile phone games were huge at this year's video game superconference, E3. And it's a growing business — by JupiterResearch's estimates, we'll be spending \$430 million a year on these games by 2009. Here's a look at some of the hottest new phone games.

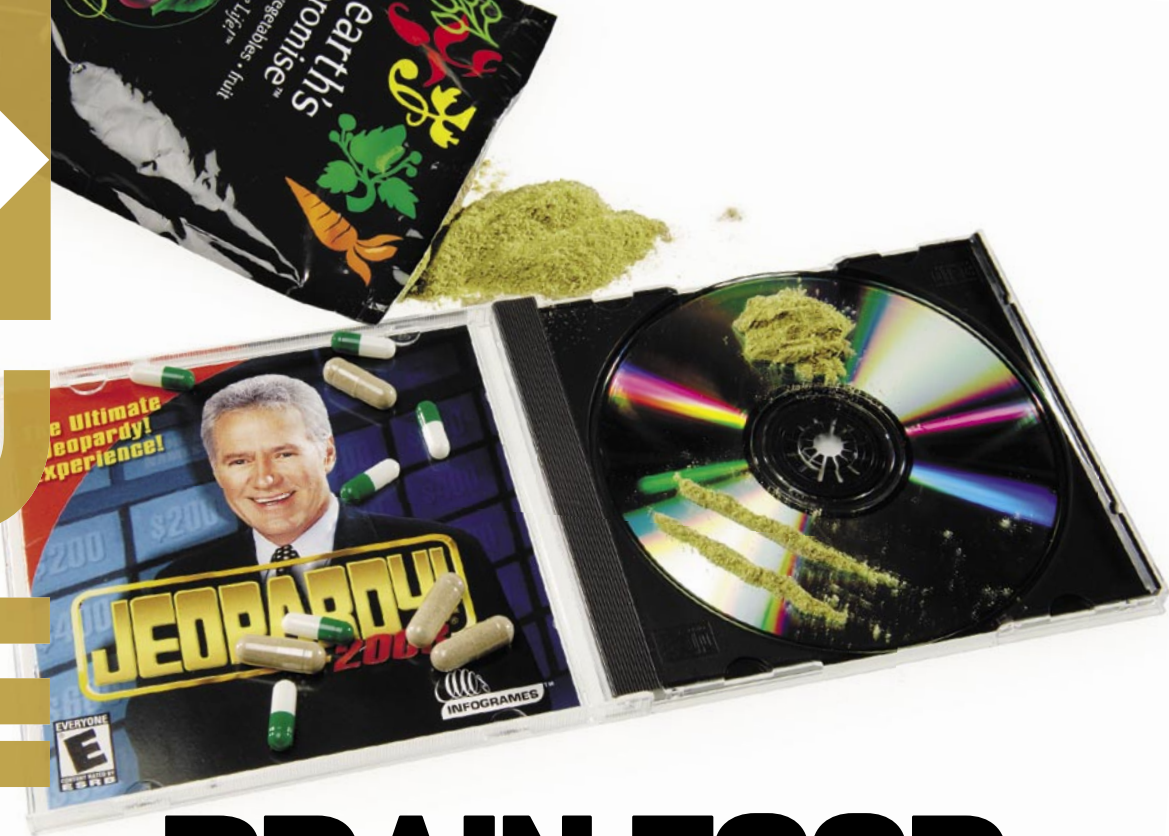
Yahoo Poker
Poker on your phone might sound dull — until you realize you can play against millions of PC users, not just other mobile users, via Yahoo's games network. Now you can commute and gamble at the same time! games.yahoo.com



Brady Bunch Kung Fu
Who would win in an all-out fight to the death: Greg or Marcia? What if they both knew kung fu? And some really badass disco moves? Find out later this year, with this game from Mobliss. www.mobliss.com




The Sims 2
Tired of your boss micro-managing every aspect of your day? Try micro-managing the tiny, pathetic lives of your Sims — right on your phone. www.ea.com




BRAIN FOOD

Is there a shortcut to intelligence? I'll take experimental smart drugs for \$1,200, Alex

I've always had a fondness for quiz shows, and *Jeopardy* has been the king of the hill for more than 20 years. Ever since the improbable 74-day, \$2.5-million reign of Ken Jennings, the show's popularity has surged to even greater heights. So when I got an e-mail invitation to try out for the show by taking its notoriously difficult 50-question written exam, I jumped at the chance. The catch: I had just four weeks to study up on opera, geography, monarchs, and Egyptian

mythology. I wondered: Was there a shortcut that could smarten me up, and quick? Naturally, I turned to chemicals. So-called smart drugs promise to increase brain function by providing extra neurotransmitters and other high-octane voodoo. After obtaining seven types of smart drugs, I devised a regimen to sample each of them for several days, while testing my progress along the way with trial runs of the *Jeopardy* computer game. Here's how each of the brain boosters fared:

ProEndorphin
ProEndorphin (a mix of various neurotransmitters, vitamins, and other stuff, like taurine) promises to instantly give you a surge of energy. Not noted on the packaging is the promise to instantly act as a powerful and explosive laxative. My sprint to the bathroom was full of vigor! Later, I developed a twitching in one eye. No noticeable effect on mental prowess.



★★★★★
\$1.73 per dose

DMAE
Dimethylaminoethanol is found naturally in sardines and anchovies. It's long been one of the most commonly touted smart drugs, and it's a huge bargain at just a nickel per capsule. And you know what? It may actually work. I scored my best on *Jeopardy* tryout runs after taking DMAE capsules and "blanked" less on questions that I knew. This is either the real deal or an amazingly effective placebo.



★★★★★
5 cents per dose

Earth's Promise
Earth's Promise? More like nature's sludge. This powder contains ground-up crap that you wouldn't dream of eating, including kale, carrots, mustard greens, and stevia (a South American shrub shown to depress sexual function in lab rats) — all "harvested from dew-kissed gardens, lush fields, and the riches of the sea." Flavored with elderberry powder, you're supposed to dissolve this in water and quickly drink it. I managed to choke down a few repulsive, chalky sips before breaking my promise with the earth. Sorry, earth.




★★★★★
\$1.53 per dose

Coenzymated B-1
This is just a B vitamin that you dissolve under your tongue, which is supposed to be better than the swallowing kind. Harmless and somewhat tasty, like eating Pop Rocks, I didn't detect any immediate effect on the brain.




★★★★★
18 cents per dose

NADH
Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide is just another B vitamin that is touted as a kind of "emergency brain boost" pill, designed to be taken an hour before stressful situations or any other time you need "cognitive performance." I took it before a sample test and it just made me feel vaguely nervous. Cognitive performance: Unchanged.



★★★★★
\$1.12 per dose

Choline Cocktail II
This ginormous jug of powder containing choline, a major neurotransmitter, plus a load of vitamins and other miscellany (like guarana) gives you a mere nine servings of smart juice when mixed with water. The packaging recommends drinking it in lieu of your morning cup of coffee, probably owing to the huge (though unspecified) amount of caffeine within. The megajolt is similar to the jitters you get from too much java, without the bother of an enjoyable flavor. Plus you get a vague inability to focus your eyes and a strange burning sensation in your mouth. This is not something that helps you concentrate, though it may make you run faster.



★★★★★
\$2 per dose

Ginkgo Biloba
Like DMAE, ginkgo biloba is another old-school smart drug, made from the bark of the ginkgo tree. Wildly popular and cheap, ginkgo didn't do diddly-squat for me after several days of taking it. Rather, it just left me with a perpetual dull headache.



★★★★★
8 cents per dose

FINAL JEOPARDY ON THE JUICE
With DMAE the clear winner, I stuck to a solid DMAE regimen for the remaining week before the *Jeopardy* tryout. And while my IQ may have been rising, smart drugs unfortunately have a fatal flaw: They can't teach you trivia that you never learned to begin with. I know that Qatar has a capital; I just don't know what it is. During the grueling written test, I did find myself pulling out a few answers that were lying deep in the recesses of

my brain, and on the whole I managed to stay calm until a string of tough questions in the home stretch threw me. Of course I failed the test (as did 93 other people from our group of 100), but on the whole I think my performance was good enough to merit studying up for another go at it in the future. Next year I'm upping the dosage. Watch yourself, Trebek! —Christopher Null