

WELL ENDOWED

# FERRARI CHALLENGE

**C**onsole simulation racing games are increasing by numbers but there's a rudimentary problem with a large proportion of them. Some scientifically reproduce dynamics based on manufacturer data but seldom few have actually driven the cars featured in their games, and even then only a minority are attended to. To get anywhere near close, developers employ test drivers - human beings that have proven real-world experiences - to fine-tune physics systems and replicate the dynamics of racing.

On paper *Ferrari Challenge* has the best chance of recreating the fundamentals of a good racing game. Unsurprisingly Ferrari supplied data to build the foundations, but project leader Mark Cale is a passionate Ferrari collector who can leverage real-world experiences of the marquee, hiring Bruno Senna, videogamer and nephew to the legendary Ayrton Senna, as handling consultant, a proven racing driver participating in the GP2 championship and the European Ferrari Challenge series. Crucially the people involved have first hand experiences of Ferrari and the sport.

Built to simulation rules, the handling model is challenging yet civilised. As expected your F430 faithfully loses adhesion in extreme circumstances, visibly twitching and stressing through fast corners and on surface undulations warranting feint opposite lock but, with moderation, it's possible to tail slide the full length of a curve. In chase cam with assists off the experience gleefully flirts with arcade characteristics, wonderfully replicating what you may expect of a modern mechanical *OutRun*, raising a charming smile from cheek to cheek.

That's not to say things are always so playful. From rolling starts the fifteen AI are keen to

slipstream, race wheel-to-wheel and, sometimes with adverse consequences, peek their noses in to view by out-braking you and each other. In fact the testosterone fuelled AI can seem aggressively audacious, not shy of a little bump and grind resulting in bright tracers and shards of coachwork indicating impact. Play hard too much and you'll damage your car, albeit not performance affecting, losing persistent body panels to the track. The AI also reveals defensive manoeuvres like weaving to eradicate slipstreaming and cutting across your bow approaching corners protecting the inside line. Fortunately you can apply the same tactics to hoax the driver ahead and overtake on the other side of the track.

This isn't a predictable on-rails experience. The AI clearly demonstrates a dynamic competitive nature not bound to racing lines, adapting to your track position numerous times and recreating an intense wheel-to-wheel experience better than any other in the genre.



## FORMAT REVIEWED

PlayStation 3

## OTHER FORMATS

Wii, PS2, DS

## PUBLISHER

System 3

## DEVELOPER

Eutechnyx

## REVIEWED BY

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**“A RAW EXPERIENCE THAT  
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YOUR EMOTIONS”**

The fifteen strong track roster is, without doubt, best in class. F1 circuits Monza, Silverstone, Hockenheim & Montreal and MotoGP's Mugello & Valellunga tender a mix of fast flowing corners, swift double-apexes, weaving s-bends and cambers garnished with swaying trees, dynamic flag-waving marshals, even moving clouds along with a plethora of other subtle effects and in wet conditions objects are reflected, cars are smothered and raindrops ripple the track. The pinnacle has to be Spa-Francorchamps, the world's grandest circuit that throws everything at you unravelled in over two minutes of pure joy and providing one of the greatest racing experiences you'll ever have.

Challenge races are timed so when the clock reaches zero whoever completes the next full lap first wins, but the lack of a restart option means you'll finish in last position if you quit a race. Race length is scalable from 5, 15, 30 and 45 minutes as are difficulty levels, assists, wheel sensitivities and car set-ups. Progress unlocks circuits and you accumulate credits to buy Ferraris, old and new, offering a diverse range of handling models from the skittish 250 GTO and 365 Daytona to the breakneck Enzo FXX or F333 SP. Trophy mode lets you race unlocked cars in mini-tournaments to gain access to even more Ferrari's which you can decorate using the decal editor, however, the hapless controls and image manipulation aren't at all precise.

Engineered to 1080p, the 30fps endures marginal dips in frames but not enough to distract from the action ahead. And although locations are detailed, people may be underwhelmed by the visual presentation even though the dark and gritty style perfectly suits. Cars are detailed with locking straps, consequential shattered glass, scrapes and full interior modelling along with the obligatory pan option. Replays suffer pop-in but are energetic and highlight the AI's competitiveness and frailties using various camera angles. The DTS sound is also solid; accelerating engines whine, bigger V blocks viciously roar on change down, kerbs rumble and bodywork creaks under the strain but collisions sound like grating sandpaper on impact.



Unfortunately the online mode doesn't always work. You'll occasionally manage to participate in a race but for the majority of the time you'll be joining empty lobbies or become the sole contender on the racetrack. There's also a Time Trial option to compete against gamers worldwide but it's inconsistent, not recognising posted times plus no ghost option is available.

It may be hard to believe but Eutechnyx have punched above their weight by such a margin other racing games may start to feel lifeless. The senses are consistently battered revealing a raw experience that rewards effort and flirts with your emotions. It may be not be the technical tour de force gamers might expect but the game has an abundance of detail and playability created with passion, by people who own and race Ferraris. The fundamentals we talked about earlier - the handling, AI and track selection - are the heart and soul of this experience that absolutely cement *Ferrari Challenge* as one of the finest racing games this writer has ever played.

**VERDICT** ★★★★★