

13 December 2006

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## [Test Drive Unlimited](#)

### *Race the Roads of Paradise*

Here you are at the traffic light waiting for it to turn green. You barely had a chance of getting out of bed, grabbing your favorite outfit and get the car out of the garage. A Corvette C6 Coupe brutally brakes on the left side. Well now, good morning sunshine! As the light turns green you both push the paddle to the metal and you're off on an adrenaline rushing race that gets the best out of your cars and your driving skills. Yeah, this is the kind of life you were hoping for. To be short about it: fabulous cars in the fabulous island of Hawaii and fabulous babes to impress and drive around. This is just what the team at Eden Games had in mind too. With an impressive background that includes NFS Porsche Unleashed and the whole V-Rally series the developing team promises an outstanding racing experience with Test Drive Unlimited. And awesome it really seemed. Let me tell you something about what I've seen in the beta version of the game.

**Story & History** It all started 20 years ago as the game developer Accolade released Test Drive (1987) for DOS, Atari ST and Commodore 64. This was the beginning of the longest running racing game franchise in the history. September 2006 brought the owners of Xbox 360 the 13th title of the series (and they welcomed it open heartedly). It is just a matter of time - until February to be exact - before the rest of the gaming community can jump into the action with the release of PC, PS2 and PSP versions. Story? Well, you pick up an avatar for yourself at the airport and send it to the beautiful island of Oahu in Hawaii. Having a starting sum of \$100,000 you are to settle in here by purchasing yourself a nice home and of course a car. You have to buy them both so you probably won't have enough to buy the car of your dreams from the very beginning. The rest of it... well, it's up to you to write the rest of the story. Go home and read the news whenever you feel like remembering how your career started. Experience the racing lifestyle however you see fit.

**Concept** Test Drive Unlimited grants you with 1000 miles (1600 kilometers) of roads to cover and more than 125 vehicles to choose from. Select your poison in terms of sport cars from renowned manufacturers such as Aston Martin, Chevrolet, Dodge, Ferrari, Ford, Jaguar, Koenigsegg, Lamborghini, Lotus, Maserati, Mercedes, Pagani, Shelby, Spyker, TVR, McLaren (I may have missed a few). Once you have unlocked all the car dealers on the island you'll next be able to drop by the motorcycle show rooms as well - Kawasaki and MV Agusta. As much as it may hurt (yeah right) you'll have to make a living out racing as you'll need the money to increase your garage capacity and buy a new residence (or exchange the old one for a bigger one), acquire the latest four wheel monsters and dress up for different occasions. Time and speed challenges along with races against computer controlled opponents and different delivery jobs will get you the money to purchase (or rent) the cars of your dream collection. Helping up hitchhikers and top models (more commonly referred to as babes) provides you with clothes coupons so that your avatar can always match the color of the jeans with the car's paint (in case you don't have enough money to match the paint to the outfit).

**Gameplay** Every purchase in the game comes with the possibility of a virtual tour. Each house offer comes with 3D views of the exterior, interior and the garage (your future private show room). There are offers for everybody at the real estate agencies - from less expensive apartments to million dollars villas. Driving home or just dropping by to change will provide you with the news (and a nice list of your achievements this far), an overview of your cars as well as a peek to your own wardrobe (accessories included). But houses are just a welcomed addition to the real gaming experience - the all mighty cars. Don't buy just any car. Checkout the details list, see if it's not scratched or anything (spin around and in it from every possible angle) and if you're not convinced yet better take it out for a test drive. You do need to know what you're

saving for and maybe keep reminding yourself from time to time. Another way to test the most impressive steel monsters is to seek out the car delivery jobs available. The nice owners will trust you with taking their cars to the annual mechanical checkup. The fun part about it is that you have no time limit to get there. Yet don't jump just yet. First of all you are not allowed to enter any other challenge (not even take the gorgeous top models to their destination). Secondly every scratch and every second that the car is off road will decrease its' value and since you get a huge bonus for getting it intact to the destination it will be like driving around with your mom - aside from occasional carefully calculated overtakes you'll drive as legally as possible. Thirdly these people seem to buy their cars as far as possible so there usually is no shorter route than 10 kilometers offering about half an hour of tensed driving. And finally these are one time races: once you get to the finish line you can't retry. So you need to think carefully if you'd really rather give up the bonus small fortune (you can only retry if you completely ruined the jewel). Top models and hitchhikers are also challenging characters. While they're all pretty much in a big hurry, they won't accept your sportive driving unless you stick to the road (again) and stay out of trouble - they'll even have the nerve to suggest that you're an incapable driver. Oh well, the babes' smiles will melt your heart and you'll forgive them anyway. Just be a little more careful about the guys as they need a rather longer lift. Beside the clothes coupons that you get for each run helping out all the ladies in distress and, separately, the guys will unlock brand new eye catching beauties such as the Volkswagen W12 Roadster (with complements from the hitchhikers). Completing all challenges of a certain kind also unlocks fabled models (the Volkswagen W12 Coupe for the time challenges). The usual arrows control system is available. Additional keys are reserved for camera change, reset, map and others. The satellite GPS will present you with the huge map of Oahu and also display the challenges and other interesting spots that you have already unlocked. Each car comes with its' unique settings scheme and you'll enjoy a different driving experience with each new ride (the major settings translate to acceleration, speed, handling and braking measured on a scale from 1 to 100). All cars come with functions such as radio, electric windows, horn or wipers.

**Video** Trying to offer a glimpse on the car and bike enthusiast lifestyle, Test Drive Unlimited was bound to have a realistic aura. This was ensured by the cars' design (and the customization options) as well as the great looking environment. I've never been to Hawaii, but the map in the game feels pretty natural with hills covered by forests (allowing a relaxing off-road experience as well as cover from the pursuing police cars), residential areas and a very good amount of roads and highways. The island is well animated with birds, leaves and occasionally pieces of paper cruising the skies and a rich flow of traffic. These cars are highly susceptible to damage and are the reason why police will track you down to give you a ticket (your few thousand dollars contribution to the Honolulu Police Traffic Control Department). Bumpers will fly all over the road as you knock out a few of your slower traffic neighbors. You'll see their cars all wrinkled like a sharpey. The rest of the racing cars (including your own) will remain just as smooth and polished as before. Look at the bright side - that means no service repairs are needed because I know you definitely don't want to take a Ferrari to a mechanic. This brings us to the racing cars. Well, these are genuine masterpieces. An extremely high level of details to the interior along with suave yet sharp design lines to the exterior offers a high fidelity overview of the real cars. The paint is yet more realistic as it is made up from a base color as well as a highlight (both customizable at the paint shop). You'll even experience sudden sun light bursts as you drive from a shadowed spot to the sunny parts of the roads (very cool but disturbing when you're in a race).

**Sound** What would be more appealing to an enthusiast than the purring of a 520 Hp engine at 8000 rpm? Of course that's just for the Gallardo Spyder. Each engine comes with its' unique sound. Give it a little time and you'll probably get to recognize the cars coming from behind by the noise they make. Well, if you want something more than feel free to turn on the radio (yes - all cars are equipped with radios, just press R). Crash, boom, bang was enough for me.

**Multiplayer** Why, Test Drive Unlimited is to be the new kid in the MMO

family. Its' creators call it M.O.O.R. (Massively Open Online Racing). The multiplayer will add an extra layer to the single player game, meaning aside from the SP challenges you'll also be able to race against other human opponents on a track that either one of you decides - simply zoom to the big map and click on the finish line. Well there are many more game rules that you can set, but I'm saving that for the full version review. What you should keep in mind is that in a multiplayer game your own map will show about one hundred human opponents that you can race at any time. **Conclusion** There is this saying that when you really want to do something good the whole Universe will work in your favor. The bases are in place: a highly renowned series - Test Drive, licenses for a huge choice of vehicles - compliments of Atari, a talented and dedicated developer - Eden Games and already the success on the Xbox 360 console. The rest of it is all about creativity and ingenuity. Hot races featuring many of the highly appreciated sport car models threaten to consume most of your free time to offer you a glimpse at the car and bike lovers' lifestyle. Test Drive Unlimited is definitely a title to be on the lookout for in February 2007.