

Review: Jay-Z scores as 'NBA 2K13' delivers again

October 17 2012, by Jonathan Landrum Jr.



This video game image released by 2K Sports shows an animated image portraying Los Angeles Clippers' Blake Griffin in a scene from "NBA 2K13." (AP Photo/2K Sports)

It's tough to improve a video game that has been so excellent for the past several years, but 2K Sports has found ways to make "NBA 2K13" (for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3, \$59.99) even better—with some help from the league's most famous owner.

Along with fluid gameplay, enhanced graphics and a smoother control scheme, this year's edition of the best-selling basketball franchise

welcomes rapper—and minority owner of the Brooklyn Nets— Jay-Z as executive producer.

From the start, Jay-Z makes his presence known. The introduction is like the opening of one of his electrifying concerts, with his "Public Service Announcement" serving as the soundtrack to a medley of highlights, from Russell Westbrook's thunderous one-handed dunk to Josh Smith's soaring alley-oop slam. Jay-Z selected 24 songs for the game's soundtrack, and they feature some of music's top acts, including himself, Kanye West, Coldplay, U2, Nas and Roy Ayers.

But Mr. Beyonce's star power isn't the only thing elevating this franchise's game. One of the new elements in "NBA 2K13" is signature skills, which assigns star players a variety of traits that make them special commodities. For example, LeBron James has five different traits, including Chasedown Artist, which allows the reigning NBA Finals MVP to chase opponents down to negate shots on fast breaks.

Another improvement is the integration of the "MyPlayer" and "MyCareer" modes. In "MyPlayer," you are able to build a player from scratch and purchase everything from game-day accessories to casual clothing with [virtual currency](#). From there, you can take your created player and insert him into "MyCareer," where your player is chosen as the No. 1 overall pick in the NBA draft.

On the court, the gameplay is stellar. The new dribbling and shooting control scheme gives gamers more offensive freedom, with an array of moves to drive past defenders or create enough space from an opponent for an efficient jump shot.

Defense has gotten some attention too. Now you have the ability to lock down an offensive player, using the trigger button to disrupt the ball handler's rhythm by crowding him.

The commentary, from Kevin Harlan, Steve Kerr, Clark Kellogg and sideline reporter Doris Burke, is once again solid. The player models are still on point, and the artificial intelligence on offense and defense makes playing against the computer seem realistic. The 1992 Dream Team and this year's U.S.A. Olympic team are also available.

The participation of Jay-Z may boost the sales figures for "NBA 2K13," and it deserves to be ranked alongside best-sellers like EA Sports' "Madden NFL 13" and "FIFA Soccer 13." It's not just the best basketball video game out today—it's one of the finest sports games, period. Four stars out of four.

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