

Video Game Review: ‘F1 2012’ is More Than You Bargained For

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 4, 2012 - 2:23pm

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CHICAGO – Racing games typically come in two flavors: Simulation and Arcade. On the Arcade side you have the excellent “Burnout Paradise,” “Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit,” “Blur,” and about a dozen more games that focus on the speed and excitement of driving a car as fast as possible, and don’t really bother too much with things like braking systems, cornering, or legality. Many open world games also subscribe to this model for their driving. On the simulation side, you got games like “Forza Motorsport,” “Project Gotham Racing”, and the “Gran Turismo” series.



As someone who’s happily owned *both* “Burnout Paradise” and “Forza Motorsport 4,” I can say with some authority that hands down “Burnout Paradise” is the more fun game. On the flip side, “Forza Motorsport” is a far more robust offering, and ultimately proves more rewarding in the long run because it challenges you in ways “Burnout Paradise” does not. Plus it has Jeremy Clarkson from “Top Gear” doing some narration, and he’s a dreamboat, right ladies?

This brings us to Codemaster’s racing threequel “F1 2012.” This is a hardcore simulation: Tire wear, pit stops, 15 lap races that take well over two hours to play, a racing engineer chirping in your ear, controls that wouldn’t feel that far out of place on an X-wing — all establish right off the bat that this is *not* a game to be taken lightly. The idea of being fully in control of every aspect of a car, from the braking system to the paint job, is the sort of experience that would cause an obsession I typically reserve for sports and pro-wrestling games.



F1 2012
Photo credit: Codemasters

I haven’t played the previous “F1” games, but knew they were critically lauded games featuring excellent graphics, realistic controls and handling, and a miles-deep career mode. So it was with much excitement I tackled this game head first, diving into a race and promptly spinning myself off the track, into the sand, and quickly finding myself in last place with sand in my tires and a sinking feeling in my stomach. Perhaps checking out the tutorial was in order.



F1 2012

Photo credit: Codemasters

The 'Young Driver's Test' serves as a tutorial, and is a new feature of this year's edition. It takes you through acceleration, braking, the various mechanical adjustments you can make and turning. After completing this young driver's test, studiously following the braking and turning instructions, I thought now, perhaps, I was ready to take on the world of F1 Racing.

Thus, after starting the career mode and accidentally naming my character Meekin One, I took to the first race. Actually, no, I took to sitting in my gloriously rendered car as my pit crew worked around me, and I was given the option to check other driver's times, take a few laps myself, or adjust my car's mechanics. I decided to head out onto the track, apparently to get my tire temperature up - I was about ready to tell my crew that I knew a bunch of tires in Everett Washington that'd probably suit their needs just fine - but instead, I took to the track.

And into the sand I went. Spinning and whirring, with sand in my tires, my racing engineer helpfully squacked that I would have less grip on my tires due to all the sand currently gunking them up. But, determined, I decided I owed it to myself, and to you, noble reader, to experience this game beyond its first turn. So, like a multi-million dollar pinball, I drove my way through the course, cursing my racing engineer every time I slide off track, but determined to, at the least, record a lap time. 4 minutes later I had. I began the race proper after that, figuring that perhaps I could follow what the other cars were doing.



F1 2012

Photo credit: Codemasters

So there I was, one of several cars lined up as the lights counted down. This was a genuinely exciting moment. The combination of the cars glistening in the sun and engines revving, and the atmosphere of the entire experience, proved to me that Codemasters made this game with care and passion for this world. From the menus, to real racers, to real life brands and locations, this was truly a labor of love for a sport that doesn't really get much credit.

As the lights finally counted down and I hit the gas pedal, promptly being penalized for bumping the car in front of me, I realized that even if *I* suck at this game, it's still a quality product. As I approached the first turn and the dastardly sand that had been my bane, I thought to myself how talented the people who do this for a living must really be. Once I spun out into the sand, yet again, watching the cars in front of me make the turn with little effort, only to see one car smash into another in a glorious explosion of metal and carbon fiber, I thought it was about time to see if I still had "Burnout" laying around.

Because this game flummoxed me at the level of control, it made the other offerings on the disc sort of a moot point. Champions Mode looked incredibly exciting as you faced off against real world racers in a variety of harrowing conditions as well as a variation of the career mode which let you play shorter races and avoid spending 3 hours or so on the same track.



F1 2012

Photo credit: Codemasters

Eventually I dug into the options menu and found a couple of options that made things easier, but it took the bite out of the experience for me. Sure, braking assist made it impossible to spin out as I was want to do, but fiddling with these options was the equivalent of ending every little league game in a tie. If I couldn't fail, succeeding was pointless. Now I'm not saying the control in "F1 2012" is bad. It's actually anything but. It's precise and realistic. I mean Codemasters brought this game to *real* F1 racers and they said it was just as good as a professional simulator for crying out loud. In much the same way "Tiger Woods 12" on the Wii with Motion Plus was *too* much like real golf in that it was incredibly difficult and frustrating and ultimately unrewarding, the control in "F1 2012" is so realistic, that unless you actually drive cars really fast regularly, the whole concept of breaking around corners and the like will likely be foreign and frustrating.

It's also very possible that the idea of a hardcore F1 racing simulation has your mouth watering. In which case, let me state emphatically this is by no means a bad game. It is dedicated to nailing every aspect of this experience, down to how incredibly difficult it is to wrangle a 1000 horse power rocket on wheels around a hairpin turn. So, while I was disappointed at the incredibly steep learning curve, you may be enticed by it. What I will say is that, in a world where games are becoming more expensive, and shorter, "F1 2012" is way more than you bargained for.

"F1 2012" was developed and published by Codemasters. It was released on September 18, 2012. The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360 but the title is also available for the PS3 and PC.

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