

## NBA Live 2001 – Sony PlayStation 2

**Developed by:** EA Sports (<http://www.easports.com>)

**Published by:** EA Sports (<http://www.easports.com>)

**Reviewed by:** Tim Maxwell

**Official Site:** <http://nbalive2001.ea.com/>

**Genre:** Basketball

**Number of Players:** 1 to 8

**ESRB:** Everyone

**Overall Rating:** 7

**Graphics:** 9/10

**Sound:** 7/10

**Documentation:** 7/10

**Getting Started:** 7/10

**Gameplay:** 7/10

**Value:** 7/10

**The Good Press:** Excellent graphics; unbelievable attention to detail.

**The Bad Press:** Unresponsive control; intolerable load times; no franchise or NBA challenge modes; lopsided difficulty; indifferent crowd.

**Supports:** Dual Shock 2, memory card, multi-tap

**Overview:** Aside from the graphics, the PS2 version of *Live 2001* can't hold a candle to its PS1 counterpart.

### Tips:

Use the select button to call a pick. This is an excellent way to get a step on your defender or create mismatches.

Always use the direct shoot feature when you're under the basket. If you take it up strong, you're more likely to score or get fouled.

Over the past 10 years or so, not much time passed when there wasn't at least one copy of an *NBA Live* title in my gaming collection. Ever since *Lakers vs. Celtics* on the Sega Genesis, I've been hooked on the venerable series and have always looked forward to what EA has in store for the next version. Admittedly, the series has had its ups and downs over the years, but it's always played a pretty solid game of hoops. And while the highly anticipated PS2 version of *Live 2001* certainly continues the tradition of excellence for the most part, I can't help but be slightly disappointed at some bothersome control issues and a noticeable lack of features.

The interface in *Live 2001* will be quite familiar to EA Sports veterans, with a robust selection of gameplay tweaks and a catchy rap tune playing in the background. It can be easy to get lost in a sea of menus, but the front-end does its job well enough. Players will be able to take the court in a standard exhibition game, a full season, a playoff, or a one-on-one match with just about every superstar imaginable—past or present. In each play mode, you can also make plenty of adjustments in areas such as difficulty level, rules, team strategies, and so on.

However, despite the game's apparent depth, the few omissions are real killers. First off, there's no franchise mode—an element that has been a mainstay in the *Live* series in recent years. The awesome NBA Challenge mode found in the PS1 version is also missing in action. Considering that the game had already been delayed several times, I can see why some features might have been left out so they could just get the game out the door, but I'm sure most fans would agree that it would have been worth the wait to have these features included.

Given EA's track record for incredible graphics in their games combined with the raw power of the PS2, it comes as no surprise that *NBA Live 2001* is visually an absolute marvel to behold. I know you've heard this a million times before when it comes to sports games, but at times, *Live 2001*'s graphical prowess comes awfully close to rivaling a real NBA television broadcast. Of course the players and arenas look fabulous (aside from a few player faces which look a bit deformed), but I was more impressed with the amazing attention to detail. Everything from a player's diligent preparation for a free throw, to the more subtle effect of the ball trickling through the twine on a 3-ball are presented beautifully. And the crowd, which is usually just represented as a sea of pixels is varied and well animated.

As for sound, not a lot has changed since the PS1 version of the game, but this isn't necessarily a bad thing. Don Poier does a bang-up job with the play-by-play, while Bob Elliot returns to offer his incite from time to time. Both do a pretty good job of keeping up with the action, and since they often have comments based on the actual game they are calling (i.e. spouting off how many rebounds a certain player has), repetition is kept to a relative minimum. Other on court sounds are pretty standard fare—nothing to write home about, but solid nonetheless. My biggest complaint would be the spectators, whose rare, ill-timed cheers make it seem as though they are watching a completely different game.

Of course, anyone will tell you that basketball is won on the court, and here, *NBA Live 2001* is a mixed bag. In terms of control, this game is easily the most complete sports title I've ever played. The sheer number of moves and jukes is absolutely mind-boggling. Nothing's quite as sweet as juking a defender out of his shorts with a killer cross-over, taking him baseline, spinning past the center who's come over to help on defense, and gently kissing that up and under lay-up off the glass for two. Yes, this is actually possible in *Live 2001*, and pulling off a move like that will have your friends in awe. The best part about it is, the control can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be. In other words, you can still win if you just use the pass and shoot buttons, though you'll do much better if you master all of the controls.

Unfortunately, all the moves in the world can't make up for unresponsive control, and in this regard, EA Sports really dropped the ball. In many cases, only a split second of timing can mean the difference between burying a decisive three pointer and having the ball spiked back in your face like a volleyball. Therefore, it's really disconcerting when you fake a defender out and press the shoot button, only to see your player delay a half-second or so before going up. This isn't to big of an issue on the easier difficulty settings where computer defenders are slow to react, but if you're playing on the all-star or superstar level, you can expect to lose a good many games as a direct result of the game's poor timing.

When it comes down to it, EA Sports knew that they had enormous expectations to live up to with *Live 2001*—especially after the bar they set for themselves with *Madden*. That said, the graphics, audio, and intangibles are certainly up to par, but the whole experience is slighted by the control issues and missing features. Basically, it comes down to this: if glitz and glamour is your thing, then by all means, pick this game up. If however you're looking for a realistic, challenging game of basketball and don't mind dated graphics, save yourself a few bucks and pick up the PS1 version instead. Isn't backward compatibility great?