

PHONICAUK



the mobile phone and gaming magazine

Issue 2

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HTC HERO

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**BECOME THE
ULTIMATE DJ**
SCRATCH: THE ULTIMATE DJ

HTC TATTOO BRINGS ANDROID TO ALL

HTC Corporation recently introduced the HTC Tattoo, an Android-based phone that brings broad personalization to the masses. With its distinct design and ability to personalize all aspects of the phone, from its hardware to its applications and content, people are able to express themselves and create their own individual mobile experience.

“Everyone wants their own phone to feel like it was specifically made for them. The Tattoo, with HTC Sense represents an easy way to shape your own distinct mobile experience and really make it your own,” said Peter Chou, Chief Executive Officer, HTC Corporation. “The HTC Tattoo ensures that you can create the most engaging and appropriate mobile experience through simple yet powerful personalization.”

“THE TATTOO, WITH HTC SENSE REPRESENTS AN EASY WAY TO SHAPE YOUR OWN DISTINCT MOBILE EXPERIENCE.”

HTC Tattoo is the second phone to embody HTC Sense, a mobile experience focused on putting people at the centre by making your phone work in a more simple and natural way. Designed by listening and observing how people live and communicate, HTC Sense revolves around three fundamental principles *Make it Mine, Stay Close and Discover the Unexpected.*

With HTC Tattoo, you stay close to the important people in your life by integrating your communications and applications including voice calls, emails, texts, photos and status updates into one consolidated view, providing innovative and fun phone experiences. The stylish HTC Tattoo is small and compact, fitting snugly into your hand or pocket. People are able to design and purchase their own unique covers or search and select from popular cover designs, altering the look of the phone to reflect their mood or individual tastes.

HTC Tattoo integrates Google’s innovative mobile services including: Google Maps, Google Search, Google Mail, and Android Market where users can download thousands of popular applications and games. It also comes complete with a broad variety of hardware features including a 3.2 megapixel camera, 3.5mm stereo headset jack and expandable microSD memory.

This latest Android powered handset will be available in Europe first in October, and will roll out in markets around the world in the following months.

www.htc.com



REVIEWS

NOKIA E63 SMARTPHONE NOKIA'S BLACKBERRY BEATER?

With the success that BlackBerry has had with its business-orientated smartphones, it's not surprising that big manufacturers like Nokia have responded with phones like the E63. To many in the industry it's seen as the company's first BlackBerry-beater and an indication that BlackBerry's niche in the market is getting smaller by the day as other manufacturers exploit the potential of handsets for power and business users.

The E63 most importantly supports push email and you can edit attachments on the handset and browse the web on the 2.36-inch QVGA display (boasting 16 million colours) with relative ease. The interface is as fast as any smartphone currently available and the battery life impressive. With a talktime of around 4.6 hours over 3G, and 11 hours over 2G, an impressive standby of 430 hours, the E63 is a great all round proposition if you're like me you need to stay in touch, while always on the move.

So what won't it do? Well firstly the E63 doesn't boast GPS, so it's use as a hand held or in-car navigation tool isn't possible without a compatible GPS receiver. Also omitted from the spec is High-Speed Down-link Packet Access (HSDPA) or 3G+ as it's sometimes called. HSDPA data is only really required if you ever need to use your phone as a broadband modem. In normal use web browsing quick enough and pages render at an acceptable speed, with only data heavy websites suffering lag. In practice it doesn't really affect the handset's usability, as push-email and Internet browsing is also available through the network of Wi-Fi hotspots worldwide or your home of office network with the E63's built in WLAN to supplement the 3G network.

The E63 runs the Symbian 9.2 smartphone OS and the Series 60 3.1 user interface. This means that there's a vast array of applications available and most importantly, the operating system seems to be very stable and bug-free. The built in camera is only 2 megapixels with a fixed focus, its adequate for the job and we must remember the prime function for this handset is mobile communications for business and power leisure users. Another nice feature is VOIP and Skype compatibility allowing free or cheap rate world-wide calls to and from other VOIP users and landlines using Wi-Fi networks or 3G mobile Internet. For all those Facebook fans out there, your Social networking needs are also catered for with the app pre-installed.

"THE E63 MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE BUSINESS USER AND ALLOWS QUICK AND EASY TEXT ENTRY FOR TEXT AND E-MAILS."





The QWERTY keyboard is ergonomically shaped and actually felt easier to use than my 8300 BlackBerry Curve, it meets the needs of the business user and allows quick and easy text entry for text and e-mails, though I wouldn't like to try and write a document that's too lengthy. This article was actually first written on the E63 to test that theory out, and although much slower than using my laptop, it proves it's possible! Another great feature is Nokia's Navi Key, which works better and feels more precise than the BlackBerry trackball, allowing quick and easy navigation from the home screen to sub-menus and while browsing the web.

By the time you read this there will probably be yet more smartphones entering the market that offer QWERTY keyboards, mobile internet and a wealth of other features, with some needed in everyday life other not. But having used the E63 in place of my Curve for a month now, one fact remains that the Nokia E63 is an impressive phone, easy to use and seamlessly allowing you to keep in touch with family and colleagues via quad band compatibility wherever you are in the world. It gives the end user a more cost-effective option for those not wanting built in GPS or a high resolution camera. In fact, if these are not on your list of priorities, I would recommend the E63 just for its keyboard, e-mail, VOIP compatibility and battery life alone.

At the time of writing this article the handset is available on contract from a little as £17 a month on 3 Mix & Match 300 or £20 a month on Orange 200, but shop around....there's always a better deal.

Peter Gray

REVIEWS

DROPLITZ

DEVELOPER: BLITZ ARCADE

PUBLISHER: ATLUS

Remember the hacking mini-game in the 2007 game of the year Bioshock? Well that's what immediately sprang to mind when I first started playing Droplitz. Available as a download on XBLA for the 360, PlayStation Network, Windows PC, and iPhone. Developer Atlus and the distributor Blitz Arcade see Droplitz as both a cerebral challenge, and a relaxing, almost meditative experience.

In a nutshell the game consists of a series of boards, onto which dials are situated. The dials have a variety of path formations that if correctly orientated will allow liquid to pass through them. Spouts at the top of the screen randomly leak drops of ominous looking liquid, and it's up to the player to use the dials to link up a route for these 'Droplitz' to reach collectors at the bottom. Once linked that completed pathway is highlighted in a neon glow and once all the Droplitz from that leak are collected the dials then disappear and a new formation takes their place. If you fail to link a route for a drop, it's lost forever and once all your reserve is depleted, the game ends. If however you do create a clear route your supply is topped up and extra Droplitz can be gained by performing combos linking more than one route together.

At the start you get the option of choosing a colour theme that suits your eye, and soon the Tron-esc neon graphics and chilled ambient electronic music works it's magic to get you hooked. Once bitten Droplitz is the kind of game that consumes time without you realising it and many a train journey in the last month has flown by without me realising it. One touch I personally loved was the intensity and complexity of how the music increases as the game progresses, adding to the urgency that you must complete that board.

On the iPhone the game has 3 modes – Normal, Hardcore and Infinite. My favourite of this initially was infinite, where the Droplitz never run out. But once the basics are mastered the Normal and a faster Hardcore mode add to the pressure. On the iPhone, simply touching them rotates the dials, and it's this interaction and tactile game play that makes Droplitz so much fun to play.

“DROPLITZ IS A SIMPLE AND ADDICTIVE GAME THAT IS ABOVE SIMILAR OFFERINGS.”

The Xbox Live Arcade version has Classic, Zendurance, Power Up and Infection modes and the dials are moved by using the Xbox controller. In Classic mode consisting of nine boards, they increase in size and difficulty as you progress and the player has control in the order that the boards are completed. Each requires a score be met on the adjacent board before it's available.

The three other game variations are unlocked by reaching high scores. In these modes you are confronted with slow moving and infected dials, you get to use bombs to clear sections of the board, or just aim for the highest score possible within a limited amount of time. There are online leaderboard's and 12 trophies/achievements to unlock and be awarded. The score-based game play makes every game a competition to get to the top of the leaderboards.

In conclusion Droplitz is a simple and addictive game that has touches that lift it above and beyond similar offerings. It works well on all platforms and using a game controller, but my advice is if you are an iPod touch or iPhone user this is a must have game app, as the interface is best suited to this platform and the two just work seamlessly hand in hand together.

Peter Gray



REVIEWS

FEATURE

FORGOTTEN GEMS

BLADE RUNNER

(PC, 1997)

There are a number of reasons why Blade Runner, the 1997 point and click, is a memorable title, and why it should be included in the Forgotten Gems section. Firstly, it is one of the few games to be based on a film that was actually any good. 99.999% percent of games that are centred on a popular film are poor at best, due to them usually being nothing more than an advertising tie-in to make a quick buck off the back of a summer blockbuster. Secondly, Blade Runner was the first point and click adventure game to feature real time 3D graphics, a major feat at the time. But thirdly, and most importantly, Blade Runner was one of a group of exceptional point and click games that were released just as the genre was unceremoniously killed off. Let's look at what made Blade Runner such a great piece of adventure gaming, before studying the chain reaction that led to its downfall.

If you've ever seen the 1982 film Blade Runner, directed by Ridley Scott and starring a relatively fresh-faced Harrison Ford, you'll be fully aware of what a seminal piece of cinema it is. Not only was it a complex study into what constitutes as 'alive', or the relevancy of a soul, it was also visually stunning and totally apart from anything of the time. Set in the perpetual midnight world of a future Los Angeles, with every aching building draped with neon lights and damp with acid rain, Blade Runner was a jaw-dropping sight. So, making a game to match the film was obviously going to be a massive task, but Westwood studios pulled it off to a tee, creating a world that perfectly represented every dark aspect of the film.

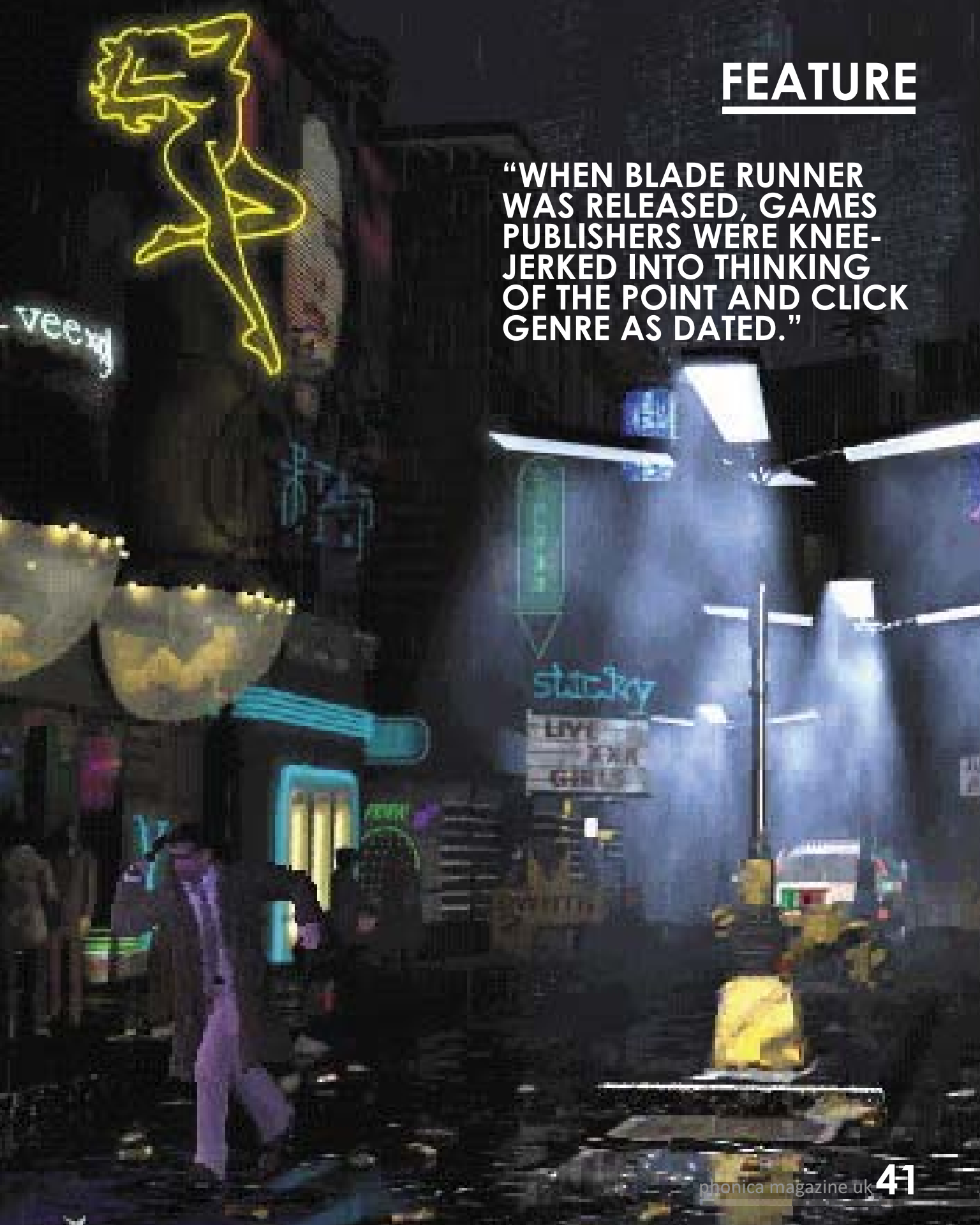
As for gameplay, Blade Runner was the classic point and click mix of problem solving and crime busting, with the occasional blast of action thrown in for good measure, but there was also a clever feature that allowed for repeated play. Depending on the manner you played Blade Runner, and how and when you chose to make your decisions, the ending would alter to compensate for this. So if you decided early on to rebel against authority, instead of playing by the rules, the ending would differ. This was a monumental addition, giving Blade Runner (unlike a replicant) an almost unlimited lifespan; more than 10 years prior to Fallout 3 using the same technique.

Sadly though, when Blade Runner was released in 1997, games publishers were knee-jerked into thinking of the point and click genre as dated. With the advent of new consoles such as the Playstation boasting better graphic and pursuing more action-packed style of gaming, publishers such as LucasArts considered the methodical, slow-paced gameplay of the point and click game as having had its day, and slowly started to reduce their production. Due to this, excellent and critically acclaimed games like Blade Runner, Grim Fandango and The Curse of Monkey Island were quietly released without any major advertising or support.

Luckily though, the point and click genre is currently having a mini renaissance at present, so these titles can finally receive the accolades they deserved, and the attention they were unfairly robbed of. So, if you get a chance, get yourself a copy of Blade Runner and get sucked into a world of neon lights and angry shadows, with a game that was years ahead of its time. You won't regret it!

Scott Tierney

“WHEN BLADE RUNNER WAS RELEASED, GAMES PUBLISHERS WERE KNEE-JERKED INTO THINKING OF THE POINT AND CLICK GENRE AS DATED.”



REVIEWS

BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM

(PS3, PC, XBOX 360)

There's something reassuringly human about Batman. Yup, he's a perfect physical specimen and yup, he has that irrepressible urge to fight injustice, but we can all relate to that. Who hasn't wanted to bench press a Peugeot 206 and then beat up a mugger? It's in our DNA.

Batman: Arkham Asylum is Rocksteady's take on a character that's fronted at least a dozen execrable games in his time. It's surprising, because the Frank Miller / Grant Morrison / Chris Nolan image of Batman – brooding, tortured, and driven – is pure fantasy gold. Industrial gothic styling, angst-driven ultra violence...all the ingredients are there, but hardly anyone has ever got the gaming mix right. Take a bow, Rocksteady. You've done it.

The premise is inspired, loosely, by Grant Morrison's graphic novel of the same name. The Joker's free in Arkham with Harley, Bane, Poison Ivy, the Scarecrow and several hundred muscled henchmen. What's he up to? Can Bats get to the bottom of it? Will he beat down a lot of bad guys en route? I don't need to answer these questions, do I?

Arkham Asylum's greatest achievement might well be that it makes Batman feel human. You sense every broken bone, every snapped sinew, as Batman spins from knucklehead to knucklehead blocking attacks, busting heads and just generally fighting the good fight. Unarmed enemies are a breeze, with one button for a context-sensitive attack and another to block and counter incoming punches. Right from the off, controlling the Dark Knight in melee is fluid and joyous, with large squads of hired muscle offering no match to your ninja street fighting.



“THE JOKER’S BEAUTIFULLY VOICED BY MARK HAMILL, WHICH IS HANDY. HE TALKS AN AWFUL LOT.”

At the same time, Bats is vulnerable. You’re not impervious to bullets and, as the game progresses, your foes get ever more lethal. Faced with a room full of 5 gun-toting sociopaths, you’ll need to take the stealth route. Grapple up to a handily-placed gargoyle then glide down and introduce boot to face. Spray explosive gel on a wall, hide round the corner, then set it off and watch the thugs tumble. Did I mention Batarangs? Obviously there are Batarangs.

Then there’s Detective Vision. With a flick of the shoulder button you’ll be able to see through walls, analyse crime scenes and track clues. It’s beautifully done and plays to the measured, tech-driven side of the Bat. He may be on his own, but he’s got a billion dollars worth of crime-busting gear with him.

It’s not perfect. It’s fundamentally a linear narrative: you’re driven from one section of Arkham to the next. You can explore to find Riddler trophies, which will enhance XP and unlock power-ups, but you don’t have to: just keep an eye on the map and follow the hints. The Joker’s beautifully voiced by Mark Hamill, which is handy. He talks an awful lot.

So nothing ground-breaking here, except the simple fact that this is an outstanding superhero game with real polish and satisfying gameplay. Even with very few other pretenders to that plaudit, it delivers.

Rob Hobson

OVERALL
9.5/10



REVIEWS

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2 (ALL FORMATS)



The Colin McRae series has changes significantly over the past 10 years. What was originally a highly sophisticated, straight-faced rallying simulator, has now become a wild-eyed, tongue and cheek arcade thrill-fest. But is this a bad thing, and is the latest offering from Codemasters, Colin McRae: Dirt 2, any good?

Straight off the bat let me just say that, Colin McRae: Dirt 2, is visually stunning! There are some good looking games out at present, and the current crop of racers (Forza 2, Gran Turismo, etc) are still extremely sharp, but this is something else. It manages to capture a delicate mix of precise photo-realism, while still going all out for outrages thrills. After a particularly frantic race, you're treated to a replay of you mud based exploits. With most games, chances are you'll skip the instant replay with a casual dismiss, but in Colin McRae: Dirt 2, the replay quality is so good, even the dullest of races is made to look epic. Mud and gravel fly through the air, leaves fall from trees when frantically passed, and all the vehicles are beautifully crafted. It's stunning, simply stunning. So, to look at and admire, Colin McRae: Dirt 2 is a visual masterpiece. As a game though, it's a hard one to call.





Codemasters have unashamedly gone straight at the jugular of the MTV generation with game, making parts of it feel like the inside of a teenage brat's bedroom. All the music is very current and – I use this word loosely – edgy; there's a lot of words like 'dude' and 'bro' being hurled around by painfully cool drivers and the whole design of the menus are funky.

“STRAIGHT OFF THE BAT LET ME JUST SAY THAT, COLIN MCRAE: DIRT 2, IS VISUALLY STUNNING!”

Codemasters have tried everything to make it cool, and to a certain extent Colin McRae: Dirt 2 is so. But sadly it's cool in the same way as a student loan leaflet from the bank, written by a committee with an average age of 57. It's trying to be cool, but it just comes across as awkward and fake. Luckily though, once you've dug through all this corporate coolness, you'll find that Colin McRae: Dirt 2 is a fantastic game.

As with all the Colin McRae games, the central core is the racing; and in Colin McRae: Dirt 2, it's superb. Once you've thrashed through the beautifully tropical jungles of Malaysia at 170mph, bouncing your car off the gravel and power-sliding through the dense undergrowth, nothing else but the racing matters. As you splash through a massive puddle, coating your turbo-charged 4x4 with mud while you power past another competitor, you forget all the loading screens and the cringe-worthy coolness; it just doesn't matter. The gameplay is so strong, that you'd forgive Colin McRae: Dirt 2 anything.

To sum up, Colin McRae: Dirt 2 is a brilliant racer that'll excite and delight the casual gamer, while still providing enough realism and challenge for the hardcore racer. It's just such a shame that all this quality is coated in a slimy layer of presumptuous coolness; Dude..... man.....what?

Scott Tierney

OVERALL
8.5/10