

Video Game Review: ‘Def Jam Rapstar’ Makes For Fun Party Alternative

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 21, 2010 - 3:07pm

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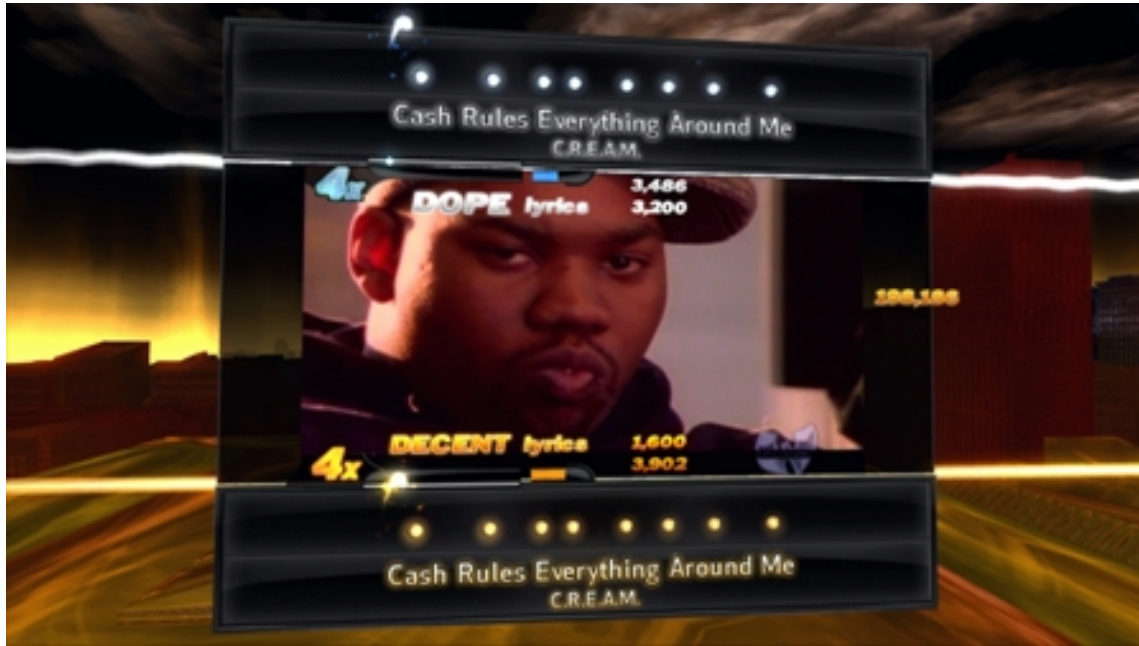
CHICAGO – With “DJ Hero 2,” “Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock” and “Rock Band 3” likely to take over families and parties for the next few months, do we really need another music game? Especially one from Konami, a company that hasn’t exactly broken the mold when it comes to karaoke games? Luckily, “Def Jam Rapstar” delivers exactly what you should expect from it — nothing much more than stupid fun.

“Def Jam Rapstar” is so simple a title that it’s almost hard to review. You rap along karaoke-style to classic and modern hip-hop tunes and are graded based on your ability to hit the words, timing, and, when appropriate, pitch. You can rap through a career, where you earn microphones in a system that basically replicates the star structure of most music games, throw a few tunes into party mode for you and your friends, or just freestyle.



Def Jam Rapstar
Photo credit: Konami

The reasons that “Def Jam Rapstar” works are as simple as the title. First and foremost, it doesn’t over-complicate anything. Lyrics, a bouncing ball, and the music video playing above them. That’s about it. I liked the integration of the videos instead of silly animations like the “GH” or “Rock Band” series. There’s something more enjoyable about rapping right along with visuals of bands like Run D.M.C. and Public Enemy, especially when you know the words well enough that you can just watch the video while you spit your rhymes. “Def Jam Rapstar” is basically a title of music videos with the lyrics below them.

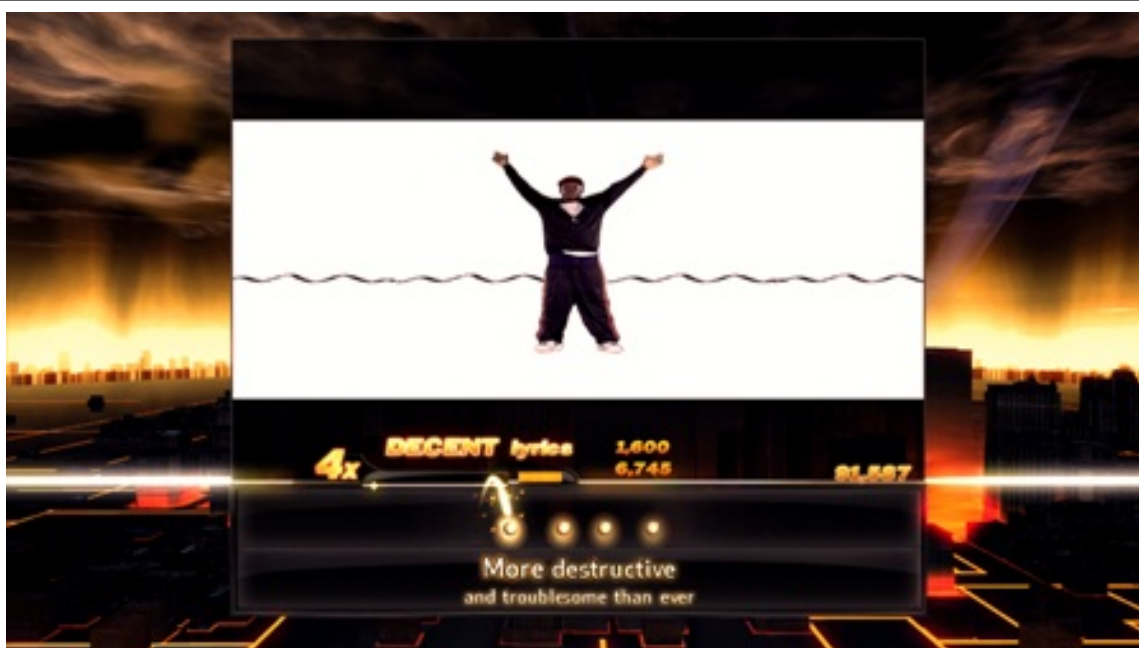


Def Jam Rapstar
Photo credit: Konami

For some, that won't be enough. The title is admittedly somewhat slight when one compares its 45 songs to the 80+ of most other music games. And the variety of most major music games could make this title seem even slighter. Do you judge a game based on how it delivers what it promises or the quantity of what it delivers? If one goes with the former, "Def Jam Rapstar" is a hit, but some could see it as a bit scant in a world of music games that promise the world.

Of course, what's just as important, arguably more so, to a title like "Def Jam Rapstar" is the song selection. I'll admit to being probably on the older side of the target audience for a game like this but I had a blast with the tunes from the '80s and '90s that I pretty much already knew by heart. I spent much of high school rapping along to an actual 45 record (go look it up on Wikipedia if you're too young to know what that is) of Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" and so it was hard NOT to enjoy doing it in game form. The song selection in "Def Jam Rapstar" spans the last quarter-century with a diverse selection that includes Ice Cube, Drake, Lil Jon, Busta Rhymes, Notorious B.I.G., T.I., and many more. The choices are great and Konami plans to release titles a la "Rock Band" for download.

What's wrong with "Def Jam Rapstar"? It's the little things. To get a T rating, the songs are all censored. If you know the word that goes in the blank spot, you won't be penalized for throwing it in, but if you're doing a song that you're not as familiar with, it can totally throw off the rhythm. Also interrupting flow is the fact that music videos are uncut. So, for example, when Drake's "The Best I Ever Had" interrupts twice for video, you have to jump right back in when the clip ends. It can be hard to keep the right flow.



Def Jam Rapstar
Photo credit: Konami

The title can also be damn-near impossible to do on your own on the extreme difficulty levels if the rap was performed by more than one person. Imagine doing all of the parts on "Run's House" or "Brass Monkey." It would have been a nice option to be able to choose a rapper when it's a band song like those two.

Finally, all of you wannabe Eminems can hook up your Playstation Eye, hit Freestyle mode, and update your own rhymes to the online community. You can also video yourself doing songs from the game, add your own effects, and upload those as well. It's a clever way to try and turn what is a solo experience (one instrument) into a community one and it's effective.

Overall, that's the best word for "Def Jam Rapstar" — effective. It's fun, well-executed, and filled with a few dozen of the genre's greatest hits. What more do you want from a karaoke game?

'Def Jam Rapstar' was released by Konami and developed by Terminal Reality. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360. It was released on October 5th, 2010.



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