

SEASON! LOTS A REVIEWS

From RA
DRIVER

speeds around town and evade the police. That's entertainment!



Driver

This is something to keep in mind when you read this, because on the first impression alone, *Driver* scored high marks. Ask the neighbors who heard the loud, mad cackling for a half-hour one fateful night—this game resonated on a base level with me. It's part of the culture to ride—not like a madman, rather a cool professional—with the additional thrill of opportunities for vehicular manslaughter and millions of dollars of damage to property.

I fought the law...

It's not all fun and felony, no. In the main portion of the game (undercover), you're playing the role of Tanner, an ex-auto racer-turned-cop (and you can't tell me he doesn't look like Kowalski) now working undercover for shady types in Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York. The cities aren't actually mapped. Instead, they offer the general feeling with generic city scenery tiles, landmarks, and backgrounds. So if you were expecting an exact drive through the urban sprawl, *Driver* will disappoint. Frankly, there's little time to take a good look around. Your missions,

to B. But there are factors involved: do it as fast as possible, go to these checkpoints, ram and destroy...
to you instantly, the driving is more arcade than simulation. So there are several training facilities to...
in which you perform a list of stunts in a minute), you can practice in a parking garage. Other basic...
driving courses. First is take a ride. This is just free driving in the city of your choice (sort of; you can only...
reached the undercover section).
doesn't last.
er, looking at the police presence. And oh yes, you'll even go looking for them. This is a good thing,
you can get around outrunning these civic defenders. You can't expect to drive like a demon without

history of impressive their soundtracks. I was already setting up a possible playlist, wavering between...
pass when I installed... Instead of the standard California racing heavy guitar compression coming out of...
the air. Each location has its own theme music. It hit me when I was cruising around Miami, with the sun flares...
"Aaaaawwww yeah!" from my lips. It's all the neat '70s action movie soundtrack bits meshed into several

in the law...
ures, as well as toward realism. But one of the lacking bits is the police AI. You can roll through a mission...
pass him in the middle road. Yes, *Driver* has a traffic pattern and working lights and road rules, but lanes...
these "suspect has no ID" through your police scanner, but you can often drive right by any traffic signal.
owners are speeding just their speed limit, not the real world's), hitting another vehicle, or using your...
driving alone won't be interesting to keep in mind when you're trying to make time but keep a low profile.
easier for your car to notice a few strange things. For one, the police don't try to stall or apprehend...
them. Repeatedly against a wall. Pushing other civilian cars into yours. Nothing like those prolonged...
team, break the car that different from Reflection's Destruction Derby and its sequel. And these are no...
have amazing abilities, grace, and comering. While going up a hill at top speed (which is 87 for most cars,
like), I had a cop boost. So remember that at any time the police can activate their jet-boosters and spoil...
want to watch the cop trying another mission. Also, there are no customization tools available from GT...
table on the Web!

URBAN CHAOS

...calculated story line...
...is the timing of its release. I find it tough to feel nervous about the whole...
passed that little momentous occasion. Of course, if looks aren't quite as...
restrial invasion, no four horsemen of the apocalypse, no messianic tribunal,
safe to say that we can go on partying like it's 1999.
...a just gone by—in the form of a gritty and appropriately paranoid action...
in the center of an unprecedented crime wave set during the closing months...
to contend with a massive surge in suicides, muggings, vandalism, theft, and...
insister underground cult intent on causing the destruction of the world. Too...
have felt like the '90s all over again.

You start the game as D'arci Stern, a rookie cop who lacks the overall...
room factor one might rightfully expect from an Eidos gal, but who makes up...
this lack of titillation with her physical prowess. One of the most impressive...
pects of this game is the freedom of movement you'll encounter. D'arci can...
rb fences, scale skyscrapers, crawl on all fours, slide James Bond-style from...
ding to building by latching onto telephone cables, and the list goes on...
ik cautiously in front of a minivan, and it will stop as you climb to the rooftop...
re it takes you for a spin around town. You can also leap over small...
tacles, slide-tackle enemies, or pick up trash and throw it. You can even...
un traffic. Just be careful while you sprint, as D'arci isn't exactly the...
ninator. Get hit by a car, and you'll be knocked out cold for a brief stint.
Oh, but you ought to be upholding the peace anyway, right? Well, that's fun...
Once you've knocked a criminal to the ground (preferably without using a...
you can get up close and hit the action button to slap on the cuffs. Climb to...
op of a skyscraper, peer over the ledge, and check out your catch, wriggling...
his face down to the pavement. The missions are extremely varied, so you'll...
going a lot more than just chasing down small-time thugs, but not until...
we become somewhat seasoned as a cop.

The graphics are dazzling. Running through the streets on a rainy night...
ll notice the full moon reflected in puddles touching the edge of the...
ement as raindrops generate ripples on their silvery surfaces. Run through a...
dle, and you'll leave shoe prints. You'll also see your own distorted image in...
puddle as you pass through it. Car headlights are appropriately glaring, and...
ways are dark and creepy. Buildings have nice touches such as fire...
pes, air conditioners jutting out of windows, and boilers and antennae on...
ops. Again, the list goes on.
Once you get further into the game, you'll encounter Roper McIntyre, an ex-...
y man and former felon diagnosed as having severe psychiatric...
s. Apparently, this GI Joe-lookalike deems himself some sort of...
me. Of course, you'll need his help to save the world, and you'll be able to...
between controlling D'arci and Roper for later missions in the game...
er is extremely strong, but he's a bit sluggish compared to D'arci. He can't...
as far, nor can he sprint when necessary. But as they say, he takes a licking...
keeps on ticking.

The missions are presented in a choppy linear format, detracting from the...
wise, vast, fluid, free-roaming feel of the game. The story line needs...
ovement and well it just can't beat *Tomb Raider* out of its slot as a third...
on game!
Tips: * To duck an attack, back away from an enemy while pressing the...
n button. When ducking, perform a foot sweep with the kick button.
* If you accidentally (or deliberately) cause the death of an innocent civilian...
of the course of your duties, you will receive a citation for disciplinary...
ion.
After five citations, you'll be removed from duty and forced to start the...
on over from scratch. Can't we all just get along?

Phil Collins



GTA Phil Collins Both Sides of the Story

[C] [D] [C] [C]
[C] Find yourself in the gutter in a
[C] lonely part of town
[C] It waits in the darkness with a
[C] weapon to cut somebody down
[C] Sleeping with an empty bottle is
[C] a [C] sad and empty-hearted man
[G] He needs a job with a little
respect so he could get [C] out
while he can
Oh we [D2] always need to [C]
hear both sides of the [C] story
We [D2] always need to [C] hear
both sides of the [C] story...
both sides of the story

Neighborhood peace is shattered,
it's the middle of the night
Young faces hide in the shadows
while they watch their mother and
father fight
He says she's been unfaithful.
She says her love for him is gone.
And the brother shrugs
to his sister and says
"looks like it's just us from now on"
Oh we always need to hear
both sides of the story
We need to hear
both sides of the story

[C] The lights are all on,
the world is [G] watching now.
[C] People looking for truth,
We must have [C] faith now.
Be [Am] sure, [Em] before
we close our [Am] eyes
Walk [Em] away from here
[Am]... 'til you hear both [Em]
sides...no no no [G]

Here we are all gathered
in what seems to be
the center of the storm.
Neighbors once friendly now
stand inside of the line
that has been drawn.
They've been fighting here for
years, but now there's killing
on the street.
While small coffins are lined up
sadly, now united in defeat.
Oh we [D2] always need to [C]
hear both sides of the [C] story

The lights are all on,
the world is watching now.
People looking for truth,
we must have faith now.
Be sure, before we close our eyes
Walk away from here... 'til you see
both sides...oh no no no

White man turns the corner, finds
himself within a different world.
Ghetto kid grabs his shoulder,
throws him up against the wall.
He says "would you respect me,
if I didn't have this gun?"
"Cause without it, I don't get it,
and that's why I carry one."
Oh we [D2] always need to [C]
hear both sides of the [C] story...
both sides of the story
Oh both sides of the story...yes,
both sides of the story

DESCENT 3 MERCENARY

One should always look askance at expansion packs and add-ons; they tend not to be worth it, they tend not to add on to nor expand the original game, and they generally exist purely for the opportunity to take just a bit more money from hard-core fans. Half-Life: Opposing Force (aside from its brevity) and precious few others exist as exceptions to this rule, but *Descent 3: Mercenary* exemplifies it. This is a damn shame when you consider that *Descent 3* was one of the best action games of this past year.

This pack does admittedly look pretty good on the surface. *Mercenary* offers seven new single-player missions, and claims to offer fan-made missions as well. There are seven new Outrage-created missions (varying wildly in quality) but the user-created missions seem MIA. If the user-created levels do exist, they are buried on the disc and they don't install into the game menu. If Interplay couldn't be bothered to make them readily accessible, why bother looking for them?

The missions range from bad (missions one and two), too absolutely brilliant (three and four) to uninspired and boring (the rest). Those two good missions rank among the best D3 offered earlier this year—particularly the fourth one, which ends with a timed escape that was only a cutscene back in the days of D2. But all isn't perfect, even with the two good missions the primary advance D3 offered—the vast, open outdoor areas simply do not exist here. It's as if the developers just went ahead and made *Descent 2* levels. The best levels in the original involved complex cities, valleys, and the given tunnels and caverns. Here we have only the given tunnels and caverns, with altogether too brief forays to the surface—yawn. Plus, the ending consists of a giant box inhabited by a boring robot or something. Honestly, was there a story of note? I cannot recall.

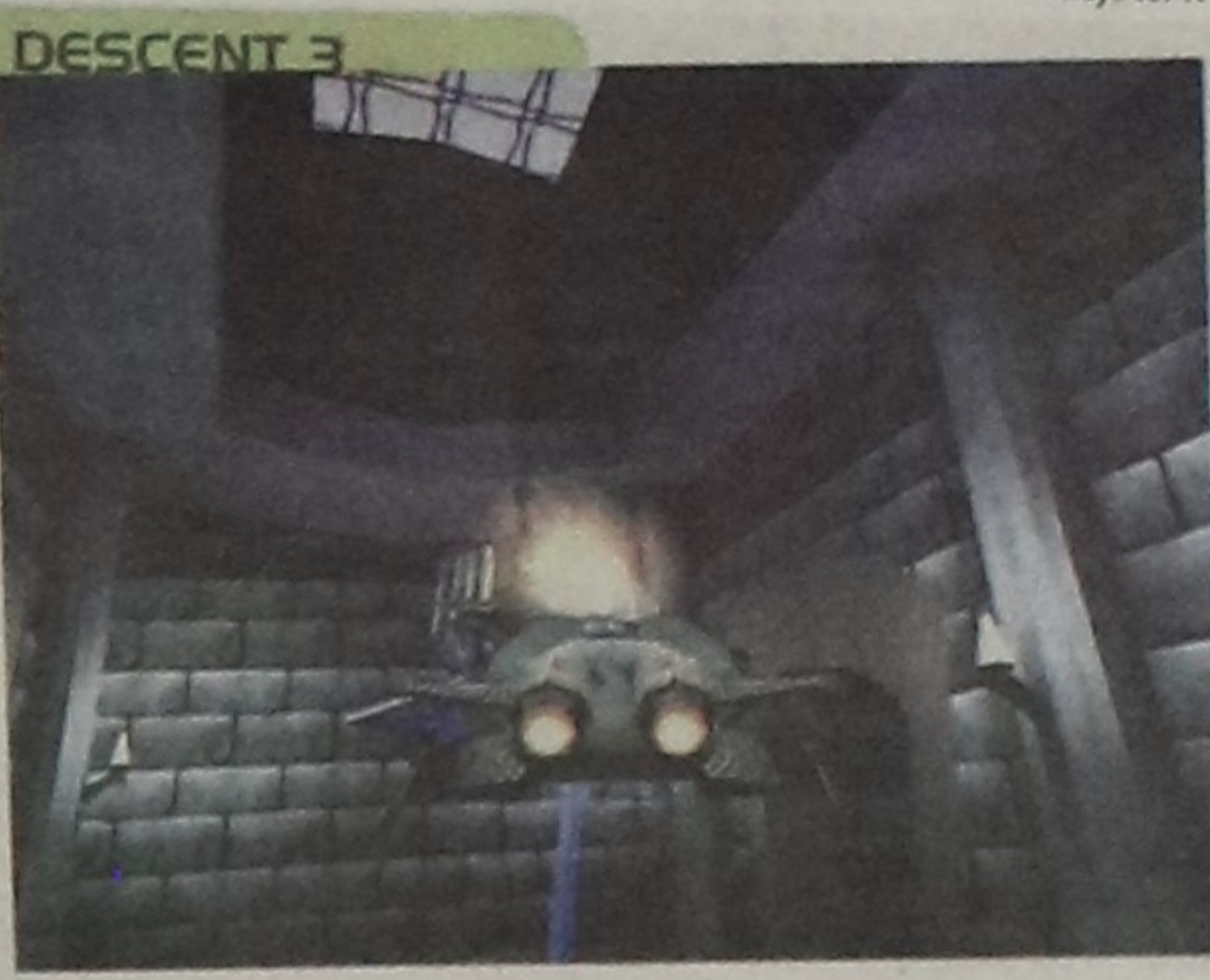
Ten new robots are bragged about on the box (I played the original copy of the game!), but this isn't like creating ten new monsters for *Half-Life*. The robots of *Descent* have never been truly, brilliantly, unique in appearance anyway. There might be ten new robots in *Mercenary*; I didn't bother to count. None of the new robots stood out (save for a few cool mini-bosses) and cried out "I'm new!" to me, especially considering the fact that I still play the original. Interplay also claims that the AI has been improved, which doesn't appear to be true, but that's a moot point since D3 has the best AI of any action game this year. Simply staying the same would have been enough. The bland new robots do react differently, so I guess that counts as "improved AI". Oh, we have a new ship to pilot—the Black Pyro—but you'd be hard-pressed to explain exactly what's so new about it.

And then there's the new multiplayer maps—four made by fans, and four from Outrage. The user-made ones are about what you'd expect, and what you can download free from any decent *Descent* fan site. The Outrage levels, billed as "b-sides," range from silly to quite cool, with the modeling of their actual offices being the highlight. These maps are worth having if multiplayer *Descent 3* is a big deal to you, but one wonders why no new game styles or maps were created beyond what we had in D3.

Mercenary is a cynical attempt to squeeze a bit more cash out of the franchise, and this is a shame. At more than half of full price, fans deserve more, *Descent* deserves better, and Interplay does not deserve your cash. As I exclaimed over and over again in my review earlier this year, *Descent 3* is a great game. In fact, it was probably the best pure action game of 1999. But even gameplay that rich and deserving of a second visit doesn't deserve clatrap like this.

Tips:

* I recommend using the mouse and mapping the movement keys to: W—forward, S—back, A and D—strafe. Map the rest for comfort. Also, if you're using a responsive mouse (like a USB mouse), lower the sensitivity to .6 or so. Joysticks—ha!
* Use your guidebot!



Interstate '82

A glance into a familiar Road Warrior-like future, but without Mad Max.
A sequel that's not quite up to the original—could it be? Well, in a word, yes. Anyone who had the pleasure of playing *Interstate '76* (176) will probably see eye to eye with me on this one. *Interstate '82* ultimately is just an also-ran.
82 is set in an alternate 1980s universe. You'll get to put the pedal to the metal in heavily armed '80s cars and trucks ranging from fast sports cars to old dunkers, as you attempt to uncover the simplistic conspiracy that is the plot behind this game. You've got to figure the CIA, the President, and maybe the mob or some mercenaries/terrorists are in on this one. But who cares? I just want to get in the car and blow things up. A plot is really unnecessary, but you're given one nonetheless. If you want to watch the cutscenes, they really are pretty good, but they don't do a lot to advance the game. The cutscenes' voiceovers actually remind me a bit of the classic *Full Throttle*. They're fairly humorous, and they're actually quite well done. You hear some overbuds of harsh language (if you choose the edited-for-TV option) that provide a direct-to-video or TV-formatted feel to the whole shebang. Though somewhat amusing, I would have preferred more levels instead of cutscenes.
Activision's new, 3D hardware-only game engine (first seen in *Heavy Gear II*—Ed.) doesn't rival the beauty of games like *Recoil*, but somehow manages to provide more environments including Las Vegas, Area 49, a mall, a circus, sewers, a construction site, and my favorite, a golf course at a swank country club. The levels are also dark enough to be annoying, as you sometimes don't see your opponents' vehicles until they're right on top of you. That said, the levels are certainly bigger than any competitor levels I've seen before. The explosions are very



repetitive, and not very inspiring. The skid marks and oil slicks are quite good, however. When exiting your vehicle, the 3D rendition of the driver on foot is pretty basic. In fact, it's very block-like. It doesn't come close to the beautifully realistic bump-mapped textures you'll find in realistic FPS sims like *Rogue Spear* or *SWAT3*. Why allow fighting on foot anyway? You don't really stand much of a chance against a hood-mounted machine gun on a fast-moving auto. In the unfortunate event that you have to leave your vehicle, you'll be dead quicker than you can say "road kill."
I loved dropping greasy oil slicks and watching anyone on my tail spin out into a brick wall or other immovable object. I enjoyed firing energy rings that hit my targets with a laser-like effect. Your choices of weapons and vehicles will expand as you move through the game. You'll also have the choice of instant-action scenarios in any of the varied environments—great for the times you just want to jump in and start shooting, like right after driving home through rush-hour holiday traffic. You'll find .52-caliber slug throwers, gattling guns, 42mm cannons, unguided rockets, infrared guided missiles, radar guided missiles, proximity mines, flame projectors and my favorite, karpoons (specialized weapons capable of delivering and attaching a payload to the outer surface of a target car, which can include gas and electrical charges). And this is just a partial list of the weaponry available.
82 can be mindless fun with plenty of action, but it has no real heart and soul. For all of its goodness, badness, and ugliness *Interstate '82* ends up squarely in the middle of the pack. It's not even a match for its predecessor, *176*.
Tips:
* Stay in your car unless you absolutely have to hijack a new one. You're much more vulnerable running around.
* When you actually leave your car, make sure you have another car lined up to hijack.
* Learn to turn on a dime. A quick U-turn is a great counter-attack strategy when you've got someone on your tail. Learn how to break until you slide/skid, and then turn easily. Finally, floor it to actually complete the turn.