

Review: 'The Show' still swinging for the fences

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In this video game image released by Sony, an animated rendering of New York Yankees ace C.C. Sabathia is shown pitching in Boston's Fenway Park in "MLB 12: The Show." (AP Photo/Sony)

(AP) -- No video game can duplicate the drama of the end of the 2011 Major League Baseball season. You remember: The historic collapse of the Red Sox. The Rays' late-inning recovery from a seven-run deficit on the last day of the season. The Cardinals coming back twice in game six of the World Series and eventually winning the trophy.

It's still early in the 2012 season I'm simulating on "MLB 12: The Show" (Sony, for the [PlayStation 3](#), \$59.99; for the Vita, \$39.99), so I don't know if I'll see those sort of September-October heroics again. But I've already witnessed plenty of stirring offensive explosions, nerve-racking extra-inning duels and an Opening Day, two-pitch shutout by the Nationals' Stephen Strasburg, each made all the more exciting because I

was controlling them.

"The Show," perhaps more than any baseball [video game](#) before it, delivers the feeling that you're in the middle of a high-pressure major league contest. Sony does a fine job recreating ballpark atmosphere, but the real trick comes from the precision and intuitiveness of its controls. You never feel like you're wrestling with the controller just to, say, make a runner try to score from second on a single.

My favorite feature remains the Road to the Show, in which you create a player from scratch and try to work your way up from AA ball. Almost as addictive is the new Diamond Dynasty, in which you build an entire team, mixing real and fictional players. To improve your players' skills, you need to earn cash by competing in games against the computer or other humans online.

But the most groundbreaking element of "The Show" is the integration between its [PS3](#) and Vita versions. If you're going to be away from your home console for a while, you can save your season to the "cloud," then download it to your Vita from on the road. It's a terrific feature that I hope will be added to more PS3/Vita games. Three-and-a-half stars out of four.

While "The Show" continues its championship reign, "[Major League Baseball 2K12](#)" (2K Sports, for the Xbox 360, PS3, \$59.99; Wii, \$39.99; PC, \$29.99; Nintendo DS, PlayStation Portable, PlayStation 2, \$19.99) feels like it's playing out the string. It's an adequate simulation - and, if you don't own a Sony console, it's your only choice.

The hitting and pitching mechanics are fine, but the sluggishness of the base runners and fielders is irritating. And when an infielder does catch up to a ground ball, you have to contend with a "throw meter" - misjudge your timing and that easy toss to first will end up in the dugout. It's an

attempt to make fielding just a bit more interactive, but it feels like one gimmick too many.

The most promising addition to "2K12," called MLB Today, invites you to play as your favorite team, day-by-day, as the real season unfolds. Since Opening Day hasn't arrived yet, I couldn't check it out - but it may be just the thing to make the 2012 season bearable for disgruntled Mets or Orioles fans. Two stars.

More information: [us.playstation.com/games-and-m... 12-the-show-ps3.html](http://us.playstation.com/games-and-m...12-the-show-ps3.html)
2ksports.com/games/mlb2k12/

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