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[Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories](#)

Crime pays, GTA sells

Rockstar is back packing a lot of steam and it's the yearly (recently monthly) installment in the GTA series we all love to play. It's a pretty unusual port, this [Vice City Stories](#), since it initially surfaced for the PSP console, getting a lot of praise from both gamers and press. While it was being ported to the PS2, Vice City seemed to have lost some important aspects, like the whole multiplayer, the ability to listen to your own songs and even the graphics are not quite what we expected. If you miss the good old [GTA games](#) and can't wait to play the "number IV" title, try Vice City Stories, for the PS2, but if you have the PSP version, you'd better settle for that. **Story**Back to 1984, you'll control Vic Vance, a tough army man that feels the calling of criminal activities. GTA will never go sci-fi, as the eighties are the perfect setting for action that's similar to the Scarface and Godfather movies. However, we're not talking about any Tony Montana here, since Vic is a ruthless man, but without a fascinating personality and memorable lines. He'll have to build a criminal empire of his own dispatching all of the gangs that dare to defy him. You'll start the game as a normal soldier in the US Army, but soon after, you'll be lured into criminal activities and the fun reaches its climax when you're kicked out of the army for bringing prostitutes and drugs to the boot camp. **Concept**GTA is the classical third person shooter and driving game we've all come to like and if you want a game that defines the genre, you've got it. Things have changed from the past [Vice City](#) game on the PS2...NOT. Rockstar brought us a brand new the same engine from the previous installment with a little touch on the graphical side to charm the noobies that didn't play the previous installments in this ka-ching generator series. It's a pretty controversial game, clearly M rated since it involves prostitution, drug usage, violent speech, cruelty and violence and basically any violation of the law and the Ten Commandments. You'll be driving cars as always, but also boats, helicopters and even jet skis. That's no sightseeing as you'll use those means of transportation to deliver packages, go for your enemies and reach new areas. Don't expect good car physics, because GTA was never a champion in this field, but you'll have a pretty decent driving experience, when you're done smashing other cars or hitting pedestrians. The targeting system has a bit of a problem, especially when you're near the enemy and you'll surely be missing if you try a close-range headshot. It's best to shoot your foes from a pretty decent distance if you want to be the one standing after the shootout. R1 is the targeting button and Vice City Stories uses an auto-locking system that's quite pedestrian-friendly. Targets are changed automatically, and the auto-lock tries not to focus on the bystanders or civilians passing by. Like they could escape Vic's wrath anyway...Saving your game has become an ordeal for those used to rely on auto saves and checkpoints. You'll have to look for save points now and go back through a whole level only to record your progress on the memory card. It gets frustrating to be interrupted by such measly aspects when you were just getting the hang of it. Like in all the GTA games so far, you can stick to the main mission set or start playing a free-roaming game, shooting people around, performing car stunts and collecting cash. You can start building your own criminal empire and organization by eliminating the rival gangs and taking over their businesses. Stuff like illegal loans, brothels, protection fees or smuggling will be on Vic's agenda for sure, as he's not law upholder. If you're doing a normal main mission, you can also trigger all sorts of sub-missions that will appear on the map, but they're optional so there's no rush to complete them all. Aside from the gang wars, you'll have to deal with the law enforcement organizations as well. If you're smuggling some weed or you've just beaten up somebody, the police will be coming, but if you're bringing tons of coke to the country, it's time for the SWAT and the FBI to join the

party. There's a clear improvement in the AI compartment when you're fighting professional counter terrorist units. Snipers will take you down, grenades will destroy your cars and allies, so it's better to lay low and bribe people than start shooting or getting shot. It's not only the shots you must fear while playing Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories, when enemies attack you with baseball bats, knives or punch you in the face. Get smart and use shotguns, sub machine guns, rocket launchers, an AK 47 or a clean sniper to put holes in your enemies' skulls. In previous GTA games, hitting the water meant certain death, especially if you were inside a speeding vehicle. Now you can finally swim, even if you were driving a ten ton truck that fell off the bridge straight into the ocean. Too bad that you'll have to swim a lot to reach the shore and you'll die when your stamina meter gets depleted.

Gameplay While the auto-locking system tries to keep civilian casualties under control, you won't and you'll be a most wanted criminal in no time. Vic's relationship with the police is rather special, since they can sometimes hunt you down, but they can also ignore you while you're taking the prostitutes to "work". Like in the real life, there are vendettas to be performed and if you've hurt a local godfather, you'll have to pay one way or the other. A fine example of the AI's implication in the whole plot and motivation of the NPCs is the fact that gangs members come back to the headquarters you've captured to try and reclaim their ground. Expect some serious shootouts and there's even an option to hire bodyguards if you feel that your criminal empire is in danger and might lose its headquarters. Money makes the world go round, not only in the movies and songs, but also in Vice City Stories and there are a million things to do to get cash while playing the game. From the basic package delivery business, to smuggling weapons and prostitution, you'll earn the needed dollars according to the level of the operation. If it's a small deal, there's a couple of hundreds of dollars on their way to your account. Go big and sell kilos of good stuff and you'll be buying expensive mansions, cars and helicopters. If you're in the mood for some car stunts, Vice City Stories allows you to do those too and they will award you with cash, but not as much as we'd like to. Anyway, it's the perfect method to get your vehicle totaled while going for the high score. Curious to check out your ride? Once you enter any type of vehicle, its name will be shown on the bottom right side of the screen. I don't have any suggestions but isn't this game supposed to be different from the GTA title that was released 5 years ago, at least in the driving section? Cars are still bumping around, jumping high, getting damaged too early or catching fire instantly after a couple of hits. Even if Vic is a criminal, he has a soft spot for those important sub-missions and you'll have the chance to become a taxi driver, do vigilante missions or drive an ambulance. These are familiar tasks, present in the previous games too, but now there's a new one called beach patrol. See that beautiful girl dressed in red from the screenshots below? It's the red Baywatch uniform that made Pamela Anderson so famous. Some may wonder what's new about the Beach Patrol mode, but don't expect much since you'll be saving swimmer's lives, chasing off bikers from the beach and doing all the stuff we've seen in the Baywatch series. You can't be the perfect player and you'll surely see the "wasted" screen a couple of times, that being a not very subtle way of telling you it's game over. When you die you're taken automatically to the hospital where you'll be stripped of your items and some of your cash. The same happens when you'll be busted for stealing cars and pulled out of the incriminating vehicle. However, you can bribe the policemen or nurses if you want to leave the precinct or hospital with all the weapons you previously had. Building an empire is not that easy and there are certain sequences you must follow if you want the criminal organization done right. First, Vic has to destroy the gang's car parked on their territory. The gangsters will get angry and they'll come out shooting, falling in your trap. After wasting them, it's time to claim their house and belongings, weapons and the whole business. Controls are better in the PS 2 version of Vice City Stories than they were on the PSP one and it's logical, because you'll have to use a gamepad that has more buttons than the portable console. The left analog stick is what you'll use to get around in the City of Vices and crime, while you'll be able to look sideways while driving thanks to the L2 and R2 buttons. The target button, R1 becomes the music

changing button when you're driving and you'll be glad to find out that the great music that all the GTA titles had is back with a punch, specially those great oldies that rocked us in the past. The triangle is still the button used to hijack cars, by pulling people out and they'll usually scream and leave the area, but there are some drivers that become rather violent when you take control of their vehicle. Stealing a car in front of a police officer is not a good idea and he'll instantly appear near you, pulling you out of the just-stolen ride. That equals a fine and the removal of your items, but as I mentioned before, you can bribe the law upholders. Vigilante missions are side-quests that you'll do for fun, by getting on a police motorcycle for example and doing the tasks that are assigned to you. Vigilante mode is triggered by pressing the L3 button and there's a time limit attached to every task that you'll have to do. Usually it's car chasing and detaining suspects, that become rather violent and will try to resist the arrest by shooting their way out. However, nothing beats the great taxi driver missions and the craze starts once the innocent passenger gets on board. Taking them to the destination is the least of your worries as you speed through the worst shortcuts one could choose to make it in time. **Video**Vice City Stories for the PS2 is a true disappointment in the graphical field and even the PSP version looked better. It's like Rockstar kept the same visual effects from 5 years ago, only adding more colors and more naked chicks to distract you from the visual flaws of the game. The cars look pretty nice, as they did in previous installments and it will be a real joy to drive a Lamborghini or a Ferrari, let alone those cool choppers or Honda motorcycles. The problem surfaces when you compare the character's size to the car... Vic must be some sort of giant, since while he's riding the bike he can be taller and bigger than any other car, even bigger than vans. You'll be happy to see neat weather effects like rain or the time of day changing while Vic's hanging out with the bad guys. Sunsets look particularly well, especially when they're seen from a helicopter flying above Vice City. There are tons of bugs to be fixed and when you'll bump into NPCs with your car, you'll get the most hilarious positions I've ever seen in GTA. People float in mid-air, half of their bodies are on the car's hood and half in the air, or you're just passing through their bodies like you were a Poltergeist. **Sound**There's no room for anything less than a straight ten in the sound compartment and I bet that there are some gamers out there that buy GTA each year for its magnificent soundtrack. Featuring 100 songs and some great radio stations to listen to, Vice City Stories' soundtrack can be fun to listen to even when you're not playing the game. Listen to famous classics like "Relax", "Blue Monday", "It's my life or "In the air tonight" and couple them with a fun gameplay situation to get the perfect atmosphere of the eighties. Also you'll be able to tell the difference between the faint sound of an old Dodge engine and the roar of new Lamborghini engine. Once again, voice acting will be something special thanks to the presence of good actors like Gary Busey or Danny Trejo. Once you've hijacked a car, a motorcycle or any other vehicle, you'll automatically listen to its radio station or change another one, more suited to your tastes. You'll be able to listen to V Rock, Flash FM, Paradise FM or VCPR and many others in the search of the perfect tune for the perfect criminal. **Multiplayer** Remember the 6-player mode on the PSP? Forget it, because Grand Theft Auto Vice City Stories is an exclusively single-player game and Rockstar made a fatal mistake by leaving that neat multiplayer mode out. It was basically the salt and pepper of the portable version of Vice City Stories. **Conclusion**When will we ever get rid of rotating pickups? GTA seems to be plagued with the art of creating sequels that are rather expansion packs, bringing only new games modes and taking out other features that we loved in the previous installments. It will be hard to make all the gamers happy, but since the name "Grand Theft Auto" sells anytime anyplace, where's the challenge of making a better game? This title is a mediocre one, a little aperitif to the most awaited game of the year: GTA IV.