

Video Game Review: Fast, Furious ‘Wheelman’ With Vin Diesel is Guilty Pleasure

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 13, 2009 - 8:34am

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CHICAGO – Midway’s “Wheelman” is my guilty pleasure game of the season. I know the game has some serious design flaws, but like an action movie you watch over and over again, the flaws are easier to forgive in the name of old-fashioned fun. “Wheelman” is far from a perfect game and with a few tweaks it could have been a classic, but that doesn’t mean its B-movie charms should be ignored.



Video Game Rating: **3.5/5.0**

It’s tempting to describe “Wheelman” as a video game tie-in with the recently smash hit “[Fast & Furious](#) [16]”. Both the game and the [Paul Walker](#) [17] movie share two important things in common - fast cars and [Vin Diesel](#) [13]. As a part of his entertainment onslaught that includes “Fast & Furious,” the video game “[The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena](#) [18]” (which will be reviewed here later this week), and the Blu-Ray releases of “[Pitch Black](#) [19]” and “[The Chronicles of Riddick](#) [20],” Diesel brings to life the role of Milo Burik, the lead in “Wheelman”. Vin Diesel is back in a big way.



Wheelman

Photo credit: Ubisoft/Midway

Milo is the titular character, an American working for three Barcelona gangs. The story of “Wheelman” is loose at best. Honestly, I found myself skipping the cut scenes more often than I usually do, but considering the amount of people forgiving of Diesel’s acting skills in “Fast & Furious,” they might be intrigued by what he has to say in “Wheelman”.

Diesel’s character is a hired foot. A guy with the skills behind the wheel when a gang needs something done. Naturally, “Wheelman” is a series of gang-related missions like stealing a gas tanker or chasing a runaway train down a tunnel. In between missions, players can perform a variety of side missions like evading police, causing damage, or even the classic “Taxi” side mission. Success in the side missions

supposedly offers incentives like faster cars but none of them felt remotely necessary to completing the bulk of the game. They’re a bit too superfluous.



Wheelman

Photo credit: Ubisoft/Midway

None of the missions, especially the side ones, are particularly creative, but “Wheelman” satisfied my need for speed more consistently than any driving game in a while. (Certainly more than the actual last installment of “Need For Speed”). The game is essentially a variation on the “Grand Theft Auto” model if all of that game’s missions were vehicle-based.

“Wheelman” falters the most when Milo gets out of his car and picks up his gun. The gunplay interface alternates between messy and boring. This is not a very well-designed shooter and whenever I got a mission that involved Milo working his way through cover and bad guys with his gun instead of his vehicle, I was a little disappointed.

Luckily, those aren’t that common. “Wheelman” is a goofy, B-movie of a game. When you knock an enemy car around the Barcelona streets enough that it bursts into flames, it’s hard not to smile or even laugh out loud. One of the most ridiculous moves of the game is the “airjack” in which you can maneuver Milo to jump from one moving car to another one. See a flashier, faster car in front of you? Airjack it. Just the concept is B-movie (or B-game) gold.

And that’s far from the only over-the-top, B-movie element of “Wheelman”. Perform enough daring moves and you’ll build your “Focus,” a meter that allows you to slow time and shoot your enemy without taking your hands off the wheel. It’s hilariously over-the-top, just another fun and funny element to this B-game.

That’s the best way to describe “Wheelman”. It’s a B-game with a classic B-movie action star behind the wheel. It’s repetitive, the side missions needed more refinement, and the story isn’t very interesting, but who cares when there’s enough action to keep the player smiling and laughing throughout the single player experience? “Wheelman” never tries to more than a diverting good time and, judged on that level, it completely works.

Check out this great “Wheelman” preview:

‘Wheelman’ was released by Midway Games/Ubisoft and developed by Midway Newcastle - Tigon Studios. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the Xbox 360 and PC. It was released on March 24th, 2009.



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