

## Video Game Review: 'Ridge Racer Unbounded' Takes Hit Driving Franchise New Places

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 17, 2012 - 10:25am

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CHICAGO – Forget the “Ridge Racer” you thought you knew. “Ridge Racer Unbounded” leaves behind the somewhat simplified gentility that defined its previous look and feel, embracing a high energy approach that offers destroyable environments and a harsher, more competitive edge. Developer Bugbear Entertainment does seem to have been pretty influenced by their own series “FlatOut” but so what? This is exactly what the franchise needed at this point and they have, by any estimation, outdone themselves with this racer.



First up, handling here is heavy. If that sounds like a criticism it's not. It takes a bit of practice to master each car, they all have their own feel. If you're like me, you'll find yourself picking favorites quickly. The point is the game allows you to grow with it when it comes to mastering the basic steering and control skills you'll need to compete.

No more clean-cut environs either. Beaches? Mountains? This time the game is set completely in one location — the city. Shatter Bay, and its gritty urban vibe, is perfectly underscored by the only element left over from before, a dubstep-rave-heavy soundtrack that thrums and drums perfectly in tune with the tone of the game whether you find yourself downtown, uptown, or skidrow. No matter where you drive you have the option to cause serious damage. Almost anything less weighty or sizable than your car is fair game and there are awards aplenty, as well as great graphics and sound effects. If it all sounds a bit Alpha Male I'm just getting started. There are lots of approaches offered but the best involves domination play where, instead of just trying to finish ahead of the pack, you score points for taking the other racers down or just generally causing chaos. The game even highlights targets in your path. The main thing to be aware of is you'll need to utilize power boosts to get up the speed to survive such collisions. But once you get the hang of it it's not hard at all.



Ridge Racer Unbounded  
Photo credit: Namco Bandai

The difficult thing is to remember that as much fun as all this stuff is it's important to pay attention to your point totals. Without enough points you can't unlock new races, new cars, etc., which are all necessary components to advancing and enjoying the game at a deeper level. That's one of the great things about this new approach. There are a myriad of ways not only to get from point A to point B but to tie in your score with all that potential destruction. The power meter gets fed by it all, especially when you are able to cause simultaneous take downs

and destruction. But do expect to be challenged. I wouldn't call this game entry level by any standard, especially for those unused to racers in general.



Ridge Racer Unbounded  
Photo credit: Namco Bandai

Other racing options have names like Shindo Racing, Time Trails, and Frag Attack, and invite the player to score points for very specific, single goals like finishing in the top three or take downs or stunts. I have to say they were okay but I just didn't find myself returning to them the way I did the domination style play. In the long run you'll want to develop skill in them if you want to advance but the domination style is so fun you may not even care.

The major danger with racing games is the way a sameness can pervade the action. Besides the elements mentioned above, Bugbear fights this tendency by providing nine distinct districts to race in. They are all finely detailed enough that those recurring roadways shouldn't distract too much over long periods of play. The game also offers a city creator. The ability to build your own tracks here would have been more than enough to keep my interest but you can actually build extra slots and then publish your course online. Outstanding.

Single player mode should keep anybody busy here for hours. The multiplayer online mode offers a solid experience but somehow I found it more fun to tinker. One of the things you have to do to be able to publish your course online is be able to prove it's beatable. You also have the ability to set time limits for folks out there who think they can beat your records. The overall sense is that the deeper you go the more innovative "Ridge Racer Unbounded" seems.

*"Ridge Racer Unbounded" was developed by Bugbear Entertainment and released by Namco Bandai on March 27, 2012. The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360 but the title is also available for the PS3 and PC.*

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