

Review: PlayStation icons join in 'Battle Royale'

December 13 2012, by Lou Kesten



This video game image released by Sony shows a scene from "PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale." (AP Photo/Sony)

The holiday season is a good time to catch up with old friends. If you're an Xbox fan, you're probably getting reacquainted with galactic warrior Master Chief in his new adventure, "Halo 4." If you're a Nintendophile, you're probably frolicking with Mario on your new Wii U.

Sony, meanwhile, has expanded its holiday guest list to invite nearly two decades worth of characters to mix it up in "PlayStation All-Stars Battle

Royale" (for the [PlayStation 3](#), \$59.99; Vita, \$39.99). Fans of the original PlayStation can welcome back old pals like Sir Daniel Fortesque of "MediEvil" and the title character of "Parappa the Rapper." Younger gamers who have only known the PS3 will be happy to see Nathan Drake from "Uncharted" and Cole MacGrath from "Infamous." Turn them loose in an assortment of game-inspired arenas and you've got chaos.

It's not an original idea: Nintendo has been pitting its lovable characters against each other since 1999's "Super Smash Bros." As you'd expect, "All-Stars" lets up to four players choose their favorite personalities and pound on each other until one is left standing.

The technique is a change from most fighting games. Most of the time, kicking or punching your opponent doesn't do much damage. Instead, each blow adds to an attack meter; build up enough energy and you can unleash three levels of truly deadly moves. There's a little more strategy, but most players won't find it too complicated.

The solo campaign is awfully skimpy, but "All-Stars" makes for a lively party when you have a few friends over. Two-and-a-half stars out of four.

— Sony's burlap-clad goofball Sackboy is part of the "All-Stars" lineup, but he takes center stage in "LittleBigPlanet Karting" (\$59.99).

Yes, it's a go-kart racer—a genre that has already made room for Mario, Donkey Kong and Sonic the Hedgehog—but Sony freshens it up by giving you the ability to build your own racetracks and share them online. By exploring the game's built-in courses, you can find hundreds of elements to add to your own, and they all share the homespun "arts-and-crafts" aesthetic of the original "[LittleBigPlanet](#)."

Unfortunately, "LBP Karting" also revives the weird, floaty physics of

its parent. That worked fine in the two-dimensional fantasy world of "LBP," but it's annoying when you're behind the wheel. The tracks are filled with the power-ups, obstacles and gravity-defying leaps you'd expect in a kart racer, but the vehicles themselves feel sluggish and unresponsive. Two stars.

—Insomniac Games' popular "lombax"-robot buddies are celebrating their 10th anniversary, both in "All-Stars" and their own "Ratchet & Clank: Full Frontal Assault" (\$19.99). The latter game, however, is a big disappointment, stripping away most of what made the team so endearing.

It's a "base defense" game, meaning you're plopped down on a planet and then have to protect your turf from waves of invading enemies. That eliminates the exploration and discovery that made most of the "R&C" games so absorbing, replacing it with a tiresome cycle of building fortifications, having them destroyed, then rebuilding them. Instead of the comedy that was once this series' trademark, you get drudgery. One star.

More information: www.playstationallstarsbattleroyale.com/littlebigplanet.com/games/littlebigplanet-karting
www.insomniacgames.com/games/ratchet-clank-full-frontal-assault/

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