Video Game Review: 'Driver: San Francisco' Offers New Twist on Racing Games

Submitted by **BrianTT** [1] on October 12, 2011 - 12:28pm

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CHICAGO – How do you make an open-world racing game? "Burnout Paradise" made a reasonable effort by presenting a city in which stop lights led to races, but the developers of "Driver: San Francisco" take it a step further with one of the most unique driving game dynamics in the history of the subgenre. The result is an original twist on an old favorite that gives it a little bit of juice even if it can't quite win the race.

Video Game Rating: **4.0**/5.0

The very concept of "Driver: San Francisco" should kind of make you laugh. If it doesn't, save your cash for the highly-anticipated Fall releases still to come because this is truly goofy — "Driver: San Francisco" is a racing game that believes in astral projection. Yes, it's like "Ghost" or "Insidious" in the world of "Burnout." While that may sound absolutely ridiculous (and it is) you have to admit that it's a clever way to get the player into a variety of cars and driving situations. You don't have to worry about jacking a car. You jack a person instead.

Driver: San Francisco
Photo credit: Ubisoft

You play cop Jack Tanner, a man injured in the opening sequence in a conflict with his nemesis, Jericho. Before you know it, Tanner is bouncing around San Francisco with the ability to jump in and out of the body of any driver. It's essentially a map dynamic that shows you cars and their specs before you choose one to dive into. As you proceed, you become more powerful, being able to quickly shift from one driver/car to another to successfully win a series of events and races.

The astral projection issue aside, "Driver: San Francisco" is a relatively standard driving game. You go through a series of events like time trials or stunts or story-based missions involving your search for Jericho in ways that will be very familiar to racing game fans. You jump into cop cars or jump into getaway vehicles and, well, it gets a little stale. Slow-motion crashes are a staple of a game like this one and they enhance the goofy presentation of the title.

A little too goofy. As I was performing stunts for a cameraman or searching for trucks to jump off, I couldn't help shake the feeling that the title needed a little more weight, an ounce more realism. This is the cartoonish school of racing games in which cars and drivers do things that not

only shouldn't be done in the real world but physically can't be. When the mechanics feel this exaggerated it can lead to a bit of a letdown.

"Driver: San Francisco" feeds that desire all car fans have to drive any car they see. Imagine if you could just take over that Porsche you passed the other day, just for a minute. While such a goofy concept demands a lack of realism, I wished the driving mechanics had a bit more weight and the story was a bit more interesting, but I can't help but think that the title will work for the right players. If you're a big driving game fan, it won't disappoint. If you're not, it might not be the best place to start.

"Driver: San Francisco" was developed by Ubisoft Reflections and released by Ubisoft on September 6th, 2011. It was reviewed for the PS3 but is also available for the Xbox 360.

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