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# CultureLab

Where books, arts and science collide



## Run faster – zombies are chasing you

13:18 28 February 2012

Apps Fiction Games

Andrew Purcell, online producer



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(Image: [zombiesrungame.com](http://zombiesrungame.com))

You're in a helicopter flying over a post-apocalyptic, zombie-infested wasteland, heading towards a small outpost of survivors known as Abel Township. Your mission is top secret. All of a sudden, a figure appears out of the woods toting a rocket launcher and shoots your aircraft down. You survive the crash, but hordes of undead are closing in on you from all sides, eager to taste your flesh. There's only one option: you've got to run. Run for your life.

This might sound like the opening sequence of the latest [George A. Romero](#) flick, or possibly even the start of some zombie shoot 'em up game, but it's actually the opening of a new iPhone sports app designed to help you run faster and for longer. The principle is simple: convince yourself you're being chased by zombies, gain a quick adrenaline boost, run faster.

[Zombies, Run!](#) is primarily an immersive audio experience. You pop in your headphones, open the app on your iPhone and go for a run. While running, you listen to an intricate story written by award-winning novelist [Naomi Alderman](#), detailing your adventures trying to escape the marauding zombie hordes which now dominate the landscape. Those adventures, perhaps unsurprisingly, invariably involve your character running from danger. While fleeing the undead, you collect items, such as medical kits, military equipment and food supplies, which - in classic strategy-game style - can be used to help build your base.

This is all great fun, but what really makes this app stand out is its innovative use of the iPhone's GPS tracking system. While you're out running, your progress is monitored and the sound of the undead groaning in pursuit is played through your headphones. As the zombies get closer, the sound gets louder and the groans become ever more chilling. You have to run faster to escape.

I really did feel that the app gave me a speed-boosting jolt of adrenaline. Of course, this has both its ups and downs. Using this app makes long, steady jogs into something more akin to interval training; great for fitness, but perhaps not so great if you're preparing for a marathon. In fact, so engrossed was I in the app that I found myself having to be careful not to sprint out into traffic as I heard the gruesome zombie groans becoming louder in my earphones.

As an immersive experience, the app really does work excellently - it's a sort of low-fi virtual reality which sits well with the tradition of zombie-horror B-movies. However, there are a couple of minor drawbacks. Firstly, the zombie chases currently only work with the iPhone's GPS system. This means that if you're out running with an iPod, in which the app relies on accelerometer tracking, you're going to miss out on the most fun and innovative part of the game.

Another issue I found was with the app's music integration. Rather cleverly, it incorporates your playlists as part of Abel Township's local radio station, meaning that the snippets of the story, presented in the form of radio messages, are spliced between tracks on your playlist. This is certainly a neat touch, but the tension of the zombie-horror storyline was somewhat undermined by its juxtaposition with the folk harmonies of the Fleet Foxes playlist I had selected. While this was my fault, it did rather ruin the immersion.

Overall though, this is undoubtedly an excellent app and I found that it helped my fitness regime in one very crucial aspect: the app made going for a run an awful lot less boring. I doubt that I am alone in finding the tedium of jogging the greatest barrier against going out more often. Now, thanks to this app, I for one will be heading out for an extra run or two this week, at the very least just to hear the rest of Alderman's thrilling story.

[Zombies, Run!](#) is created by [Six To Start](#) and is [available now on iTunes](#). An Android version of the app is scheduled for release this spring.

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By TS  
**Run faster – zombies are chasing you:**  
Shame there's no test version. Not sure I'm willing to spring for it without at least sampling....

By Mark Olive  
**Run faster – zombies are chasing you:**  
I agree, the original was by Peter Dolan (not an employee of "Six to Start") and is still avail...

By j. read  
**Run faster – zombies are chasing you:**  
Rip off of 'zombie, Run!' On Android. I had it on my G1....

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[February 2012](#) (39)

[January 2012](#) (36)

[December 2011](#) (39)

[November 2011](#) (38)

[October 2011](#) (38)

[September 2011](#) (45)

[August 2011](#) (44)

[July 2011](#) (49)

[June 2011](#) (51)

[May 2011](#) (43)

[April 2011](#) (43)

[March 2011](#) (43)

[February 2011](#) (37)

[January 2011](#) (20)

[December 2010](#) (46)

[November 2010](#) (41)

[October 2010](#) (36)

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[July 2010](#) (35)

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**j. read on February 28, 2012 2:09 PM**

Rip off of 'zombie, Run!' On Android. I had it on my G1.

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**Mark Olive on February 28, 2012 2:41 PM**

I agree, the original was by Peter Dolan (not an employee of "Six to Start") and is still available on Android Market. This sounds like a derivative of his idea, with a story added, and as such he deserves credit.

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**TS on February 28, 2012 6:26 PM**

Shame there's no test version. Not sure I'm willing to spring for it without at least sampling.

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