

Review: 'Band Hero,' 'Lego Rock Band' -- clean rock

November 12 2009, By LOU KESTEN , Associated Press Writer



This screen grab released by Activision shows "Band Hero" a pop-oriented entry in the "Guitar Hero" series.(AP Photo/Activision)

(AP) -- Musical video games are already family-friendly. There's no violence, and their developers have already weeded out most of the sex and drugs in rock 'n roll. And just about anyone can pick up a fake guitar, microphone or a pair of drumsticks and figure out what to do with it.

But Activision and MTV Games, the publishers of "[Guitar Hero](#)" and "Rock Band," respectively, want to make sure that even the youngest gamer is on board. So both companies have introduced more wholesome versions of their rock franchises, hoping to infect preteens with the musical bug.

Activision's entry is "Band Hero" (for the [Xbox 360](#), PlayStation 3, Wii,

\$59.99). MTV's would-be gateway drug, published by Warner Bros., is "Lego Rock Band" (for the Xbox 360, [PlayStation 3](#), Wii, \$49.99). Both titles feature the same gameplay as their parent titles, but the gigs have moved out of dingy rock clubs and into more fanciful, all-ages spaces.

The success of a [music game](#), though, depends a lot on what songs you get to play. So, let's conduct a battle of the bands.

-Number of tracks:

LRB: 45.

BH: 65.

Winner: "Band Hero."

-Special celebrity guests:

LRB: Queen, David Bowie, Iggy Pop - in Lego form.

BH: Taylor Swift, No Doubt, Maroon 5's Adam Levine.

Winner: "Lego Rock Band."

-Great songs:

LRB: Elton John's "Crocodile Rock," Supergrass' "Grace," Blur's "Song 2."

BH: Marvin Gaye's "I Heard It Through the Grapevine," Santigold's "L.E.S. Artistes," the Mighty Mighty Bosstones' "The Impression That I Get."

Winner: "Band Hero."

-Novelties:

LRB: Ray Parker Jr.'s "Ghostbusters," Queen's "We Will Rock You."

BH: The Village People's "Y.M.C.A.," Devo's "Whip It."

Winner: "Band Hero."

-Jackson 5 song:

LRB: "I Want You Back."

BH: "ABC."

Winner: "Lego Rock Band."

-Counting Crows song:

LRB: "Accidentally in Love."

BH: "Angels of the Silences."

Winner: Neither.

-Other horrible songs:

LRB: Lostprophets' "Rooftops (A Liberation Broadcast)," Boys Like Girls' "Thunder."

BH: Tonic's "If You Could Only See," Hinder's "Lips of an Angel."

Winner: "Lego Rock Band," if only because it has fewer of them.

-Additional songs you can download:

LRB: The "Rock Band" franchise has nearly 1,000 downloadable tracks, though some won't work in "Lego Rock Band."

BH: The company's Web site lists 167 downloadable "Band Hero" tunes.

Winner: "Lego Rock Band."

-Approach to questionable material:

LRB: The track list is pretty clean, and it won't let you play the raunchier downloadable tracks. So Electric Six's "Gay Bar" is out.

BH: Sex and drug references are dropped out of lyrics. But seriously, what is the Rolling Stones' filthy "Honky Tonk Women" doing in a kids' game?

Winner: "Lego Rock Band."

-Character customization:

LRB: You can turn your whole family into Lego figurines.

BH: You can build your own rockers, or import Xbox or Wii avatars.

Winner: "Lego Rock Band," for sheer adorability.

-Settings:

LRB: Whimsical fantasy stages like a haunted house, a pirate ship and

outer space.

BH: More realistic spaces like a mall, an outdoor festival and, um, outer space.

Winner: "Lego Rock Band."

Overall, I had more fun playing "Lego Rock Band," and I prefer its mix of single-song challenges and multi-song gigs. But "Band Hero" is a lively way to jam with the whole family as well. Both games: Three stars out of four.

On the Net:

"Band Hero": hub.guitarhero.com/games/bh/

"Lego [Rock Band](http://www.rockband.com/games/lego)": www.rockband.com/games/lego

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Citation: Review: 'Band Hero,' 'Lego Rock Band' -- clean rock (2009, November 12) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-11-band-hero-lego-.html>

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