

ROLE-PLAY

WARGAME

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CONSOLE

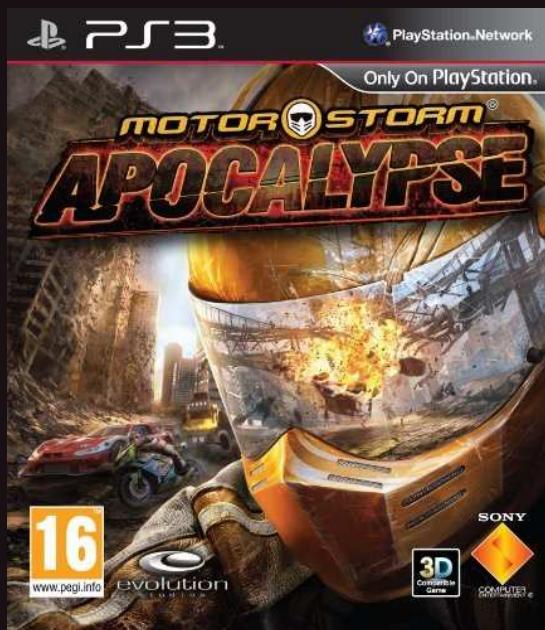
PC GAME

MOTORSTORM APOCALYPSE

PLAYSTATION 3
ARCADE RACE GAME

DEVELOPER: GUERRILLA GAMES
PUBLISHER: EVOLUTION STUDIOS
2011

REVIEWER:
DIRK VANDEREYKEN



The Story

After an earthquake has shaken the city, a ragtag team of drivers led by the aptly-named Big Dog decides to race through its premises until they've reached the other end of town, leaving after 2 whole days and nights just before its total destruction. As it turns out, the natural disaster seems to herald the apocalypse for the city, and the racers have to avoid crumbling buildings, violent storms, explosions and warring gangs alike...

The Game

You gotta hand it to the *MotorStorm* designers: they have taste. While PlayStation has pushed this release to their fullest, sending out beautiful-looking press packs and inviting the reviewers to a special demolition event, Evolution Studios and PlayStation decided to halt the distribution of this game after the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster hit Japan. Of course, this was the right thing to do, and of course the game had already been released, but it stands to the publisher's credit that it didn't send out any more copies and that it made sure the *MotorStorm*

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website – at the moment of this writing – opens with a statement about the disaster in the Land of the Rising Sun.

That being said, *MotorStorm Apocalypse* is the fourth title in the *MotorStorm* series, the others including *MotorStorm Monument Valley*, *MotorStorm Arctic Edge* and *MotorStorm Pacific Rift*. It has taken the team a full four years to develop this latest instalment and it shows, as there are some major differences between this and the other games in this series.

First off, *MotorStorm Apocalypse* has an actual storyline running through its festival mode. This would be a welcome addition, if not for the poor execution of the (admittedly well-drawn) motion comics that unveil the actual story. One problem is the tedious loading times between every motion comic and every track of the game, the other is the fact that the voice acting (at least the one in Dutch) is really bad, the dialogues don't make much sense and the entire thing seems a little infantile. The idea to include the motion comics certainly is a good one and we were still entertained, but maybe next time the design team should hire an actual writer to do this.

Secondly, the game doesn't take place in natural surroundings, but in a crumbling city. In fact, a lot of the fun elements stem from being able to watch the 40 tracks change in front of their eyes as buildings fall down, debris blocks passages that were easily accessible before, fires are starting, rooftops come down, the earth caves in, etc. There are 3 laps for



every track and usually the third lap ends up looking very different in some places, yet very familiar in others. Watching the disasters happen is a stunning experience, even though sometimes it's very hard to see where you're going, resulting in unwarranted crashes. Dust clouds may momentarily obscure the view, opponents may drive you off the track and changes in the scenery can cause you to drive your vehicle into a building. Many reviewers have complained about this, but to us it seems to add more excitement to the game: sure, it all adds a little unpredictability, but it's fun and the difficulty level isn't that high anyway, allowing experienced gamers to complete the entire game within maybe 7 or 8 hours despite the theoretical 40+ hours of gaming time. So what if you have to push X to restart from the place where you previously crashed, or push select in order to put your vehicle back on track?

Graphics & Gameplay

OK, the graphics aren't the best ones we've seen in a racing game, but thanks to the many environmental hazards, the collapsing environment and the way crashes are represented, everything still looks visually stunning. Moreover, the game can be played in 3D, offering one of the best gaming experiences of that kind we've seen so far as mud seems to splatter out of the screen and racing over roof tops suddenly becomes even more unnerving than before. Moreover, the frame rate stays at a constant level,



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aided by the fact that important scenes are often displayed in slow motion.

Steering is pretty straightforward, using the left joystick. The X-button starts the boost engine, but gamers need to watch the meter in the lower right corner because their vehicle will explode if this option is used for too long. Driving through water makes sure the engine cools down faster, while fire heats the engine more quickly. Other buttons

toggle the view from first person and back, control the gas pedal and the brakes (which most of us don't ever use anyway), help you to perform stunts or are used to make opponents driving to your left or right crash.

Modes

In order to heighten replay value, Evolution Studios have made sure to include maps to find, medals, and more neat stuff. Players compete against 15 opponents, first as the rookie Mash, after that as pro Ty and finally as veteran Big Dog, with the first 5 qualifying for the next track. However, when a race is actually won, its Hardcore Festival equivalent is unlocked, allowing gamers to race against better opponents. This time, though, they race against the clock and there's even a Time Attack option, in which they have to compete with all 13 available vehicles, trying to set



the Festival mode, players can also choose specific models when they're picking out certain tracks or playing against friends. The look and feel of all of these is very customizable, but Perks are needed to increase either handling, the boost engine and combat readiness (it's perfectly possible to add armor, for example).

As much fun as the festival mode and the Hardcore Festival are, it's the multiplayer that provides lasting fun. It's even possible to race against each other split-screen, with up to four gamers participating. Online, players are placed in groups that include a healthy mix of skill, so that rookies won't be outmatched all the time. Interestingly, they can even bet poker chips against other players, creating rivals and mission objectives (i.e., finish before the player you bet against) for themselves, which is very useful if too many other participants are better than they are.

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Our Opinion

MotorStorm Apocalypse is a fun, engaging and visually tantalizing game with – as always – a flaring soundtrack. Unfortunately, the hard rock and metal of old has been swapped for more dance-oriented music, but at least there's the option to use your own music as well.

Definitely make sure to check this one out, you won't regret it! *MotorStorm Apocalypse* isn't a realistic racing simulator, but it's a very nice arcade racer, with great gameplay and lots of stuff happening in the background.



www.MOTORSTORM.COM

CATEGORY

GRAPHICS

GAMEPLAY

SOUND

SCORE

IN SHORT

Well above average graphics, especially during the disaster sequences. The explosions, earthquakes, storms and collapsing buildings all make sure there's enough variety and look great.

There's no realistic handling, but gameplay is perfect for an arcade racer. The controls are easy enough and there's a lot of content to be unlocked. Moreover, the multiplayer option is nothing short of great!

Nice soundtrack, but unfortunately dance instead of metal.

Fun, easy-to-learn and very quick race game with lots of interesting ideas.

SCORE

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