

By ~~May 2008~~ Dumitrescu, Games Editor

One Hour With: GTA IV and Liberty City

Fist fights and crashes

In today's super quick, hyper active world, there isn't much time for anything. And I find there's less and less time for gaming. Gone are the days when I played bad games almost to the finish just because I could. We, gamers, now live in an age when a game must make an impression or be condemned to the trash bin. The issue is made worse by the fact that the gamer demographic is aging. There are more and more gamers that have demanding work hours, families they want to spend time with or friends that like to go out. So, in many instances, one hour is all a game has to impress someone and acquire the rights to more play time. I decided to take games, give them an hour and tell you what happens. **14:00**. Retail copy of the game arrives. Nice cover work. Even nicer map of Liberty City. Can't wait to explore it all. Then, I take a look at the control layout as it is printed on the back of the map. I spend the next 5 to 10 minutes trying to memorize controls for the mobile phone and the in-car radio stations. I put the map/reference chart away. **14:10**. The game opens with a cinematic sequence that shows Nico coming to Liberty City. No customs and some diamonds. Apparently it's all highly illegal and hush-hush. The fact that cousin Roman is very drunk and is playing extremely loud music probably doesn't help. I think the music is from somewhere in the Balkans, so the mysterious origin of Nico is going to remain hidden for a while (I really had my money on Ukraine). I drive to Roman's house in his rather unresponsive car. **14:20**. Fiddled a bit with the options. I really think I'm gonna need subtitles a lot in this game (I figure Italo-Americans and Afro-Americans are going to come in sporting their own half unintelligible dialects). I also turn the brightness up a bit as the night is very... well, dark. I am in Roman's apartment, which is pretty ruined down with nothing to do. **14:30**. I watched TV and liked it. I wonder if they put full feature movies and documentaries in the game. Damn, it's been half an hour and I haven't done anything illegal. I save on the bed and head out. Time to jack a car and see the town. I don't like the fact that Rockstar made us of a "terror threat" to lock down parts of the city. This is not open world but rather open world with heavy limitations. **14:35**. I have car. It's small and slow and does rather bad. I just went head first into a blockade on one of the bridges and got myself propelled through the window. Cool. Next I'm gonna pick on somebody. **14:40**. Got into a fight with a few guys. I really don't know what determines whether some guy gets help from the other or not. I picked on someone in the street randomly and soon there were five more guys putting the hurt on me. I went down in flames. Hello, hospital! **14:45**. I hustled some random guy, beat him up and I've taken his money. I'm satisfied, the combat is interesting, feels a bit like it needs more rhythm but I like it. Back to car jacking. I hope I get a police cruiser. **14:55**. I took a car right under some policeman's nose and they followed. I narrowly escaped the search perimeter and then I did it again just to get chased. Pulled a nice U-turn and rammed the police car then made a run for it as the cops followed me. Sadly I did not make it to the car. They arrested me. It seems I got my hands up and that was the end of it. Bottom line after one hour play of [GTA](#) (well, less than an hour actual play time)? It's nice. Looks good, is exciting and all. And I didn't even get to see some plot. My advice is to try it. I've not seen any bugs or major glitches and a New York look-alike with a ton of cars to steal and cops to battle is too nice a proposition to turn down.