

Moto GP 3

Contributed by
Friday, 01 September 2006

Go back almost two years to when Xbox Live was first launched and you will find THQ's Moto GP the first game on the Live titles list, and what a game it was. Packaged as a demo with the Live starter kit, it was played by anyone and everyone. It had everything the bike fan could want and more besides.

Up to date team rosters, the correct bike liveries, a design function (similar to the editing tool in Forza, but a little more basic), all the tracks recreated superbly, from the tyre bridge at Donnington to the Twists of Assen and game modes that had never been seen.

Then we saw the next instalment in the series, Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology 2. Pretty much as before, not much difference in the way of game modes, in fact I don't recall any real changes in that way, only in the team rosters and liveries. The graphical improvements were minimal but you could put this down to the awesome first game being tuff to beat.

But here comes the third installment. The only way to describe this is smooth! Let's start at the beginning. Forget about the first loading screens showing THQ and Climax, any publisher and developer can get them right (we would hope). Instant access to Xbox Live gets you straight in on the action but also lets you go into the single player game easily.

The front end of the game is exactly the same as the previous two, basic but functional. Choose from various options such as Single player, Multiplayer and Extras, nothing new here then. Choose Single Player and this is where things start to get interesting. The usual suspects are there in the guise of "Quick Race", "Career" and "Time Trial" but to go a little further and you will see the major change in this game. Extreme mode takes the racing genre one step further. The taboo subject of street racing hits the screen with an almighty thud, taking the series off the track and on to the street, a feature to date not yet seen within the series. You can race street bikes on familiar roads of anything from the U.K. to Holland; really it's the same as Grand Prix mode just on different tracks.

The Grand Prix mode is exactly the same as previous games, choose rider and team and away you go. In career mode the first thing to do is choose your bike colours, helmet colours and leathers. The rider rosters have been updated as have the bikes and team colours, allowing you to choose from new riders like Melandri and Hayden or the seasoned pros Rossi or Biaggi.

In game sees graphical improvements and a fairly decent soundtrack. The game runs at a very respectable and very smooth sixty frames per second making it feels very fast indeed, keeping it inline with the first two. As usual the sense of speed is phenomenal; motion blur is used at high speed giving a sense of realism (and panic). At this point the concentration levels are off the scale, trying to get the line and braking point right is no easy feat. Make a mistake and the following pack soon overtakes leaving you in their smoking tyre clouds, as does the leading pack, make just one

mistake and watch as they disappear into the distance, soon looking like dots on the horizon. Unfortunately though they can soon be caught up again with little effort; this should have been a little bit more challenging.

The default button configuration sees the green 'A' button being used as the accelerator and the triggers for front and back brakes. Use the separate brake buttons effectively to maximize cornering power, hitting the back brake only and double tap the accelerator will see you power sliding around the corner, but don't over do it or it will soon send you skimming across the track into the kitty litter.

The unlockable feature is maintained. As before you can unlock riders and their bikes, but no doubt the best of this unlock feature is the unlockable tracks, achieve set times and a track is then unlocked as a reverse or a mirror of another track, giving more longevity to an already a huge game.

Connection to Live sees the same game types as the previous titles. Hosts can set the game parameters as usual changing the scoring system, game type and bike choice (Grand Prix, Extreme 600, 1000 or 1200). Nothing has changed in the lobby making the title feel a little dated, but the lobby isn't the most important feature of a game so it really doesn't matter.

Launching the game puts you on the starting grid in whatever order the host has chosen, they can set random, last race order or last race reversed, random gives a fairer chance to everyone but guaranteed somebody will end up sulking because they are placed at the back a couple of games running.

Game lag isn't a issue, there is very little for the game to keep up with, every now and again you'll see somebody else jump around but this is very minor and can easily be ignored as it doesn't affect lap times or positions. Online rankings are a must for a game of this genre, but they are very basic and are only challenging if you are very serious about it. Beating other gamers times is the only way to advance through the rankings, so you could set a time and be ranked at 20,000 then beat your time by a considerable amount and find yourself ranked at 3,500, however next time you log into Live you could see the ranking drop to 7,800 due to others beating your scores during your time offline. These figures are probably a bit of an exaggeration but you get the point and unless you plan to play 24/7 or are a true Moto GP champ don't expect to stay too close to the top without ongoing effort, someone else is always waiting to kick your high score out of the water.

Stunt mode sees a good break from the norm. Racing is still the object of the game but enhanced by the fact that you need to pull off stunts to succeed. Wheelies, stoppies and power slides are order of the day, but be warned touch the grass and forfeit points, and don't forget fail to finish the race and you'll not be awarded any points on the ranking boards for your efforts.

The game runs smoothly consistently and nice little touches like tyre smoke for example just enhance the gaming

experience. Use of the look behind button will see your rider actually turn his head to look behind, rev your bike on the start grid will see your rider twist his wrist, its little attentions to detail like this that make Moto GP 3 stand out, making for a more complete simulation.

So to summarise, Moto GP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3, to give it the 'official' title, is definitely a game more suited to the petrol head but with a few touches that make it a title worth having on the shelf for the none biker fans out there.

It's a good and accurate simulation of a sport that probably doesn't get the credit it deserves often placed behind sports such as F1, bearing in mind Donnington Moto GP is the highest attended sporting event of the year in the UK, biker fans want to see an accurate simulator and one to be proud of, and this is what THQ and Climax have produced. Its a definite 'Go Buy' title to take away the seriousness of other games, as the old saying goes: Variety is the spice of life, this title can bring you some much needed fun or taken to the full extreme as a serious title in its own right.

Try it, you just might like it!

Review By: Ian Holt 9/10

Graphics

Fast and very smooth, motion blur at high speed gives a real sense of velocity. Not as crisp as other games out there, but nice none the less

8/10

Sound

Decent enough soundtracks in the menus but the real sounds are in the engine noises, V-Twins actually sound realistic as do the 4 cylinder machines

7/10

Longevity

The game is a full season in Grand Prix mode but is also enhanced by the Extreme Mode. Add Live into the equation and it's a recipe for success

9/10

Overall

A definite 'Must Buy' title. Live mode will keep you going back. A great alternative To the 4 wheeled racing games out there

9/10