



# TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

Say "aloha" to massively open online racing

PUBLISHER: Atari DEVELOPER: Eden Games GENRE: Racing AVAILABILITY: Retail, E-tail ([www.testdriveunlimited.com](http://www.testdriveunlimited.com)) ESRB RATING: Everyone 10+ MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2.4GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 8GB hard drive space, 256MB videocard (driving wheel recommended) MULTIPLAYER: 2-8 players VERSION REVIEWED: Final Downloadable

## REVIEW

**Y** On the mainland, even the most environmentally challenged redneck knows our smoking, polluting car culture is on the ropes. Well, screw the mainland; in Hawaii, gas gobbling isn't merely tolerated—it's *mandatory*. The more cars you have and the more miles you rack up, the better your place in life. You establish your relationships in them, and you make a name for yourself in them. In Hawaii, sidewalks exist only as runoff room for aggressive drivers.

This is the highly social, vehicle-crazed world of *Test Drive Unlimited*, a game so revolutionary and so downright ambitious that you can almost forget all those horrid *Test Drives* preceding it. *Almost*.

### SUPERMODEL HITCHHIKERS? SIGN ME UP!

*TDU* is no mere racer—it's a driving-centric, "massively open online racing" lifestyle. One minute you're slamming along a six-lane interstate at 200-plus mph with a gaggle of Euro-exotic speed merchants, the next you're taxiing some incredibly hot supermodel hitchhiker. Then you buy yourself some androgynously chic new duds, or perhaps a bigger garage for your fleet. In between, you might take a leisurely cruise with your buddies, unlocking new roads and challenges...or maybe just seeing the sights.

And what sights: Developer Eden Games (*Need for Speed: Porsche Unleashed*) somehow re-created the entire Hawaiian island of Oahu for your driving pleasure. The *entire* island. It's an amazing achievement that'll keep you exploring for weeks, if just to soak up the incredibly lush locales and diverse roadways. Moreover, most every horizontal surface is navigable—including tons of nooks and crannies in which to temporarily cower from the local constabulary.

Yet some may find Eden's freewheeling, unstructured concept more purposeless than compelling. Moreover, ultrahardcore racers will cringe at the arcade-meets-sim physics modeling and the lack of

car tweaking. Still, with the exception of the game's few available motorcycles—which feel more tacked on than integral—*TDU's* vehicles handle more plausibly than those in prior *Need for Speeds* or *Test Drives*. And for drivers who like to dig around, *TDU* supplies plenty of incentive.

### OH, THE HUMANITY!

The game integrates online racing unlike anything before, effectively eradicating the line between multiplayer and single-player competition. Indeed, hundreds or thousands of humans roam the world right alongside the far inferior bots. Granted, you see and interact with a maximum of just eight random cars at a time, but snagging one for a fully customizable 1-on-1 challenge is as easy as checking your map, heading to that location, and flashing your headlights. A return flash means the duel is on. You'll likely need to drop your resolution to prevent a slideshow, and certainly some competitors warp around like crazy, but a patch should hopefully resolve that.

Online perks aside, *TDU* works so well because it nails that fine balance point between insane speed and due care. Though you (sadly) can't damage your own car, you generally need to steer clear of both the scenery and the traffic while also interpreting your GPS directions *and* racing as fast as possible. Tense? The only way it could be more so is if the game supported rain and night driving.

Rough in spots and a bit too casual for some, *Test Drive Unlimited* nevertheless delivers a truly innovative format and a gorgeous, massive world populated by real people. Now get in and drive! **•Gord Goble**



• Setting up the parameters for a 1-on-1 online challenge is as easy as scrolling around a map and placing icons. Then you're off to the races.

### VERDICT

Transparent online multiplayer; stunning digital treatment of Hawaii.

Can't manually alter your car; no night or rain; free-form play not for everyone.

8/10

GOOD



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