

HURRY UP AND DIE SO I CAN PLAY

video
game
views

PlayStation2

ATV Offroad Fury Sony Entertainment

While the PlayStation2 has yet to get the spectacular driving simulation it truly deserves (can you say *Gran Turismo 3*...?), it has had more than its fair share of more 'extreme' driving games - why bother with realism when you can settle for some outlandish action instead? Yet some games try to do something else, something slightly more unusual. And *ATV Offroad Fury* is one of those strange games which tries to represent itself as a simulation, with a great deal of attention having gone into making sure that the vehicles handle realistically. But then they add a little dash of fantasy so when you hit a jump just right, you can actually fly through the air for several hundred feet. And your driver can travel an equally long distance if you crash too - it's hardly what you would call lifelike, but somehow it works.

ATV Offroad Fury both looks good and plays well - the system of control is a little tricky to begin with because you have to learn how to preload your suspension before hitting the jumps. Once you get the hang of that, the only thing you really have to be concerned about is trying to turn your ATV too sharply and performing the occasional trick too. So most people will be able to pick it up and play it within just a few minutes.

There's a lot of different choices when it comes to racing - you can have just a straight-forward race for a set number of laps, but the other less usual events are the more enjoyable ones. Those include Freestyle Stunt Competition (pull off as many tricks as possible within a set time limit), Cross Country Enduro (you can follow any route you want as long as you travel through periodic gates) and Stadium Supercross (racing around indoor tracks with more jumps and turns than their outdoor counterparts).

One area where *ATV Offroad Fury* excels is the multi-player game. Even with the screen split into quarters for four players, the resolution stays high enough to ensure no detail is lost and there's no drop in the frame rate either. It's at times like this that you really appreciate the power of the PlayStation2 - it is wonderful to be able to have simultaneous play without having to make any sacrifices. If only there was an online option...

The one real problem? The difficulty level. Once you get past the first few levels, the difficulty gets hiked to such a level that there's a very good chance you won't be able to finish in first place if you make just one mistake. And with bumpy, twisty tracks to speed around, it doesn't take much for your driver to hurtle spectacularly through the air or even for the ATV to flip over. Combine that with the difficulty and you have a game that is unfairly hard - hard enough to potentially stop people from really getting into it. Hopefully if a sequel does appear (which, let's be honest, there's a very, very good chance of), this will be taken care of. Until then, we'll have to make do with this imperfect, albeit incredibly fun little game.



PlayStation2

Gauntlet Dark Legacy Midway

The urge for companies to remake classic video games has been increasing - just about every major arcade hit has reappeared in recent years in a new form and now *Gauntlet* can be added to that list. *Gauntlet* was one of the first games in the arcade where four players could take part simultaneously and it spawned, not surprisingly, all kinds of lesser clones.

Not much has been done to update the basic premise of the game - a story has been tacked on, but the biggest difference comes via the graphics. With the power of a PlayStation2 behind it, *Gauntlet Dark Legacy* is a good-looking game with a lot going on at one time. But it is all the little graphical touches that really show off the system's power - the lighting effects for magic spells are particularly impressive.

While nobody could call *Gauntlet Dark Legacy* particularly deep, it is an incredibly enjoyable game - there's a lot of running around killing monsters, just like in the original and the addition battles against bosses do add some depth to the proceedings. And the designers have made sure there's plenty to do and uncover in each level too.

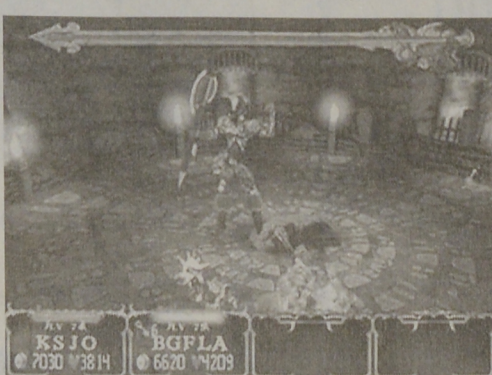
Every single level has a whole bunch of switches and buttons to discover, some of which are essential to make it to the end of the level while many of the others will aid in your quest for special items like rune stones, golden items and legend items (which help you defeat the bosses). There are also other more mundane things to collect like crystals (which unlock higher levels) and an obscene number of monsters to defeat too.

Like in the original *Gauntlet*, the monsters appear from generators - if you destroy the generator then the source of the many various types of monsters disappear and life becomes a lot easier. Of course, generators for more powerful monsters take many more hits before they are demolished so you could probably use some help on the higher levels.

And that's where *Gauntlet Dark Legacy* really comes into its own - a multi-player game. Up to four players can play simultaneously and while the default setting allows you to play cooperatively, you can also choose to blow the hell out of each other too if you are so inclined. But most importantly, with three other people to help out when the going gets tough, the game becomes even more playable.

Control is handled well - there's even a *Robotron*-esque scheme for those with a nostalgic urge and considering the simplicity of the game, you don't have to worry about anything too complicated. That means anyone can pick up the game and play immediately. Then as you progress through the levels, your character will increase in strength and abilities. There are eight different characters to choose from, each with their own types of attacks and magical abilities.

Gauntlet Dark Legacy is a very old-fashioned game, but it is also one which is an awful lot of fun and that can't be a bad thing. The replay value might not be immense (unlocking a few hidden characters isn't a big deal) but the game is big enough to keep you busy for quite a few hours. If Midway do as good a job on their forthcoming update of *Spy Hunter* then the world will be a better place.



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The full scoop on all the new consoles

PlayStation2

Zone Of The Enders Konami

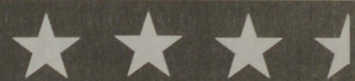
I feel bad for Konami. They release one of the more visually impressive games to date on the PlayStation2 and all that people care about is the free demo of another game that they've included with it. Of course, it really doesn't help that the demo is for one of the most anticipated games ever, namely *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty*. And the demo is jaw-droppingly incredible and worth all the hype it is getting - let's leave it at that.

This review is for Hideo Hojima's other project - *Zone Of The Enders* (ZOE), a mech game that tries to add a complicated cinema-driven story to what turns out to be a remarkably simple game. And what does that game involve? Blowing stuff up. And boy does it blow up pretty. There is the odd spot of puzzle solving to do, but most of it simply involves taking a particular object to a particular location. Nothing too deep. But for the most part, it is simple explosion after explosion.

That isn't exactly fair because it makes ZOE sound overly simplistic. Instead, it is one of the most ambitious attempts at making a mech type game for several reasons. Firstly, the graphics are nothing short of stunning - the robots look wonderful and the animation doesn't miss a beat no matter how much is going on at one time. The second reason that the game works so well is the control. So many games in the past have failed because it was so damned difficult to see what the hell was going on, but ZOE uses a clever combination of the two analog sticks and a method of locking onto your target, allowing you to fly around and blow things up at the same time.

It isn't all rosy though because ZOE suffers from one huge problem - the novelty wears off real quick. You'll be amazed for the first few hours at how the story unfolds and how the battles proceed at a breakneck speed. And you'll be even more amazed when you get to one of the boss battles because they truly are incredible. But then you'll notice how there isn't a whole lot of variety between the non-boss battles and, God forbid, it actually gets a little dull.

There are some things that do help it out though - finish the game once and you unlock Versus Mode which allows you to take on a human (or computer for that matter) opponent in a one-on-one battle. That does make you want to play *Zone Of The Enders* again, but at the end of the day, this is a game that will be best remembered as a free game that came with a \$70 demo.



PlayStation

Aladdin in Nasira's Revenge Sony Entertainment

In the peaceful kingdom of Agrabah, lurks an evil sorceress...Nasira, the twin sister of Jafar - the same Jafar which Aladdin defeated some time ago. Nasira kidnaps Princess Jasmine and the Sultan and takes over the palace. As Aladdin tries to rescue his friends, Genie gets trapped, leaving Aladdin and Abu on their own to save the day...and the kingdom.

In theory, this game should work; it's fun, the story is entertaining...and hey, it's a Disney game. But it isn't that simple. Although the game moves along at a good pace, even though it looks and sounds good, there are some significant flaws that plague the game and keep it from being a potentially decent game.

Like in most games of this genre, the biggest problem lays in the camera angles. Why can't developers find a way to keep that damn camera behind the character in the third person view? So many games are able to do it flawlessly (such as *Syphon Filter*). At this point in time, game companies need to invest a few extra bucks in order to get their hands on the technology that will enable them to use camera angles that work and that stick behind the character, instead of spinning around, thus resulting in impossible angles where you can't possibly see what's going on around you and worst yet, what's coming at you. This part of the game is infuriatingly annoying and calls for many deaths from falling off of ledges, and this is not necessary by any means.

Another concern is the unresponsive controls. When you play a game, you expect the character to execute moves which are synchronized with your button pushing. When this doesn't happen, once again, many unnecessary deaths occur, leaving the gamer frustrated.

As you progress through the game, you have to collect items which will help you in your quest throughout each level. The best part is the mini games which you can play at the end of each level. They are fun to play, but lack in controllability.

As you progress through the game, the levels get more challenging, as they should, but sometimes get insanely tough in certain levels (most notably, the magic carpet level, where you have to fly around, but once again, with unresponsive controls and ridiculous speed, it's quite hard).

But when all is said and done, the game isn't bad, but it's not friendly enough that you'll want to play endlessly either. The FMV's are nicely done throughout for the most part and the voice acting isn't half-bad.

- Marc Hostetler



PlayStation

Triple Play 2002 EA Sports

With the life of the PlayStation quickly coming to an end, along with it comes an end to the Triple Play series. And for the occasion, EA decided to make the title the most memorable. What can you possibly add to a baseball, you ask yourself? Not very much, indeed, but there's always room for some improvement.

The game looks good, runs smoothly, the players are proportionate and the game plays realistically. From the opening menu, there's catchy music that'll grab your attention.

The game includes the usual Single Game, Season, Playoffs and the Big League Challenge, a welcome addition which is basically a modified Home Run Derby, with a few variations of it. There's the regular slugfest, the tournament slugfest, and the extreme mode. You get to choose from several outrageous fields, such as the construction yard, the bedroom and a medieval castle, all of which surround a somewhat regular baseball field. Spread out in the what would-be bleachers are targets to hit. Each home run earns you points, and each target hit earns you bonus points, depending on the size of the target. This doesn't make *Triple Play* a better baseball game, it just makes it more fun, especially when playing against a friend.

The controls are identical to previous titles. The sounds of the game have been improved, with more sound effects when the ball is hit hard, and more vibration as well. Buck Martinez and Jim Hughson take care of the play-by-play and colour commentary as in past years.

There is still the problem back from last year that there is a lack of grounders hit compared to real-life baseball, but I guess that's just to make the game more fun and higher scoring. One really annoying problem is the fact that when a ball is hit into midfield, the computer automatically chooses a player closest to the ball to field the ball. Well, when the ball is rolling past second base for example, then your second baseman will be selected to run after the ball, but the ball keeps rolling into midfield and it would be better for your center fielder to go retrieve it, but you have to do it manually, and often you lose too much time to get the out, and it's just a pain in the ass when this happens.

Other than that, the game plays very well; it is the best of the series. It's a lot of fun, mostly if you play with a friend, so get out there and hit some home runs!

- Marc Hostetler

