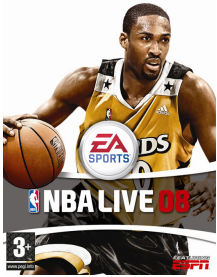


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PC DS



The game's cover

[Nba Live 08](#)

Basketball simulation or just a poor joke?

Franchises. With every big company [buying the smaller](#) developers, more franchises arise. If things keep heading towards this direction where we'll only have 4-5 giants and nothing else, we'll soon end up playing games with double digits in the end. And that is the worst thing a gamer could expect. [Franchises](#). And we have an example right here, with NBA Live 08, one franchise that seems to have debuted since the dawn of time. When I was a young lad who just started playing basketball, I was already dreaming: I was sure that, in a few years, I'll be in the spotlights, surrounded by cheerleaders, with a full crowd yelling my name, remembering my last triple double game. As you can imagine, this was one of those dreams that will never come true and, even more, it's very likely that I will never get the chance to feel the glass of an NBA court. But, at least in theory, there should be a way for me to forget about my delusions and live my dream: the virtual reality or, better said, the virtual worlds. In this particular case, NBA Live 08 is trying to make me feel better, to dress me like a superstar and make me finally become THE MAN. If it is able to succeed in my case, it's very likely that the same will happen to you. So... let's see. **Concept** For all those who want to be basketball superstars themselves or control the big shots like Garnett, Wade, James and so on, EA Sports tries to come with the answer. No, they're not putting up on sale Allen Iverson action figures, they're trying to bring us a sports game. Basically, you have to do exactly what you did while playing the previous iterations: grab a team and win the league, play a "friendly" match, experience the All Star Weekend or begin your dynasty. Which means that, whatever your choice is, you get to play ball, hit the net and draw the plaudits. Be an NBA superstar and prove the skills against the best of the best. It is as easy as it sounds. **Gameplay** For those who played any other NBA Live game, the '08 version doesn't bring too much new things. Basically, there are two major changes for this year's edition. First, the superstar button does not exist anymore, which is a great thing in my opinion. Instead of pressing a button, the superstar moves will now randomly occur so you won't get the chance to win a game by exploiting this feature anymore. Still, you will always know where to go with your players and take your shot, since you have "hot spots" - places on the court from where your players prefer to shoot and have a bigger chance to score. Piece of cake! Except these two major changes (could you really expect more in one year?) there are a few new, smaller, just for the eye features. For example, now you can play a match with one of the eight FIBA teams in the game, your players can get fat during the season break if you're playing the dynasty mode and, overall, the management part of the game has been improved. This is good, but it does not have a big impact regarding the gameplay or the core of the game. The controls in a sports game are essential - bad controls equals zero satisfaction and, even more, leads to frustration. And, unfortunately, NBA Live 08 comes with the same poor control: basically, it is extremely difficult (I could even say impossible) to play this game using the keyboard. I would recommend a pad to get the most out of this game. The defense/offence moves have, as you know, similar buttons and, no matter how you customize these buttons, it will still be hard to press them as you wish and as you should without causing some damage to your fingers. But, if you're a hardcore fan, you'll probably think that "no pain, no gain" is what should be said about the controls. Now, if you sort the controls out, you will still have a few problems. The most frustrating comes when you manage to steal the ball in your own court: the camera rotates and if you are not quick enough to move your finger from the "down" button to the "up" one, you will most likely miss the steal. But, no matter what you do, you will still lose a second which usually means that it will be really hard to go on a counter attack. And since we're here, there is

another problem with the NBA series: the players' speed. Even if you press the turbo button, you don't get the "speed" sensation and your players won't move as fast as they should. Usually they will hit an opponent and ruin the whole thing. Still, NBA 08 seems to bring a little improvement regarding this issue - your players will move better than they did in NBA 07, but still not good enough. Still, you'll have the same issues regarding the rebounds and blocks - you'd better leave that to the AI, it will surely be more successful than you could. One of the things that I hated while playing the previous NBA iterations was the difficulty setting. I usually ended up playing each game with the lowest difficulty setting and beat the hell out of my opponents, because I hated the artificial AI boost. Which wasn't actually a boost - the most superstar mode just made you and your team look dumb, since you could rarely hit the basket if there was another player near you. The issue has been kind of sorted by EA Sports this year: none of these things happen anymore. Unfortunately, that's not a bad thing, since now it just seems too easy to win a superstar match and a rookie one will just bore you to death since there will be no competition. Overall, NBA Live 08 looks more like a patch than an actual sequel or a new game or whatever you want to call it. The players have a few new moves, they have learned some extra things, but no change is big enough to make you feel that you're playing the 2008 version and not the 2007 one.

GraphicsThe same thing happens with the graphics: it's the 2007 game! The players, the court and everything looks like the things you already saw before and Williams still has an obscenely huge head. I don't know why, really. Still, even though the graphics don't look better and you'll still see some strange moves no human could ever be able to do, the animations are a little better, the fakes look a little bit more real and the jump shots really look good. But there is still a big need for a huge change regarding the graphic engine. But, probably, the one thing that needs to be checked by the developers is the "Create player" option. I haven't seen a change there since NBA 2006 or maybe 2005 and that's just not good. I got tired to create myself again and again using the same old options. And that is really a thing I hate.

SoundThe first thing you'll notice is that basketball is not a hip hop exclusive anymore. The music is more varied and you'll have to press the "next song" button quite a few times in order to listen to a hip hop song. I don't want to be mean, but basketball goes hand in hand with the hip hop music. Period. And please, EA, don't you dare to bring us an NBA LIVE 2009 with some emo songs, you'll make Shaq and everybody cry! Apart from the songs, which are ok, if you agree with something else than just hip hop, we get the same old match commentary. It's ok to play 2-3 games in order to listen to the four new lines this new version comes with, then you will most likely turn it off and listen to the crowd or stuff. Because the lines you'll hear will always be the same, like it happens with all the other sports games.

MultiplayerMany mediocre games can be saved by their great online play. Especially sports games, since no matter how you set the AI, nothing compares to a human opponent. Unfortunately, the multiplayer option in NBA Live 08 is outdated and outrageous. The game will only offer the IP play option and, well... that's not enough. We're living in the multiplayer era and all the games try to offer as many multiplayer options as possible. NBA doesn't. Probably EA doesn't care.

ConclusionIf no other NBA game had ever existed and EA Sports had come with NBA Live 08, it would've been a hit. But since we have the same old game, with updated roosters and a few, tiny, improvements, this game is a miss. As I said before, it actually looks more like a patch than a game. The graphics are bad and they have no similarities with the console versions, the controls are bad, the sound is boring and you have no way of beating the hell out of a stranger in an exhibition game. NBA Live 08 is a complete failure. And this happens since EA's game has no competitor on the market. Because of that, they can do whatever they want and you'll still play the game, since you don't have the option to choose. And something should change really soon, or else I'll start thinking that being an NBA superstar is boring.