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[NBA Live 08](#)

Courting the court...

Fresh after some pleasant shock treatment branded NHL 08, I've had the chance to experience some pro-balling action thanks to [NBA Live 08](#). NHL 08 was OK, FIFA 08 promises to be a hit, but let's see how things are on the basketball court... I've got to tell you right from the start that NBA always tends to be the black sheep of the yearly sports titles releases, or at least it has been for the past two years. NBA 07 was rushed to catch the launch of the next-gen consoles, while NBA 06 brought almost nothing new compared to its predecessor, so it's up to the latest title to bring something positive to the series. **Concept & Gameplay** The game starts with... a [basketball](#) panel and this proves to be the repetitive element of the title, since you'll sometimes see it during the loading screens or before starting a competition. NBA Live 08's main menu looks decent, being practically the same we've seen in NHL 08 and FIFA 08. Even in the demo version of the title you can download from the Xbox Live, there are tons of options to toy with before stepping up on court. You can adjust the rules to your liking, stuff like foul out, shot clock, out of bounds, over and back or the 5 second inbound being customizable. Also, you can change the AI skill level if you want or increase the gameplay speed, if you like fast-paced sports action. Fatigue is also an option in the game and you can tweak it in order to have your players affected by it and your competitor's players as well. Before selecting a team, you might want to check out its attributes, like athleticism, teamwork or defense. The demo allows you to pick two major teams from the US plus Spain and France's national teams. I definitely wanted to play with Spain as I was a fan of theirs during the last year competition, that brought them the World Champ title. Of course, Pau Gasol, the star of the team is included in NBA 08, so chill, as you're going to relive the thrill of those long basketball-watching afternoons all over again. I was surprised to see that you'll be prompted to take part in a trivia game, while the loading screen is on. You'll answer questions by pressing one of the action buttons, each assigned to a certain word or set of words. Stuff like "What college did Shaq attend?" will surely be more enjoyable than a frustrating loading screen. Does a correct answer grant you bonuses? We don't know that, but since this is an Xbox 360 game, there might be some achievements involved, so try to stay focused and answer all of the trivia questions correctly. NBA 08's main innovative features are the "Go to" moves, basically the trademark moves of each famous player you've seen on telly. Also, the latest title in the NBA series features more realistic rebounds (thank God) and a seemingly more realistic collision system. OK, that's what the EA Sports representatives say, that's what all the gaming experts say and that's what I was looking for the whole time while playing the Xbox 360 demo. I may be missing something, but there's no feeling of really bumping into several players while penetrating the Zone and trying to score. What's worse, my player always seems to pass through the others, in his attempt to pull out a neat trick. Also, I may be playing dirty, but the referee has a slight tendency of exaggerating the fouls and giving free throws for free. Of course, the AI never misses and I was surprised to see my virtual opponents throwing perfectly 20 times in a row, after being fouled by my defensive players. If you scroll down this page a bit, you'll see that this preview doesn't include a multiplayer section. Do you know why? Unlike the other major EA franchises getting a new title, NBA 08 doesn't feature a multiplayer mode in its Xbox 360 demo. Yes, the option is present and the on-screen controller avatar will light up if you turn on a second 360 joystick, but there's no way of playing a one-on-one game. Too bad, as the frustration of being beaten by the AI every single game can really spoil a reviewer's day. Please keep in mind that since I only had the chance of playing the title's demo version, also checking out trailers and game facts, that's

all the content I can judge right now. Maybe the full game, being launched a couple of weeks from now will be a stunner, a hit and a worthy rival for NBA 2K8. Who knows? Maybe EA's got some tricks up its sleeve and didn't include them in the demo version of the game.

Video "Video killed a ... basketball star". That's all I can say by checking out NBA 08 before the great launch. The year's 2007 and still there are no major changes in the title's looks, or at least so it seems. How can a 2-meter tall player pass through a short defender? And by "through" I mean that good old buggy way that allows textures to mix, in a way that's fast enough to be missed by the average gamer. You'll probably think that you're seeing things, or that your MVP had a collision with the other team's defender. At least the basketball players resemble their real counterparts, featuring cool hairstyles and all the gear a top sportsman is allowed to wear during a basketball match. The animation is fluid and the fast-paced action, coupled with the quantity of light you'll see on-screen due to the floor's reflection will generate a nice atmosphere, but still those defects I mentioned earlier won't disappear.

Sound Nothing to say here, really, except for the fact that I love the public's reaction to what's happening on the basketball court, both in real life and the game. Also, the title's soundtrack should appeal to all of the rap fans who claim that they listen to quality music. As years pass we tend to associate rappers with bling-bling, fancy cars and...basketball. Don't ask me why, but I guess it might be the fault of this hip-hop based NBA Live soundtracks. Imagine a NFS title without a rockin' soundtrack... It's like Shaq without a slam dunk!

Conclusion No reviewer can say that he's disappointed by a certain demo or trailer, because the full game will always have different features, so you can't cast the stone and then play the game. The flaws I mentioned above may be important, but they won't spoil the fun of playing one of the most famous basketball titles, especially if you're a fan and a collector who's played the previous games. If you're a frequent visitor of the Madison Square Garden and a fan of this sport who never missed a final, try NBA Live 08, but don't forget about NBA 2K8, because it's a worthy competitor and a better game if you ask me. Also keep in mind that tomorrow we'll be getting some goodies on XBLA: the FIFA 08 Xbox 360 demo. Oh God, please make it feature a multiplayer mode!