

VITA PLAYER

ISSUE 2, JANUARY 2022

RACING GAMES SPECIAL

Special look at the WipEout series

Interview: CoLD SToRAGE (aka Tim Wright)

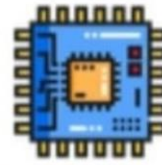
Horizon Chase Turbo reviewed
and more!



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Issue 2 of Vita Player Magazine. As you can see from the cover, we're dedicating this issue to racing games. It's quite a varied genre and one that was blessed with several games that were released alongside the PS Vita at launch and saw a plethora of games throughout the console's lifespan right until the last of the physical releases in 2021.

When the original PlayStation made its debut in the UK, we were able to buy a near-perfect home conversion of the arcade hit *Ridge Racer*. We were also introduced to *WipEout*, a game that helped define everything that the PlayStation was. A console that broke the mould and showed that gaming was just as much for adults as it was for "kids". So, it was fitting that the Vita launched with the latest

incarnations in both franchises and we're taking a look back at both of them here.

We're not stopping there with the iconic racer though. We're also looking back into the PlayStation archives at *WipEout Pulse* on the PSP, and to round off our coverage of this seminal classic, we're talking to Tim Wright - composer of the music for many of the games in the franchise!

But back to the magazine as a whole and to be honest, we're a bit overwhelmed at the response we've had to the first issue. We were hoping that some of you were going to enjoy the magazine, and maybe a few of you would help spread the word about it, but your support and feedback has been wonderful.

It made all the hard work we put into the magazine worthwhile and it's given us the strength to keep working harder than ever not only on this issue but to plan the magazine out for months ahead.

The response to our Rock Boshers DX competition was better than we could have anticipated as well and you'll find details of the winner at the back of this issue. We've even had our first Reader's Review submitted and you can read that further on.

As for the future of the magazine? Well, we have plenty of ideas for topics for future issues ranging from homebrew to specials looking at individual publishers, sports games and much more! The Vita itself, and its commercial game releases may be no more, but the passion of its community will live on and we've got plenty to talk about still and hundreds of games that we'd love to share with you in these pages.

Until next time!

Simon Plumbe, Editor

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GAME REVIEW: RIDGE RACER (PS VITA)

by Simon Plumbe

Ridge Racer has an incredibly long pedigree. Starting life in the arcades, this racer from Namco made its debut back on the original PlayStation as one of its early releases and was one of the deciding factors in the war between the PS1 and the Sega Saturn. When the two consoles were launched, each had its own exclusive flagship racer. While Sony had Ridge Racer, Sega had their own port of Daytona USA.

Ridge Racer delivered a near arcade-perfect conversion (helped in part by Sony's excellent libraries that were provided for developers at the time, allowing the game to be converted in a matter of months), Daytona USA, in contrast, was a disaster. It was bug-ridden and while it looked arcade-perfect in still images, it failed to recreate the speed or playability of its arcade parent and was plagued with problems and the Saturn never recovered. The subsequent Championship Edition corrected its flaws, but by then it was too late...

Since then, there were three PS1 sequels, several games for the PS2, PSP, PS3 and then this for the PlayStation Vita released both as a card and as a digital download. The game remains the same as before - racing against a series of other cars over several tracks forgetting realism in favour of fast drift-based racing and providing a fast, stunning looking arcade driving game. As always, it was never a title where players were asked to expect anything too deep in terms of gameplay...

The game starts out a little differently from previous Ridge Racer games - making use of the PS Vita's online capabilities on an ongoing basis as you play, the first time you load the game up you are asked to select one of four teams to drive for. Once you have picked your team, this will stay with you throughout the game and each day as you sign into the PS Network, teams will be assigned challenges - ranging from beating racers from other teams in races to racing against other teams two-on-two. Depending on how well you do, you will earn points for your team and yourself and these points will be used



enhancements and various other improvements to your car.

While you can purchase a range of these, only two can be fitted at any one time so you have to choose carefully... You can customise your cars further by giving them a complete makeover changing the paint scheme used on them, either using

to upgrade your cars during the game - but onto this later.

The game itself is standard Ridge Racer fare - select a track, a car and simply race as fast as you can over several laps. The key to winning races in RR isn't necessarily how fast you can drive but how well you can drift around corners and that's always been the driving force (sorry!) of how to get the most out of the game. If you're not used to this style of play then it can take some getting used to and it's not for everyone. If you are more looking for a driving game where steering and acceleration / brake control are also just as important as drifting then this certainly won't appeal to you.

There are only three tracks on offer but each can be selected normally or in the traditional Ridge Racer reverse mode, effectively turning it into a brand new track. At the end of each race, depending on your performance, you will be awarded points that you can use to upgrade your car by purchasing new types of turbo boosts, slipstream

the presets or the colour sliders giving you total control over the look of the cars.

There are two multiplayer modes on offer - online and local ad-hoc modes - both for up to 8 players but strangely they will also allow you to race on your own on an empty track. Although if you wanted to that would work well for earning more points for upgrading your car, even if was a rather tiresome way of doing it.

While the new upgrade system and addition of a turbo boost function (which is earned through successful drifting) it's still the same old Ridge Racer and plays just as it always has done... and that's its main strength (or weakness depending on your view of the franchise). If you love Ridge



Racer then you'll know what to expect already but if it's a game that you don't particularly like then there's nothing here that will excite you.

On a technical level, this looks absolutely remarkable. It is incredibly fast, smooth, detailed and really does look as if it belongs on not only the PS Vita but looks as if it could have come straight from the PS3. I can't fault the visuals for one second and the range of music is second to none. Sound effects are a little sparse and uninspiring and I have to say that all the cars sound pretty much alike so that's probably its weakest link... until you look at the game's physics engine - or lack of it.

To be fair, physics and realism have never been a strong point of Ridge Racer. It hasn't really changed much since the original arcade game and to be honest, I think if it had been updated for this release there would probably be an uproar from gamers complaining that the game "wasn't Ridge Racer anymore" so these foibles have been left in.

Regardless, it can be frustrating for those not used to them. The problem with Ridge Racer is that these quirks can be downright annoying at times.

For example, if you mis-time a corner and understeer and end up hitting a track wall, in most racing games all you need to do is steer back onto the track and carry on. Not Ridge Racer. You are pretty much forced against the wall for the duration of that corner and no amount of turning can get you out of it - it just seems to grind your car into it further. Similarly, crashes into anything just stop you dead in your tracks and as for jumps... let's just say that you will never see cars recover back to being on four wheels and driving as if nothing

had happened so quickly in your life! As I said, these are issues that have been with the series since day one so most of us are used to them - it still doesn't make them acceptable though.

Back to the game and the biggest issue that gamers have with Ridge Racer on the Vita is that the game only comes with three tracks and this is quite understandable when compared with any other racer on the system. Compared with the open world environment of *Need For Speed: Most Wanted*, or the varied worlds of *Sonic & All Stars Racing: Transformed*, Ridge Racer does make gamers feel as if they are being somewhat short-changed especially with the game being sold at retail. While it



isn't a full price game, many do feel that it is vastly over-priced for what it offers, even though each of those tracks can also be played in reverse effectively doubling the number of tracks.

However, for those old enough to remember the original, this only shipped with a **single** track and cost double what this PS Vita game does. While it did offer a variant on the track unlocking an alternative extended route, and reverse versions of it, it was basically still just a single track but it still proved to be one of the biggest hits on the original PlayStation. What has frustrated PS Vita owners when it comes to this latest incarnation of Ridge Racer is that more tracks are available,

and were available from the day the game was released, but only as DLC from the PSN Store... and that's what caused such outcry.

Six further courses have been made available to purchase - individually and as part of packs with additional music and cars - bringing the total up to 9 (18 if you count the reverse tracks). Now, if all of these had been included in the game from the start and the game's price had been increased by £10 I don't think that anyone would have complained a great deal, but to offer everything separately, it has led to players venting anger over what they felt was an incomplete game at retail.

It has to be said that this is how you need to consider the game. The original retail release - while a genuinely good game - just doesn't provide enough long-term appeal to justify the price tag. If paying the full retail price for this, it really isn't worth buying without the *Gold Pass* and *Silver Pass* which gives you all the extra courses but that pushes the game into the same sort of price bracket that you can pick up superior racers like NFS and Sonic.

As much as I prefer owning physical copies of games over their download counterparts where possible, this one is really only worth getting from the PSN store as the *Ultimate Edition* which

contains the original game plus the Gold and Silver Passes as a single package which is much better value for money. You'll still need to get the song packs separately but this does make the game worth considering.

It's definitely a fun game, but racing games



There is no denying that Ridge Racer has been well supported with DLC from the PSN store. Backed up with six new tracks, a large selection of additional cars (most of which are available individually or in two specially priced bundles), the special Hornet car seen in Daytona USA and 20 packs of free additional songs featuring music from past Ridge Racer titles, for around £10 you can expand the game to give you a selection of 9 tracks, over 90 pieces of background music, and 13 cars (not counting the ones available away from the collected bundles) making this an incredibly well-rounded package.

have moved on over the last 20 years since Ridge Racer first appeared and despite some changes to the gameplay, it's still the same Ridge Racer underneath. Yes, it looks a lot better than it has ever done but unless you're a fan of the series, you'll soon find yourself frustrated with some of the quirks that Ridge Racer is known for. A good fun game, but best to stick to the download version only and really one for the long-standing fans only.

GAME REVIEW: WIPEOUT 2048 (PS VITA)

by Sven Harvey

I'll warn you now. I love WipeOut. It was the reason I eventually caved in and got the original PlayStation - the first pure home game console I ever even contemplated owning (I did own a C64GS, CDTV and CD32 previously, but let's face it they were all just modified home computers rather than bone fide purpose-developed game consoles).

The original WipeOut game - a kind of mixture of Powerdrome and Road Blasters with a smidgeon of Mario Kart and a sprinkling of Matrix Marauders, was a launch title for the original Sony PlayStation in 1995 here in the UK, from Amiga stalwarts, Psygnosis. As it's available as a PSN download for the PS Vita, I will be reviewing that elsewhere in this issue.

Following on the PSOne, Psygnosis also released the hugely upgraded WipeOut 2097 and Wipe3out as well as WipeOut 3 special edition which included tracks from the previous two games in the higher resolution they were squeezing out of the original hardware for the third iteration of the series.

Psygnosis had been part of Sony Electronic Publishing since 1993 (prior to Microcosm's release on the CD32) but were absorbed into Sony Computer Entertainment as Studio Liverpool in the run up to the PlayStation 2 launch. WipeOut Fusion was the PS2 release, and wasn't as successful as its predecessors, either commercially or critically. The next time WipeOut would appear, it would be on the PSP in the form of WipeOut Pure. Almost a reboot of the franchise with a return to the highly regarded play style of WipeOut 2097 with some refinements of excellence, that then carried over with further development into WipeOut Pulse. WipeOut Pulse even got a makeover and port to the PlayStation 2 with a release that I have never actually seen in the flesh (more is the pity!).

With the incredibly powerful PS3 on the way WipeOut Pure and WipeOut Pulse were combined and recoded into high definition for a "digital" only release on the Playstation 3. The resultant game was not only in 1080p but ran at a full 60 frames per second, and this was back in 2008, putting some next gen games to shame. To be brutally honest putting this game on





With several event types including zone, eliminator, time trials and so on as well as the basic races, there is plenty of variety to the gameplay, which still features the earlier titles speed pads and various pick-ups. What does set it apart is the colour coding of the pickup pads, revealing if they are defensive (green) pick-ups or offensive (yellow) ones, making things a little more tactical than the earlier colour changing pads on the previous games.

in stores on full HD TVs sold PlayStation 3's far easier than anything else I ever tried. The game also had an add-on in the form of WipeOut HD Fury with an entirely new WipeOut league and campaign with new event types, tracks and craft.

Then with the Vita on the way, Studio Liverpool forged forward by going back to the beginning...

As the name suggests the Vita game is set in 2048, the first year of the anti-gravity championships, and the start of ballistic racing, the future of motorsport. The style of the game is immediately familiar yet disparate from the previous titles. The best parts of the previous games have filtered into 2048 via WipeOut HD, while the track surroundings are significantly different with large chunks of tracks actually being the streets of Nova State City.

The sound of the game feels somewhat retro with the male voice announcements, instead of female, harking back to the first game, and the sound effects similarly evoke the first game yet suggest something slightly more primitive than even that. As you would expect the graphics are way ahead of all of the previous titles bar PS3's HD.

In the single player campaign you have multiple events in the 2048 championship and then you progress onto 2049 and 2050. You also get an online campaign as well with 20 sets of events to progress through - the twentieth having 15 events to complete. The basic game also offers ad-hoc multi-player and limited cross play against PS3 players using WipeOut HD (initially you have only four tracks and five ships to choose from).

The game is expanded significantly by the additional DLC. You can opt to unlock either the WipeOut HD campaign, the WipeOut HD Fury campaign, or both. However if you own the download version of WipeOut Fury HD for the PS3, the WipeOut 2048 DLC is unlocked at no extra cost.

The WipeOut HD campaign has all 8 sub-



campaigns from the PS3 game (with between 6 and 17 events), though some minor modification has taken place, while the Fury campaign offers another 8 each consisting of between 7 and 13 events. You also get the sound effects, including the female voice from the PS3 title, and of course the tracks and ships. In other words, there is quite a bit of longevity in the normal basic game which is expanded hugely by the DLC packs.

All in all, you get 4 event types to try out in the main game; standard WipEout races, time trials (over multiple laps), combat (forget the race - attack the other ships with every pick up you can get) and Zone (survive as long as you can using airbrakes as your craft continually accelerates in a stripped trippy multi-colour environment where the music cosmetically alters the track!)

The WipEout HD campaign adds speed lap challenges, while on the Fury campaign you'll discover Zone battles (essentially the trippy Zone events with craft and the ability to save up energy to expel as a barrier for other to crash into, while boosting you up a few zones), and Detonator where you are armed with a blaster and EMP type device to take out



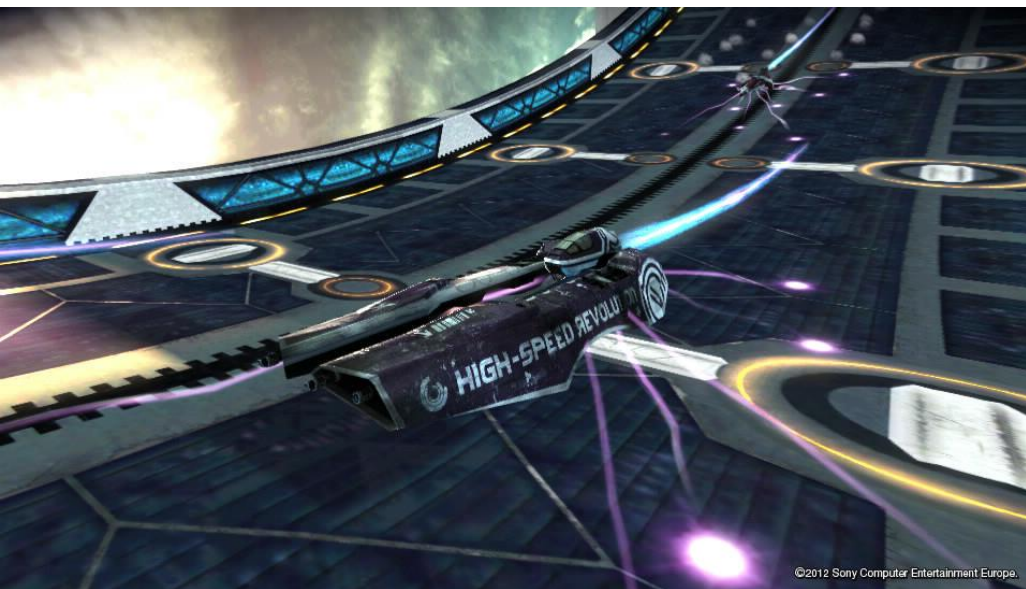
mines and bombs in a very similar environment to the Zone events.

The game is presented very well with even the menu/title screens reacting to the rear touch pad and music that is playing. Some of the music is familiar being from earlier games, some remixed, but you always have the option to turn the in-game music down to zero and play your own MP3s off your memory card through the music player app. I transferred my WipEout PS3 playlist (including tracks from other racing games, I may add, like remixes of the themes from Lotus Turbo Challenge II and Split/Second!).

The graphics are great - though you do get some frame rate drops occasionally when there is way too much going on, on screen. Having said that the frame rate on the faster events seems rock steady, though

the ships tend not to be so bunched up in such races. Regardless you will not see anything as drop dead gorgeous as the tracks, including the DLC ones, running this well on anything else that will fit in your hand.

I must say there is nothing quite like belting around the faster tracks in Fury's Aftermath sub-campaign with Invaders Must Die from the Prodigy belting out of



your headphone as you feel like you are being sucked into the speed on screen - especially on zone events.

Controls are very flexible - you have the option of going button and stick only, but as a game developed specifically for the PS Vita the sixaxis control is supported, though is a little tricky. The rear touch panel and the touch screen can also be utilised, though the original plan to have a voice activation for weapons don't appear to have made it to the finished product (or my voice just doesn't push the right buttons!).

The only real drawback to the game is the pre-race loading time which seems awfully lengthy (on both the download and physical versions of the game) even after a patch post-launch, but at least there is something giving you a clue about the time you'll have to wait - but even then it usually suggests it take longer than it actually does. It appears the DLC tracks load faster than the 2048 ones, which may suggest that a little more optimisation may have been possible if Studio Liverpool had not been closed.

On a personal note, when tired it is difficult to play on the small screen, but let's face it when you are tired you shouldn't be playing anyway. Unfortunately, it's not

compatible with the PSTV as standard so can't be played on a big screen.

As stated previously, if you own the download version of Wipeout HD and/or Wipeout HD Fury you get the equivalent DLC for the Vita title for free added to your download list.



However there is a store listing for *Wipeout 2048: Wipeout Complete Game Pack* which adds the DLC to your download list, and according to the product description also unlocks the PS3 version of the *Wipeout Complete Game Pack* consisting of Wipeout HD and Fury too! With all that content it really is a no brainer - but if you want to be a sure a demo of 2048 is available (as is a demo of the PSP's Wipeout Pulse - the majority of which is in HD/Fury.) Go get it!



GAME REVIEW: F1 2011 (PS VITA) by Simon Plumbe

While everyone raved about *WipEout* on the original PlayStation, that wasn't my favourite racing game to grace the console. Some loved Namco's near-perfect arcade port *Ridge Racer* but not me. Instead, I preferred something a little more down to Earth. Being a fan of the sport for as long as I could remember, I was overjoyed when an official Formula 1 game was released. It was a near perfect blend of simulation and arcade racer. The addition of commentary from the legendary Murray Walker and music from Joe Satriani was icing on an already delectable cake. While the PSP had its fair share of F1 games, the PS Vita was left out apart from this single offering from Codemasters. So let's take a look back at this early Vita title - F1 2011...

Porting a game like F1 2011 to the Vita was no small task. While we were promised a lot of high-end AAA titles for the PS Vita from the beginning, these soon faded after the first year or so of the Vita's life. We may have had games like *WipEout 2048*, [Uncharted Golden Abyss](#) and entries in the *Assassin's Creed* series but many developers in the West gave up on the console. That being the case, you'd be

forgiven for thinking that Codemasters wouldn't put much effort into F1 2011. But nothing could be further from the truth. Instead, they drafted in highly respected developers Sumo Digital, who had an established track record in racing games, to handle the PS Vita conversion.

Bringing a game like this to the PS Vita isn't easy and Sumo Digital had a difficult task on their hands. In the case of F1 2011 the game has to capture the look of the races as accurately as possible. Also recreating the feeling of intense speed the sport brings to it is key to the experience. The performance the Vita offers is certainly up to the task, but its relatively small screen does make recreating the atmosphere difficult. What the Vita can't manage is the feeling of actually *being there* in person - the smell of the engines, the weather, and the stronger sense of immersion that a large screen can provide as you hope to see your favourite drivers take to the podium.

On a technical level at least, Sumo Digital have delivered the goods in fine style. It looks stunning and moves at a blinding pace. All the authentic engine and race





sounds are there as you would expect and there's full pit crew commentary throughout. The only thing that is missing is television-style race commentary, one of the real highlights for me of previous F1 games. Understandable here though as this is more of a simulator than a straight arcade racer.

That's the technical side of things out of the way but what about the game? As I just mentioned briefly, F1 2011 takes the game down the route of being a racing simulator rather than an arcade racer. That makes for a welcome change as most of the other games released at the same time were just that. The game kicks off giving you the chance to create your own driver for the game - selecting your name, nationality, racing gear and so on. All of this will be relevant in the main game modes that you'll encounter later on.

The main menu presents you with the core options. A quick race (which is self-explanatory), Time Trial, a full Grand Prix and the

main Career Mode. In this, you take your created driver in a full season for a chosen manufacturer through a typical Grand Prix working your way up through the ranks from rookie status attempting to earn your position as a full time F1 driver. In addition there's also a Challenge mode providing you with a series of driving objectives to test your skills to the absolute limit.

Some of the F1 games I've played in recent years have focused more on being a simulator and to be honest, I've tended to avoid these. I've had more of an interest in arcade racers and I've found that many simulators have been too unforgiving or





most of its recent peers and - for me at least - makes it one of my favourites since the early PSOne days.

This is a great racing game and really captures the feel and speed of Formula 1 perfectly. The only thing that disappointed me was that this was the only release from Codemasters for the PS Vita.

have had too narrow an appeal for the average gamer. F1 2011 is different. Codemasters have understood this and have made the game accessible to hardcore F1 fans and those who love racing games in general thanks to its heavily customisable controls.

As well as the steering sensitivity of the car, there are a range of driving assist options that can be turned on or off. So you can adjust the game to suit your own playing style. If you want the full F1 experience you can but if you prefer an arcade racer, that's possible as well. This lifts the game head and shoulders about

With so much potential for future games in the series or even from their other franchises such as *Grid*, it's a shame that they decided to leave the Vita after a single title. With superb visuals and enough game modes to keep the game fresh long after you complete the career mode, this is one racer you can't miss.



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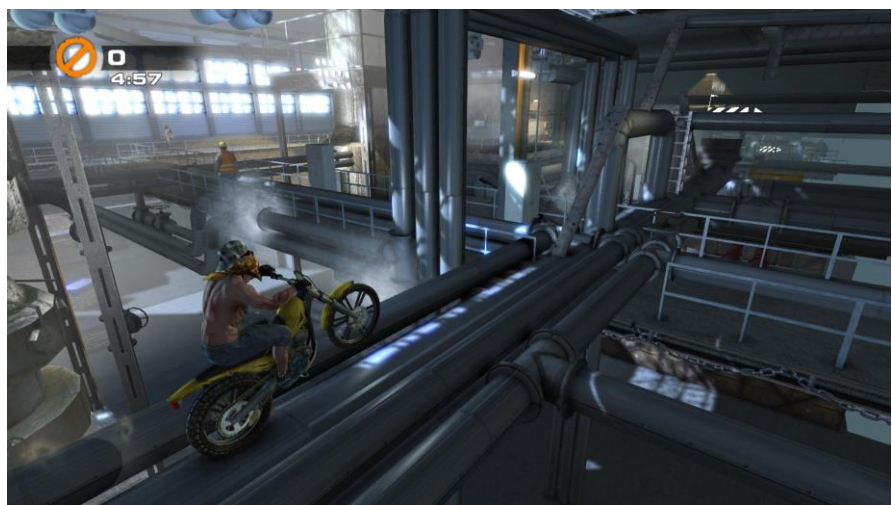
READER'S REVIEW: URBAN TRIAL FREESTYLE (PS VITA) by 52KM

Let's get some things out of the way before we get into the review. Firstly, this review maybe a little biased as this is one of the first games I played on my Vita. Secondly, I have not finished the game but I have played through about two thirds of the levels.

So, let's get into the game. If from the title of the game it wasn't obvious, this is a trials game through and through. The game is inspired by Trials HD (by RedLynx) on Xbox Live Arcade, which I never had the chance to play sadly, but from what I gather, it was very well received.

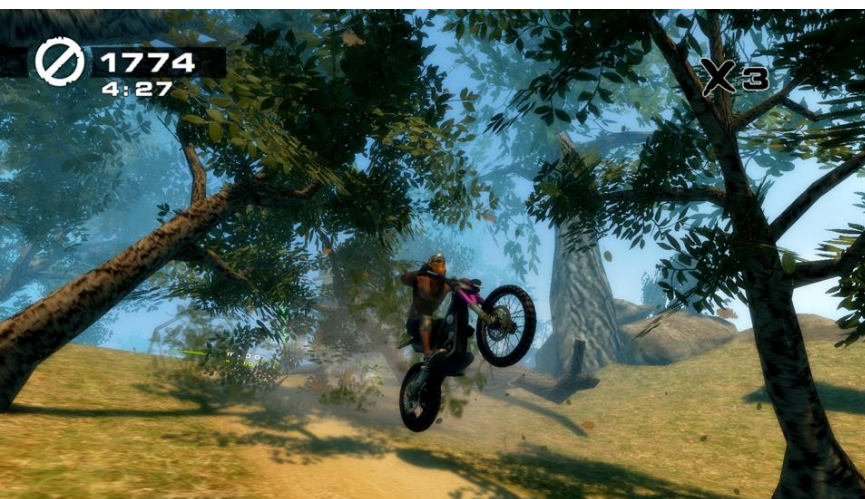
Urban Trial Freestyle's level design is quite well done. There is a lot going on in the levels. The difficulty is mainly controlled by time constraints, challenge points and timing-based obstacles in a level. Tricks are limited to front and back flips, but do lend an extra layer of difficulty for high score chasers (definitely not me). The game takes place in a city ruined by natural disasters. Basically, it's an end of the world

kind of vibe. It has 5 major areas and 47 levels. The level maps/tracks are reused with different challenges/goals, but the variation and difficulty of the levels prevent it from feeling repetitive. The game has essentially two modes: a Level based mode and a Challenge mode, which is unlocked for each area after completing all the levels for that specific area.



It is not a long game by any means. But the replayability of the levels do help the game. Most levels have alternate routes/shortcuts which can be accessed

after certain bike upgrades are acquired. The game also encourages exploring by providing pick ups of in-game currency along the tracks, that can be used to upgrade the bike and customize the rider.



The rider customizations are purely aesthetics. The bike upgrades are important though, and divided into three categories: Engine, Chassis and Wheels which affect the three performance parameters of the bike: Max. Speed, Acceleration and Handling. There are a total of three types of upgrade for each category. There are a lot of three's, in short. Upgrades can be applied in various combinations accordingly, to achieve the goals set by a level. The upgrade system does feel a little limited but gets the job done.

The controls for this game are apt. Neither feel unresponsive nor feel too sensitive. Which is a good thing, because I cannot blame the game for having to retry a single level so many times before completing it. All jokes aside, you do feel in control of the bike and rider. In physics-based games the controls can be bit tricky (pun intended), but this game handles it quite well. Did I mention this is physics-based game? The bike and rider physics are awesome in the game, as the movement feels natural and fluid if you get the timings right.

The visuals are not ground breaking but are alright, considering the fact that the setting is a bit grim. The levels are a bit void of colours, but feel cohesive. The fast-paced gameplay seldom gives you enough

time to look around. As I said earlier there's a lot going on in the levels in the background and the foreground, which make the levels engaging and exciting. The explosions, riding over trains and moving platforms keep the levels fresh and make you feel like a badass. The music suits the gameplay and surely enhances the experience. I will not pretend to understand anything about sound design, but in my opinion it is good.

Now, let's talk about the addictive part of this game, leaderboards. The leaderboards are separate for each challenge within a level, which gives more reason to replay and perfect a single level. The leaderboards are displayed in the levels themselves on billboards with pictures of the top scorers, which is a nice touch as you can see how well (or poorly) you did while playing a level. Or you can view overall top scorers for a level in the level selection menu. This aspect of the game is quite addictive.

Also, if you are connected to the internet a ghost rider (not the superhero) races alongside you. The ghost rider is your previous run on that level if no one else is online.

To wrap things up, I would highly recommend this game to all PS Vita owners who are looking for a trials game. See, I was not kidding about this review being biased. This game has got all the important things right and is easy to pick up and play. The levels are short and fun. The game feels right at home on the Vita.



GAME REVIEW: WIPEOUT (PSONE CLASSICS)

by Sven Harvey

I love the WipeOut series. I have done since this first game came out on the original PlayStation and was basically what convinced me to even consider owning a home console, as I had been a home computer user until that point.

fly/pilot/drive the anti-gravity racing sled of your team of choice (you even get to choose one pilot from each team roster of two) around various tracks, with each race literally being just that (normal WipeOut first to the line type racing is all there is in this first game). There are accelerator speed pads dotted around each track along with colour changing weapon/upgrade pads where you pick up something to help you along the way, or hinder the other racers.



In single player mode the weapons/equipment available from the pads are a shield, a turbo boost, a missile (locks on to the heat signature craft ahead of you), rocket (straight line fire), and disruptive shockwave. None of these weapons cause actual damage to the opposing craft but simply stall them (and in some cases flip them over a full 360!).

This original WipeOut game, from the well-known Amiga software house, Psygnosis was a kind of mixture of Powerdrome and Road Blasters with a smidgeon of Mario Kart and a sprinkling of Matrix Marauders. It was also a launch title for the original Sony PlayStation in 1995 here in the UK.

This was the game that sold the PlayStation at launch. It was demoed everywhere on the biggest screen in each shop, and even in clubs. It wowed people. It looked glorious. People loved the look of it and fought to control their craft when they played it. It, however, perhaps due to its own success, has not aged well.

As you load the game the retro flashback of the Psygnosis owl greets you like a warm fuzzy blanket enveloping you (or maybe giant owl wings). WipeOut is set in 2052, in the early(ish) days of the F3600 Anti-gravity racing league. You

For those with two original PlayStation consoles, and a serial link cable it may be of note that in two player mode there are two further weapons that reverse your opponent's controls and a secret weapon that turned out to be an ECM pod that blocked the opponents weapon pick up and use ability. The serial link option unfortunately doesn't translate to an ad-hoc wireless option on the Vita for the PSOne Classics download version.

The comparisons with WipeOut 2048, however, are not kind to its great, great grandfather. Once the intro starts you realise quite how far things have come. Both graphically, and game play wise the series has moved on in huge way - see the review of WipeOut 2048 earlier in this issue, with perhaps only the music from the early titles seeming a bit more in-keeping with the game play. Absolutely key to Sony Computer Entertainment's

strategy to make video gaming mainstream, using licensed music, ironically from non-mainstream artists (this would be capitalised on further by 2097) and this has developed over the years, but it's the early titles that have the more appropriate music.

The game is reasonably playable on the PS Vita, but like so many PSOne Classics it feels somewhat archaic when you are playing it. With the PlayStation One only having digital controls, and this being exactly the same game it feels rather clunky to be controlling it with the d-pad to say the least, and you do find yourself trying to use the analogue sticks for a sec until you crash into a wall. As a result, you will be remapping! Even with the brilliant screen on the handheld, on some sections the game can look like a mess of pixels in places.

Fortunately, there are a number of controller set ups for you to try out (presets A-H), but they are all, as you would expect, designed very much for the original digital PlayStation pad, and due to the nature of the PS Vita, you will be making use of the PSOne settings to remap your buttons in conjunction with selecting an appropriate preset - but it very much will be trial and error for most people seeing what mix of configurations works for them.



WipeOut was ground breaking in 1995, and earned very high review scores then at an RRP of £49.99. It is a piece of history - unfortunately it really needs to stay as one as it simply cannot hold a candle to WipeOut 2048 (and Wipeout HD on the PS3). It may only be £3.99 on the PlayStation Store, but that's four quid that could go towards a digital copy of WipeOut 2048.

The original WipeOut can be thanked, for without it we would not have the WipeOut games that followed, but with all the development in the game series I'm afraid this is for download as a historical curiosity only, and let's face it, collectors will have the original physical version.



In 1995 with PlayStation the best console in the world at the time, this would have scored a 9/10, maybe even a 10, but today, on Vita it does seem somewhat behind the times.

Scoring it now, a 4/10 would apply to a download being used on a PS Vita in comparison with its peers, rather than as a PSOne game being played on a PSOne, PS2, or PSP.

Note: The original physical game could serial link across two original PlayStation consoles for two player games - needing two copies of the game, two consoles, two televisions, etc.

INTERVIEW: CoLD SToRAGE (aka TIM WRIGHT)

by Simon Plumbe and Sven Harvey

The name Tim Wright might not be familiar to many of you reading this, but his music certainly will be. Performing under the name CoLD SToRAGE, Tim has worked on countless video games since the 1990s across a wide range of systems. Most significantly, he is the composer behind the stunning soundtracks heard on the WipEout series...

VP: First can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you got into the video game music business?

TW: That's quite a broad question, but I'll try to keep it succinct. I'm a Welsh father of one, who moved to Switzerland back in 2016. That makes me the furthest flung and eldest child of 4 siblings, most of whom have also made their name in game development in the past.

I grew up on a remote farm in North Wales, and so we had to make our own entertainment, largely consisting of climbing trees, riding motorcycles, shooting air rifles and playing computer games. The latter began on a Grandstand 2000 black & white TV 'pong' style game, closely followed by the legendary ATARI 2600. I can vividly recall seeing the Basic Programming Cartridge in the catalogue of available games. I mentioned to my dad that I'd love to get it, but he was dubious and so it never transpired.

A couple of years later, and after being exposed to both the Acorn Atom and the BBC Micro at High School I cajoled my father into ordering a BBC Model B. Weeks ticked by, and supplies were thin on the ground, so I was surprised to hear from my father on the phone one Saturday... he was calling me from the local computer shop in town, and explained that I could wait for the BBC Micro for another 3-4 months or I could have a Commodore VIC-20 that very day. I was a kid, what was I gonna say? So that's how I became a devotee of the

Commodore brand!

The VIC-20 allowed me to learn basic and some initial development in sound and graphics, but it was quickly exchanged for a Commodore 64. This is where I began coding in 6502 and was introduced to the delights of the now famous SID Chip – the synthesiser sound chip at the heart of the C64. I was amazed by the likes of Rob Hubbard, Ben Daglish, Martin Galway and David Whittaker.

So, after a brief dalliance with trying to write my own games, and develop graphics, I left all those tasks to my brothers and invested my time in learning to write music for the SID. None of my tunes ever made it out into the big wide world, not until much later.

Roll on a few years while I studied Electronics at University in London, and not long after I returned to North Wales I got a job with Littlewoods, the Catalogue company in Liverpool. It was there, that I bought my Amiga 500 with a loan from the bank. A friend at Littlewoods also had an Amiga and he supplied me with several demo discs, amongst which was Soundtracker – a music composition tools that allowed you to compose four channel music with sounds taken from various synthesisers and drum machines, and with the ability to sample your own sounds if you had the correct hardware.

After a few weeks, I was writing reasonable tunes, so I sent demo discs away to several key publishers, and got mostly favourable replies, but no firm offers of work. It was only after a fortuitous meeting with some would-be demo coders that we worked together to develop their first demo "Puggs in Space", which would lead to a meeting with Psygnosis. They loved my music and sound effects work on the demo, and this led to us being signed up, and to me getting a very sudden and prolific amount of audio work. I had finally

become a professional games musician.

VP: At the start of your career you joined Psygnosis, who were later purchased by Sony and became Studio Liverpool. Did being part of one of the Amiga's high-profile publishers add any pressure on you creatively?

TW: Oh absolutely. I was thrown in at the deep end. Bearing in mind I was a no-name n00b, you can imagine that being offered the gig of providing music to *Shadow of the Beast 2* was both a dream come true and a total head-****! I was running on adrenaline the whole time I worked on that music. I had heard David Whittaker's music for the original game, and that was going to be a hard act to follow.

of disc space. One extra disc just for my music was a cost they couldn't bear at the time. The bizarre thing is, I never really realised until many, many years later. I had so much work to do, holding down a day job and writing music most nights, and trying to have a relationship with my wife that I had very little time to play the actual games I was writing music for.

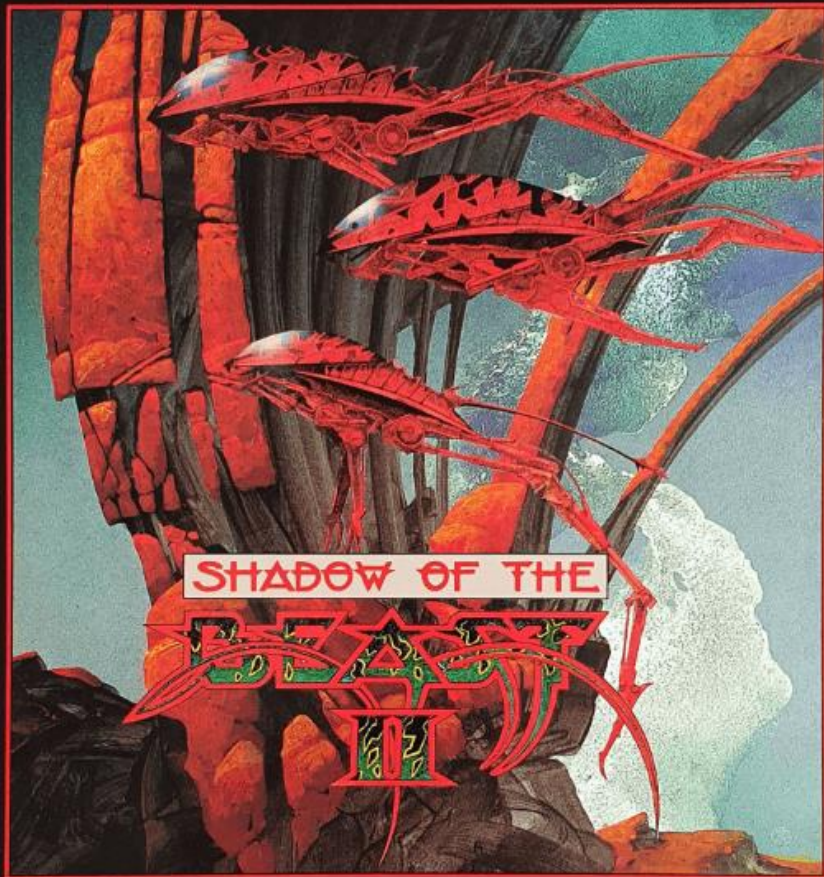
VP: Why use the name **CoLD SToRAGE** rather than using your own name, and where did it originate?

TW: For all of my Amiga game music, I went under my own name Tim Wright. Quite often the music and sound effects would be attributed to Tim & Lee Wright, and that's because to be successful in the game audio field back then, it was wise to have music AND a coded-up playroutine that was the program that would play back each note or trigger each sound effect. So I composed the music and created the effects, and my brother Lee coded the playroutine. It was very, very fast and memory efficient, so we were quite sought after at the time, because with a fast efficient sound player, there was more time left for the game mechanics and graphical content.

CoLD SToRAGE came later...

When I was at the early stages of composing the music for *WipEout*, the lead designer Nick Burcombe suggested that I should have some kind of moniker or nom-de-plume rather than just go by "Tim Wright". He pointed out that even solo electronic musicians went by other names; Moby, Aphex Twin and so on.

Back then, my studio such as it was, was a room in a converted warehouse on the Liverpool dock front. It had a ridiculously tall ceiling, which was no more than asbestos sheeting with a couple of transparent sheets to let in daylight. In summer it was cool, and in



My only regret with *SOTB 2* is that the title music I poured a lot of effort into never went into the game because they ran out

winter it could be rather chilly. I quipped one day that I was going back to cold storage after a long chat.

This became a bit of an in-joke, so I printed off an A4 sheet with "COLD STORAGE" and Sellotaped it to the door. Consequently, when Nick suggested a name, I said, "Well... what about Cold Storage?". He thought it was a rubbish name, but I said, "Well... Duran Duran and Wet Wet Wet are pretty stupid names really, and it hasn't hurt their success?". He agreed it didn't really matter, and so the name stuck.

When the powers that be at Psygnosis asked for credits for Krazy Ivan I said, "Put me down as CoLD SToRAGE rather than Tim Wright please" and so that was the first released game with my new name in. The all-upper-case-with-lower-case-o came about because Lee Carus (a long-time friend who drew the original Puggs from the Puggs in Space demo) was badgered into creating me a 3D logo, and he chose to make it as "CoLD SToRAGE" maybe partly influenced by the styling of Wipeout as WipEout in much of the marketing materials. In any case, they stuck, and I've featured that in all my logos and marketing, and I try to ensure any articles spell it correctly, which proved to be tricky with the likes of iTunes and Spotify.

VP: When creating music scores and soundtracks for the games you've worked on, what was the process involved?

TW: This varies by game. Sometimes I was provided with music references where I was asked to write something "in the style". On one occasion, for the Game Over music for Shadow of the Beast 2 I was sent a tape recording of some actual music and asked to copy it verbatim. I did so, thinking it wasn't a problem. As it turns out, it was a recording taken from Miami Vice. This music was composed by Tim Truman, and after a few years, many people spotted this, as evidenced by the number of videos on YouTube pointing out

the fact. I've been keen to point out I was just doing as I was told, and never considered it was someone else's work. I'm happy to say the rest of my musical output has been original, save for some deliberate cover versions here and there.

Largely, I'm given free rein to come up with a fitting audio canvas. When you've built up a reasonable back catalogue, people tend to come to you because they know that you can provide the style they are looking for. Although, it must be said, that when I was working full-time at Psygnosis, I had to provide music in all manner of styles, and it was simply assumed I could do so. Techno, Dance, Orchestral, Pop, Rock, Industrial... you name it. I think I covered pretty much most styles aside from Country and Western! These challenges definitely built up the bedrock for my ability to tackle most projects thrown at me, both while I was at Psygnosis (SCEE Liverpool) and after I left and worked as a freelancer again.

In terms of process back in the day, I'd be approached more often than not when the game was close to completion. This meant that I would be under pressure to provide for the music and sometimes the sound effects under a breakneck deadline. It also meant that I had no say in the gameplay, so where I might have made suggestions where the audio could play a bigger role, I simply wouldn't get a chance. I became quite vocal about this at Psygnosis, and this led to me being involved at an earlier stage in game development, which was better for me in terms of deadlines, but also, better for the team as they would get to discuss the audio aspects of the game with me.

VP: Did you get to see any of the games before working on the music for them or were you just given a brief from the developers with their music needs?

TW: Again, this varied depending on the game. Working in-house meant I could have access to the programmers and designers, and I could even play work-in-progress demos. However, when the

project was freelance or with an external developer, the opportunities to do this were less or zero, in which case I had to work from videos or sometimes just still images and a basic template in terms of memory requirements, channel limits and style requests. Quite often I'd only see my music in a game after the final product had shipped. This led to a few problems, for example, Colony Wars was supposed to have a track called Opus Beta playing over the end credits, but the programmer literally just 'forgot' to put it in.

VP: What were your influences for the WipEout soundtracks?

TW: Kicking off my work on the WipEout soundtrack I had just come out of composing tracks for 'Krazy Ivan', so my mind was firmly still in industrial techno land. The first track I composed didn't get a particularly warm welcome from the team, as it was still a bit too dark and mechanical sounding.

At this point two things happened... my brother Ali gave me a tape of trance techno he just happened to getting into, and I was taken on a night out to a club that was playing non-stop dance tracks. These two events, coupled with the purchase of some en-vogue sample CDs from 'Time & Space' allowed me to get into the right frame of mind. Just as well too... because after a reasonable delay due to Psygnosis moving from Century Buildings in the Liverpool docks to a bespoke modern office on the Wavertree Technology Park, time became of the essence. I seem to recall composing most of the music in a period of a few weeks, one after the other, until someone basically said, "OK, stop... no more time".

I don't think my music tracks for the first WipEout could really be attributed to listening to any specific artists, at least none I could really point to. However, my work on WipEout 2097/XL was heavily

influenced by the likes of the Chemical Brothers and big beat techno. I'd stopped chasing every faster BPM by that point, and in fact went completely in the opposite direction. I went from 'Messij' hammering away at 168bpm to the 115bpm of 'Canada' – literally as slow as I dare, but still sound like it's perfect for a fast paced game. A bit of a gamble, but it paid off.

VP: Your involvement in the WipEout series came to an end after WipEout Pure on the PSP. Were you approached by Sony to continue after that?

TW: Because I was no longer an in-house musician, I think I was kinda forgotten about when it came to the franchise. I think the producers on the new products wanted something fresh, and maybe saw no value in going backwards musically.

My contribution to WipEout Pure only came about due to pressure from my fans landing at Sony's door. They almost petitioned the producer to have me included, so I provided one guest track for the title in the form of Onyx.

After that, there was a bit of a hiatus for three years or so. And then, with the advent of WipEout HD on PS3 I was cheeky enough to produce an unofficial album called CoLD SToRAGE HD that people could simply insert into their custom playlist. This meant I was kinda still producing music for those who wanted



CoLD SToRAGE in their latest WipEout game.

There would be another long gap with some other work in a similar vein, such as my music for the very WipEout-esque 'Sodium 2' / 'Project Velocity' in 2011 for PlayStation Home. This led to the release of my 6E-61-32 album - the strange numbers are hexadecimal for ASCII characters na2, with 'na' being the chemical name for sodium, although as some have pointed out it should really have been 'Na2' or 4E-61-32, but I failed 'O' level chemistry 3 times, so there's your answer to that one!

I then contributed a track called 'Torvolution' to the WipEout clone 'Slipstream GX' in 2013.

When WipEout Omega was announced in 2016 there was tonne of pressure from my fans to get me on board. But apparently, I was dismissed as it was thought I'd be too expensive to approach. This was quite flattering, but totally incorrect. In fact, when I finally got to speak with the producer in 2017, I told him he could have the pick of all of my racing music, including the re-mastered original WipEout music for FREE. The premise here was that being in the product on a large scale would be good for them, and good for me in terms of publicity – just treating it as a marketing exercise from my perspective. But sadly, by the time we were having this discussion they were already in Alpha and creative cut-off had already happened. So, no more music in the game. It was mooted that I could be added to a DLC, but again, that never happened.

My latest musical offering to an anti-gravity racer was also accompanied by sound effects... it was good to get back to being part of a development team again truth be told. This time it would be for the game PACER (originally called Formula Fusion) released in 2020. There was also an accompanying album released under the PACER name.

VP: If Firesprite/PlayStation Worldwide Studios were to do a new WipEout for PS5, would you be up for contributing to the soundtrack?

TW: Absolutely! It would of course depend upon them wanting me on-board. Everyone has their own vision when it comes to games development. For instance, when they re-worked Shadow of the Beast for PlayStation back in 2016, they didn't approach David Whittaker (the original composer for the Amiga version), nor myself (I composed the SOTB2 and SOTB3 soundtracks). I actually contacted the team and offered my services, along with the P.R. it might generate, but nothing came of it, and the music was composed by Ian Livingstone – a fine musician of course!

VP: Of all the games you've worked on during your career so far, which is the one you're most proud of and why?

TW: Soundtrack wise, I would say Gravity Crash. My dear friend Stewart Gilray (recently sadly departed due to Covid) gave me total freedom to write the soundtrack and create the sound effects I wanted. I was given months to do this and was paid really well, so that project was an utter delight to work on. The accompanying album 'Gravity Crash Anthems' featured all the music from the game, along with some remixes. Stewart loved the music so much, we talked about releasing it on Vinyl, but sadly that never came to pass. In fact, just before he passed, we were talking about working together again on a new version of Gravity Crash. I think the music I provided for this game is some of my best, as I took a long time to get the production just right.

VP: For the PS Vita version of Table Top Racing you appear in the credits both as CoLD SToRAGE for music and as Tim Wright for sound effects. Was there any reasoning behind this?

TW: The simple answer is... CoLD SToRAGE writes music, he doesn't really do sound effects or develop games etc.



worked out fine all these years, and I always recommend games musicians to follow my lead where they can and retain all the rights to their music.

VP: Your music has made its way onto streaming services during the pandemic (Spotify etc) and there's a few tracks on the likes of amigaremix.org and your Soundcloud accounts (see www.coldstorage.org.uk for links). You also have music for sale on Bandcamp

(coldstorage.bandcamp.com) including the wonderful album *Ch'illout* and the *Pacer Soundtrack*. Any tips on getting set up with Bandcamp for budding musicians, and are there any plans for a digital bundle of all your music to date?

So, to keep thing clear as to who-does-what, that's been my approach with most of the games I work on – assuming I can get the people who write the credits to comply.

VP: Were there any games for the PlayStation Vita that you worked on that were not released?

TW: There are always games that don't make it for one reason or another. For example, I was working on several kid friendly games with a now defunct company called Gameworld 7, for which I composed music and also recorded myself reading several nursery rhymes. There are a few more, but I'm not sure if they were intended for the Vita.

VP: You've released a number of digital albums featuring music from the games you've worked on. Did you encounter any issues creatively surrounding the copyrights from the game publishers with them?

TW: With every project I sign-up for I sign a contract with agreed terms. I always insist on a license to include my music in the game, and I retain 100% copyright in the musical works. Even with the music I composed whilst at Psygnosis, I managed to secure a deal whereby I could do whatever I liked with those tunes, so long as they didn't appear in any competitive products, and I didn't bring the games into disrepute in any way. That deal has

TW: The likes of Bandcamp is a wonderful place to start when it comes to getting your music out there. At one point I hosted and sold all my music from my own website, but this proved to be more trouble than it was worth for a few reasons, such as PayPal changing their sales API meaning more work being a website developer than composing music. So, I'm happy to host most of my music on Bandcamp.

The only downsides with Bandcamp is that you have to do all the legwork if you want to sell cover versions of other people's music. For that kind of activity, there are better options.

At one point I was massively sceptical of the likes of iTunes and Spotify, but honestly, it's the best route to making money for any budding musician. Sure, they pay a very low amount per play, but if you can get the volumes up to a few thousand per week, you can make money from this, in addition to pure sales and live performances.

I argue that the likes of Spotify are essential for artists who aren't at AAA level, because you're not going to get much radio airplay if you're not signed to a

major label, so the only way you can get money 'per play' is to collect from the likes of YouTube and the streaming services... it's the new radio for people like me. Selling a copy of your single or album is amazing, but it's a one-off sale, whereas streaming means you can continue to try to make a living while you create your next masterpiece.

A full digital bundle was something I did for a guy in the U.S. I explained how much it would cost as it would be a one-off job collating it all, but he wasn't dissuaded, and I sent him a collection of all of my works, going back to the Amiga days for a sizeable fee which he paid in advance. He was happy, so that's the main thing! Would I release something like this commercially? I might even get around to doing something like a box set of all my albums at some stage.

VP: We mentioned streaming services before. Do you think that music streaming services have had a negative effect on actual music sales for artists?

TW: I guess I kinda answered this above? I would like to be paid more per play, and there are some discussions along these lines already taking place, but in essence I think streaming services, including the likes of YouTube are great for artists who aren't AAA and can't get traditional radio airplay, which let's face it, is a smaller audience these days.

VP: Following the issues with getting Ch'illout" pressed as a CD set, would you entertain the idea of putting your music out on physical media ever again? It would be great to see The Complete CoLD SToRAGE in a series of 2, 3 or 4 disc CD sets (subtitled Amiga, WipEout 1995-2097 and so on! I suspect vinyl might sell well too!

TW: There are rumours that there may be some vinyl coming out at

some point soon... these may or may not be true, and it depends on many factors. I think if I were to release a CD collection, I would press everything up-front in a limited run and sell them in that way. I do know that I'm totally done with pre-order projects, as that can turn into a real mess as I discovered – twice.

VP: "CoLD SToRAGE vs Romeo Knight: Cream of the Earth" is a particularly brilliant and enthusiastically retro-nostalgic aural trip to the Amiga's past, along with Shadow of The Beast MMXV (CoLD SToRAGE vs David Whittaker?) Any plans to do further reimaginings of music you enjoy from the Amiga, PlayStation(s) or indeed any other source that may have inspired you? If so, are there any particular tracks you'd like to have a run at?

TW: I have so many tracks from games musicians and chart artists that I love and, in some cases, have had a go at re-creating with my own twists. I've also been approached to re-mix commercial artists, from all over the World. So, there's no shortage of potential projects which is



flattering and great fun too. There's nothing right now that I'm desperate to re-work, but I am busy doing production work for an artist in Portugal this month. I generally do these things when I'm on holiday or having a chilled Sunday and I get the urge after listening to something. Back in the day I did some remix competitions just for fun... some Little Boots remixes, Erasure, and one or two lesser know artists. Some of these have made it onto my Bandcamp or SoundCloud pages.

VP: Which game's soundtrack has impressed you the most over the past few years? Are there any particular composers, bands or artists you make a point of listening to?

TW: In terms of orchestral scores adore the soundtrack for World of Warcraft, it so nicely crafted and has evolved as the game has grown. One that really impressed me was the end game music from Portal, with the synthetic singing and the amusing lyrics.

VP: As a music professional, who pioneered music making on games consoles (PlayStation, PlayStation 2 and Gameboy with the "Music" series as well as eJay on the PC), if a new home computer was developed in the style of the Amiga 500 or Amiga 1200, what features would you like to see in it musically?

TW: You've picked on a subject that I'm quite deeply engrossed in. When I finally earned some money, I went about buying up all the 8 bit computers I could find at a reasonable price. Atari, Commodore, Acorn, Texas Instruments, Amstrad, Memotech, Oric, Spectrum... the list goes on and on. I still

have an extensive collection of computers, peripherals and books in the attic.

In recent times, there's been an upsurge in new home computers, either loosely modelled on old machines, or inspired by them. I have a Mega65 development kit and I'm looking forward to receiving the final machine soon. I've ordered the Spectrum Next v2 as well, and that should land next year with any luck. I'm also



looking at lots of other similar devices like the Commander X16 (the 'chicken lips' – in joke!) and a host of others. These will all hopefully have a small but vibrant



This means I'm always editing speech, writing short tunes, or scoring to videos. Keeps me busy! As for external projects, I'm still working on getting all my back catalogue up onto Bandcamp and the streaming services. Stuff like Krazy Ivan, Colony Wars, Tellurian Defence and other games that haven't had the re-mastering treatment just yet. Finding the time to do this gets tricky, but I'm getting there slowly.

VP: What can we expect to see in the future from Tim Wright / CoLD SToRAGE?

TW: I wrote an adventure book for teenagers (or adults who enjoy that genre) some time ago. I've not published it yet, and I got the idea that maybe I could release it as a podcast,

chapter by chapter. So that's a backburner project that I want to get off the ground at some point soon.

I'm working on getting more of my music streaming as well as joint projects with various people around the globe.

I'm getting a lot of cover versions of my work appearing on YouTube just now, which is flattering and great to hear how people reinterpret my tunes.

Marc Renton did some remixes of my WipEout tracks; you can hear them on Spotify -

https://open.spotify.com/album/5qjmUZaCkvGtdUeCuZa2Vh?si=LsfT_algQGO2Y-indfFX7Q

VP: Thanks very much for your time.

TW: You're very welcome! I'm sure time will come when these interviews dry-up, so I'm happy to chat about my work right now. Thanks to everyone for reading this, big hugs for listening to my music over the years and urging me to keep writing.

development community, and I'm keen to get involved.

I'm not really that fussed what their capabilities are, as it'll be fun to get involved musically.

VP: Still with music on computer platforms, have you ventured into experimental music making on any non-PC/Mac formats in the past few years such as the Raspberry Pi 400?

TW: I guess the above question is kinda connected. I've not really used these platforms 'in anger' as they say, but I have written music on my iPhone using apps like Caustic, which is very impressive, and also Korg Gadget, now in its second incarnation.

VP: What projects are you working on at the moment?

TW: My full-time job is managing the studio at Numfum GmbH in Switzerland, so, aside from regular duties, it requires me to also create music and sound effects for all our in-house projects and demos.

"Nah, never heard of him..."

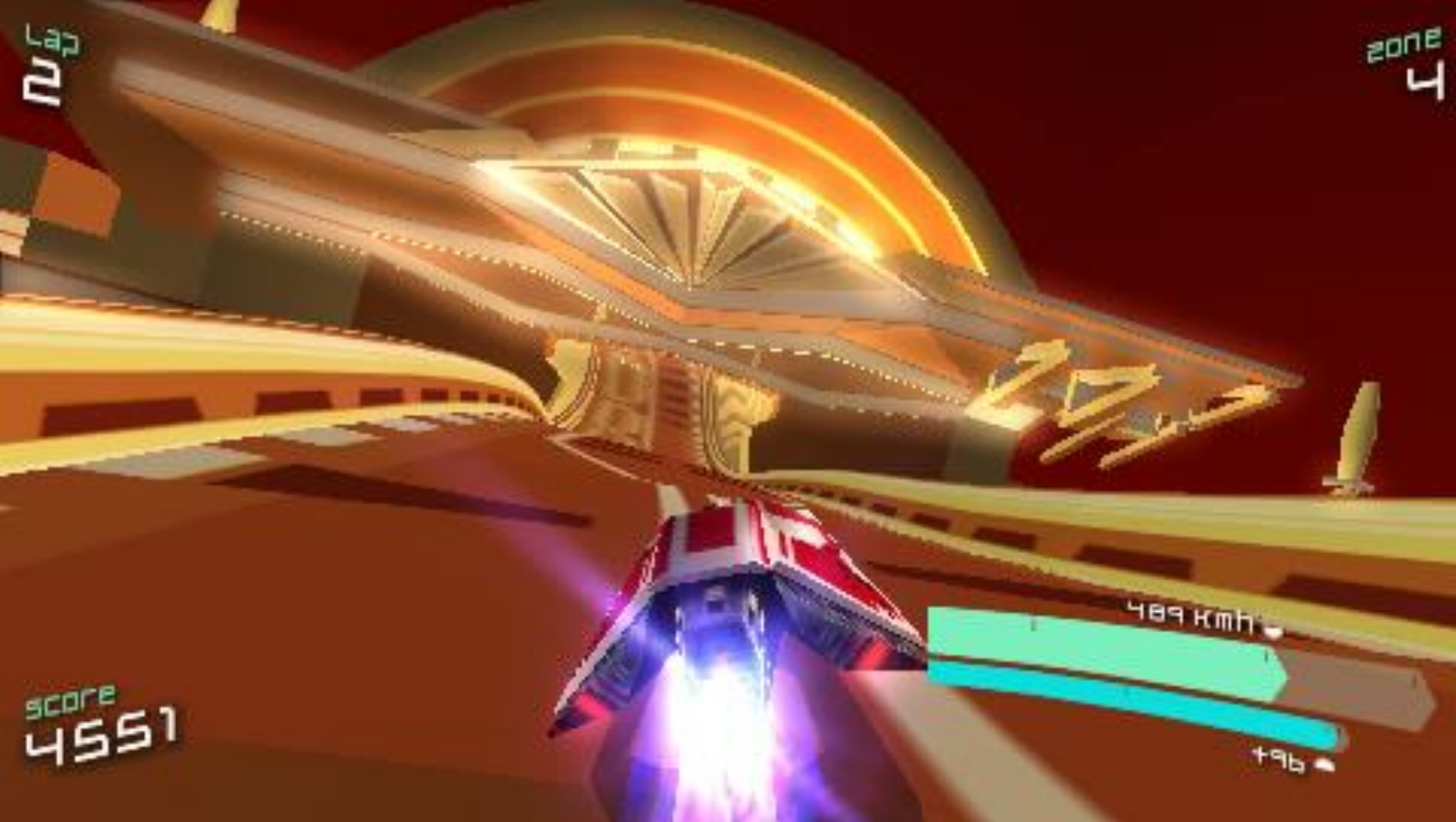


Bram Stoker's Dracula Microcosm Mickey Mania
Thunder Truck Rally Codename: Tenka WipEout64
Sensible Soccer Mary Shelley's Frankenstein No Escape
eJay Virtual Music Studio Sudoku TT Superbike Legends
Brainless Aquaventura Shadow of the Beast 3 Puggsy
Armour-Geddon Powermonger Leander Amnios Lost Soul
Chomper Last Action Hero Combat Air Patrol Phoenix Rising
eJay eQuality Spellbound Party Gravity Crash Extreme Bingo
Puggs in Space Awesome Carthage The Killing Game Show
Magician's Castle Championship Soccer 94 WipEout Flink
Adventure Dungeon Travel Bug Boxbeats Table Top Racing
Write Your Own Music Slipstream GX Dynablaster Revenge
No Escape Colony Wars Tentacle Shadow of the Beast 2
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing Skillz Sodium 2 Psychroma
MTV Music Generator 2 Supertruck Racing Pocket Music
Music 2002 Jet Set Willy Wipeout Pure Ring Factory
Dance eJay 7 HipHop eJay 6 Techno eJay 5 R&B eJay 1
Music Creation for the PlayStation Tellurian Defence Music 2000
Music 3000 Krazy Ivan Formula One Adidas PowerSport Soccer
Lemmings Agony Wipeout 2097 Gravity Crash Ultra Pacer ...



"People tell me where they were, or what they were doing when they were listening to my music. Often, it's very personal stuff, like graduation, a relative passing away, that day they drove for miles to the beach. If my music brings back good memories then that makes what I do so worthwhile."

www.coldstorage.ge



GAME REVIEW: WIPEOUT PULSE (PSP) by Simon Plumble

Wipeout Pulse, released in 2007, was the second and final game in the franchise to be released for the PSP and as with the original PSOne game has been made available to buy from the PlayStation Store as a legacy title to run on the PS Vita.

I have to be honest and say that I wasn't really that impressed with the early Wipeout games on the PSOne. I bought the original PlayStation on the day of release in the UK along with a bundle of games including the first in the Wipeout series and while I was impressed with its stylish approach, soundtrack and visuals, the controls and gameplay left me somewhat cold.

For me I'd say the entire series came into its own once the PlayStation family introduced analogue controllers as standard, and this included the PSP. Suddenly the games transformed from being cumbersome and - at times -

clunky to control, to a fluid and fast racing experience. While each still took time to master the nuances of the combination of speed, steering and the innovative air brakes, the new controls turned them into almost a completely new series of games altogether. I decided to take a chance on Wipeout Pulse to see if my faith in the earlier releases in the series could be restored...

Developed by Sony's Studio Liverpool, on paper it was certainly going to be in good



hands. The development team was formerly known as Psygnosis and were the original developers of WipEout on the PlayStation so it's safe to say that they should know the franchise better than anyone else.



On loading up for the first time you create a user profile that's used throughout the game, primarily for record keeping but also for identifying you in races and for multiplayer games, but I'll come onto those later on. The menu presents players with three main options for play - the main Race Campaign mode, Racebox and the Multiplayer / Sharing menu.

Most of you familiar with the WipEout series will dive straight into the *Race Campaign*. Spread over the vast 24 tracks on offer, the game is split over 16 grids. Each of these is broken down into a number of races, each with different objectives that need to be completed. Some are straightforward races against AI opponents, other races involve time trials where you have to beat a set time limit over a fixed number of laps.

To start off with, each grid only has a couple of races available, with more unlocked as you complete them. Medals are awarded based on your performance with each medal being worth a number of points. Earn enough and the next grid is unlocked for play.

Racebox is next up and this mode allows you to create your own custom races. There are a variety to choose from, each based on the type of races seen in the Campaign mode. You can choose the speed level of the opponents, difficulty level and - depending on the type of race - whether weapons can be used or not. Once you've selected the options, you can race on whichever of the 24 tracks in the game have been unlocked in the Campaign. With the range of settings available to customise, there's an endless amount of gameplay to be had just from this mode alone.

There are also two multiplayer modes to extend the game's lifespan further still. The first offers online multiplayer (although at this stage I'd say that this is no longer available) and the second uses the PSP's ad-hoc wireless function. One thing I have found is that this can also work between two PS Vitas or a PSP and Vita so in theory this should still be useable even today to race against friends.

So that's the game modes, but what about the WipEout experience itself? Races in the game aren't just a case of flying your futuristic gravity-defying craft as fast as you can though... Your craft is able to use a variety of weapons and abilities that can be collected along the way, using a similar system adopted by Mario Kart. Activation pads are located at various points around each track and flying over these will add a single-use power-up to your craft ranging from EMP waves, homing missiles, speed boosts, shields and an ever-useful auto pilot. Also scattered around the tracks are speed boost pads and flying over these will give you a short-term boost for a few vital seconds.

What makes WipEout Pulse (and its predecessors) different is the way it controls and handles its weapons. There are 8 craft at your disposal, each from a different futuristic race team. Unlike many racers, each has genuinely different performance characteristics and you can notice the change between them as you swap from one to the other. This adds an extra layer of depth making the game unique for each player.

In terms of the actual control system, as well as the usual accelerate/brake controls, you have two airbrakes which give you incredibly subtle controls for tighter and more precise cornering. It's these that set WipEout apart from its peers and where it takes time to master the game's nuances. You can't slam on the accelerator and hope to power your way around the track in the same way you would with any other racer.

The weapons are also a lot deeper than Mario Kart. It's not just a case of collect them and let rip. Your craft take damage from attacks and collisions with the track walls and if you take too much your flyer explodes and it's race over. However, instead of using weapons you can choose to absorb their power into your craft and repair the damage you've taken. This adds a much welcome strategic element to the racing action.

One thing that struck me immediately were the visuals. The WipEout series has always been praised for its graphics, but WipEout Pulse really impressed me. Running this on the PlayStation TV I expected a fast, smooth racing experience but with a degree of pixelisation in the now-dated imagery. Instead it holds up remarkably well, certainly with the best the PS2 has to offer. More importantly it flies along at an astonishing speed and I'd have

to say that this runs faster and smoother than WipEout 2048 on the Vita!

As you'd expect, it has a stunning soundtrack to accompany the visuals, with plenty of speech throughout introducing each of the tracks and making in game announcements about weapons and your overall status.

When this was first released, it did offer support for DLC with additional tracks and music although sadly this is now missing from the PlayStation Store. This doesn't harm the base game though as it's still superb value for money and as the saying goes, you don't miss what you don't have!



I have to say that this *isn't* the best racing game to grace the PSP, but it's still a great racer and well worth checking out but it is challenging. It will take a lot of practice and perseverance to get the best out of it and like others in the series before it, it's not for the feint-hearted.

The WipEout games certainly aren't easy, but that makes succeeding at them all the more rewarding. But if you're looking for something that will keep you coming back for that elusive "one more go" until you beat it, and you're looking for something that will push the PSP to its limits, then look no further.

GAME REVIEW: WRC 5 (PS VITA) by Marcos Cotas

I really want to like this game: I am a motorsports fan. I know about cars. I watched and re-watched all of the episodes of Top Gear (UK only, thanks). I love driving. I love engines. I love rally, and rally games.

So, in theory, this game was tailor-made for me. The reality, however, is that it was made by a tailor who was half blind.

I have to admit, at first I was very disappointed. I was waiting for a patch to fix some of the audio and graphics issues I had with the game. I was hopeful. I was naive. I am, alas, disappointed.

I am not really a graphics guy (see all of my reviews praising 8-bit graphics [here](#)), so the fact that the game looks a bit drab wasn't what threw me off. It wasn't the fact that the noise crackle was too loud either. Or that I couldn't hear my engine.

My issue was the physics of it all. It just didn't feel like the rally games that I loved playing growing up (from Sega Rally to Colin McRae Rally).

The car understeered like crazy, and the

only way to correct it was to steer using the throttle. But then, I went and fiddled with the realism settings a bit. And after half an hour or so, I had the game running like a dream.

Since then, I've won the Monte Carlo rally (thank you very much) in the WRC-J category, and I nailed the first special stage in Portugal. Why did I go the extra stage? I wanted to see if the game had particle effects on gravel. It doesn't.

So, yes: the game doesn't look particularly great, or sound all that awesome. But the mechanics are there, and when it comes to a rally game, that might just be enough to earn a very, very high spot in my book.

Let's start with the good: the mechanics are spot on. If you're a rally game fan, you can feel the heritage of games like Colin McRae Rally and even Sega Rally in WRC 5. You can change the realism if you want something a bit more "sim-like", but if you want arcade rally gaming, it's here in all its glory.

The "rally simulation" setting adds a lot of realism, but takes away the fun. Instead of



easily oversteering, you need to steer with your throttle on most cars. Oversteer is everywhere. If you play with arcade settings, though, it's glorious oversteer, specially lift-off oversteer and four-wheel drifting.

Another good thing is the amount of content: I don't mind that it doesn't really have multiplayer (other than "ghost mode"). Rally games (and real-life rally) are solo experiences by nature. If you're expecting something like Need for Speed or Grand Theft Auto, even, you're out of luck. The solo modes, though, are fantastic: the career mode specially, as it has a plethora of tracks from all over the world, including some that are out of commission.

But this is where it all starts to come undone.

Even though there are tons of tracks, the graphical sacrifices made to port the game to the Vita mean that all tracks look the same: drab. There are also no particle effects, so whether you're on tarmac or gravel, the only difference is in the behaviour of the car, and the colour of the road.

Car models are beautiful, and I think that's where they got it wrong. They should have used less polygons on the car, and more on the track. At the very least give me some dust! Some snow! Some mud!

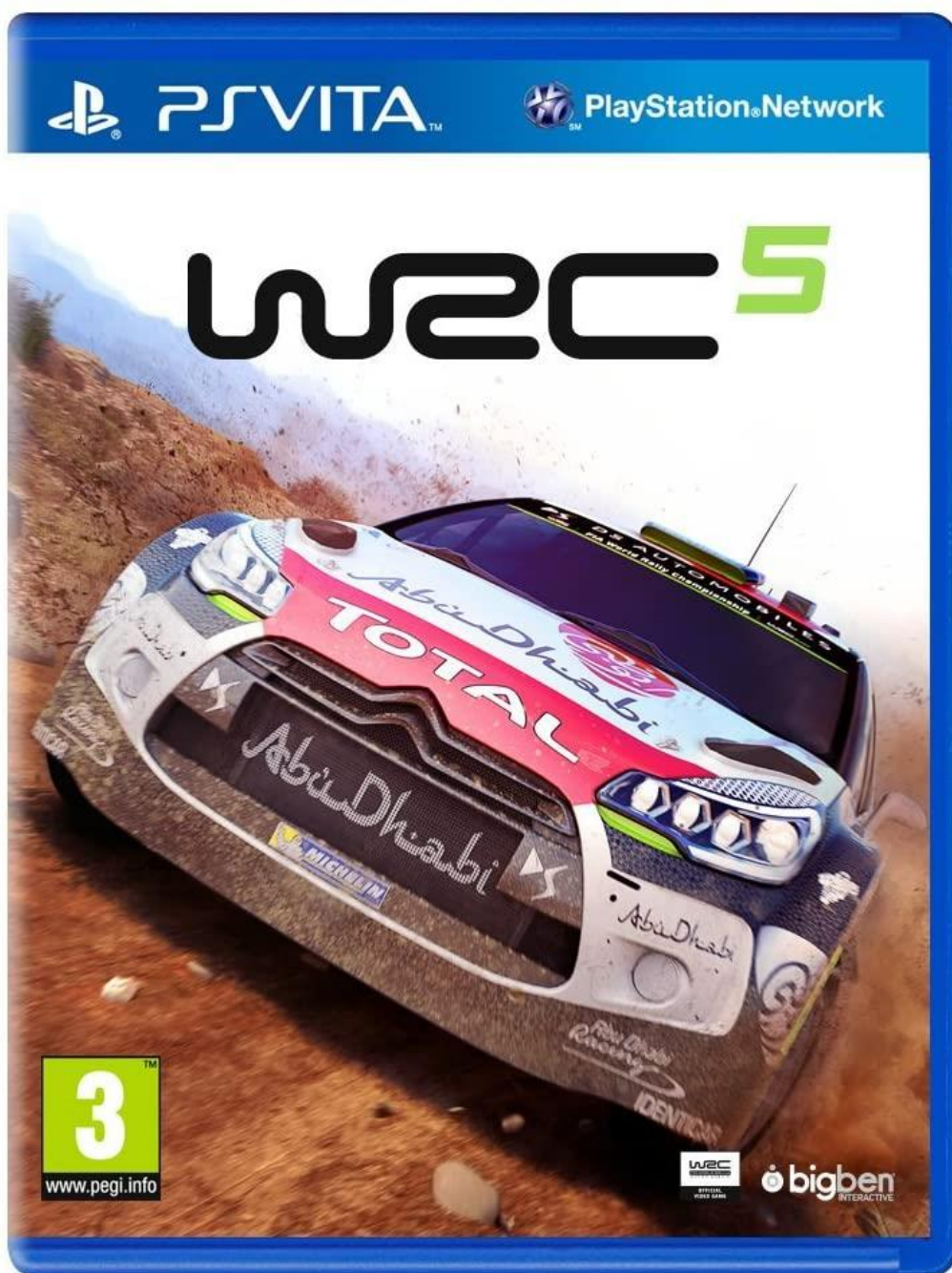
At least it sounds great, right? Well, no.

There's no music, but I didn't really notice that until I read people complaining about it. I guess it's because I prefer to listen to engine sounds, so usually in rally games I mute the music

anyway. But the thing is, even though there's no music, you still can't hear the engine. All you can hear is the crackle of the exhaust, and even that sounds tinny.

There are other nuances in the game that could have helped set it apart. It could have been a great game. Sadly, WRC 5 was made by a team who really understood the physics of a rally game (and a rally car), but not really the visual and aural appeal of the sport.

This means that WRC 5 is the game that could have been great, but is just good. And that's not good enough for me.





PRESS START

GAME REVIEW: JAGGY RACE! (PLAYSTATION MOBILE)
by Simon Plumbe

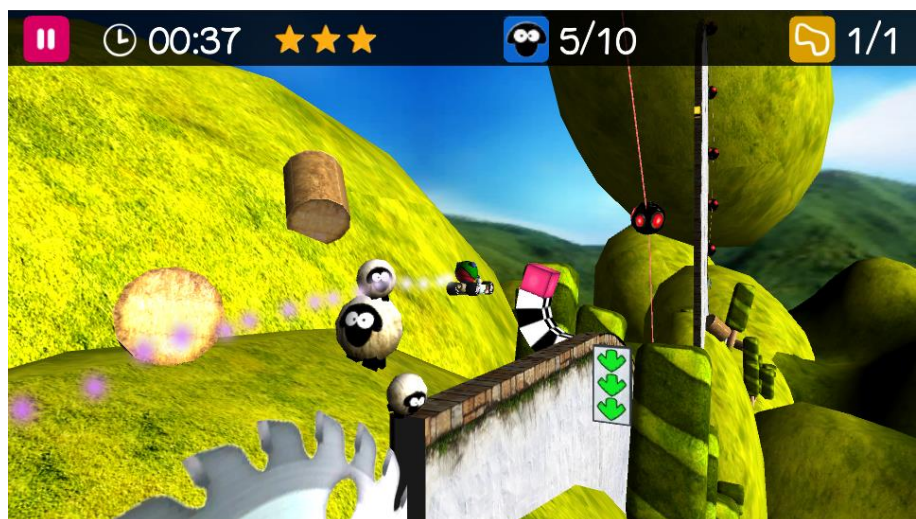
With an incredibly diverse range of games released for the platform, and such varying degrees of quality, it's not a surprise that many PS Vita owners were wary when it came to PlayStation Mobile. Even the promise of PSM making greater use of the Vita's capabilities with the advent of Unity in the final stages of its lifespan failed to sway many to its cause and looking at some of the early Unity releases it was no wonder. However, that didn't dissuade Italian developer Tiziano Bizzini who hoped to change that with the PlayStation Mobile port of his iOS racing game *AeroDrift*...

Jaggy Race! can be best described as being a platform based, stunt kart racer but unlike most racers where you're competing against other drivers, in Jaggy Race! it's just you, your kart and a series of sprawling tracks across varied terrain... oh, and there are sheep as well, but more on them later!

Split over 6 different themed worlds, each containing six different tracks,

your goal is to complete a set number of laps of each track within the time limit for each. Instead of twists and turns in the track itself, the game takes the form of a side-on view and your focus is more on negotiating the obstacles in your way - razor-sharp circular saw blades, electrified fences, gaps to jump over, and sheep to dodge or drive into for bonuses!

Control of the kart is simplicity in itself - while there is no steering involved, the game relies completely on your skill at acceleration and mastering the speed of



your kart and precise timing of jumps along each of the tracks. You have full control of the kart's forward and reverse movement (and for most of the tracks you'll need to master both), jumping and brakes.

something that really showcases the power that Unity has brought to PlayStation Mobile and it runs along at a superb pace with no slowdown at all during gameplay.



The graphics are bold, colourful, well defined with plenty of variety between the worlds and full of nice touches from your driver turning his head to look in the direction of travel to the spinning blades of the circular saws that are ready to send you to your impending doom...

Back to the tracks and while there are no other cars to race against, each has a set time limit in

The tracks themselves get progressively more difficult as you move through the game starting off gently with the tutorial levels to some of the fiendishly tough tracks that will have you negotiating twists and turns as your kart flips between surfaces, and defies gravity at breakneck speeds. Special mention here has to be given to the look of the game. While it takes a 2D approach (with the basic gameplay reminiscent of the 8-bit classic Kickstart), it is presented in full 3D and it looks absolutely stunning, easily one of the best looking PlayStation Mobile released and the screenshots really don't do this game justice.

The game can be viewed in two different modes - a straightforward 3D perspective that is more reminiscent of the 2.5D viewpoints seen in games like *Batman: Arkham Origins* and other games, or a more dynamic 3D camera mode that showcases the game's 3D engine wonderfully although it can take a little getting used to. The 3D engine is

which they have to be completed. There are three time goals set at the start and the faster you complete the track the more stars you earn up to a maximum of three. Complete all five main tracks in each world with two stars each (or three tracks with the maximum three stars) and you unlock the sixth and final bonus track.



Unlike other challenge-based racers, there's no particular order in which you have to tackle each of the worlds as they are all available from the start although the tracks themselves need to be played through in order. In addition to the extra

tracks, the game starts you off with a choice of two different karts (although the only difference between the two appears to be cosmetic) but a further six are available to unlock throughout play.

The game itself is extremely addictive and is one that I've found to be incredibly hard to put down. As I mentioned at the start, like so many PlayStation Mobile games that have come out since the advent of Unity it's a port from iOS but this is one of those games that proved that porting games from other platforms by way of Unity is paying off dividends for the Vita. There's very little I can find to fault with this and it's not only one of the best PSM games that I have played but one that could stand up on its own as a regular PS Vita release at the same asking price. My only real reservation is that the difficulty settings on one or two of the tracks could do with a slight tweak here and there but apart from that it's a remarkable game and a real highlight for the format.



those extra seconds off your personal best scores or eradicate those pesky sheep!

When you're starting to get to grips with the game, you'll be more eager to battle to get more stars to unlock the bonus tracks but as these can be done through earning two stars rather than three, but as such there's plenty of life in the game with some of the times needed to earn three stars challenging even the best players.

This was a real gem for PlayStation Mobile - it came out of nowhere and really stood



Sadly, unlike all PlayStation Mobile games released at the time, there was no option for online leaderboards to compete against your friends but the continual challenge for long-term repeat play was still there as you are drawn back to keep trying to shave

out from the crowd as being one of the best games available for PlayStation Mobile. Offering plenty of variety and more than enough longevity to keep even the most hardened of gamers happy, it represented incredible value for money and was game that's perfectly suited to the Vita. Jaggy Race! proved to be a great pick-up-and-play game that you could enjoy in short bursts, with plenty of longevity ensuring that you would return to over and over again. This was a much overlooked game at the time, despite being an essential purchase and sadly, like so many from the PSM range is another game lost to us all...

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GAME REVIEW: HORIZON CHASE TURBO (PS VITA) by Simon Plumbe

One of the greatest things about growing up as a gamer in the 1980s was that we could afford to be more flippant about our choices of software. The 8-bit computer era brought us an incredible range of games for under £10 for the likes of the ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC and Commodore 64. And thanks to budget pioneers like Mastertronic it was even possible to get complete physical games at retail for under £2!

What this meant for gamers was that we didn't have to concern ourselves with magazine reviews, or trying games out before risking our hard-earned cash. But it also led to the start of something unheard of at the time... people were buying games purely on the reputation of those responsible for them. The people who programmed them, who created the graphics and in the case of Commodore 64 titles even those who composed the music.

But what has that got to do with Horizon Chase Turbo? Well, my first encounter with the game wasn't on the Vita - or any other platform for that matter. Instead it was the game's soundtrack, composed by industry veteran Barry Leitch. Credited with games dating as far back as the Commodore 64 and Amiga, that caught my attention straight away and after listening to the soundtrack countless times on Amazon Music, I had to get the game on the Nintendo Switch.

Horizon Chase Turbo is a no-nonsense





arcade racer that could have come straight from the consoles and arcades of the 90s, complete with a soundtrack to match. And to be honest, this is not necessarily a bad thing. Gameplay has been stripped back to basics to focus on making the game a simple, yet addictive and no-frills fun racing game that's easy to pick up and play right from the start. There's no drift techniques to master either so anyone can dive in and enjoy the high-octane driving action.

Gameplay is simple enough - controls are limited to accelerate, braking, steering, and a button to use your nitro to achieve a short burst of extra speed. There are no gears to wrangle with so you just have to focus on the driving itself.,

The main game focuses on the World Tour which is split across 10 different cities around the world. Each of these is divided further into separate map areas, each with several individual races within them. Finish within the top few positions in each race and the next is unlocked. Complete a city and the next out of the 10 becomes available to play.

A limited choice of cars is available at the start, with more unlocked as you play throughout the game based on your performance. Each has their own strengths and weaknesses and can be upgraded by

winning special races that are unlocked during extended play.

There are no time limits to each race, but you have a finite amount of fuel for your car so you have to be mindful of this at all times. More can be collected as you race so this adds an extra challenge to each race. You only have a limited number of nitro boosts available as well, although some tracks have additional boosts scattered around them, but you have to use these wisely.

There are also tokens scattered around each track to be collected. These add bonus points to your score at the end of each race. If you managed to collect every one and finish first, you'll be awarded the maximum number of points and a trophy. Get all of them in each city and a bonus car will be unlocked for play. The points themselves will unlock additional cars and while you can progress through the game without winning each race, performance is everything to get access to all the game has to offer.



There are also three tournaments on offer of varying difficulties, each set in different cities spanning several different tracks. Points are awarded based on your track position at the end of each race and the tournament winner is the driver with the



most points at the end of four races. Win a tournament and the next city is unlocked. I'll come onto the technical side of the game in a moment when I mention the Vita version specifically. But as far as the console and PC versions are concerned, there are further game modes available. Most notable are several DLC packs that are absent here. A few of these were released prior to the release of the PS Vita port so I'm disappointed by their absence, especially as there is no way they can be made available now. The most recent F1 themed *Senna Forever* pack is understandably missing as well.

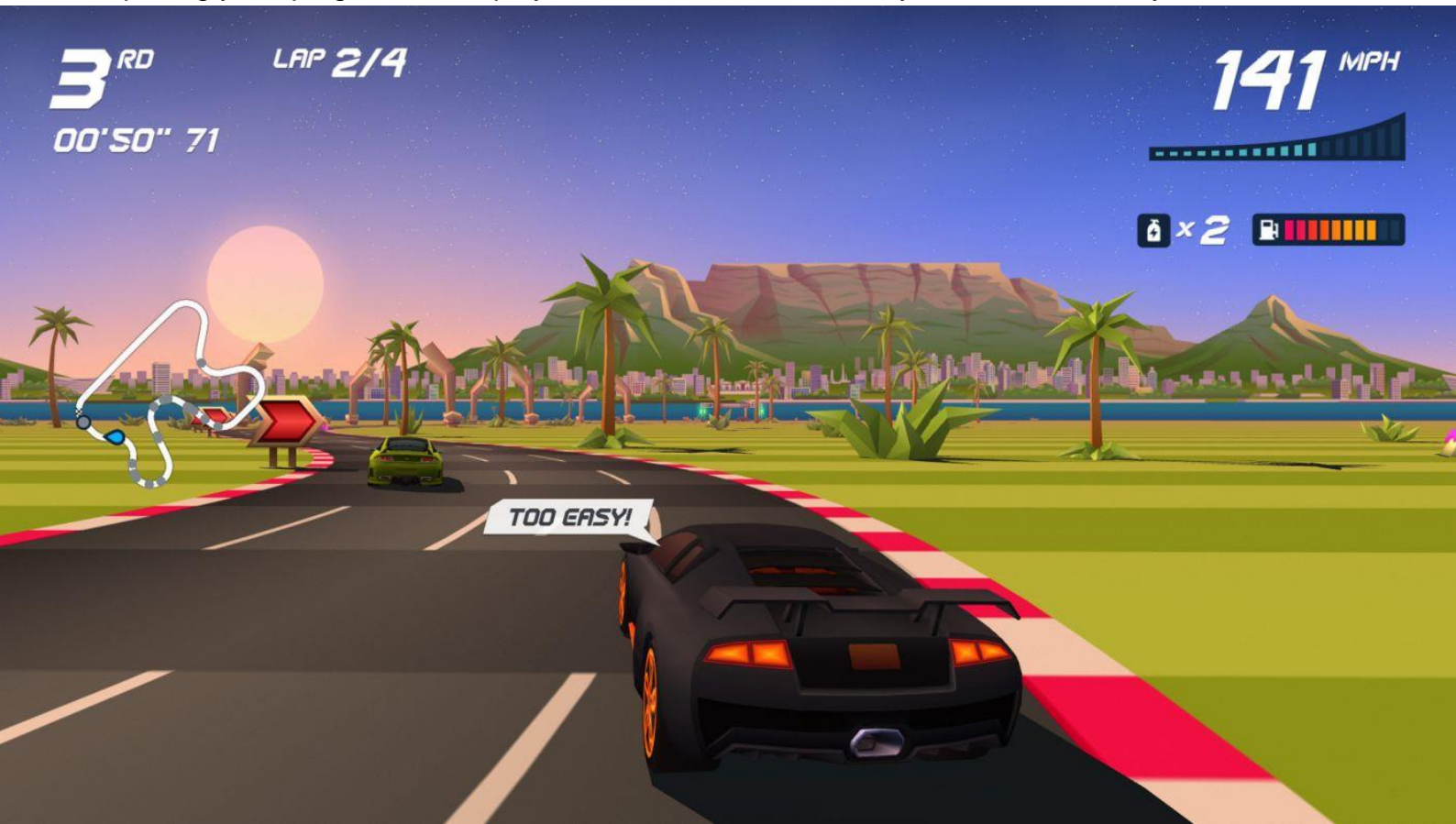
The other mode that is missing is the Playground mode. This provides gamers with random time-limited challenges putting you up against other players from

around the world. While I appreciate that this has been omitted because it would have needed an online connection, perhaps an offline version could have been included offering random daily challenges for the player instead?

Ignoring all of that, *Horizon Chase Turbo* is an incredibly addictive racer. It lived up to all my expectations and delivered all the racing thrills I was looking for and more. It's fast, has an incredible selection of tracks (over 100) and plenty of cars on offer so there's plenty of variety to keep the game looking and feeling fresh.

It's challenging but never frustrating and has that one-more-go factor that will keep you coming back constantly. Despite having games like *Burnout: Paradise* and *Mario Kart 8* on my Switch, this is the racer I've probably played the most on the console so far.

Now, the Vita version is a rather special release. It was unveiled by Eastasiasoft in 2021 and surprised gamers everywhere and was amongst their final releases for the console last year. It's notable because at that point not only was its release completely unknown to the PS Vita community, but it's one of only a handful of



physical-only titles for the console. And with a production run of just 2,200 copies, it's one of the most sought-after games released for the system.

But how well does the PS Vita version stack up? Generally, not too bad but it has to be said that the PS Vita port has had to make some compromises along the way to make it across to Sony's handheld...



As you can see, the game's solid 3D visuals have remained relatively intact from the console versions and there's very little to distinguish between the PS Vita and Switch versions on first impressions. Where things are noticeable is the framerate. The Vita version still runs at a remarkable speed and retains all the addictive playability of the original as a result, but it's no longer the 60fps visual delight of the other versions. It looks *good*, but not quite as smooth as you'd hope for.

The only other difference I noticed on the visual front was with the cars. On the Switch version you were able to change the colour schemes for all of the cars but this is missing for the Vita version. Whether this was down to time, memory constraints or something else, I don't know. It's only a cosmetic point, but for those expecting a perfect port it's another gripe.

It's not without the odd visual glitch either. I spotted the odd frame drop and stutter

during play - not enough to spoil the game or to hinder gameplay, but enough to be noticeable. There was also one incident of a corrupted image once I'd unlocked a car.

I had heard of concerns about the loading times for the game but didn't find too much to complain about and while it was slightly slower than the Switch port, it was nothing to complain about. The only worry I did

have is that the loading music and animation suddenly stops part way or pauses. First time it happened I actually thought the game had crashed but it was just a delay in loading.

By this point you might think that I wasn't impressed with the Vita version or didn't enjoy playing it. That certainly wasn't the case. The Barry Leitch soundtrack was still there in all its glory, driving the game along and drawing you deeply into the

90s gameplay. The visuals are a joy to behold, and it looks even better running on the PlayStation TV where it feels right at home using a DualShock4.

Even though there isn't as much on offer as there is in the console versions, there is an astonishing amount to sink your teeth into. With over 100 tracks to master, three increasingly difficult tournaments not to mention the Endurance mode to unlock for even more gameplay, this is probably one of the biggest arcade racers I've ever seen. While open world racers like *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* may offer gamers the chance to play how they want to, I can't remember the last time I've seen this much content in a straight-up racer.

Overall, despite missing some of the content and not running as fast as the original, this is a solid port to the Vita of an incredibly addictive racer. Add the soundtrack CD into the mix and it makes for a superb bundle that's a must-have for any racing enthusiast... assuming you can find a copy, that is.



1 Bit Action Platformer!

HAND CANNON

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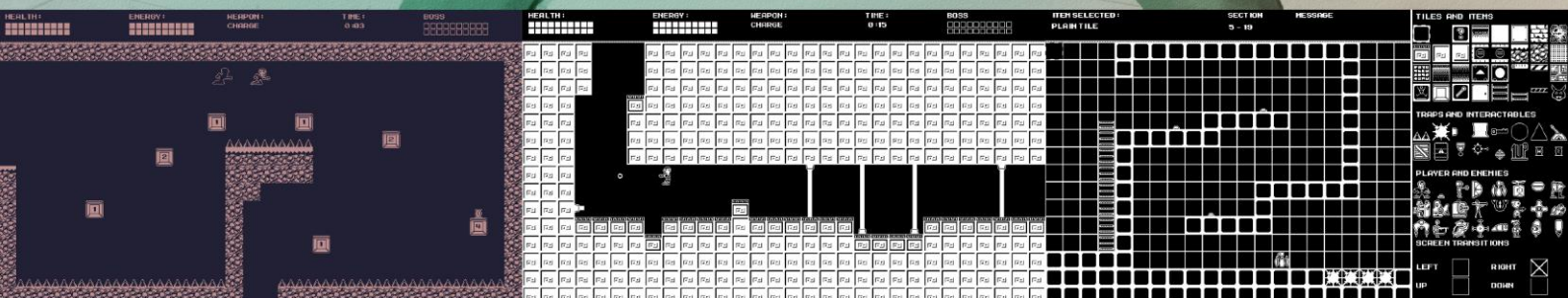
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GAME REVIEW: NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED (PS VITA) by Sven Harvey

Starting on the EA backed 3DO console, Need For Speed has grown into a bit of a behemoth and essentially swallowed Burnout too. The good news is that as EA has a roster of developers working on NFS branded games, Criterion got to do the newer, 2010, Hot Pursuit and then two years later, they brought us the new, 2012, Need For Speed: Most Wanted.

With the game being a direct port of the PlayStation 3 version, albeit with slight alterations for the hardware specifics, the question is how does the title do on the handheld format?

Take me down to the Paradise City... kinda. There's no getting away from it, from the moment you start playing Need For Speed: Most Wanted (2012) it's blindingly obvious it started in development life at Criterion as the sequel to Burnout Paradise (which was fantastic, by the way). One branding change and the switch from fictional to real cars with the

licensing from a whole host of manufacturers and the result is, unfortunately, Criterion's final full game before losing key staff and being merged into the rest of EA's UK operations.

Now I'll get this out of the way now - I really enjoyed Burnout Paradise and Need For Speed: Most Wanted (2012) on the PS3, so comparison of this handheld version to its home console sibling is inevitable. Oh, and while you are wondering why I keep adding that 2012



tag, it's because there was already a Need For Speed: Most Wanted game developed by Black Box and released by EA in 2005 on the DS, PC, PS2, Xbox, Gamecube, GameBoy Advance, and was the first Need For Speed on the Xbox 360 (an altered version of the game also came to PSP, Need For Speed: Most Wanted 5-1-0, while the PS2 title was recompiled for play on the PS3 and released as a PlayStation Store download... in 2012. Not at all confusing).

Most Wanted is presented as a fully open world, with you being presented with your first car, an Aston Martin V12 Vantage, with you already at the wheel being guided to your first jack point where you pick up a Porsche. The tutorial guides you to the first event for the Porsche and you are away.

Access to events is by driving to their starting points (though, unlike the initial release of Burnout Paradise you can restart a race from within it or just after it's finished, via a pop-up menu) and you are thus encouraged to explore the game map to find all of the events. As you play AutoLog (upgraded since its appearance in previous games) which is essentially integrated completely with Easydrive - the side HUD menu system, issues you with suggested challenges/races as well as

challenges from players on your PSN friend list.

By winning races you earn vehicle upgrades as well as speed points which you can also gain from escaping cops when a pursuit kicks in (either by you being clocked at too high a speed or by hitting a police car), smashing through billboards, breaking down security gates or triggering speed cameras.

This then unlocks races to take down the ten most wanted cars which you have to beat in a race and then destroy to add them to your car collection. Further cars are also unlocked by finding them which pops an icon on the in-game map.

Different cars can be used in different races so finding all the cars and thus accessing all the races gives you a better chance of earning more speed points. Every car handles differently and very slight tweaks do come into play with every tyre, chassis and engine upgrade, but even the twitchiest handling car or non-cornering beast can be gotten used to, to win races and further points.

The whole of the initial PS3 release is here plus some PS Vita exclusive content in the form of special events, and there is a





collection of multiplayer gameplay modes from races to jump challenges, so there is an immense amount of content here for a handheld title. But that's a whole problem in itself - this *isn't* a handheld title, and in fact actually works better as a PSTV title in a way.

When it first came out it was as near as it could be to a full console racer on the Vita. It was the best racing game (well involving wheels) on the PS Vita too, but doesn't really take into consideration the PS Vita's peculiarities, and certainly wasn't designed to take advantage of the full capabilities and ways of doing things that are Vita specific.

Plus, nothing in the game is really new as such - just like it wasn't on the PS3 - it a melding of everything Criterion have learned since starting off on Burnout, including Burnout Paradise, and the feedback from previous NFS titles (including those they didn't do themselves. It is an evolution. This, however, turns out to be no bad thing.

This is a great game on the PS3, and it's a fantastic game on the PS Vita - it is a distillation of Criterion's finest and is

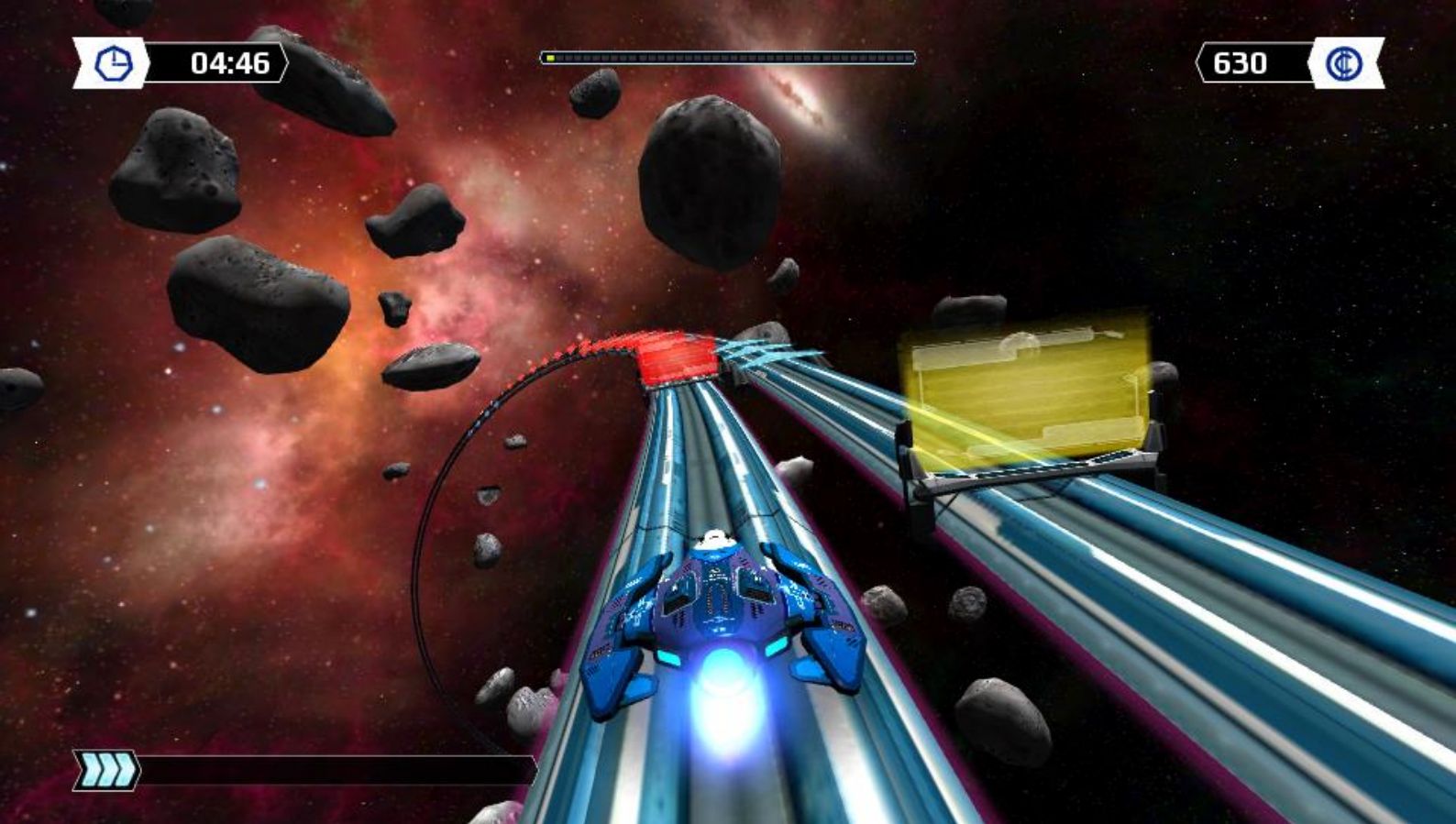
probably the best combination of the Burnout and Need For Speed knowhow.

Though it is an embellished port to the PS Vita from the PS3, to all intents and purposes with graphics as close as the machine could manage, that didn't stop it from being the best racing game on the Vita at the time of the game's release, and you know what, it still is!



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GAME REVIEW: SWITCH GALAXY ULTRA (PS VITA) by Simon Plumbe

I don't make a secret of the fact that I was a huge supporter of PlayStation Mobile. So much in fact that before the service was taken offline that I ended up with a near complete collection of every title released for the EU market. So with that in mind I'd like to think that I have a fairly good knowledge of games released for the format.

But why am I talking about PSM when I'm supposed to be reviewing a PS Vita game? Well it's testament to the hard work of the developers Atomicom when the PlayStation Mobile update of their original Android game, [Switch Galaxy](#) made it into our Top PlayStation Mobile games lists over on our website. Not satisfied with that, after a wait that has seemed like an eternity, the game was finally released in an updated form for the PS Vita and PS4 but was it worth the wait?

As with the original release, the very heart of Switch Galaxy Ultra is a simple concept harking back to the 8-bit era. The basic gameplay from the PSM original remains the same so I won't dwell on that too

much, but briefly it's a rail-based racer - just think a futuristic Scalextric where you can swap tracks. Your craft flies along these space lanes between planets dodging oncoming obstacles and all you can do to survive is switch your craft from one lane to the next.

Barriers appear in your path that will slow down your speed, gaps appear that need to be avoided by switching lanes, cash can be collected en-route to allow you to upgrade your ship, and there are boosts and other powerups to be collected on the track to help you on the way. Pretty simple stuff and easy to get into and grasp the basics in mere minutes.

Just like its predecessor, there's a story behind the racing (please don't ask why - personally I'd rather get straight into the game itself) but this time it's accompanied by a fully voiced digital comic. Regardless of your view on having storylines behind games of this ilk, you take on the role of one of the Galaxy's last surviving humans, Vince Vance. Regarded as being one of the best pilots in Dakur, you've been asked

by Amur Ness - the Head of Dakur Technology - to explore the galaxy to find as much tantalum as possible - one of the most scarce elements known to mankind (or should that be alienkind?).



If you've played the original (and if you haven't then shame on you!), the core game remains the same but understandably has been refined and expanded upon for this new version as you would expect for a higher profile release. The first most noticeable change in the game is the format for collecting tantalum itself. In the original version, this was obtained based on your performance in each race, and the faster you reached the end of each stage the more you earned but it wasn't actually *needed* other than to earn more coins to spend on upgrades.

In Switch Galaxy Ultra however, tantalum plays a more critical role in the game. The races themselves are split into two main elements - the track-based segments and a more open area that you reach after flying through a portal that is more than a little reminiscent of Stargate. On flying through this portal, the controls shift from the standard left/right navigation of your craft to having full directional control as your ship flies freely through this galactic "tunnel". In here you will find the all-important tantalum that you need to fly into to collect so precision navigation is needed

to collect as much as possible before returning to the track.

At this point you have to ensure that you don't collide with *anything* on your way to the end of the level as each collision not only loses momentum but tantalum as well. Why is the tantalum so important? Well, this is where the game differs so much from Switch Galaxy as no longer do you have to reach the end of each track in a set time limit but instead you need to collect enough tantalum to unlock further stages. If you haven't got sufficient tantalum then it's a

case of going back to replay earlier levels to try to get as many of the ten pieces up for grabs on each.

Back to the track sections and the speed boosts are the other real change and while at first this may not seem like a major gameplay element, it does add a new strategic twist to the game. Previously flying over a speed boost part of the track simply accelerated your craft. Now you charge up your boost which you can then activate at will and use it until your boost is drained and it can be used in short bursts or in one go and replenished every time you fly over the speed boosts. It may not seem like a major change at first but having total control of when you boost really gives you that extra feeling of being in control and makes the game seem that bit more fluid.

In total there are 55 tracks to race over increasing in difficulty as you progress through the game, adding additional hazards to overcome as you play ranging from barriers blocking your path that you need to avoid (or pass through if you have collected pass tokens along your travels), gaps in the track to jump over, and enemy ships hell bent on stopping your progress.

To help you along the way, the cash that you collect can be spent in the shop between stages to upgrade your ship, tweak it's appearance with new skins or even buy a brand new craft from the six on offer... and fully customise those as well!

The one real difference to the game from Switch Galaxy, which will really put your piloting skills to the test, is how you progress through the levels and is something that could potentially extend the game's lifespan considerably. In the original, each race had a set time limit in which it needed to be completed and if you managed to accomplish this, the next track was unlocked. This time, each track requires you to have amassed a certain amount of tantulum before you can move on.

Fortunately, you can go back and replay levels at any time to try to try to collect the maximum in each area. While this method of rewarding players and locking off game progress can be a good thing, if you're not *quite* as good on the tunnel sections as you are in the main race sections then you could ultimately reach a point where you won't be able to continue in the game and I am a little wary of games that do prevent progress for gamers in this way.

Saying that, it doesn't spoil the game itself and it's still a fun racer and has managed to retail all of the playability of the original, not slowing down for a second. Despite not being a racing game in the traditional sense and having most of the controls, bar the steering and boost taken out of your control, there's still an amazing adrenaline rush to be had while playing. At the same time as that, the game is stepping things up a gear visually. It's no longer just a case of the tracks looking good... now they look fantastic - smooth, detailed, with a fully populated space environment surrounding

you. While you don't necessarily notice as you race, the asteroids flying past as you pilot your ship really do add a great deal to what is already a stunning looking title. Things then look even more astounding when you fly through the tunnels before ending in the WipEout-influenced cities and it really adds up to a game that is incredibly polished.

As well as the main story mode, the game offers several additional modes to provide additional longevity and variety for players. In a continuation from the PSM release, the Survival Mode makes its way over to the PS Vita. Taking its cue from the myriad



of endless runner games on the market, it's just you and a never-ending track set out in front of you. The game mode is simple enough - all you have to do is fly for as long as possible, avoiding the oncoming barriers as your ship gets progressively faster. Collide with a barrier and it's game over and you're presented with your score representing your total distance travelled. Beat your personal best score and you're awarded with credits to spend in the store. It's all about quick reactions and hand-eye coordination and as every game plays using a default ship, no player has an advantage over any other when it comes to the global leaderboards.

In addition, there are also two online multiplayer modes available as well - Survival and Barrier. Now I'd love to be

able to talk more about both of these but sadly I can't nor give any judgement or opinion on them. No matter how hard I tried, I simply wasn't able to experience them. It didn't matter what time of day I attempted to play them or which of the two modes I tried to play, or whether I was looking to join an existing game or act as host for a new game, I simply didn't encounter *any* other players online.

It's a shame because it's one new feature of the game that I'd have loved to experience and this was a major disappointment. Being a significant new feature added to the game from the PlayStation Mobile version it's quite a let-down that I wasn't able to play this, even once, and it's the first time I've been unable to play a multiplayer game on the PS Vita for lack of any other players. In all the time I played this, I was never able to encounter another player, and I presume it was down to low sales of the game. It's a pity because this had so much potential.

I can't finish talking about the game itself without mentioning two other elements missing from the original PSM release - Trophies and Leaderboards. As much as I

loathe Trophies personally, these were a much-welcome addition for many gamers as are Leaderboards although these are a little odd. They allow you to compare scores in the multiplayer modes as well as your performance in the main game itself, but there is no way to scroll through the list beyond the Top 10 in each nor can you look at how you stack up against your friends, something that seems to be a standard feature for most Leaderboards.

While I'm not generally too concerned about Trophies or Leaderboards, for some games I have felt that the Leaderboards have extended the longevity of the games and kept me returning far longer than I would have normally just so I can try to stay one step ahead of people on my friends list so this is a wasted opportunity here.

Now onto the comic that I mentioned earlier... I really have mixed feelings here. I thought the artwork itself was great, although that didn't really come as a surprise considering the source - Darren Douglas, the original concept artist for WipEout - but I did feel that it dragged on and the voiceover left something to be



desired. I will be honest and say that voice work is an area where I have come to get very picky over and I am probably a lot less forgiving than others. Having spent almost 20 years running sci-fi conventions and working closely with animation voice actors, most of whom are veterans of the video games industry, it's something I've found that I pay a lot more attention to than I used to and it is a weakness compared to the artwork.

Additionally, the way the comic is presented does cause problems. There is a lot of text on screen in many of the panels in the comic and with the nature of the Vita's screen and its screen resolution, comics need to be presented in a way to make things easy to read, either keeping text to a minimum or zooming in to text and moving between characters speaking when multiple speech bubbles are in a single comic panel. What I found with Switch Galaxy Ultra was that the text was incredibly difficult to read throughout. At first this was something that I attributed to my eyesight (I'm not getting any younger!) but the text is rather dense and it is an issue that a lot of other players have had problems with as well.

It has to be said that Atomicom were aware of the issue and were hoping to addressing the problem in one of their planned patches for the game, although I don't know if it ever happened. At the time I looked at the comic when I originally wrote this review it did spoil what had the potential to be a great opener to the game.

One thing that I have to make special mention of is Atomicom's well-known charitable work. This was also extended to Switch Galaxy Ultra and the first DLC pack released simultaneously with the game. Aiming to raise money for Caudwell Children, this Charity DLC Pack available from the PSN Store adds additional music to the game licensed from a range of artists with all of Atomicom's proceeds



going to the charity. There's always talk online about fundraisers from the PC games industry but it was great to see a PS Vita game being able to support charity in this way.

For those of you who own a PS4 as well as the PS Vita you're well looked after here. As well as being a Cross Buy title, the game also supports Cross Save and Cross Play for its online multiplayer modes, something that I would have like to have seen more of from other developers of Cross Buy releases over the years. Other developers could have learned a lesson or two from Atomicom.

As an update, Atomicom have delivered a more than worthy tribute to their original futuristic racer. It keeps the same frenetic gameplay of the original, looks a LOT better as you would expect for a native PS Vita release but managed to add plenty of new twists to keep the game fresh and offer something new for those who have managed to master the original release. As I said, it's not without its flaws and does have areas where it needs some work but it is still a fun and challenging game.

My only reservation was the price which is expensive for what it offers right now and the non-functional multiplayer mode but despite that it's an update that has successfully managed to improve on the original without taking away what made the first game fun in the first place.

GAME REVIEW: MUD FIM WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP (PS VITA)

by Jason Bonnar

Part simulation, part arcade racing game, MUD is the official game of the 2011 season of the FIM World Motocross Championship with all of the official drivers, teams, bikes, tracks and competitions.

MUD features all of the official licenses for the 2011 season, which comprises of twelve tracks situated in various locations around the world. There are 84 professional riders and 32 teams and their specifications of MX1 and MX2 bikes. However, the official licenses do not end with the MUD World Tour; as they continue with MXoN (Monster Energy FIM Motocross of Nations) and features all of the licenses from the 2011 season.

The Official Mode consists of quick race, championship and Monster Energy FIM MXoN events. The quick race feature can be raced with MX1 or MX2 bikes across any of the locations in the game, while the championship can be customised with MX1 or MX2 bikes and anywhere from three to twelve tracks and the Monster Energy FIM MXoN is a championship featuring twelve consecutive races to

determine the winner of the MX1, MX2 or Open championship.

The MUD World Tour game mode features fifteen cards worth of unlockable events with each card consisting of three or four events totalling to dozens of events spread across multiple game types. The game types have a great amount of variation to them and consist of races; elimination cups; checkpoint races; head-to-head races; and trick battles. The cards are unlocked by purchasing them with in-game currency you earn from such factors as your finishing position, team target and talent bonus from every event that you participate in. It is important to earn as much in-game currency as you can as earlier cards include all of the events already unlocked as standard, while you will find that the further you progress into the MUD World Tour; the harder you will have to work to purchase new cards and events as the events will no longer be unlocked as standard from around a third of the way into the MUD World Tour, resulting in you having to purchase the second event onwards for each card from then onwards.





The quick race game mode includes the ability to select one of four riders, use MX1 and MX2 bikes across any of twelve tracks as you race against up to seven AI opponents, and a choice of five difficulty levels and varying time lengths and number of laps.

The Monster Energy trick battle game mode includes any of the six trick battle tracks as you attempt to perform better freestyle tricks than the AI opponents, that are set to any of the five difficulty levels with the length of the trick battle between one to three rounds. The Monster Energy trick battle consist of a three-minute time limit in which you have to perform various freestyle tricks.

The handling will initially feel a little twitchy, but you will become accustomed to it rather quickly as you learn such techniques as scrubbing, which is an essential technique to perfectly execute your landing by positioning your bike appropriately, while in mid-air during a jump. There are a few gameplay mechanics that may influence the speed and handling of the bikes, such as performing burning starts straight out of the gate by holding the brake and only

accelerating as soon as the gates drop to earn a boost to your acceleration off the start line and using energy drinks to provide temporary speed boosts.

There are five difficulty levels - rookie, easy, normal, hard and extreme. The major difference is simply that the harder difficulty levels will produce riders that are harder to pass, less likely to crash and are harder to catch during all disciplines of races after they have opened up a lead ahead of you. Whereas the easier AI suffer from random bouts of consecutive mistakes that will see you catch them fairly quickly. The harder difficulties effectively eliminate the rubber banding effect that many racing games suffer from. The harder AI also applies to the freestyle events as they are less likely to make mistakes and are therefore significantly more likely to heavily score points from consecutively landing their tricks.

There are four riders in the MUD World Tour which all start off with their own skill sets in regards to favouring a particular type of event over enough due to their strengths and weaknesses.

The bike and rider upgrades are essential to your progression in the MUD World Tour

as they genuinely make a difference to the handling and acceleration of your bike and are purchased with the same in-game currency that is used to purchase new events and cards.

There are equipment upgrades too that improve your team, helmet, energy drink and trick crew. The team upgrades allow you to purchase your position in a new team, with each having their own perks. The selection of twenty helmets are purely for decorative purposes; energy drinks provide a temporary speed boost; and the trick crew allows you to make your selection of a particular trick crew from fifteen separate crews with each having their own perks consisting of your target position and reward bonus for successful performances.

The Trick Shop is presented in the same way as the bike and rider upgrades, but relates to the tricks that you can perform in the Monster Energy trick battles. There are a total of twenty-nine tricks with five star difficulty ratings for their executions; the combo required to perform the trick; and the amount of points that are earned for performing the trick and while some of them can be unlocked, most of them have to be purchased with in-game currency.

There are unfortunately only two camera angles with one placed directly behind the rider and the other positioned further back with no option to re-position the camera angle to move the viewpoint closer or further away. I was hopeful for more than two camera angles as it is important to cater to different preferred perspectives and as I usually choose the first-person camera angle in racing games and there are a lot of gamers who do so, so I thought it was a rather odd omission.

There are no video tutorials, although there is a how to play guide. The how to play guide introduces the game, so you know what to expect from MUD, while the race start guide covers the techniques required to perfect burning starts. Another very important guide teaches you how to perform a perfectly executed scrub and how to avoid scrub errors that may lead to crashes; and providing advice on the purpose of energy drinks.

Graphically, MUD is pretty good with deformable track surfaces that include mud being flicked up from the track surface as the bikes drive over it and sprays onto the camera with excellent crash dynamics that see your rider seriously falling off anytime you have a stray jump. The draw distance and





graphics are mostly pretty good with a solid frame rate even when there are eight bikes closely bunched together, although the very occasional background detail will pop up as you get closer to it and the trees sometimes look a little flat, but other than that MUD performs well from both a graphical and performance standpoint.

The audio consists of sound effects and music with the sound effects playing an essential part of the experience as you will hear the revving of the bike engines and crashes, although the ambient sound effects are lacking as they are too low in the audio mix with only the occasional applause from the crowd at the start of the race and to a well-executed scrub and the possibility of an announcer overheard on a rare basis, while the music covers such genres as rock and metal.

There are online multiplayer features and leaderboards. The multiplayer includes a quick match game mode that allows you to quickly enter a lobby and if there are no populated lobbies available at that time, you will be entered into your own customisable lobby. The quick match includes the ability to ride MX1 and MX2 bikes across any of the twelve tracks and multiple race disciplines against up to five

opponents including human and potentially AI opponents of any difficulty level.

The custom match game mode provides a quick and efficient way of searching for the online gaming environment that best matches your preferred settings including track and event category selection, the inclusion of AI to pad out the field, AI difficulty; the maximum number of players ranging anywhere from two to six players; the length of the race; and the ability to select for collisions to be on or off. If you have very limited time and none of those options matter to you, then you can just leave the options on their default settings.

The create match game mode provides the ability for you to create your own customised lobby with a choice of a quick race or Monster Energy FIM MXoN game mode; and selecting the track and various other customisable options as before.

The online stats consist of your current level; the amount of races you have participated in; the amount of races you have won; the amount of well or perfectly executed scrubs; the amount of laps you have completed; and the amount of times you have fallen from your bike. The online stats are a positive design choice as

anyone within the lobby can press triangle on your PSN ID and view your statistics for your online multiplayer races, which allows everyone to know the kind of skill level they are going up against before the online multiplayer race commences.

The only problem with the online multiplayer depends upon how much of an accurate rider you are; as I feel that the bike resets far too much in online multiplayer due to venturing out of bounds. The issue here though is that you are looking at the equivalent scale of about the width of a bike where the front tyre is actually in bounds and the rear tyre is barely out of bounds, so I found that this rule was breaking up the fun of racing online far too much, especially considering that it rarely happens in single player.

The replayability of MUD is quite significant due to the amount of content on offer across all of the game modes and categories. The MUD World Tour, MXoN Championship and freestyle trick battles in single player, alongside the online multiplayer and online leaderboards are all sources of vast replayability that will be entertaining you and providing fun even long after you have experienced everything the game has to offer, while the unlockable content is another form of

replayability and reward for achieving great performances in multiple race and freestyle disciplines.

Overall, MUD: FIM World Motocross Championship is a great first entry of what could have been an exceptional franchise of Motocross games with an immense amount of potential for where the franchise could progress to. While there are a number of features that could have been included that were not; it is a testament to the game that the content that is there is enough to keep you coming back for more and always feels fresh and full of vibrancy. With a debut in the Motocross franchise that is this well-crafted, I am certainly looking forward to seeing how much of a step up MXGP can provide.

Editor's note: This review was originally written when online functionality was still available. At the time of writing we don't know if this aspect of the game is still active.



GAME REVIEW: RACE THE SUN (PS VITA)

by Simon Plumbe

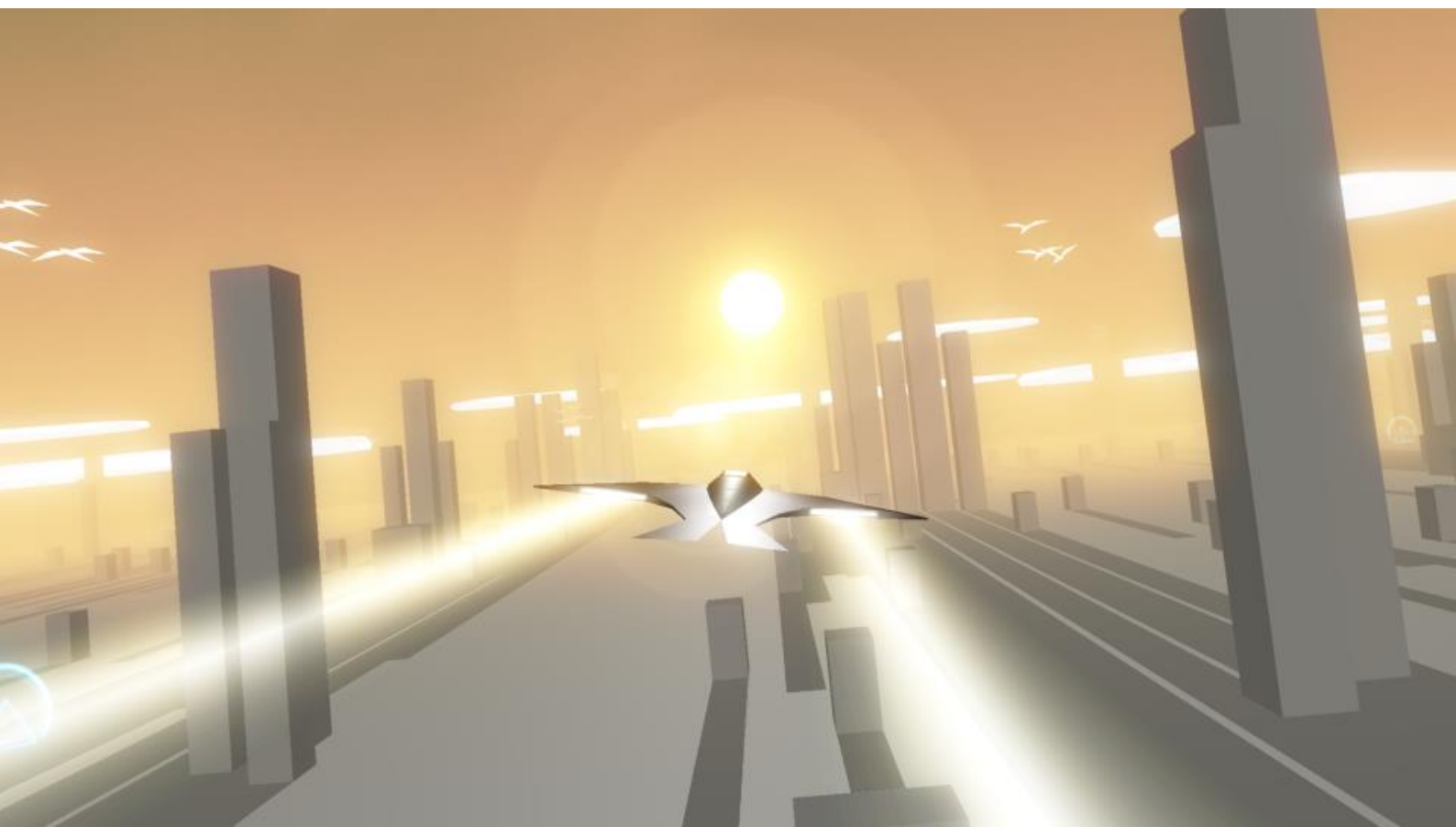
Racing games have been around almost as long as gaming itself. Whether it's a more traditional racing simulator recreating Formula 1 or the thrills of rally driving, an arcade racer along the lines of OutRun or something a little more adventurous like the futuristic racers in the WipEout series, we've been fascinated with speed and gaming since the 1980s. It's hard, therefore, for developers to come up with a new take on the genre and provide gamers with something a little different to straightforward track racing or vehicular combat but developers Flippfly think they have the answer with their solar-powered title, Race The Sun...

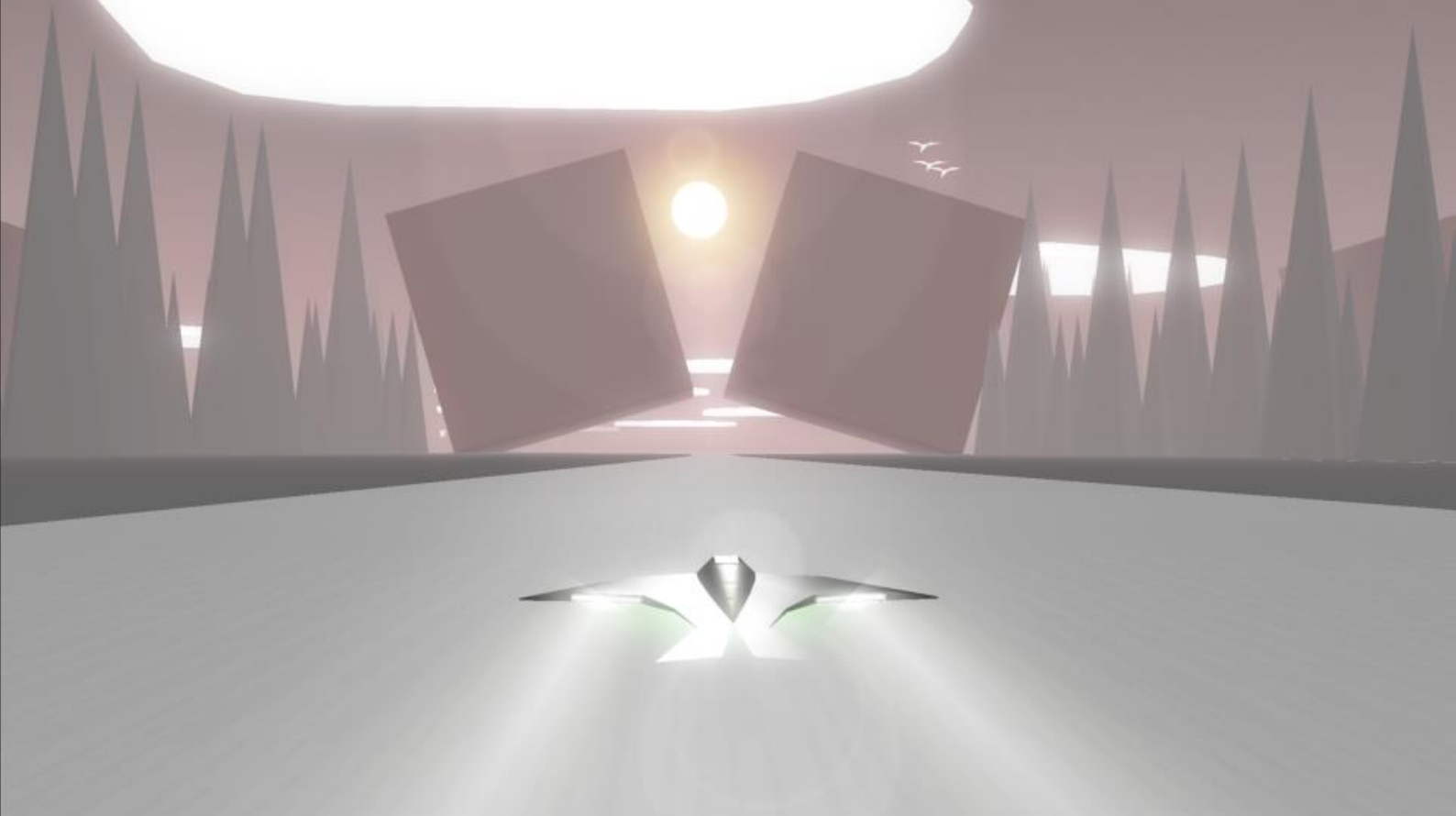
Unlike traditional racers, you're completely on your own in Race The Sun. No other vehicle, no "traditional" tracks to race on - in fact, it's not your typical racer in any sense. You're in control of a solar-powered plane and quite simply you have to fly as long as possible through as many of the game's sectors as you can. The sun is setting in the distance so the only way you can keep going is to stay out of the shadows and chase after the sun as fast as you can. Control of your plane is limited to left and right to steer (although you can

perform barrel-rolls to get out of tight spots) and acceleration is automatic so all you have to worry about is steering through all of the buildings and obstacles in your path...

Oh, I forgot to mention them. It's not just a lack of power that will bring your flight to a premature end but the buildings and other hazards in your way so you have to use all your skills to make sure you don't collide with anything or it's game over.

There are three game modes on offer, the first available from the offset and two further modes - Apocalypse and Labyrinthia - available later once unlocked as you progress through the game. The main game mode is a straightforward race over a series of sectors, and the game follows the simple mechanics of staying out of the shadows and trying not to hit any buildings in sight. To help you along the way, there are powerups that you can collect granting you a temporary speed boost, jumps that you can collect and use to help avoid the trickier sections on the course (you can store these for use at a later time in the game) and portals to allow you to skip straight to the end of each



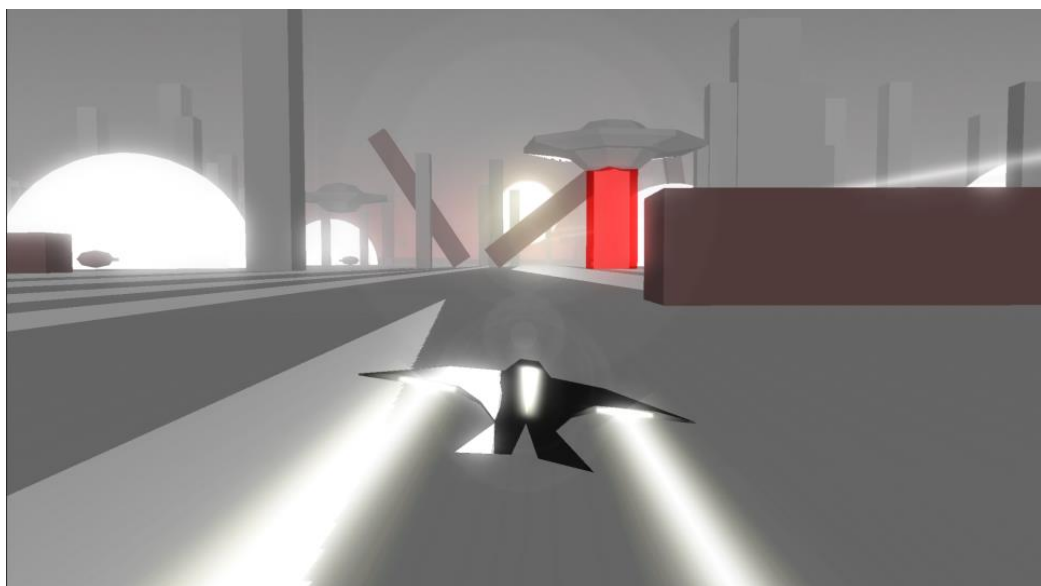


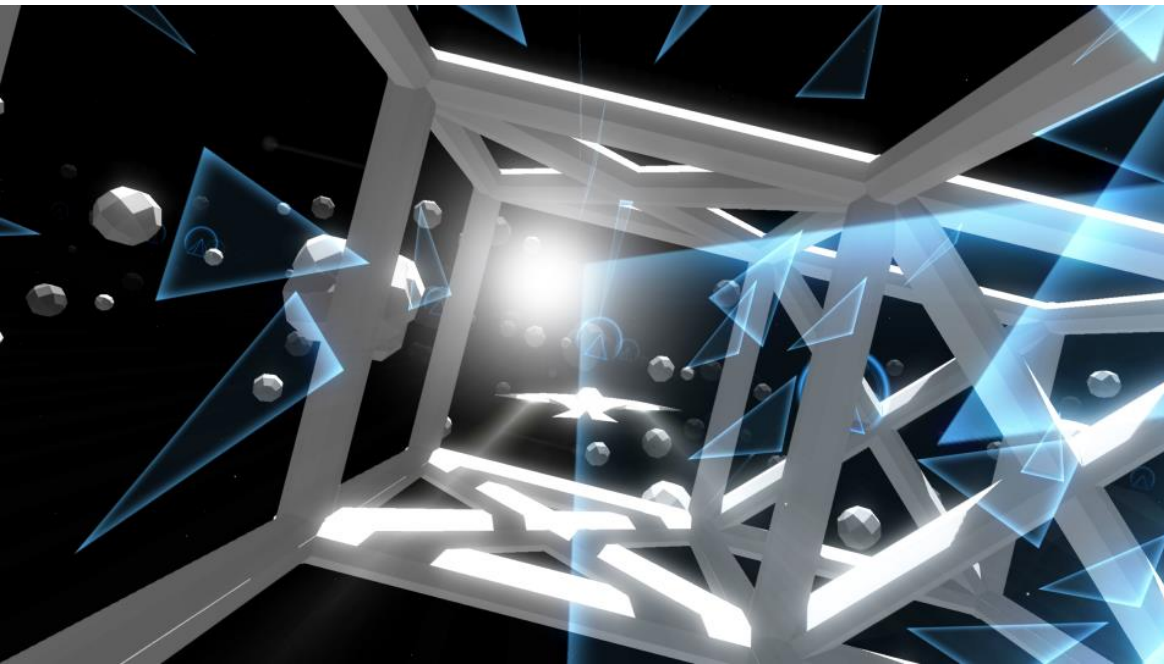
sector. In addition, along each zone there are Tris - blue triangles that you can pick up en route. As you collect these, a meter fills up that increases your points multiplier during the game to boost your score. Get to the end of the sector and a bird appears dropping bonus Tris that you can collect and a random bonus powerup then it's on to the next...

The Apocalypse mode is more of the same only a LOT faster and tougher and in addition to the plethora of obstacles in your path, you also have to contend with explosions laying waste to the landscape meaning that you need to have lightning-quick reactions if you are going to survive. The final mode, Labyrinthia, is brand new to the PS Vita and this time you're trapped in a maze that you have to navigate. The camera shifts to an aerial view and makes an interesting change to the gameplay.

The game has a levelling up system, akin to the one found in [Jetpack Joyride](#). You are presented with three objectives to

complete, each with varying difficulties and worth a different number of points. To progress from one level to the next you need to earn a set number of points and as you do, you unlock improvements to your ship, decorations and later on in the game the additional game modes. Some of the unlockable rewards are little more than "stickers" that you can apply to your ship (a single emblem that you can apply to one of the wings) but others are more useful including the ability to store more than one jump at a time, a battery to stay in the shadows for longer and more and up to two of these items can be equipped at once. The objectives are varied enough





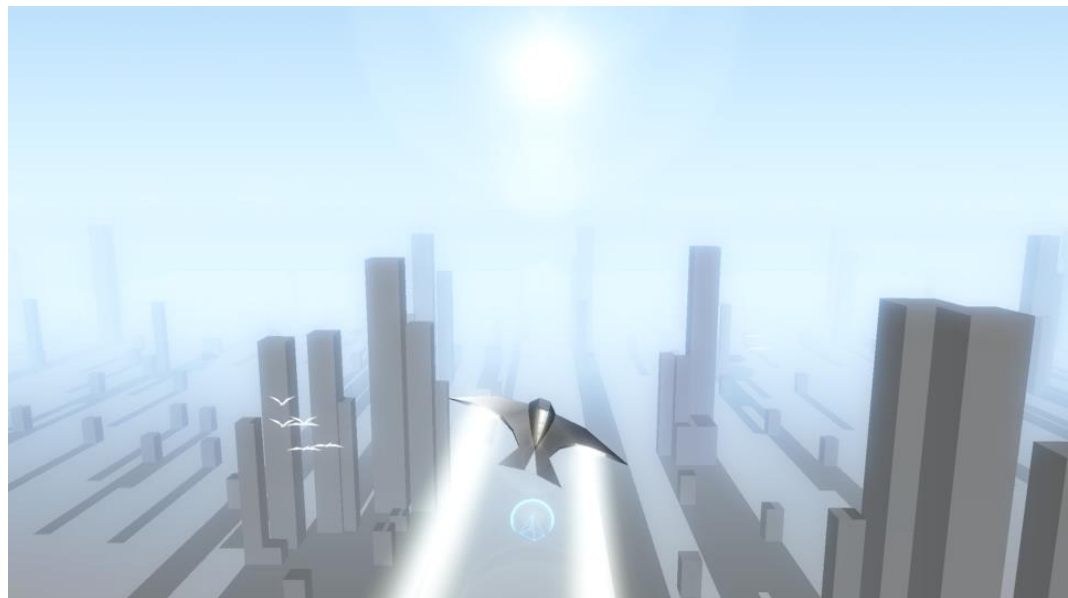
adding to or detracting from the game. It just seemed to be there.

The one innovative element to Race The Sun is the level design itself. These are reset and freshly generated each day so no two days play will ever be the same. Potentially this

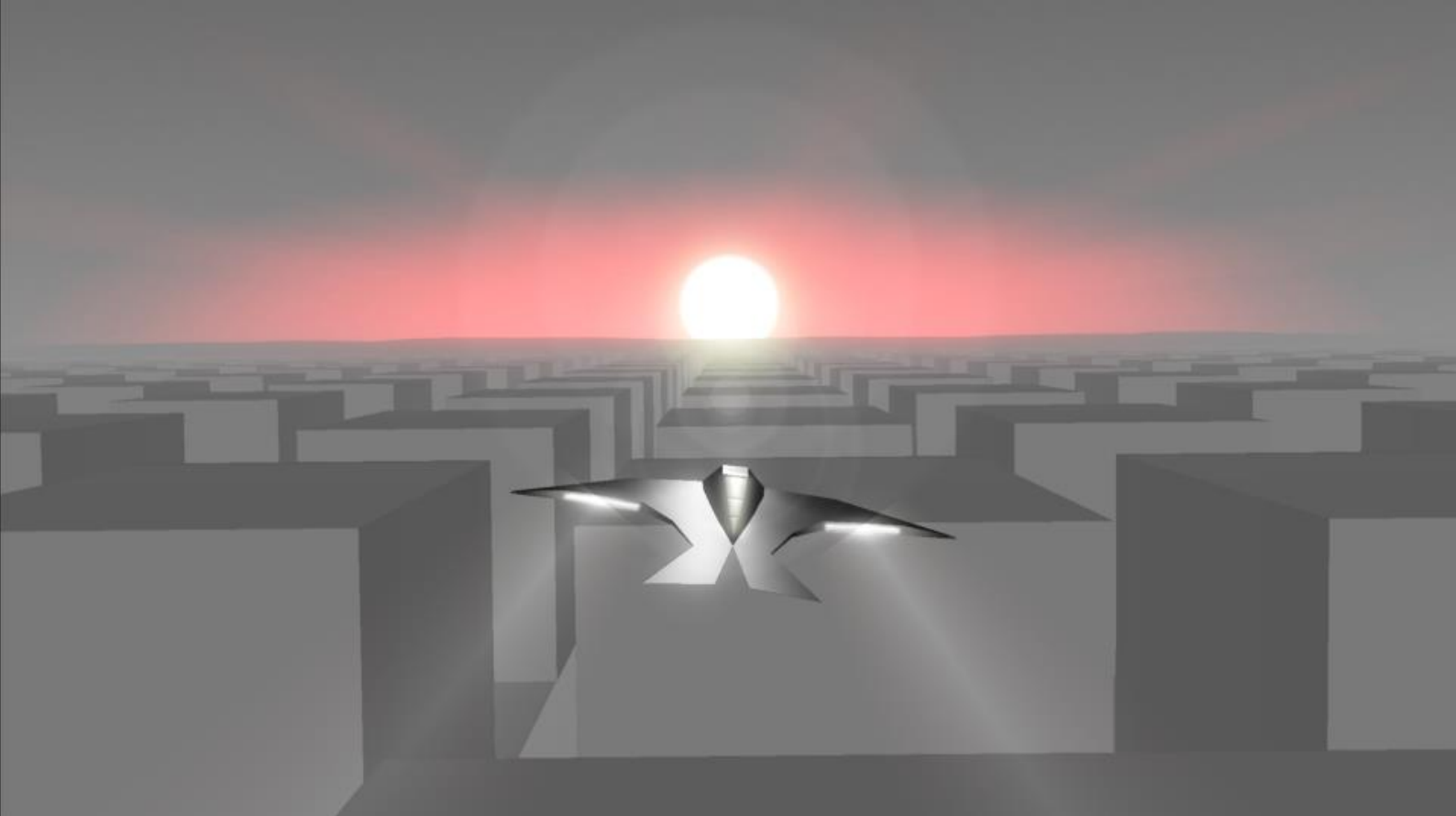
and some are easier than others to achieve but with only 25 levels you'll have these cracked after a few days of intensive play leaving little more other than the courses themselves.

Visually the game adopts a minimalistic approach with the graphics and your craft adopting a filled and shaded 3D form rather than featuring any textures and it's no double as a result of this that the game runs at a blinding pace throughout and easily matches the speed of the PS3 version. It does get rather bland and repetitive though and I found myself yearning for *some* variety. Even though there were changes in the style of obstacles from one stage to the next and some were animated, moving to block your path, generally each one felt no different to the one before it. The only real change came from the sun and the skyline and when that changed and altered the game's lighting the terrain took on different hues but it still didn't detract from what is still a visually bland game. Sound is limited to a few sparse sound effects and a soundtrack playing during flight but nothing really that stood out as being anything

could give the game near limitless replayability for those who are drawn into the game, especially as the nature of the tracks mean that success is just as dependent on memory as it is on quick reaction times, and this also links into online leaderboards which are reset every 24 hours as well adding further challenges. For gamers who want to master the game and its tracks it could be off-putting unless you have enough time to spare to master specific tracks but at least the game does have some long-term appeal built in to it.



Cross Buy is supported with the PS3 and PS4 version as is Cross Save. While you can't save progress in mid-game, it does record your overall progress which you can transfer between consoles. It's also one of



the many titles compatible with the PlayStation TV and I'll be honest and say that running this on the PSTV and comparing it to the PS3 version there's very little difference. While the PS3 version runs at 1080p, this copes admirably and I found no reason to play the PS3 version when I had the PSTV up and running as it wasn't really a game that didn't seem to take advantage of the higher resolution of the PS3 or PS4.

I don't doubt that Race The Sun offers a great deal of longevity to gamers with its ever-regenerating worlds but other than learning the new track layouts each day I wonder how much appeal the game will have after you've completed all of the individual challenges set for you and unlocked everything that the game has to offer. Despite the promise of never-ending content, I found that the game really just wasn't that exciting to play. Some stages required very little effort to complete, only needing the occasional nudge of the left analogue stick to ensure survival while others were a nightmare to negotiate requiring MENSA-grade memory skills. There were times when trying to complete the challenges almost felt like a chore rather than an enjoyable experience and I

was left with an empty feeling that the game could have offered so much more.

The Apocalypse mode was just far too frustrating as well and I found myself crashing head first into obstacles and spent more time waiting for the game to restart than I did playing. Flippfly have acknowledged that this game mode is tough, but there has to be a balance between tough and irritating and this mode is too difficult to be enjoyable.

I really wanted to love Race The Sun but I couldn't. There is a great game inside screaming to be let out, but deep down it's just too limited and repetitive to offer any serious long-term entertainment. It may be fun in short bursts, but after all the hype I expected much more. Sadly after you've played the game for a short while it feels as if it's the racing equivalent of grinding in an RPG and ceases to be the fun experience that it should be. Mildly entertaining for brief gaming sessions, but really this is a wasted opportunity for what could have been a really great game.

GAME REVIEW: NIGHT RIDERS 3D ARCADE RACING (PSM) by Simon Plumbe

For some reason, the majority of racing games seem to focus on high performance sports cars. Yes, the Vita has seen futuristic racers such as WipEout and Switch Galaxy but the genre is still usually dominated by vehicles of the four-wheeled variety so Night Riders 3D Arcade Racing made for a welcome change when it landed on PlayStation Mobile...

Taking its inspiration from Sega's classic arcade racer *Hang On*, Night Riders is a 3D motorbike racing game set across 4 different courses spanning a total of 10 different stages. Before you start you are faced with what looks like a fairly daunting menu screen with more options than you'd expect to find on a PSM title. The first is the Player option and allows you to select the player profile that you want to use for the game. It's fairly basic, just allowing you to enter your initials, but you can create several profiles for different players for those of you who share your PS Vita with several friends or family members and profiles can be changed easily from this menu.

Following this is the Difficulty option, allowing you to choose from four difficulty

settings from Very Easy to Hard with the game defaulting to Normal. Next up is the Music selection allowing you to alter the in-game music. Initially only one piece is available but more are unlocked as you progress through the game. The next two options, Courses and Tracks are the main part of the game and I'll mention those in a moment. The final one is a web link to the author's site.

The two that feature the game itself are Courses and Tracks. In Courses you choose which of the four courses you want to race on and each of these is made up of a number of individual stages. You have a set amount of time to get to the end of each stage and if you manage it your time is extended and - as you can probably guess - you're then up against the clock to get to the end of the next stage. Each stage has a different look to the one before it and while the visuals mainly consist of a plain road and gradient backgrounds, the stages look different enough to keep things varied and things move along at a breakneck pace to give you a fantastic feeling of speed.

It's not just you and the open road though



as there are other bikes on the road as well. As with other classic arcade racers like Out Run, you're not actually in direct competition with the other vehicles, just the clock, but you still have to avoid everything else on the track. Colliding with other bikes *won't* cause you to crash but it will slow you down and when time is so precious, it's the last thing that you need!

The Tracks mode provides the same basic gameplay but just across a single stage which you have already completed in the Course mode and is a time trial where you will need to try to beat your previous record (as kept in your profile data).

I have to be honest and say that this game really took me by surprise. When I first saw this on the PSN Store, the screenshots didn't inspire me that greatly. It appeared as if nothing actually happened in the game other than a solitary rider on a track and it didn't instil much confidence. It wasn't until seeing a video of the game in action that I decided to take the plunge and it's certainly one of those cases where the screenshots do more harm than good. In fact, the game plays incredibly well. It's a fast-paced racer which reminded me not only of Hang On but also Epyx's *Super Cycle* on the Commodore 64.

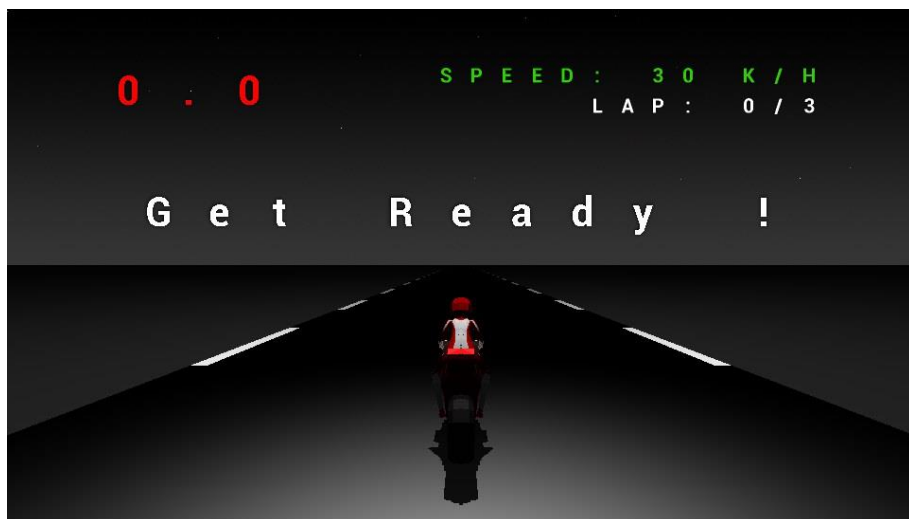
The tracks themselves aren't overly tough but the timescales are tight enough to prove challenging and keeping on the tracks while avoiding all of the other bikes around stops the game from being too easy. The controls are a joy to use and the bike is incredibly responsive and that's what really makes Night Riders work so well. Acceleration is handled with X, with circle to brake (not that you'll ever use it!) and steering using the left stick. This works like a dream and rather than extremely rigid movements the analogue stick allows for very precise and controlled steering throughout the game so you feel in total control at all times.

Visually while it's not a textured, detailed 3D game in the same way

we have already seen with the other Sega arcade clone [Bloodred Wyvern](#) released as part of PlayStation Mobile, the tracks are clear and move smoothly and the racers are nicely animated, well defined and look good - reminiscent of Tron I'd say - even if they're not the greatest example of PS Vita / PSM visuals. Sound wise, the effects are nothing to write home about with sparse engine noises but the music is quite good and is of a suitably high tempo to fit the game perfectly.

Back to the gameplay though and I found Night Riders extremely addictive. Gameplay is fast and there's plenty of variety with the game to keep you coming back even once you've completed the main Course Mode but it has that elusive appeal that drives you to want to complete each course in the same way that all of Sega's arcade racers did. You always get a sense of how close you are to each checkpoint and know that you're able to either get that little bit closer or even reach the next stage if you have that "extra go" so you're drawn into continuing to play.

It has to be said that while PlayStation Mobile was starved of good racers, this certainly proved that great games were possible from the genre and that players didn't need to settle for second best in buying whatever came along. It's a fantastic racing game in its own right and it's a great loss to the Vita community that it - along with the rest of the range - was erased from history.



GAME REVIEW: ASPHALT INJECTION (PS VITA)

by Jason Bonnar

Asphalt Injection is a high-octane arcade style approach to street racing through exotic locations and cities as you scrape past civilian vehicles on your way to the chequered flag.

The game provides you with two game modes: career and free race. The career mode starts with you at the bottom in the league qualifiers with the lower spec cars, such as the Mini Cooper S Coupe and Tesla Roadster. There are a total of twenty leagues to unlock with five events in each league totalling one-hundred events and fifty-two cars available to collect with the leagues and cars both requiring a certain amount of stars to be collected via winning career events. Each of the career events have a total of five stars to be earned; usually with one star for finishing third place, two stars for finishing second place or three stars on offer for winning the race, one star for reaching a certain number of drift points and another star for achieving a certain number of knockdowns. There are a total of ten event types including: normal race, elimination, time attack, duel, under pressure, beat 'em all, collector, drift, urban destruction and cop chase.

The normal race event is a straight race, while elimination sees the slowest car eliminated after time expires until only one car remains. Time attack sees you speeding towards checkpoints before time expires for three laps; duel sees you racing one AI controlled opponent; under pressure provides you with three lives as all of your opponents are trying to wreck your car; beat 'em all challenges you to reach the set knockdown goal before time expires; collector challenges you to collect the most pick-ups against the AI controlled cars during the time limit; drift challenges you to obtain the highest drift distance during the time limit; urban destruction challenges you to destroy public property and play chicken with traffic to reach the set number of points within the time limit and cop chase challenges you to evade the police. The free race mode allows you to play any of the twenty tracks on offer that you have unlocked by achieving certain objectives in the career mode with all ten event types available for each of the unlocked tracks.

The drift mechanic works by braking and steering into a corner simultaneously, while the nitro boost mechanic works by





filling an adrenaline gauge via collecting boost symbols, drifting, the amount of air time, near misses with traffic and scoring knockdowns on opponents. You can use the nitro boost at any time, so you do not have to have a full gauge, as you can use a limited supply each time that will provide a burst of speed for a few seconds. If you collect boost symbols as you are using the complete adrenaline gauge, then the nitro boost will last longer and there are temporary boost symbols that look like go faster stripes in arrow form that will speed up your car for very short bursts.

There is a garage that you can visit before each race to select your car, purchase a new car, customise and tune your car. There are fifty-two real world cars covering such famous brand names as: Audi, Alfa Romeo, Aston Martin, Bentley, BMW, Bugatti, DeLorean, Dodge, Ferrari, Ford, Lamborghini, McLaren, Mercedes, Mini, Nissan, Pagani, RUF, Shelby and Tesla. The paint job and decals of your car can be customised, while the areas of your car available for tuning include: the ECU, intake,

exhaust and turbo for the engine; suspension, brake, armour and tyres for the handling; and boost capacity and boost speed for the nitro with statistics available to display the current performance of the car and the potential performance of the car after the upgrade has been installed. All of the tuning options are based upon three stages that are unlocked as rewards as you progress through the career events.

All of the cars and tuning kits need to be purchased with cash, which is earned after completing a race and is based upon your position, number of knockdowns, total drift distance, total jump length, and other bonuses such as collecting cash symbols





within races and the number of wrecks. There is a showroom of purchased cars available from the garage option on the main menu in which you can walk around and browse through a showroom of your purchased cars from a first-person perspective. There are also settings found in the privacy section of the options menu that allow you to take screen shots of important in-game events and to allow the sending and receiving of players' pictures when they get wrecked in multiplayer. It is these kinds of smaller features that help to build the overall package of the game into something broader.

The default controls are exactly what you would expect from a racing game on a portable platform. The R and X buttons can both be used to accelerate with O as the nitro boost, while the L and square buttons can both be used to brake and used in conjunction with the steering buttons to create a drift, the directional pad and left analogue stick can both be used to steer the car, while triangle is the change view button, the right analogue stick is to rotate the view and the start button is to pause the game.

The graphics are mostly pretty good with good lighting and shadow effects on the

tracks and detailed paint jobs on the cars. There are a couple of graphical glitches here and there, such as occasionally being able to see under the game world for a brief moment after a large jump or being able to see through a wall if you crash against it at a certain angle. Although these kinds of bugs should not be present, they are not game breaking. The audio consists of a thumping soundtrack with loud engine noise and screeching tires, along with a female voice over that describes key events in each race, such as the build up to the start of the race, wrecks, knockdowns, eliminations and finishing positions.

The presentation of the game is solid with a good touch screen based user interface that can alternatively be navigated via the directional pad and face buttons. The backdrop to the user interface focuses on the car that you have chosen spinning as though it was in a showroom with various buildings forming a large, open cityscape.

The online multiplayer component consists of online and ad-hoc multiplayer modes. The online multiplayer game modes include: quick game, host game, join game and leaderboard. The quick play game mode will put you into a lobby of a game



anywhere across the world; it is instead limited to a locality of around one-hundred feet.

The leaderboards includes global rank, top experience, top takedowns and best times. Each of these are split into top 10, near you and friends categories with the best times leaderboards also focusing on all of the twenty tracks the game has to offer.

that is currently in progress and failing that it will make you the host of the game with a pre-selected track. The host game mode allows you to select your track from the twenty on offer, your car and whether it is a public room or a private room, while you are allowed to include AI players to flesh out the competition; you are not allowed to choose how many AI players participate and you must wait for an opponent to join the lobby before you can start the race, despite having a full field of eight cars including yourself and seven AI cars, which means the lack of an option for players to join an online multiplayer race mid-race can be rather frustrating at times, especially when you are having to wait for another player to join your lobby.

The performance of the online multiplayer component holds up well and is without lag even when you have a full field of eight cars including AI controlled cars, although it is frustrating that an online multiplayer race has to end because your human opponent decides to leave the race; even when there are still another six AI controlled opponents racing.

The ad-hoc game modes include host game and join game and both provide the same features as the online multiplayer, but rather than playing against an opponent

Overall, despite some graphical glitches here and there; Asphalt Injection certainly packs a punch with its strong array of content including: fifty-two cars spread across famous brand names, twenty tracks across various exotic locations, ten unique event types, one-hundred career events, online and ad-hoc multiplayer, leaderboards and more for a budget priced racing game cannot be refused! I highly recommend that you make Asphalt Injection your next racing game purchase for the PlayStation Vita!

Editor's note: This review was originally written when the online servers for Asphalt Injection were still available. At the time of writing we don't know if this aspect of the game is still active.





GAME REVIEW: MOTORSTORM RC (PS VITA)

by Simon Plumbe

Motorstorm RC was one of the first titles to be launched for the PS Vita in the West back in 2012. It was notable for a number of reasons - it was one of the early titles offering Cross Buy support with the PlayStation 3, and was an eagerly-awaited sequel to a much-loved PlayStation franchise. And as with many of the early digital PS Vita releases, it was also available at retail both as codes that could be purchased in-store and as a much sought-after boxed download code.

That aside, Motorstorm RC was something of a departure for the long-running series. Instead of the expected 3D format for the off-road racer, Sony transformed their classic game into a Micro Machines styled overhead perspective racer, putting players in control of miniaturised off-road radio-controlled vehicles.

Kicking off with a tutorial, you're introduced to the basics of Motorstorm RC. Starting off with a small dirt track, you have to drive your car around the course towards a series of markers. It's quite simplistic but it's designed to not only teach you the control system but also give you a key

option that will affect the rest of the game going forward...

The developers have attempted to simulate controlling an actual RC vehicle using the left analogue stick to steer and the right analogue to control speed - pushing forward to accelerate and pulling back to reverse. Two control methods are offered, one using the left stick to steer your car left and right, and the other using the stick to push in the direction you wish to travel. The tutorial gives you the option to choose which you prefer although this can be changed at any time from the options menu.

Once you've finished the tutorial and selected your preferred control method it's on to the game proper. The main Festival game mode is split over six areas, each themed on a different game in the Motorstorm series from both the PS3 and PSP. Within each theme, there are a number of individual tracks to race on offering different challenges to the player. Some offer straightforward races against AI opponents, while others are time-based

challenges where you have to race one or more laps against the clock.

Medals are awarded based on your performance and tracks are unlocked based on the number of medals you earn. In addition to this primary mode, there is a Playground (where the tutorial takes place) where you can drive freely and try out any new vehicles you've unlocked.

The final game mode is Wreckreation. This is made up of two elements. *Time Attack* mode allows you to challenge yourself across a series of tracks to try to beat not only your personal best time but those of other players around the world (although sadly the global leaderboards don't seem to be functioning anymore).

Secondary to this is *Free Play*. Here you can create your own one-off custom races - from choosing the tracks, type of race, vehicle types, AI difficulty and number of laps, almost everything can be tweaked giving an almost endless extension to the core game.

Visually, all of the tracks have taken the same post-apocalyptic styling that we're now familiar with from the Motorstorm series. While it works well enough for the dirt tracks of the classic 3D racers, it does seem to seem to be out of place here.

When you compare this to its peers, they all adopt a more light-hearted, fun visual styling which I feel works much better for the RC genre and while I can't quite put my finger on it, the look of Motorstorm RC just never "feels" right.

Don't get me wrong, there's nothing particularly *bad* about the graphics themselves and they look great and they run at a great speed, but it's more to do with the game itself and it's whole setting. The only issue I did have was they vehicles and they did seem bland compared to the detailed backgrounds.

Sound again was something of a strange part of the game. Sticking with the Motorstorm theme, the music has the same dance style from all the previous games in the series. Sound effects however, are somewhat sparse and are limited to the quiet motor sounds from the RC vehicles themselves. I don't really know what more could have been done to have improved things in that department beyond adding ambient environmental effects but it didn't help the game's atmosphere.

On paper Motorstorm RC must have seemed like it was going to be a great game. While Motorstorm doesn't have the same level of prestige as the Gran





Turismo series, it's still a much loved franchise on the PlayStation. So you can imagine that there were high expectations from Vita owners for this one, but sadly it falls short of the mark.

Gameplay is nothing remarkable and while there's plenty of challenge here it quickly becomes repetitive. The lack of a multiplayer option - both online or via ad-hoc mode - leaves you with just the single player mode to keep you playing and with a game like this the unpredictability of human opponents makes all the difference.

There are frustrating parts to the gameplay as well. Tracks that involve time challenges allow you to race indefinitely and the only way to bring races to an end is to manually quit them. Instead, a predetermined number of laps would have been better than taking the best time from that or an average lap time. Instead, you feel stuck in a loop rather than spending time having fun playing.

But for me it's this control system that ultimately lets Motorstorm RC down more than anything else. Even though the right stick offers greater precision when it comes to controlling your speed, it's

frustrating when put into practice. It's probably the only racing game on the Vita that doesn't use button control for accelerate/brake/reverse functionality and it suffers as a result. With no option to change it to button control it's a huge let-down.

Even with the game offering Cross Buy support with the PS3 version at launch, and coming in at a wallet-busting sub-£5 price point, I really do find it hard to recommend this one.

Just one minor change to the controls and this could have been a much better racer, but instead it misses the mark and is relegated to being barely average.

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GAME REVIEW: BEN 10 GALACTIC RACING (PS VITA) by Simon Plumbe

Taking established franchises and tagging them onto racing games rarely works, even more so when the license wasn't based around racing in the first place. Cartoon Network show Ben 10 made its way over to the PS Vita, transferring many of its popular characters and locations into a Mario Kart styled racer...

For those of you not familiar with it, Ben 10 started life back in 2005 and has to-date spawned seven television shows and several movies. It centres around the main character Ben Tennyson, a young boy who finds an alien device. Attaching itself to his wrist, it gives him the ability to transform into a range of alien creatures, each with their own distinct skills and abilities. He uses these skills to protect the Earth from attack from alien invasion.

Each race follows the same basic formula. Set on different planets throughout the galaxy taken from the Ben 10 universe, races take place over a fixed number of laps, competing against seven AI opponents and using random weapon pick-ups along the way to help you/hinder

your adversaries. These respawn shortly after being collected in the same way as Mario Kart and most other racers in the genre.

On to the races themselves and the game is split into two main sections - single and multiplayer (which I'll come on to shortly). From there you are presented with a further choice of five race modes. The *Galactic Grand Prix* is first up and puts you in a series of courses, set across different planets. You start off with a choice of 9 playable characters, each with a couple of vehicles at their disposal. More tracks and characters will be unlocked as you play so this is the main game mode you'll need to master if you want to see everything the game has to offer.

Short Circuit is next up and offers a cut-down version of the Grand Prix allowing you to create a customised three-track race built around any that you have unlocked. Next on the list is *Single Race* which is self-explanatory and is ideal for those wanting a shorter, quick game.

Following that are the *Time Trials*. Again, this mode is restricted to the tracks you've already unlocked, but this time you're on your own. Three laps and the only power-ups you collect are speed boosts and you have to race as fast as you can to get your best overall track time.

The final single player mode is *Showdown*. There are actually three further modes in here, each themed around solo or team-based vehicular combat. *Ultimate Alienation* puts all the racers into an arena environment, while *Ultimate Elimination* is a standard race with a twist... a timer runs throughout the game and when this counts down to zero the racer in last position is eliminated. When there's only one driver left the race is over.

There's a local multiplayer mode using the Vita's ad-hoc function allowing up to 8 people/AI drivers to take part in each race. Most of the single player modes are retained with the exception of the *Galactic Grand Prix* and the *Time Trials*. With no online mode it's obviously dependent on knowing others who have this, and with it being such a niche title in the first place it's unlikely that many of you will ever get to experience multiplayer on this one.

In terms of the gameplay, there's certainly

no shortage of options and game modes and you certainly won't get bored. There's plenty in the core game on its own, but add all the extra game modes and there's more than enough to keep you occupied for a long time. Well, there would be on paper if it wasn't for a few fundamental problems that the game has...

Unfortunately, what lets Ben 10 Galactic Racing down is the physics engine. What could have been a fun, albeit simplistic kart racer, is hampered by the way the cars feel as they travel around the circuits. Sadly, they just don't feel right and seem to glide around each of the tracks and you never get the sensation that you are in control of cars that are travelling along different terrain.

It isn't just the feel of the cars though. More often than not, I found that they weren't as responsive as they should have been and as such didn't take corners particularly well. Add in to this some particularly unforgiving tracks (hazards throwing you off the track and too many edges you could fall off) and it stopped the game from being fun.

Another problem I had was the track design itself. Disregarding the unforgiving nature of some of them that I've already





mentioned, the design of some made it quite difficult to actually ascertain which way you were supposed to be going until it was too late. Tracks weren't overly cluttered but routes were just hard to make out until you were right on top of turns or walls.

It also suffered from what I call the Mario Kart syndrome. Frequently I found myself either leading a race, or near to the front of the field only to get bumped and ending up right at the back. Almost immediately I'd taken multiple hits from opponents, bumped off the track and had no chance of winning. As much as I love Mario Kart, it's the *one thing* I loathe about that game and it's present here as well.

All of this is a great shame. It is a somewhat polished game and makes reasonably good use of the Ben 10 license. The fact that the original voice cast have returned to lend their voices to the cut scenes and characters is a huge plus point and will delight fans of the series. And the interactive environments and trackside hazards help to add variety on top of the special weapons unleashed upon you by the AI opponents you have to contend with.

Despite a number of games being released across multiple formats over the years, this is the only one to have made it across to the Vita. Whether this was as a result of poor sales of Ben 10 Galactic Racing or simply the Vita's demographic audience not matching that of Ben 10's is unknown. But it's interesting to see that what was essentially a game aimed at children could have helped the console were more released in the series.

Ultimately though, this is a racer that will only really appeal to fans of Ben 10. It's not strong enough to stand up as a good racing game in its own right and it's too reliant on the licence to gloss over its weaknesses. Fans will no doubt relish in the characters, superb voice work and references to the shows, but as for anyone else... you'll be left wondering what the fuss is all about and find it far too frustrating to be enjoyable.

Pos 4/6

Lap 1/5



GAME REVIEW: TABLE TOP RACING (PS VITA)

by Simon Plumbe

The 1974 arcade hit Gran Trak 10 has a lot to answer for. The top-down racer spawned an entire genre of racing games that lead to classics like the Super Sprint series, and the home classics such as Micro Machines.

Essentially Table Top Racing takes the same basic formula and expands upon it. The core gameplay is the same - miniaturised vehicles racing across a series of exaggerated real-life environments. Throw in a hint of Mario Kart with random weapon pick-ups, and the ability to customise and upgrade your vehicles and you've already got the makings of a great racer.

But Table Top Racing is far more than just a series of tracks, weapons, and upgrades as you quickly find out when you start to play it...

The depth of the game isn't apparent when it first loads up. The title screen displays just four options - Garage (where you can view your unlocked cars); Let's Race! (to play the main race modes); Network (for

local and online multiplayer games and Options.

The garage allows you to not only view all the cars at your disposal but also to upgrade their different abilities using coins that you earn during play. Each car has five different stats that can be upgraded, different custom wheels that can be purchased giving you additional abilities and custom paint jobs. You start the game with just two vehicles - a camper van and an ice cream truck but more can be purchased or unlocked as you complete events.

The race menu is where the real meat of the game lies. It's split into four sections, offering plenty of content for the player to engage with. The first up is the Championships. There are several available of increasing difficulty, and each of them are split into a series of races, each with individual playing styles and goals. Races within each championship are diverse and include straight lap-based, races without weapons, Elimination (the racer in last position is removed from the

race as each lap is completed), Pursuit (a one-on-one race where the objective is to catch up with a CPU driver within the time limit) and many more.

Depending on your performance in the race you'll be awarded XP (earn enough and you'll increase in levels which will allow access to tracks in the Special Event mode), a score out of three stars, and coins to spend on upgrades and vehicles.

You don't have to get all of the stars for each track to be able to complete each championship, but you can return and replay races individually if you want to aim for that perfect score at a later date giving it ample replayability.

Next are Drift Events, with more challenges are available, themed obviously around drift style racing, but these require specific cars to be used that you need to purchase or unlock during play. After this is the Special Event section. Offering four difficulty levels, this provides a wide selection of tracks and race styles, again each offering star ratings for you to test your skill and earn those all-important coins. However, in this mode, each race is locked off and requires you to meet certain conditions before you can race them - either reaching a certain skill level through

earning XP, or owning the appropriate vehicle to take part.

Finally, is the Quick Race mode. Just pick a track, the race type, the AI skill level, your car, and whether you want to race the track in reverse or not and away you go. Once you've completed a lot of the tracks in the Championships, or find that you're struggling with your current car's performance, you'll find yourself drawn to this part of the game. Not only for the race variety it offers, but the fact that every race will earn you XP and those much-needed coins.

But where Table Top Racing *really* comes into its own is in its multiplayer mode. As well as offering online support, it also makes use of the Vita's ad-hoc functionality allowing you to play locally against 3 other players, with the rest of the field being comprised of AI opponents. With so many of the Vita's online games being shut down over the last few years, it's great to have some that still have multiplayer support included using the ad-hoc mode to keep the game's longevity going long after you've mastered all the tracks in single player mode. The online support still seems to be active as well although whether you'll find anyone else playing is another matter altogether. I tried



to find games and host them but found no-one to compete against *but* the ad-hoc mode more than makes up for this...

Playing in multiplayer really is a delight. One of the reasons I bought a Nintendo DS was to play Mario Kart with my wife and daughter - I lost count of the number of times we had family gaming sessions with the three of us competing. That progressed onto Mario Kart on the Wii and we've all got Switch Lites as well...

multiplayer games like this combined with the Vita's wonderful ad-hoc functionality *should* have been real system sellers. In the case of Table Top Racing, it really is to that standard and is just as much fun as Mario Kart. I've spent countless train journeys battling my wife on this, and both of us have loved every minute.

Table Top Racing isn't a game you'll get bored of in a hurry. With 18 cars available, each with their own individual handling and style as well as 8 tracks (16 if you count the option to play them in reverse) there's a lot to see. Add to that the plentiful supply of game modes and diverse races themselves and you won't grow tired of the game in a hurry.

As with most kart racers, the AI can be frustrating at times - you can be leading a race almost up to the finish line, then



suddenly find yourself under a salvo of attacks and find yourself crawling over the line in last place. While it's an irritation, it's not unique to Table Top Racing and I've found myself frustrated when the same happens regularly in most of the Mario Kart games. It just seems to be a trope of the entire kart racer genre.

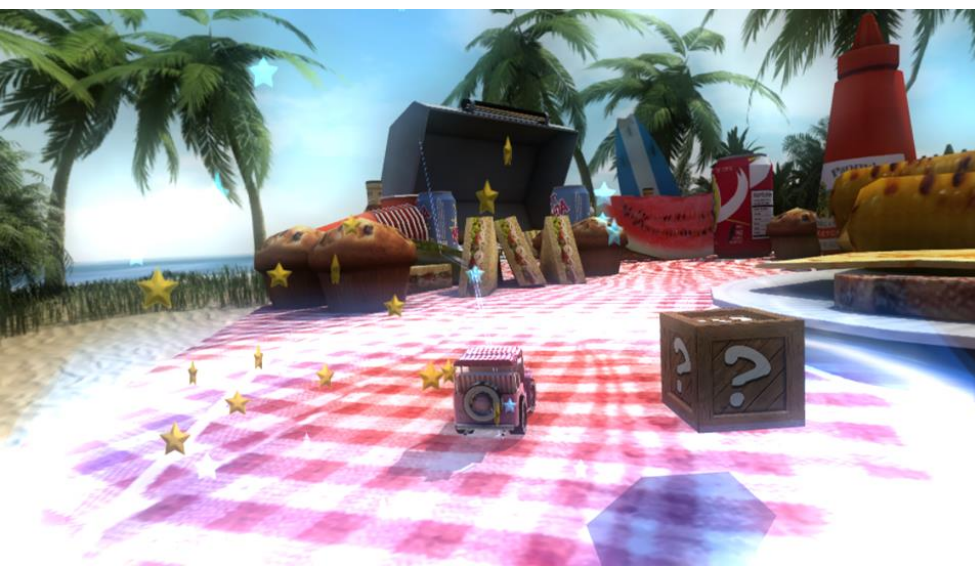
The game looks great as you can see from the photos, but what you can't tell from the stills is how well it moves. It runs at a silky smooth 60fps throughout, with no loss of detail at any time. The graphics are well defined at every level, from the backgrounds to even the smallest details on the vehicles themselves... although that's no surprise considering the fact that some of the original WipEout design team were responsible for this.

Sound is just as good with some great music and sound effects scattered

throughout. Plenty of engine sounds, explosions and other sound effects fill the game and bring it to life and it's an incredibly polished game throughout.

It's not all good though with Table Top Racing... On the PlayStation Store it states that the game is compatible with the PlayStation TV, but that comes with a caveat. As soon as you attempt to download it you're presented with an on-screen warning saying that it's





pad or analogue stick can be used just as well if not better. It breaks the flow of gameplay and is simply an irritant that need not be there for the player.

There was one other thing I wasn't too happy with either. I mentioned the use of coins to unlock cars and upgrade ones you already own. If you don't have enough, you can go to the PlayStation Store and buy more. Yes, Table Top Racing has In-App purchases. While

not expensive (the most costly is under £3), it's still not something I would have expected from a PS Vita game.

Fortunately, despite the touchscreen gripe when playing on a PSTV, Table Top Racing is an absolute gem of a game and one of the best games in this genre that I've played for a long time. It's great fun as a single player game, with plenty of challenges and variety to keep you hooked. But where this really shines is its exceptional multiplayer mode. If you've got more than one Vita lying around, grab a couple of copies of this and enjoy one of the best multiplayer games the PS Vita has to offer.

not compatible. The game does, in fact, load and run. But Ripstone decided to have the menus only accessible using the PS Vita's touchscreen so even though the game loads, you can't actually play it until you've activated the touchpad emulation on the microconsole. In essence this means using a combination of L3 and the analogue stick to select options from the menu, then pressing L3 again to return to the game just as you're about to play. It's frustratingly fiddly and just means that you're alternating controls constantly.

To be honest, games that *need* the use of the touchscreen to navigate menus are a pet hate of mine, especially when the d-



WHAT MAKES A GOOD RACING GAME?

by Simon Plumbe

Racing games have played a major part of gaming right from the early days in the arcades, and an incredibly diverse range of titles have appeared in our homes since the dawn of the games industry. But what are those key elements that come together to make a classic example of the genre?

The Open Road

There are plenty of options open for developers these days when it comes to racing games. We've seen track-based racers offering single lap modes, single course based routes, and open world games. All three work just as well as each other but all have something in common. They offer ample variety to the player in the racing environments.

As long as there are a diverse range of tracks and courses to choose from, players won't get bored quickly and will keep coming back for more. Despite having a limited choice on offer, the original ports of the arcade Ridge Racer titles worked around this by offering reverse versions of the tracks but in reality, gamers need plenty of tracks to remain interested in the long term.

Doesn't Steer Like A Cow!

I know I'm sounding rather flippant with this one, but how well a racing game controls is one of the more fundamental aspects of games in the genre. Where some other games can be a little more forgiving in the way you play, you need to feel that you're in total control of the car, bike or whatever you are driving.

It doesn't matter what type of racing game it is, but as you learn to master the game you have to feel that it's your skill that lets you get around each track with ease and not sheer luck as you see your vehicle float aimlessly around the track out of control.

A Need For Speed

It doesn't matter how good a game looks, how many tracks it may have, or how deep a selection of vehicles may be on offer to the player. More important than anything else is the sense of speed that the game has.

If it feels that the game is chugging along at a snail's pace then it's not going to get your heart racing while you play. You really need to feel that the wind *could* be in your hair as you speed around the track, that the velocity is forcing you into your seat and that, subconsciously your whole body is leaning left and right as you drive along (admit it, we've ALL done it at one point or another).

You Can't Change The Laws Of Physics...

This is one of my personal gripes in racing games. While games are meant to be fun and some artistic license is always expected, if the everything in the game environment (vehicles included) don't behave as you would expect them to, then things will soon become frustrating as you play.

One of the worst culprits here has been the *Ridge Racer* series. If you collide with anything here, your car always came to a sudden stop, yet anything else around you continued as if nothing happened. Collisions should have an impact on all vehicles involved and not leave you in the dust from everyone else as the surge past you.

Multiplayer Mayhem

Solo racing is great, but nothing beats racing against your friends or at the very least other human opponents. One of my favourite arcade racing experiences was the Sega smash hit *Daytona USA*, more specifically the 8-player linked version.

Racing against 7 other players was an amazing experience, especially seeing their reactions with them seated nearby.

While it's not essential to have this on home racers, the idea that you can compete makes a huge difference and is what's made games like Mario Kart so popular.

* * *

Now there are older racing games that have managed to stand the test of time that only meet a few of these criteria. In those cases, gameplay has helped those games rise above their limitations to true classic status.

But if you look at some of the greatest racing games of all time, across all formats, you'll find that most of the points I've covered feature in all of them.

VITA PLAYER READERS FORUM TOP PS VITA RACING GAMES

You've heard some of our thoughts, but what issue of our magazine would be complete without letting you have your say? So we turned once again to our Twitter followers to see what they thought are the best racing games for the Vita...

"MotorStorm: RC is awesome. The most fun feature is comparing time with friends and racing their ghosts."
@Spartan_S2KM

"I have lost many hours on the open roads of Need For Speed: Most Wanted. Wish I could find someone to play online with more often though!"
@Pixelated_Ben

"Gran Turismo PSP is timeless."
@iasa

"Need For Speed: Most Wanted & WipeOut 2048"
@BatGeek98

Is there anything I've missed out? Write in to our Letters Page or let us know on Twitter!

"Too many to choose from but Sonic & All Stars Racing Transformed is a great kart racer, and NFS: Most Wanted is the closest we'll get to one of my all-time favourites, Burnout: Paradise."
@SimonPlumbe

"NFS Most Wanted. I played this game both on PS3 and PS Vita. Vita version is almost identical to the PS3. Graphics, soundtrack and gameplay are great!"
@rimolaus

"Wipeout 2048 is great! It runs perfectly fine on the vita and playing it is a lot of fun. It had a good difficulty level and the replay value is big."
@DarrenBaleE

Well, that's what our Twitter followers thought but what about you? Join us in the discussion at
https://twitter.com/Vita_Player

CREDITS / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

READER'S LETTERS

The Reader's Letters section will be back in Issue 3 of Vita Player. We've love to see YOUR letters in future issues whether it's about the magazine itself, the theme we're covering in that issue or Vita gaming in general. Just email them to us at contact@vitaplayer.co.uk with "Vita Player Magazine Letters Page" in the subject and the Star Letter published in each issue will win a mystery sealed PS Vita game!

* * *

COMPETITIONS

In Issue 1, we ran a competition to win a copy of Rock Boshers DX courtesy of Tikipod. We asked what 8-bit computer was the inspiration behind the look of the game and the correct answer was ZX Spectrum.

The winner chosen at random from all the correct entries was Michael Petch. We'll be in touch shortly to confirm your address details where to send the game to you.

* * *

CREDITS

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Special thanks to Tim Wright aka CoLD SToRAGE for sparing his time and providing the photo used in the interview.

ARTICLES / FEATURES

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COVER ART

WipEout 2048 by Sony Interactive Entertainment

Infinite Frontiers advert background photograph Photo by [Nicole Avagliano](#) from [Pexels](#)

SCREENSHOTS

All screenshots are the copyright of their respective developers/publishers. Where possible they have been taken from the PS Vita version of the game, but in some cases they may have been sourced from other versions. However, all images are from official press sources or provided directly by the publisher or developer.

* * *

Next issue we'll be taking a special look at retro game collections and remakes.

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