

San Francisco Rush 2049 – Sega Dreamcast

Developed by: Atari Games/Midway (<http://www.midway.com>)

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

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site:

Genre: Football

Number of Players: One to Four

ESRB: Everyone

Overall Rating: 8

Graphics: 8/10

Sound: 8/10

Documentation: 7/10

Getting Started: 7/10

Gameplay: 8/10

Value: 8/10

The Good Press: Awesome graphics and sound, all the shortcuts and secrets will keep you occupied for a long time; the stunt and deathmatch modes are great additions to an already solid racer; all cars should have wings.

The Bad Press: Winning races can be really difficult unless you find all the shortcuts; weak explosion effects.

Supports: Modem, Jump Pack

Overview: What a rush.

Tips:

Use the practice mode to familiarize yourself with the tracks and memorize the locations of the shortcuts.

In stunt mode, use the wings to regain control of your vehicle if you are spinning out of control. Your stunts are worthless unless you land on all four wheels.

Not since I played Gran Turismo on the PlayStation has a racing game really impressed me. When Midway's *San Francisco Rush 2049* arrived on my doorstep a few weeks ago, I expected a fairly shallow and short-lived arcade racer, similar to the lackluster previous console Rush games. It's not that they were bad games necessarily, but much like the NBA Jam series, the Rush games tend to be insanely enjoyable for a few hours or so, then either collect dust on your shelf or become cheap eBay fodder. Therefore, it came as quite a surprise to me when *Rush 2049* was not only a blast to play, but offered up an impressive amount of replay value as well.

The available options in *Rush 2049* are fairly basic, but a few races in, you'll realize that there is much more to do in this game than meets the eye. To begin with, the gameplay modes to choose from include single race, circuit, stunt mode, practice, or, if you have some friends and extra controllers lying around, a *Twisted Metal*-style deathmatch mode. As far as vehicles are concerned, there are a half dozen or so to choose from at the outset, each with different speed and handling characteristics. In accordance with just about every other arcade racer ever released, you can unlock more cars and tracks as you progress, but instead of having to win races to do so, you have to find all eight of the gold and silver coins scattered about the track. This as you'll find out a little later is quite a feat, and really adds to the game's replayability.

As you continue to play the game, you'll realize that there must be some trick to winning the races. All of the vehicles--despite their variable characteristics--all seem to travel at similar speeds. This makes it rather difficult to overtake your opponents and virtually eliminates any room for error. This is where the gold and silver coins come in. To obtain all of them, you'll have to do some heavy-duty exploration and pull off some hyper-difficult aerial maneuvers. If you manage to find one, it means you've most likely found one of the dozens of shortcuts carefully tucked away on each track. Some of the shortcuts merely involve cutting corners, while others have you traveling through buildings or subway tunnels in order to shave a few seconds off your lap times. Memorization of the shortcut locations in practice mode is almost a necessity, and once you've got them down, you'll be winning races in no time.

The real fun of the game is not only finding the shortcuts and coins, but also being able to navigate your vehicle through them without wrecking your car. The alternate routes will most certainly save you some time, but they are

often narrow and treacherous. Some have you jumping from building to building, while others are littered with obstacles. In either case you'll really feel a rush of adrenaline when you successfully negotiate your way out and find yourself in first place, but if you wreck, you're thrown back on the original track and have pretty much taken yourself out of contention. I also loved the fact that Midway has included several routes that seem like shortcuts, but dump you at a dead end or at a disastrous situation. A perfect example of this was when I found a ramp to take you to a higher level in a tunnel. As I was passing cars right and left, I failed to notice the train that was blocking the entire path. A few sparks and tread marks later I was back on track, but hopelessly out of the race. These little nuances really add to the challenge and strategy of the game, and further proves that no lead is safe when you're playing *Rush 2049*.

A few other play modes that bear mentioning are the stunt and battle modes. Stunt mode was first introduced in a previous *Rush* title, but has never been executed as well as it is here. The basic premise here is to perform as many wheelies, flips, and spins as you can in the allotted time. With the help of speed boosters and huge ramps, you can really rack up the points by pulling off dozens of moves in a single jump. The catch is that you ultimately have to land on all four wheels to get any points—an extremely difficult task. Luckily, each car is equipped with wings to help you land squarely, but you get more points if you don't use them. In battle mode, you and your friends can duke it out in a standard deathmatch setting complete with old favorites like rocket launchers and proximity mines. Both modes are great additions to an already superb game.

Aesthetically, *Rush 2049* really showcases the power of the Dreamcast. The city of San Francisco has been recreated in all its splendor for the year 2049, and aside from a revamped transportation system, a load of neon lights, and an overabundance of Slim Jim billboards, it looks a lot like the real thing. The cars themselves are also highly detailed, and the framerate never slows no matter how much is onscreen. Aurally, racing games tend to be more of an annoyance than anything. Fortunately, this isn't the case with *Rush 2049*. The music is standard techno fare, but it isn't overpowering and won't distract you during a tight race. The sound effects are also pretty standard, but each vehicle is distinguishable and the engine and atmospheric sounds are right on the money.

When all is said and done, *Rush 2049* is an excellent arcade racer with surprising depth. Casual racing fans will love the over-the-top physics engine, but will undoubtedly miss a lot of what this game has to offer. There's just so much to do here, and taking the time to find all the secrets is a rewarding and enjoyable experience. If you're looking for a solid arcade racer with plenty to do and see, rush over to your nearest electronics store and buy this game. You won't be sorry.