



PUBLISHER: Viva Media DEVELOPER: SimBin Studios GENRE: Racing AVAILABILITY: Retail, E-tail (www.steampowered.com) ESRB RATING: Everyone MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 1.7GHz CPU, 128MB RAM, 2.5GB hard drive space, 256MB videocard (driving wheel recommended) MULTIPLAYER: 2-25 players VERSION REVIEWED: Near-Final Reviewable

REVIEW

Sad truth: The hardcore PC racing-sim scene isn't what it once was. Luckily for those who appreciate such games—where the sensation of driving a real car is paramount over off-track flash, where four-wheel drifts don't send you into the next continent, and where force feedback is indeed all it should be—a little Swedish company called SimBin carries the torch. Picking up where pioneers such as Geoff Crammond (*World Circuit*) and Papyrus Design Group (*NASCAR Racing*) left off, SimBin's kept the sim faith alive with highly regarded games such as *GTR 2*. In its latest, *Race 07: The Official WTCC Game*, SimBin goes crazy...but in a good way.

Race 07 is a massive affair, encompassing over 300 real-life cars spanning no less than nine real-life classes. From the race-prepped BMW and Alfa Romeo sedans in the 2006 and the 2007 World Touring Car Championships to the scorching open-wheeled monsters of the Formula 3000 series, the retro-cool Caterham Seven sports cars, and skittish throwbacks from the 1987 WTCC, this game pimps no shortage of rides.

TWO GAMES IN ONE?

More impressive than the sheer number is the distinctive, complex, and credible physics model attached to each. The folks at SimBin don't merely make a heavier car feel heavier or a faster car faster; they dig deep into the subtle nuances and come up with a wholly unique experience so convincing that they could've built a couple of games instead of one. And no matter what your level of experience, *Race 07* cars are a pleasure to drive. For racing newbies and immigrants from arcade-style titles, the game offers so many drivers' aids that the only question is which to deactivate. But if you're a sim veteran, you'll likely find no better test of your mettle.

With all aids removed, the cars demand all of your attention all of the time—and react agreeably only if you're skilled, experienced, and silky smooth. However, unlike other notable sims from the past—Papyrus' *NASCAR*, for one, where the journey from oval to road course was like a descent into hell—they don't feel artificially challenging. Ultimately, these cars probably drive more like real cars than those in any other game.

ARTIFICIALLY MORONIC

The A.I. drivers are another story: Though they smartly avoid collisions with you and struggle with traction just like humans do, they consistently beat the crap out of each other in the first few turns of a race. Thusly, two or three localized yellows—and delays—accompany the start of every event. But that's what patches are for. Furthermore, the game's sophisticated online multiplayer mode feels remarkably smooth, even with a dozen cars battling it out.

The game's track lineup is superb, whizzing you around the globe to 17 intriguing circuits (32 with variants), including several—such as Southeast Asia's Macau and France's Pau—that have purportedly never before been replicated. The look is photorealistic, right on down to the bugs on your visor and the smoke puffs from your motor. You will, however, encounter stuttering if you aren't equipped with a top-of-the-line videocard.

This is likely where Papyrus would be, had the company survived—and that says a ton.

• **Gord Goble**

VERDICT

Superb physics models; impressive force feedback response; enough diversity for two games.

Some A.I. quirks; high-end videocard mandatory.

8/10

GOOD



• Like SimBin's other games, *Race 07* is about as close as a videogame gets to real racing.

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