

Video Game Review: Rock Out With ‘Green Day: Rock Band’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 14, 2010 - 4:51pm

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CHICAGO – Harmonix and MTV Games took something of a surprising turn after the massive success of last year’s best music game, “The Beatles: Rock Band,” by choosing the follow-up band from a very different arena of radio rock and announcing “Green Day: Rock Band.” With dozens of bands on player’s wish lists of who they would love to get the “Beatles Treatment,” many were surprised that Green Day was chosen as the follow-up group.

The game that now bares their name has been rocking players for the last week and the results may not be quite as instantly remarkable as that of Paul, John, George, and Ringo, but there’s still so much gaming craft on display here that it’s an impossible title for music fans to ignore.



Video Game Rating: **4.0/5.0**

Despite some misgivings about who should be the sophomore “Rock Band” artist, there’s no denying the success of Green Day, having sold over 60 million records worldwide, winning several Grammy Awards, and even watching their “American Idiot” turn into a Tony-nominated Broadway musical. With their eighth studio album, “21st Century Breakdown” released last year, Green Day is as hot as they’ve ever been more than twenty years into their existence.



Green Day: Rock Band

Photo credit: Harmonix/MTV Games

“Green Day: Rock Band” recognizes that the band made up of singer/guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong, bassist Mike Dirnt, and drummer Tre Cool

is primarily known for three records - 1994’s “Dookie,” 2004’s “American Idiot,” and 2009’s “21st Century Breakdown”. Those albums are included in the game in their entirety (if you buy the DLC previously available for “21st Century Breakdown”...more on that later) with a few tracks from other recordings including “Insomniac,” “Nimrod,” and “Warning” sprinkled throughout.



Green Day: Rock Band
Photo credit: Harmonix/MTV Games

The “Career” portion of the game is divided into three sections that highlight the three “biggest” recordings of Green Day’s existence, framing them as live shows from the different eras. So, the player works through “Dookie” in four-to-five song sets in a small club in the first section, plays “American Idiot” and hits from the albums that came between on a much bigger stage in the middle section, and closing it out at a massive arena for “21st Century Breakdown”.

Each song comes with two “Collectibles” that can be earned depending on performance. A three- or four-star performance earns one collectible picture; a five-star performance earns both. Each of the three venues also comes with challenges, which are basically just three-song sets in which the player needs a certain number of stars to win an “Award,” which is, for example, a video of the band performing “Boulevard of Broken Dreams”.

Clearly, this is a title designed for the hardcore Green Day fan who wants to play “Boulevard” once in Career, again in a Challenge, and then watch a video of it — all in one game sitting. The lack of variety in the relatively short title is likely to wear on the nerves of someone who doesn’t already own and love Green Day songs, but should a game like this be judged for how it plays to the fans or how it plays to the masses? Obviously, it would be nice to have a title that equally appeals to both but when you put a band’s name on the cover and include songs by no one but that group, then anyone not into the band seems automatically forewarned.



Green Day: Rock Band
Photo credit: Harmonix/MTV Games

Judging the game based on how it appeals to fans does, however, raise one thorny issue. Before its release, there were six songs available as DLC for “Rock Band 2”. If you’ve already paid for and downloaded them, then they automatically appear in your “Green Day: Rock Band” playlist. But, if not, you’ll find the third section of the game oddly short on hits with “21 Guns,” “Last of the American Girls,” and “Know Your Enemy” missing. Naturally, anyone who loves Green Day is going to want to buy those songs and they were redesigned for the title with mo-cap of the band playing them, so making them DLC essentially adds a hidden cost that seems a bit unfair. (And it’s not alone — if you want to import the tracks in this game to be playable in “Rock Band 2” that will cost you too.)

It’s also difficult for the game not to pale a bit when compared to its British predecessor. With just three venues meant to replicate the experience of being at a Green Day show (although no live versions of the songs were used), the game never approaches the graphical beauty of the second half of “The Beatles: Rock Band,” in which the Fab Four were beautifully recreated in song-themed dreamscapes. “Green Day: Rock Band” is “fun” for sure, but “The Beatles: Rock Band” was sometimes downright transcendent.

As for gameplay, Harmonix proves once again that they’re leaders in this category with some spectacularly designed songs that fans of the game will play repeatedly. I will say that something seems a bit off about the Expert Guitar level in that it seems to include chord changes meant to increase difficulty that aren’t really there. As someone who has played through every single music game on Expert Guitar, I found the level on “Green Day” oddly inorganic and frustrating, although the Hard level was thoroughly entertaining. As for the other instruments, vocals are pretty straightforward but you better have a quality drummer on hand if you want to compete as Tre Cool is remarkably good at his craft.

Ultimately, “Green Day: Rock Band” is precisely what you would expect it to be. Like the band it chronicles, it’s a bit hit and miss, but the number of hits far outweigh the misses and it can be incredibly fun. Until “Rock Band 3” comes out, the world of music games belongs to Green Day.

‘Green Day: Rock Band’ was released by MTV Games & Electronic Arts and developed by Harmonix. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360 and Wii. It was released on June 8th, 2010.



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