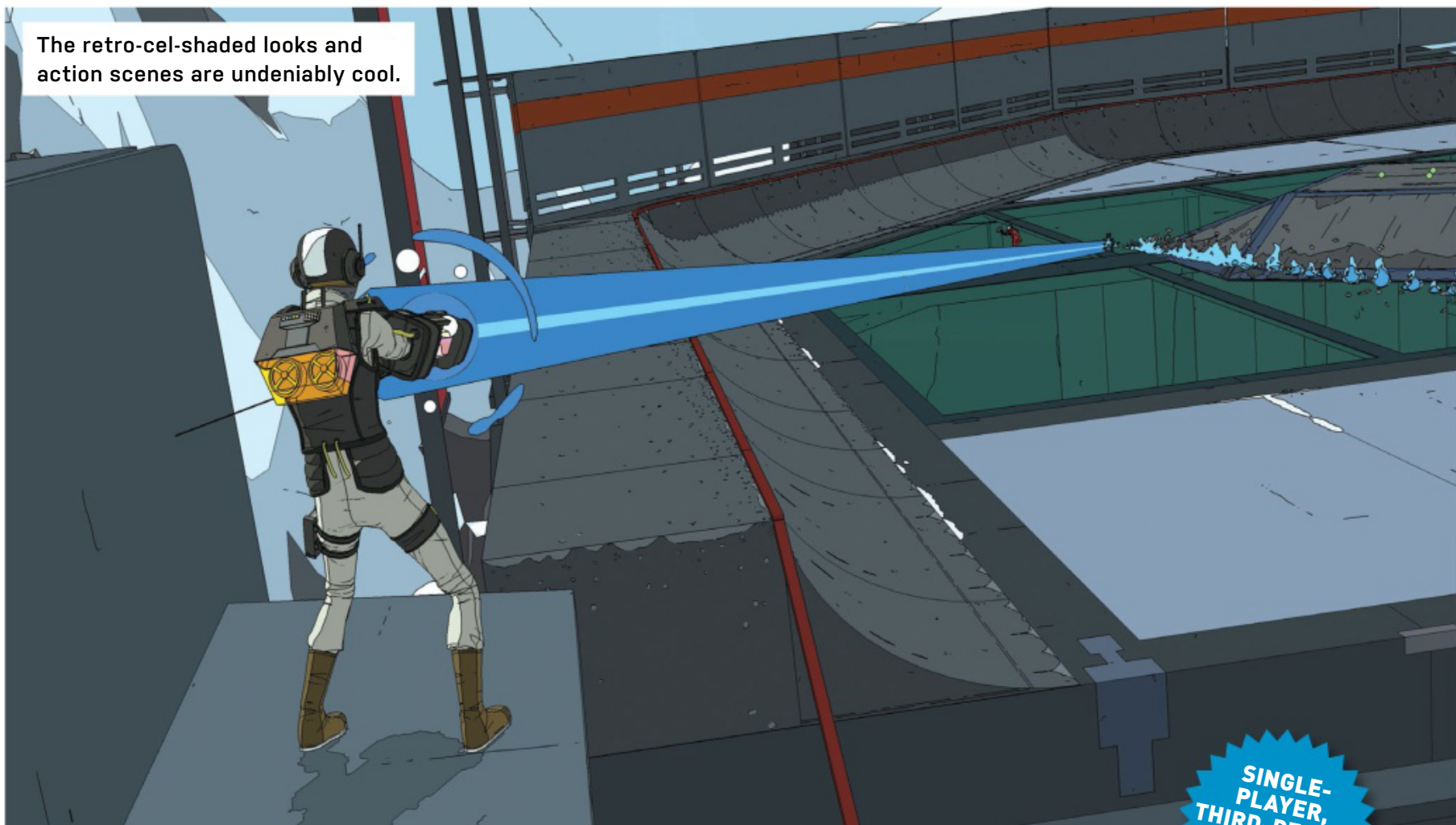


The retro-cel-shaded looks and action scenes are undeniably cool.



# Rollerdrome

## Everything's more fun on roller skates

**SOME GAMES** are defined by their graphics, some by their plots, and others by their dialog choices. However, there's also a more nebulous category of games that are defined by their feel, and RollerDrome is most definitely one of those.

How does it feel? Cool. Outrageously so. It involves roller skates, and its main influences seem to be *The Running Man* (1987) and *Rollerball* (1975), which are so likely to be lost on anyone under 30 as to perhaps be new and fresh.

The plot is that you are the newest recruit to a near-future, arena-based bloodsport by the name of RollerDrome, in which challengers take on (and shoot) the 'house players'—all manner of out-of-work professional wrestlers and *Mad Max* extras armed with spiky clubs, armor, sniper rifles, and rocket launchers. For reasons left completely opaque, but probably to do with speed, fluidity of movement, and traversal, they're expected to do this on roller skates.

This means you can do tricks, something which is encouraged both by the layout of the arenas and the scoring system. Grinding on rails and the edges of the arena is the only way to reload your gun (we're not sure how this works but in the heat of the moment it's best to just go

with it) while you rack up points by pulling off a variety of grabs and flips while airborne, especially in designated areas where the cameras can get a good look at you. If you can do this while shooting somebody in the head, all the better.

Clearing each arena flamboyantly is the way to win. Killing goons, who constantly respawn until you've hit a target number, tops up your health, but even better is to avoid getting hit at all. A dodge move is tightly bound into the game, allowing you to duck under incoming weapons. Thanks to a strange flaw in the snipers' laser sights that makes the beam flash from red to gray, you can also roll out of the way of bullets. Dodging them gets you more points, as does pulling off tricks and kills. At the end of the match, you are graded on your tricks and kills, your performance held up against your personal best, and that of the reigning champion.

You have one other advantage to help you survive the onslaught—the ability to slow down time, a simple pull of the left trigger putting you into a Max Payne-like state no matter what you're doing, whether you're upside down in the middle of a trick, or just rolling across the arena in an attempt to pick up speed. Aiming is automatic, as long as your intended target

is roughly somewhere you can hit, as is forward motion once you've got started (though it's really hard not to push the stick forward anyway, there's nothing like 20 years of muscle memory to force you into a redundant action).

Motion is utterly fluid, as you might expect from the studio behind the *OlliOlli* skating games, and the general feeling is that perhaps *Tony Hawk* wasn't exciting enough, so someone decided to add guns to his world. Replayability is high, as you're encouraged to play arenas over and over to increase your score once you've cracked surviving them, with pickups and targets to hit around the arena, sometimes added in by helicopter while the match is underway.

The background to the near-future roller-slaughter is as keenly designed as the cel-shaded aesthetic of the game itself. You're paying to enter these games, racking up a ruinous debt to the company, Matterhorn, that runs the championship in the process. It develops into an uncomfortable relationship between Matterhorn's weapons development, the RollerDrome, and law enforcement, and blossoms as you pick up hints about what's really going on, and whether you'll ever be allowed to leave, even if you win.



Flamboyantly clearing each arena is the best way to win.



Defeat rivals with tricks including slowing down time.



Tony Hawk not exciting enough? Just add guns.



A helicopter drops pickups and targets to hit in the arena.

Given what you discover, you should feel exceptionally guilty about the slow-mo bullets you pump into house players while hanging upside down in mid-air, but this is impossible. Playing *Rollerdrome* is such a blast, such a direct shot to the pleasure centers of the brain, that questions of morality pale alongside the prospect of more time spent wall-running with a shotgun.

### SIMPLE INGREDIENTS

There aren't many weapons, only a limited number of environments to use them in, and there aren't many things to do, but the game spins so much cloth out of its simple ingredients—roll, shoot, jump, trick, dodge, and slow down time—that it doesn't matter. There's always another approach, always space to skate around and have another go.

One major shock is that this, at the time of writing, is a staunchly single-player game. Online leaderboards are the closest you get to interaction with other players.

This seems like a major shortcoming and a multiplayer patch must surely be at some stage of development. One-on-one duels, co-op PVE, and even an entirely new team sport in the spirit of *Speedball* could be born out of this.

Another is the difficulty. The game wants you to spend time perfecting your scores in its arenas, and no jump is so stark as that between the first and second areas. The game has a tutorial, in which you prove your basic competence with the controller and the moves it facilitates, then drops you into the locker room before the first arena. You'll pass this one quite easily with a mediocre score and, bitten by the violent-skating bug, eagerly move on to the next. The difficulty spike is prodigious—suddenly there are snipers and helicopters and guys with rocket launchers. You head back to replay the earlier level, chastened.

The replays, however, are still fun. Merely surviving a level to unlock the next is only the beginning, and there are

always more targets to hit, time limits to beat, and additional points to score.

*Rollerdrome* is an example of a game in which the various systems come together and just work. Its retro-cel-shaded looks are cool, its premise is cool, and its action scenes are cool. The dystopian backstory you pull out of it is also cool, if you thought *Robocop* was cool. Roll7 is onto something huge here, and when you consider that this isn't even a full-priced game and has low specs, that makes it all the more worth playing. —IAN EVENDEN

**VERDICT**  
**9**  
**Rollerdrome**  
**SKATE** Cool looks; cool game; makes you feel extremely cool.

**HATE** Difficulty spikes; screaming out for multiplayer mode.

**RECOMMENDED SPECS** CPU, i3-610 / FX-6300. RAM, 4GB. GPU, GTX 560 Ti (2GB) / R9 270X (4GB) / Radeon Vega 8.

\$30, www.rollerdromegame.com, M-rated

**TAIWAN ON TOP**  
How TSMC conquered  
the chip world **PG. 32**



**DIY DIGITAL HUB**  
Turn an old computer  
into a digital dashboard **PG. 70**



**INTEL'S ARC REVIEWED**  
Can it compete with  
AMD and Nvidia? **PG. 74**



# MAXIMUM PC

MINIMUM BS • NOVEMBER 2022 • [www.maximumpc.com](http://www.maximumpc.com)

## BUILD A **\$990** GAMING PC

- ✓ Intel 12400 CPU & Nvidia 3050 GPU
- ✓ Perfect for 1080p gaming
- ✓ PLUS! Best budget peripherals

**STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE**  
Build your own low-price system  
**PG. 16**

### 2023 GAMES PREVIEW

The best games and tech from Gamescom **PG. 50**



Digital Edition