

LucasArts changes gears a bit with its latest offering, Full Throttle. This is a hard-rockin' motorcycle adventure from the word go that will leave you wanting more (trust me).

Full Throttle stands out as having an original and engaging storyline, involving our hero, Ben. Ben is the leader of the Polecats, a motorcycle gang roaming the roads of future America. One day, a Corley Motors (the last maker of motorcycles in the country) limousine is, ah, "overtaken" by the Polecats. The company's CEO, Malcolm Corley, at the advice of his right-hand-man Ripberger, tries to hire the Polecats to accompany his limo up to a shareholder's meeting. The deal goes bad. The next thing Ben knows, he wakes up in a dumpster, his gang is gone, and the keys to his motorcycle are missing. From this point on, it's up to the player to help Ben figure out what happened to his gang and save Corley Motors from the sinister Ripberger.

Full Throttle is chock full of delicious eye candy. This fully-animated adventure has a very "cartoony" look, but it's done so well, and flows so smoothly, that any lack of a sophisticated look is quickly forgotten. Japanese animation it's not, but it's still great. The cutscenes that advance the storyline are all done exceptionally well and are really a lot of fun to watch, and there's a lot of them. Actually, the cutscenes amount to a two or three minute "cartoon" between action scenes, which is a real treat. Animation and backgrounds in the "action" scenes, where the player helps Ben complete a task, are also very good. Lots of mysterious settings, hauntingly empty stretches of road, and dark, foreboding caves set the tone for Full Throttle, and do it very well.

One aspect of the graphics that stands out is the three-dimensionally rendered road scenes and vehicles. All of the "road chase" scenes have a 3-D look to them, as do the wonderfully designed vehicles. Ranging from Ben's own turbo-thrustin' hog, to an old converted cargo plane that serves as a huge road transport, the vehicles are all meticulously detailed and a joy to behold. Bravo, LucasArts!

Full Throttle doesn't try to be a kid's game. All of the characters are disgruntled, working-class adults, and a few expletives are spoken over the course of the game (maybe this is what happens to civilian employees of closed military bases). This adds to the realism and atmosphere of the game, increasing the entertainment value.

Interface in Full Throttle is somewhat unusual, and takes a little getting used to. When the mouse crosshair passes over an object that Ben can interact with, red brackets appear around the crosshair. By pressing the left mouse button, a huge logo appears, the Polecats' own emblem. By then dragging the crosshairs over different parts of the emblem and releasing the mouse button, different actions are performed, including grabbing, kicking, and (spewwww) licking! This interface takes a while to get the hang of, and detracts a bit from gameplay early on. Even once I got used to it, I still got a little frustrated when I would release a button too early, or not soon enough.

The soundtrack to Full Throttle is probably the best aspect of this game. It literally ROCKS! LucasArts went out and hired a real biker band, The Gone Jackals, to record music for the game's soundtrack. A more appropriate choice could not have been made. A full range of heavy metal biker tunes dominates the soundtrack. This, more than anything else, really helps to establish the game atmosphere and adds immensely to the enjoyment. In fact, when I'm done with this, I plan on going out and buying The Gone Jackals' latest album, which includes all the music from this game. It's THAT good.

About the only "Bone To Pick" I have with LucasArts about this game is the length. Full Throttle is a bit on the short side. I have heard of some players completing this game in anywhere from five to seven hours. Not much entertainment for \$50. Replay value is pretty good. Part of the fun of the game is figuring out the puzzles, but once the game is beaten that challenge is gone. Repeat playings of the game are still immensely entertaining, but lack the challenge and thrill of the first time through.

So, if you're looking for a little change of pace, pick up Full Throttle. It's got a gritty, hard

biker edge that will have you seriously looking at a Harley after you're done playing. Great animation and graphics, a rockin' soundtrack, and just plain fun gameplay make this one a great addition to anyone's game library.