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Guitar Hero: Smash Hits

Less than a fully new game, but more than a rehash.



by Joe Rybicki

I feel like I should be more outraged about this. For Guitar Hero: Smash Hits, the developers selected 48 songs from the Guitar Hero games prior to World Tour, gave them the master-recording and full-band treatment, and packed them up to sell (again!) for a full 60 bucks.

But you know, I just can't stay mad at a game that's this much fun to play. And when you look closer, it's clear this is a lot more than a repackaging of classic tracks. But you do have to look closer.

In part, that's because the song selection seems a bit odd at first glance: For example, do we really need Ratt, Warrant, *and* Extreme? Is an instrumental (Rush's "YYZ") really appropriate for a game that advertises "the best of Guitar Hero music, now for the full band"? And where are classics like "Higher Ground" and "Sweet Child O' Mine"?

I know no song list can please everyone, but the bulk of the selection here just felt a bit flat to me...until I started to play through the lineup on various instruments. Once you do, it becomes clear that many of these songs were chosen for the simple reason that they're a friggin' *blast* to play with a full band. Take Ratt's "Round and Round," for example. This insipid '80s hair-metal throwaway strikes exactly the right balance of simplicity and challenge when you add in vocals and drums, making it an ideal song for party play. And one pass through "YYZ" on drums makes it obvious why this was included: The drum section is *legendary*. It's also a treat to play the bass section with the addition of open notes -- a feature introduced in World Tour.



And that brings us to one of the other reasons Smash Hits just might be worth the price of entry: Many of the guitar and bass charts are different! In some cases this is to make use of features introduced in World Tour, like the open bass note or the tap-slider on the neck of the World Tour guitar. (Some drum tracks also include the Expert+ difficulty level introduced in Guitar Hero: Metallica, which requires the use of two bass pedals.)

But in some cases they're just different; in my experience this seems to mean that the Expert-level charts are a bit more complex, while the Hard-level charts are a bit easier. For me, this is a good thing; I tend to play most songs on Hard, and it moves the balance a notch away from "challenging" and toward "fun." (There's always Expert for a real challenge, right?) Of course your mileage may vary, but it seems to me that this change should be a good one for everyone except players who want nothing but challenge.

So in the end I just can't get too huffy about the full-retail price tag on this collection of classics. The addition of drums and vocals is a big deal, and the retooling of guitar and bass parts creates new challenges for even the most familiar songs. No, it's not an all-new Guitar Hero, but for junkies like me it's a satisfying fix.

Publisher [Activision](#)
Developer [Beenox Studios](#)

rating



(4 out of 5 GreenPixels)

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