

Jackie Chan Stuntmaster – Sony PlayStation

Developed by: Radical Entertainment (<http://www.midway.com>)

Published by: Midway (<http://www.midway.com>)

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: <http://www.midway.com/admin/nav.cgi?mode=title&page=jackiechan/>

Genre: Action

Number of Players: One

ESRB: Teen

Overall Rating: 7

Graphics: 7/10

Sound: 7/10

Documentation: 7/10

Getting Started: 7/10

Gameplay: 6/10

Value: 7/10

The Good Press: Innovative level design; terrific motion-capture work; hilarious one-liners by Jackie himself.

The Bad Press: Jumping puzzles, jumping puzzles, and more jumping puzzles; repetitive gameplay; unforgiving control; get used to seeing the loading screen.

Supports: Memory card, vibration function

Overview: An entertaining beat 'em up to be sure, but extensive load times and frustrating jumping puzzles will grate on your nerves.

Tips:

Whenever you're fighting on a ledge, try to line up your enemies so you can knock them off for the easy kill.

Stay away from the corners by any means necessary. If you're cornered by multiple enemies, you probably won't survive the assault.

When faced with the train-jumping sequences, try to stay near the front of the car. Otherwise, you won't be able to keep pace when you're forced to jump back and forth in rapid succession.

When you think of recent movies starring Jackie Chan, visions of cheesy one-liners, kidnappings, bizarre weaponry, and incredible (often downright insane) aerial action and kung fu mayhem undoubtedly come to mind. The plots are generally rather thin, the story lines familiar, the supporting cast unspectacular (*Rush Hour* excluded—ya gotta love Chris Tucker), but there's just something about watching a man—clearly without any sense of fear—performing stunts onscreen that could literally kill him at any moment. And the best part about it is: his personality is such that he's always smiling and having fun risking life and limb to entertain us. That is why I enjoy his movies, that is why I enjoy Midway's new brawler *Jackie Chan Stuntmaster*.

I recently found out that Jackie is actually quite a gaming enthusiast himself. Therefore, it isn't surprising that he actually oversaw much of the creation of *Stuntmaster* (not just the motion capture and voiceovers). Chan's grandfather has been...you guessed it, kidnapped by a band of insubordinate ruffians and it's up to the lazy delivery boy/martial arts champion to rescue him. The opening sequence shows granddaddy sending you off to deliver an important package. When you stop off at a local restaurant to get a bite to eat, you just happen to notice the band of baddies hauling him away. The cut scene continues as you dash out of the restaurant as only Jackie Chan knows how (by barreling over unassuming waitresses and swinging from chandeliers). Unfortunately, even Jackie at his fleetest-of-foot can't keep up with the accomplices and they escape. It's up to you to find your dear grandfather and the missing package.

The game is broken up into various stages—each with three lengthy levels and a bout with a boss at the end. Once you complete a stage, a new stage is opened up for you. Each of the levels vary only in structure (some have you traveling left to right, others are completely three dimensional), and the majority of your time will be spent either disposing of a constant onslaught of thugs, partaking in some *Crash Bandicoot*-style platform jumping, or a combination of the two. Of course Jackie is a master of many moves, so there are quite a few ways to put enemies down for the count. You've got your standard array of punches and kicks which, when timed properly, can allow you to string together some impressive combos. There are also several throws and a few defensive maneuvers to employ, but nothing too special. What keeps the game interesting is the ability to use the

surroundings to your advantage. For instance, if you're involved in a scrap atop a high building, you can score a quick kill if you line up and toss the enemy off. Oh yes, and let's not forget all the zany weapons you can use on your foes—you just never know when a life preserver or a fish will come in handy. To appease the adventurer types out there, there are ten red dragon masks scattered around in each level. Some are in plain view, others will take some creativity to find. If you manage to locate all ten in any given level, you are awarded with a mysterious gold dragon mask. Collect all of them and something cool happens (I won't spill the beans, but rest assured, it's cool). This added gameplay element adds immensely to the replay value since if you couldn't find all the masks the first time through, you can always go back and try again.

Aesthetically, *Stuntmaster* isn't exactly a work of art, but it does a lot of things right. Jackie's personality is just streaming out of his every move, and it really adds to the experience. During each enemy encounter, Jackie and the bad guys are constantly talking trash. Granted, most of the comments are pretty lame, but you just can't help but laugh when you hear Jackie shout "let's sit down and discuss this like gentlemen" while knocking the tar out of someone. The enemy taunts get repetitive and annoying pretty quickly, but I never tired of Jackie's seemingly endless vocal repertoire. In terms of visuals, Jackie himself looks pretty good, but the rest of the graphics aren't anything to write home about. Luckily, this won't bother you much since the game runs at a fairly constant 30 frames per second.

A good platformer (which this game tries to be) must have pinpoint control to be successful. This is where *Stuntmaster* really has its problems. Momentum is perhaps the biggest issue during the jumping sequences, so Jackie will often end up falling to his death on simple jumps that even my grandma could make. As a result, a good 95+% of the deaths in this game happen because of poorly-timed jumps. Nothing is more frustrating than slaughtering a room full of baddies, only to accidentally fall off the building in the next area. Unfortunately, as you get further and further into the game, the jumping sequences become much more prevalent and difficult. I was especially miffed at the abundance of train-jumping puzzles—I must've died two dozen times before I finally got it right. On top of all this, each time you die, you have to wait 15-20 seconds of load time before you can try again. At some points, you're faced with a tough jump almost immediately in the level and it gets cumbersome having to wait forever just so you can attempt (and often fail) it again.

In the end, I was pretty pleased with *Stuntmaster*, but I think it should have concentrated more on being a fighting game as opposed to a platformer. The control is fine for a brawler, but simply isn't conducive to the pinpoint accuracy needed for the countless jumping sequences. Still, Jackie Chan's intriguing personality and unmatched skill has brought a lot to this game and fans will undoubtedly enjoy his witty dialog. If you're a fan of 3D fighting games, have quick reflexes, and a good bit of patience, you'll definitely have fun with this game.