

Burnout Revenge for Microsoft Xbox: Another Powerful Boost for EA's Trademark Racer



Mike DeVine
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Burnout: Revenge, the fourth installment in EA's stellar Burnout series, provides a fresh experience for the series' seasoned hardcore, a unique first experience for those new to the games' trademark hit-n-run racing game play, and a perfect pick-up-and-play title

for casual Burners-Out. Best described as a cross between the Twisted Metal car-combat games on the original PlayStation, and crash-minded Destruction Derby 64 for the Nintendo 64, Revenge is a title that begs to be played—no matter what type of gamer you are.

Being the fourth in a series, Revenge retains many staples from previous entries, while adding enough unique twists and tweaks into the mix to create an original game which can easily stand on its own merits—a rare quality in today's sequel-saturated market. Those who have played earlier Burnout's will instantly feel at home with Revenge's familiar premise: Race in numerous events, unfolding as much havoc and destruction onto your opponents as possible, while marauding your way across the finish line. Like its predecessors before it, Revenge expands upon the original formula and introduces different race types, new non-racing events, and other tricks to keep the series fresh.

Aside from the standard race types, single race, grand prix, etc., Revenge also features other, more destruction-oriented event types. Road rage, traffic attack, and elimination events charge you with causing a certain amount of property damage within a time limit, or challenge you to destroy a certain amount of cars before your car takes too much damage. All these modes are equally as entertaining as the normal races, if not more so, and add a much needed dose of variety. Then there are crash events, which are as close to an actual destruction derby as this game gets. Almost a mini-game in itself, you first choose a car, then time two button presses with sliders on the screen. The right button presses right gives your car a boost at the starting line, sending you hurtling towards ramps, buildings, and intersections. The object is to find the most destructive path through the level—the bigger the pile-up you create, the more points are accumulated. It's simple, addictive, and makes a great addition to the other events.

All the event types are also available in the game's multiplayer mode. Revenge comes complete with a robust online multiplayer mode via Xbox Live. Pushing someone into a wall from across the country has never felt so good. However, despite its demolition heavy style, Revenge is a racing game at heart.

There are several types of events available for each of the numerous courses. Each course, complete with its own theme and setting, is loaded with shortcuts, ramps and, of course, plenty of traffic. A new feature, one which will please fans of the series, is the ability to crash into traffic during an event. In past games, hitting any traffic would instantly destroy your car. In Revenge however, you're not only allowed to hit same-way traf-

fic (hitting oncoming and crossing traffic will still cause you to crash), it's been made an integral part of the game play. Cars and trucks have become strategic projectiles, and hitting them into an opponent will cause them to crash in a brutal traffic check takedown.

Traffic checking isn't the only way to destroy your rivals. Bumping, shunting, and grinding against another car can throw his balance off and cause him to crash, setting off an awesome slow-motion instant replay sequence, and the fruits of your destructive labor from a satisfying over-the-shoulder view. But that's not to say the other cars are all push-over's; if you're not careful, a rival car could take you out and when this happens, you get yourself a new revenge rival for that event. Take your rival down before the race ends and you've executed the most valuable (and satisfying) stunt in the game. There are also special tricks and maneuvers which can be performed during an event, such as the self-explanatory takedown into car, and the vertical takedown (slamming onto an opponent from above), as well as numerous signature takedowns available on each course. Think along the lines of the level plays in the Tony Hawk series which include such feats as slamming an opponent into a bulldozer, pushing him into a

pole, and of course, bumping him into a trailer park. Welcome to the world of Burnout.

All these stunts and tricks, plus race standings (and other factors, depending on the event) add up to points. You must earn enough points in each event to boost your ranking in that event. Rankings are based on a five-star scale; each time you rank in an event, the stars you earned add to your overall ranking. In the beginning, you start at a mere rank 1, but as you clear events and accumulate stars, you start advancing in rank, all the way up

until the elite rank 10. As you gain more and more points, you unlock new events and cars in each rank. Completing various challenges listed for each course earns you one of numerous trophies: crashing into certain number of cars, completing a certain number of takedowns in a race, etc.

The solid game play is neatly wrapped in a slick, pupil-widening presentation, with fast save times and even faster loading times. Complementing the edgy graphics is a rocking soundtrack, courtesy of EA Trax. A full 41 songs are crammed together to provide the background music for Revenge, including tracks from Fall Out Boy, Yellowcard, Bullet for my Valentine, and others, as well as a healthy dose of techno, dance and house music thrown in for good measure. If nothing else, this game's soundtrack alone merits a rental.

Burnout: Revenge has a universal appeal that almost anyone can jump right into. Like its forerunners before it, Revenge creates a unique and genuinely fun experience by bringing out its players' most brutal and destructive driving instincts. Once you've slammed your first taxi and demolished your first rival, you'll be hooked too. Burnout: Revenge is also available for PlayStation 2, GameCube, PC, and Sony PSP.

