

eSports 'shoutcaster' on the up and up

■ Jon Solmundson

A Geraldton local is making a name for himself nationally as an eSports announcer for competitive video gaming.

Michael Roberts, who announces under the name "Disconcur", has become one of the rising new talents in Australia's "shoutcasting" scene, where thousands of viewers tune in to live online broadcasts of competitive video games.

Although competitive gaming broadcasts have existed since the early 2000s, the widespread availability of online video streaming and surge of team-focused multiplayer games has seen interest in the professional side of gaming hit new heights.

Last year's Dota 2 International championship prize pool reached a record-breaking \$18.4 million, with most of the prize money being contributed by viewers, and some gaming teams now have coaches, doctors, and salaries paid by game publishers.

Roberts started watching professional games of Starcraft in the mid-2000s, but got involved in broadcasting only eight months ago when he entered a competition to be a tournament commentator for the recently-released Heroes of the Storm.

"I didn't win the contest, which was fair enough. They were looking for someone with a few years' experience, but I'd done all the research at that point so I figured I would start casting anyway," he said.

Roberts said eSports provided a great option for competitive communities in regional areas, because you didn't need all your players in the same physical space to have a national or world-class competition.

"The top team for Heroes of the Storm in Australia right now their manager is in New Zealand, one of the guys was born in Korea, there are a few guys from Sydney and Melbourne and I think a guy down in Adelaide as well," he said.

"The only real problem as far as the regions are concerned is infrastructure, and we were going



Michael Roberts mostly commentates on Heroes of the Storm, a game where players fight to reach the opponent's base. Picture: Blizzard Entertainment

to have that great NBN rollout, but now it's pretty much a screwed network.

"While I'm sure eSports wasn't a top priority in that decision-making process, it's just one of many digital industries we could've capitalised on, and that

will really continue to keep a lot of Australia out of the competitive scene."

Roberts said before he started his website there was a disconnect between people in the community and the competitive scene, and most players didn't

know when tournaments were happening. "It was also really important for us to get up team pages. For people who have a new, small team you aren't going to get sponsored straight away, but I can provide a team page that people can come and check out, and

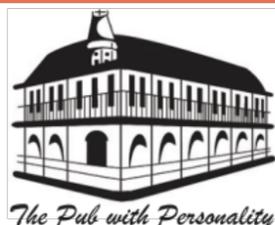
hopefully sponsors will eventually pick them up if they're good enough," he said.

"Don't get me wrong, nobody's gotten famous off my website yet, but it's a launch pad. It's a portal for the community to gather around."

HAPPENING AT THE FREEMASONS HOTEL

**THURSDAY
LIVE AND
LOCAL
JAMES
MCDONALD
7.30PM
FREE
ENTRY**

**CALL AND ASK
TODAY ABOUT
OUR FUNCTION
ROOM AND
FUNCTION MENUS**



**RESTAURANT
OPEN
MON-TUE 6-8.30 PM
WED TO SUN
12-2.30 PM
6-8.30 PM**

**DOUBLE
SESSION
SUNDAY
TESSA
MAYNARD
@ 1 PM**

**SHANGHAI
@ 4 PM
FREE ENTRY
BAR SNACKS
AT 4PM**

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African Safari brings the audience up close to the native wildlife. Picture: Supplied

Harvest brings best in film

Film Harvest Mid West returns this week with a visually stunning journey across one of the most spectacular continents in the world.

African Safari is the first 3D feature ever made about the wild animal kingdom.

The expedition follows Kevin Richardson and Mara Douglais, experts of the flora and fauna, in a safari covering more than 3700 miles across Africa.

On board a 4x4, an air balloon or a dugout canoe, African Safari travels through the continent's remotest

places, from Namibia's sand dunes to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, and onto the foot of Kilimanjaro.

Film Harvest Mid West brings African Safari to Orana Cinemas Geraldton tomorrow.

Film Harvest presents the pick of the crop of alternative and art-house films, bringing them to premium cinemas throughout regional WA.

Film Harvest is an independent organisation, partnering with regional businesses and engaging community to present an ongoing calendar of screenings.