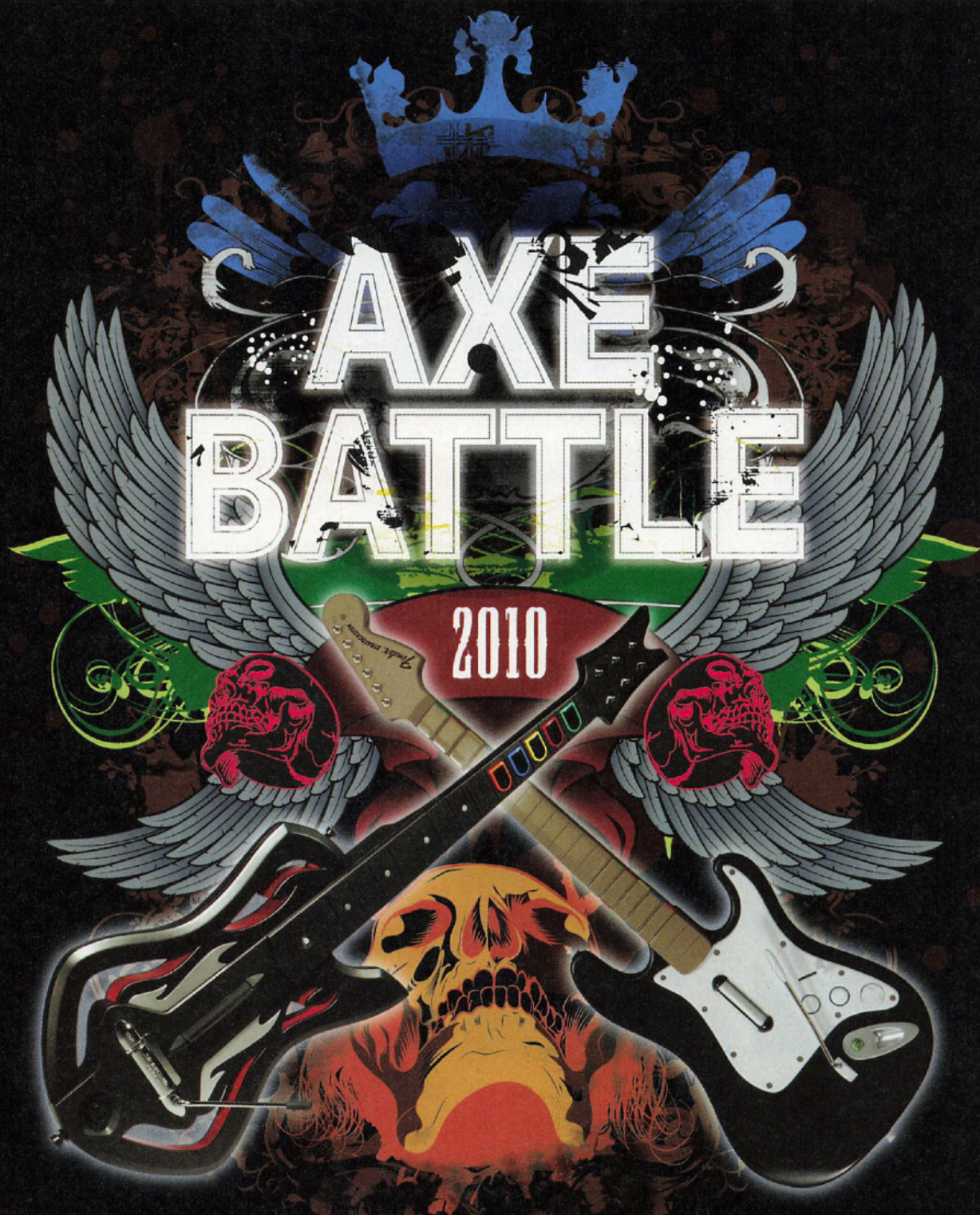




GUITAR HERO AND ROCK BAND BOTH PULL OUT THE BIG GUNS THIS YEAR. WHICH WILL EMERGE VICTORIOUS?

It's been two years since *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* really went head-to-head with full-fledged, main-franchise releases. This year, the gloves are off: Both games are making dramatic changes and additions—and moving in sharply different directions. Which one will come out on top? Let's break them down, piece by piece.

GAME PLAY



GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

Though *Warriors of Rock* isn't adding much in the area of core gameplay, just about everything else is getting a major overhaul. A story-driven Quest mode has you unlocking special abilities for each of the game's characters—abilities that can dramatically alter scoring, adding an element of strategy to any song.

Advantage:

Rock Band 3. There's so much new here, it's like learning to play music games all over again.



ROCK BAND 3

While *Guitar Hero* is refocusing on the game side of music gaming, *Rock Band* is digging deep into the music side with Pro mode. Here, you can learn songs note-for-note on keys and guitar (and nearly so on drums); at Expert level you'll learn enough to pretty much play the songs on any real instrument.

TRACK LIST

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

Activision is doubling down on the rawk this year, stepping away from the wildly varied (some might say schizophrenic) setlist of *Guitar Hero 5* and back toward the guitar-heavy rock that made the series famous.

Notable artists: Megadeth, Jethro Tull, DragonForce

ROCK BAND 3

Rock Band introduces a new instrument this year: keyboards. As a result, the set list is looking slightly more poppy than in previous games. But keyboards also allow the game to pack in classic, keys-heavy cuts, and the setlist is also loaded with plenty of straight-up rock. **Notable artists:** The Doors, Yes, Huey Lewis

Advantage:

Rock Band 3, for variety. But Harmonix should expect to hear the same gripes *Guitar Hero 5* got last year.

EXTRAS

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

The new "Quickplay+" mode will offer 13 challenges for each of the 90-plus songs on the disc, as well as for almost all downloadable songs from *World Tour* onward, offering lots of replay value and incentive to challenge friends. The game also appears to be focusing more enthusiastically on special animations for each song, reinforcing the larger-than-life nature of the playable characters.

ROCK BAND 3

An achievement-based career mode will feature more than 700 goals, as well as "road challenges" that the designers say draw influences from games like *Mario Party*. It's clear the game is aiming for a nonlinear career experience, but it's possible it may come off as simply unfocused.

Advantage:

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock. Giving players in-game benefits for digging up old DLC is clever, and the social, competitive focus of Quickplay+ should prove addictive.

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii



GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

INFO

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft (360, PS3),
Vicarious Visions (Wii)
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

1-4 players together, 8 online

GENRE

Music

RELEASE DATE

September 28, 2010

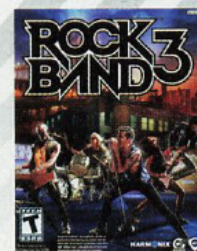
SUITABLE FOR

Hard rockers into star power

Free Soundgarden CD
with purchase of any version
of Guitar Hero



PS3 XBOX 360 Wii DS



ROCK BAND 3

INFO

Publisher: MTV Games/EA
Developer: Harmonix
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, DS

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

1-7 players together

GENRE

Music

RELEASE DATE

October 26, 2010

SUITABLE FOR

Aspiring musicians

**Preorder
Exclusive**
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▼ Rock the house in *Rock Band 3* with your own Adam Lambert look-alike.

STAR POWER

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

In spite of some legal entanglements with No Doubt and the estate of Kurt Cobain, Activision has gained the enthusiastic support of some heavy hitters in music. Gene Simmons of Kiss provides narration and voices a major character, while Dave Mustaine of Megadeth composed a song specifically for the game.

ROCK BAND 3

George Harrison's son Dhani apparently served as a consultant on the game, and the franchise is perpetually talked up by Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, and the members of Green Day. But Harmonix seems content to let *Rock Band 3* speak mostly for itself.

Advantage

Warriors of Rock. Big names don't make the difference between a good game and a mediocre one, but they can help get folks who might not otherwise care interested.

CHALLENGE

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

The *Guitar Hero* franchise has always pummeled *Rock Band* in terms of raw challenge, and the speed-heavy setlist of *Warriors of Rock* should make for the most difficult five-button gameplay we've seen yet.

ROCK BAND 3

But with Pro mode, *Rock Band 3* opens up entirely new horizons of difficulty. At Expert level, you'll be playing guitar literally note-for-note,

on either a controller with 102 (!) buttons, or a real, stringed guitar. It's going to be fascinating to see how the top *Guitar Hero* phenoms take to this new challenge.

Advantage

Tie. In terms of raw challenge, it's *Rock Band 3* by a mile. But the exacting precision required to excel in Pro mode may turn so many players off that this comes out as a wash.

WHAT MUSIC TEACHERS WILL SAY

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

"Why don't you learn to play a real instrument?"

ROCK BAND 3

"Why don't you learn to play a real instrument?"

Advantage

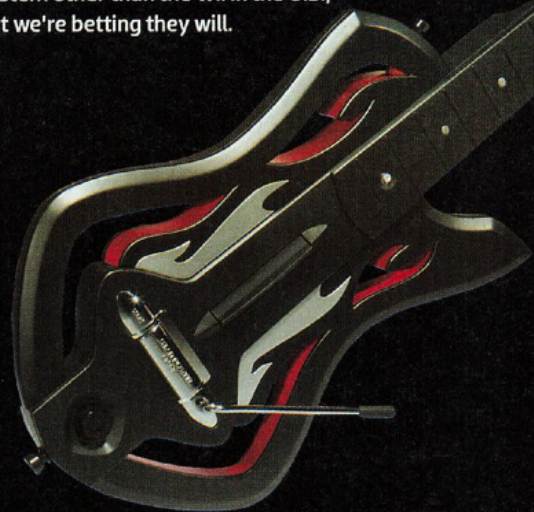
Tie. Adults just don't understand, man.

▲ *Guitar Hero* shows you've gotta be hardcore to pull off a green mohawk.

INSTRUMENTS

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

A redesigned guitar with a detachable body will let you swap out parts for a custom look. The sleek new design also features a larger, firmer strum bar that retains the trademark Guitar Hero—guitar click. No word yet if those redesigned Band Hero drums will finally appear on a system other than the Wii in the U.S., but we're betting they will.



ROCK BAND 3

Rock Band gets a brand-new instrument this year with the keyboard. But it also gets a dramatically more complex, 102-button guitar for Pro mode—and even a fully functional, stringed electric guitar being manufactured by Fender. Also on the docket are slightly refined drums and cymbals.



Advantage:

Rock Band 3, though Warriors of Rock gets points for a slick redesign of the familiar controller.

COST

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

You'll be just fine with all your current instruments. That means most players will probably need to shell out just the \$60 for the game.

ROCK BAND 3

Outside of Pro mode, Rock Band 3 will also work with legacy instruments; keyboard parts can even be played on guitar controllers. But for Pro mode you'll need a keyboard (\$80), a new guitar (at least \$150), and a cymbal set (\$40). That's in addition to the game itself.

Advantage:

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock. Recent studies show that \$60 is less than \$330.

THE VERDICT

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

By refocusing on more straightforward rock and traditional game-y features, Warriors of Rock is smartly catering to its immense fan base, betting that plenty of players want to play a game, not actually play music. Critics might accuse it of treading water, but fans will likely have no problem with that.

ROCK BAND 3

This ambitious game aims to bridge the gap between tapping colored buttons and playing real music. The dramatic challenge of Pro mode—not to mention the added expense—may scare off casual players, but they'll come back once they realize they can still get a heck of a lot of gameplay in the traditional modes.



Advantage:



You. The franchises are diverging and diversifying, which means more options for gamers. Whichever game you choose, you're getting the benefits of two franchises in top form.