

# Video Game Review: ‘Toy Story 3’ Tie-In is Ambitious But Flawed

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 21, 2010 - 1:57pm

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CHICAGO – After seeing the amazing “Toy Story 3” (read our review [here](#) [16]) this past weekend, you may be inclined to participate in the adventures of Woody, Buzz Lightyear, and the rest of the gang in one of the many incarnations of the video game tie-in available on Sony Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, Nintendo DS, and Sony PSP. Unlike most movie tie-ins, which are almost always horrendous affairs, Disney Interactive and Avalanche Software’s “Toy Story 3” is an ambitious title that still falls flat at times but must be admired for its willingness to think outside the toy box.



Most movie tie-ins are so creatively bankrupt in their blatant manipulation of fan love for the franchise on which they’re based that they’re more useful as coasters or collector’s items than actual games. From the very beginning, “Toy Story 3” feels different. The first thing the player notices is the scope of the game. Instead of merely replicating the major set pieces from the actual film, the developers of “Toy Story 3” have endeavored to create something more individually dynamic, advertising the game as a “sandbox title.”



Toy Story 3: The Video Game  
Photo credit: Disney Interactive

The game is divided in two sections. The first is the standard, plot-driven section that very loosely follows the plot of the Pixar film. Like the film, it opens with a train sequence and eventually features a trip to daycare and an appearance by Lotso, but it’s only based on the screenplay in much the same way that a five-year-old would remember the plot — highlights but not the real meat of the story and a few odd diversions, including an overly long level in which Buzz flies around shooting asteroids and robots.





Toy Story 3: The Video Game  
Photo credit: Disney Interactive

The movie-based section of "Toy Story 3" is better than average but it's where some of the gameplay issues first pop up. The graphics are mediocre at best with some character animation that's downright frustrating in its awkwardness. And, like a lot of kid's games, the camera can be downright awful at times, especially on a later level in which Woody has to jump platforms to avoid rising coffee (a prime example of something VERY loosely based on the action of the movie).

What's most striking is that the story mode for "Toy Story 3" doesn't feel nearly as "fun" as you would expect. Most of the missions are pretty simple "point A to point B" affairs and the gameplay is missing the ingenuity of Pixar's work. Judged on the story mode, it's an average title that definitely jumps over the very low bar of most movie tie-ins but not by as much as one would hope, especially given the masterpiece quality of the film itself.

The more interesting half of the game is the "Toy Box Mode," in which the player can customize a town and its inhabitants while also going on a number of collectible-based missions. With all of the major players from the entire trilogy popping up for appearances (and most of the minor ones as well), players can get lost in the "Toy Box Mode" for hours. The player interacts with town resident to get new missions, which opens new areas of the map or allows them to buy new buildings or town residents, which opens new missions, and so on and so on.



Toy Story 3: The Video Game  
Photo credit: Disney Interactive

Creating a sandbox game with the characters of the "Toy Story" franchise was a stroke of genius. One of the main themes of the films has always been the power of playtime and getting some of that sensibility into a video game was an ambitious goal. Having said that, much of the awkward gameplay of the story mode infects the sandbox mode and it's not as open-world as one would hope. The missions are still relatively linear and must be accomplished in a certain order to open new ones. Except for the many collection-based side missions, it often feels like a "story mode" disguised as an open world game. Of course, younger players need to be guided in the right direction sometimes or risk getting frustrated, but "Toy Story 3" could have been a bit more challenging by presenting a sandbox mode that truly felt unique to each player's playtime desires when they picked up the controller.

Pixar has revolutionized the entire medium of animation through their willingness to take chances. I'm very happy to report that the video game based on their latest film definitely takes similar chances. Sure, some of them pay off more than others, but developers working on the next movie tie-in should take a look at what Avalanche Software has attempted with "Toy Story 3." Despite the game's flaws, it would be a much better gaming world if there were more titles like it.

Before writing your own adventures for Woody and Buzz, check out this great preview from Disney Interactive:

*'Toy Story 3' was released by Disney Interactive and developed by Avalanche Software. It is rated E (Everyone). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360, Sony PSP, Nintendo DS, and Nintendo Wii. It was released on June 15th, 2010.*



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