

= Tony Hawk 's Underground =

Tony Hawk 's Underground is a skateboarding @-@ adventure video game published by Activision in 2003 , the fifth entry in the Tony Hawk 's series . Neversoft developed the GameCube , PlayStation 2 , Xbox versions , Canadian developer Beenox developed the Microsoft Windows version , which was only released in Australia and New Zealand as a budget release in 2005 , while the Game Boy Advance adaptation was developed by Vicarious Visions and the mobile phone version by Jamdat .

Underground is built upon the skateboarding formula of previous Tony Hawk 's games : the player explores levels and completes goals while performing tricks . The game features a new focus on customization ; the player , instead of selecting a professional skater , creates a custom character . Underground adds the ability for players to dismount their boards and explore on foot . The plot follows the player character and his or her friend Eric Sparrow as the two become well @-@ known professionals and grow apart .

The game was developed with a theme of individuality , which was manifested in the extensive customization options , the presence of a narrative , and the product 's characterization as an adventure game . Real @-@ world professional skateboarders contributed their experiences to the plot . Reviewers praised its wide appeal , soundtrack , customization , multiplayer , and plot . The graphics and the controls for driving vehicles and walking were less well received . Underground 's PlayStation 2 version had sold 2 @.@ 11 million copies in the United States by December 2007 . A sequel , Underground 2 , was released in 2004 .

= = Gameplay = =

Like its predecessors in the Tony Hawk 's series , Underground is centered on skateboarding in a series of levels . The player performs tricks via combinations of analog stick and button inputs . For example , the player initiates an ollie (a jump trick) by holding and releasing the jump button . During an ollie , the player may change the position of the analog stick and press one of two buttons to perform either a flip trick (such as an impossible or kickflip) or a grab trick (such as a benihana or nosegrab) . The player can grind on certain edges and rails ; different tricks may be performed during a grind based on the position of the analog stick . On quarter pipes , the player may execute lip tricks . While skating on flat surfaces , the player may manual in multiple ways via button combinations . Miscellaneous tricks include acid drops and wall @-@ rides .

While a grind , lip , or manual trick is underway , a balance meter appears : unless the player prevents this meter from falling to the left or right , the character will bail and need a few seconds to recover . Bailing can also be caused by falling without one 's board facing downward . Completing tricks in succession without bailing is called a combo . Comboing raises the player 's score and fills up the Special Meter ; when it is full , the player is granted access to more elaborate tricks worth more points , such as the McTwist and 540 Flip . Underground introduces the ability to dismount one 's skateboard , which allows the player to explore levels more carefully and reach new areas . Each level features at least one vehicle , usually a car , that the player can drive .

The levels are based on regions of the United States and other countries . In each level , certain tasks that advance the game 's narrative must be completed before the player can move on . These tasks include score attacks , races , item collection , and reaching one of many gaps found in a level . Each level houses one professional skateboarder , who provides a sidequest that unlocks a trick for the Special Meter . On account of the levels ' large sizes and the integration of goals into the story , Underground has been described as an adventure game . Characters can level up their stats ? which include jump height and speed ? by completing optional goals in a level ; this adds an element of role @-@ playing gameplay . Other gameplay modes include multiplayer minigames ? one , a combat mode called " Firefight " , can be played online in the PlayStation 2 version of the game ? and a " free skate " mode that lets the player explore levels with no goals or story .

Underground features extensive customization . The player creates a custom character for the story mode , and may not play as a pre @-@ made professional skater outside a few contexts : a special

scene late in the game , minigames , and the free skate mode . A level editor allows the player to create skate parks with a large array of objects , ranging from traditional skate park elements like halfpipes , ramps , funboxes , and grind rails to more outlandish pieces like buildings and sections of elevated freeways . The player can change their park 's time of day and environmental theme . Tricks , skateboards , and level goals may be customized as well .

While the console versions of the game are fully three @-@ dimensional , the Game Boy Advance version is rendered in an isometric style that incorporates both 2D sprites and 3D models . This version is a more traditional Tony Hawk 's game , with little attention given to story or customization . The mobile phone version is similarly restricted .

= = Plot = =

The protagonist and their friend , Eric Sparrow , live in suburban New Jersey and dream of becoming famous skateboarders . The protagonist manages to impress professional skater Chad Muska , in town for a demo , who gives them a new skateboard and informs them that a good way to start a skating career is to gain a sponsorship from a skate shop . The protagonist seeks out Stacy Peralta , but he refuses unless he sees something to set them apart from the other local skaters , so the protagonist travels to Manhattan with Eric , who is on the run from drug dealers after setting their car on fire for stealing from the skate shop .

There , the pair shoot a skating video that impresses Stacy , who loans them a van and suggests they enter the Tampa AM , an amateur division skate contest held annually at the Skate Park of Tampa in Tampa , Florida . Eric is arrested for insulting a police officer , and the protagonist does favors for the police to secure his bail . However , when they arrive for the contest , it is revealed that Eric had only completed his own registration form and not the protagonist 's , forcing a dejected protagonist to try and impress competitors in the pro contest in order to gain admission . After impressing Tony Hawk , the protagonist wins the Best Trick event at Tampa AM and is offered deals by major skateboard sponsors , much to Eric 's dismay . The protagonist then heads to San Diego , California to meet Todd , the manager of the team , and completes several photo shoots for a magazine . After a wild celebration party , it is revealed that Eric has been picked up by the same sponsor .

The team then flies to Hawaii to film a video , with the protagonist aiming for local spots that skaters have not filmed in before . Finding a tall hotel , the protagonist climbs to the roof and recruits Eric to film a trick video atop it . The police arrive to arrest them for trespassing , but the protagonist uses the opportunity to perform a McTwist over the helicopter and onto the awning of an adjacent hotel , allowing them and an awestruck Eric to evade the police . The team then travels to Vancouver , Canada . After doing favors for locals and finishing their part of the team video , the protagonist attends the video premiere at the Slam City Jam . However , Eric steals the idea and alters the footage , which instead shows him jumping the helicopter and allows Eric to become a professional . After angrily confronting Eric , the protagonist , in payback , enters Eric 's pro contest and wins , becoming a pro as well .

After designing their own pro skateboard , the protagonist and Eric embark on a team trip to Moscow , Russia , where they reconcile . However , Eric gets drunk and joyrides in a Russian military tank . The protagonist hops in and attempts to stop the tank , but being unfamiliar with the controls , fails to keep it from crashing . Eric jumps out and runs away , leaving the protagonist , trapped inside , to be arrested by the Russian military . Eric then lies and accuses the protagonist of stealing the tank , stating that he in fact tried to stop them . Unwilling to pay the damages , Todd kicks the protagonist off the team , much to Eric 's delight . The American Embassy bails out the protagonist , leaving them to do favors for locals in order to return to New Jersey .

Eric , who now has his own skate company , reveals that he had been planning to betray the protagonist after having long abandoning the idea of " soul skating " (skating for enjoyment rather than riches) ; after unsuccessfully trying to exempt them from the Tampa AM , Eric stole the helicopter footage in jealousy before finally getting the protagonist kicked off the skate team by lying back in Moscow . Determined to fight back , the protagonist teams up with Peralta and several

professionals to create a soul skating video , creating a new trick in the process . Due to the success of the video , Eric challenges the protagonist to one last skate @-@ off , with the unedited helicopter tape at stake . The protagonist wins by avoiding Eric 's attempts to cheat and walks away with the tape while Eric breaks down in anger .

If the story has been completed more than once , an alternate ending occurs , which sees the protagonist punch Eric and knock him unconscious , taking the tape back instead of holding the skate @-@ off .

= = = Characters = = =

The game features many real world professional skateboarders including : Tony Hawk , Chad Muska , and Stacy Peralta . Underground also features cameo appearances by Iron Man , C.H.U.D. , and Kiss singer Gene Simmons .

= = Development = =

= = = Concept = = =

The GameCube , PlayStation 2 , and Xbox versions of Underground were developed by Neversoft , while the Game Boy Advance version was developed by Vicarious Visions the mobile phone version by Jamdat , and the Windows version created by Beenox . Activision , which had acquired Neversoft in 1999 , published all versions of the game .

Underground was created with a theme of individuality : it stars an amateur skater in a true story mode , whereas each previous Tony Hawk 's game had starred professional skaters and had lacked a plot . One reason for only allowing the player to use a custom character was that certain criminal acts completed in the plot would not reflect well on real @-@ world skaters . Previous games in the series had included character @-@ creation features as well , but Neversoft expanded customization in Underground by implementing face @-@ scanning for the PlayStation 2 version : if the player emailed a photograph of their face to faces @ thugonline.com , the company would digitize it for use in the game . Regarding the customization options , especially the park editor , producer Stacey Drellishak stated that Neversoft was " trying to create the most customizable game ever " . The developers used storytelling and exploration to distance their product from the plotless , task @-@ based format of previous Tony Hawk 's games , which led Neversoft president Joel Jewett to describe Underground as an adventure game .

= = = Design = = =

Levels in the console versions of Underground were significantly larger than those of earlier Tony Hawk 's games . Neversoft expanded each level until it ceased to run correctly , then shrunk it slightly . Most of the levels were modeled closely after real @-@ world locations ; the designers traveled to locales representative of each city in the game and took photographs and videos as reference . The New Jersey level was a replication of a neighborhood where team artist Henry Ji had grown up as a young skater . Neversoft wanted the player to become familiar with the basic game mechanics quickly and to notice Underground 's differences from previous Tony Hawk 's titles immediately . To accomplish this , they introduced the player to foot travel and the ability to climb along ledges in the first few missions of the game . While Neversoft wanted to keep Underground realistic and relatable for the most part , they added driving missions as an enjoyable diversion and to push the boundaries of freedom in skateboarding games . However , these missions were intended not to take away from the main experience of skateboarding .

Pro Skater 4 , Underground 's predecessor in the Tony Hawk 's series , had received criticism for its difficulty : Neversoft had not realized that each game in the series was drawing new fans who were unaccustomed to the demanding tasks . As a result , Neversoft added four difficulty settings to

Underground 's story mode , ranging from " Too Easy " to " Sick " . Neversoft wanted players to develop skills for higher difficulty settings on Too Easy while still progressing through the story . The company had included extremely difficult missions in each previous Tony Hawk 's game ; the methods used to create these missions were the inspiration for Underground 's Sick mode . Development of the basic gameplay mechanics and structure began quickly but by the end of August 2003 , only two months before the game 's American release , work was still in progress .

While the game 's cutscenes are animated with 3D graphics , the team recorded live @-@ action videos to introduce the real @-@ world skateboarding teams , so that players could better understand each team before selecting one to join . Neversoft interviewed professional skaters about their experiences of becoming known in the skateboarding world , then compiled elements of these stories into the game 's script . Every skater who appears in the plot helped to craft their own scenes and voiced their own character .

= = = Promotion and release = = =

The game was promoted with a playable demo at Microsoft 's " GameRiot " event held at Lollapalooza in July 2003 . Activision stirred up enthusiasm for Underground with the " Tony Hawk 's Face Off Mobile Tour " , a series of promotional events across 29 cities in October 2003 . Attendees could play the game early and compete in it for tickets to Boom Boom Huck Jam 2003 , which the real @-@ world Tony Hawk attended . Activision , which sponsored the October 2003 Gravity Games extreme sports competition , promoted the game at the event and used its rendering engine to model tricks performed by the real @-@ world skaters . The console and Game Boy Advance versions were released on October 28 in the United States , November 14 in Europe , and May 2004 in Japan . The mobile version was released worldwide in January 2004 .

= = Soundtrack = =

The game features 78 songs , 75 of which are immediately playable in the main game ; the other three are unlockable . They range from the late 1970s to the early 2000s by release and are categorized into three genres : rock , punk , and hip hop .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Underground was released to critical acclaim : with scores for the PlayStation 2 at 90 @. @ 58 % on GameRankings , and 90 % on Metacritic . GameZone 's Michael Knutson stated that Underground is " one of the best skating games around " and that players of every skill level would enjoy it . Eurogamer 's Tom Bramwell concurred : " as a ' pick @-@ up @-@ and @-@ play ' sort of game , THUG is endlessly rewarding once you get your head round the basics , and it 's the best entry point for the series to date . "

The story was well received . Joel Rybicki of Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine celebrated that " for the first time I can remember , an extreme @-@ sports game actually has a real story [with] honest @-@ to @-@ goodness characters " . IGN 's Douglas Perry called it " a kick , albeit relatively lightweight in nature " . He especially praised the pervasive sense of humor in the narrative and in the portrayal of real @-@ world skaters . Knutson called the story " unique " and stated , " I really like that Neversoft had the guts to try something this radical and ditch the formula that they know works so well . " Ben Silverman of Game Revolution described the game 's plot as a " silly " cross between those of the 1980s films North Shore and Gleaming the Cube , but he praised it for giving context to the level goals and keeping distance between the skill unlocks . Bramwell called it " hackneyed " . Rybicki found that the plot hurt the game 's replay value and caused missions to be overly simplistic . By contrast , Game Informer 's Justin Leeper thought that " it serves to make some

of the less @-@ entertaining goals tolerable , because there ? s a reason for doing them . "

The game 's aesthetics were generally well received . Bramwell called the graphics " unchanged and increasingly antiquated " and criticized the presence of " sharp , angular character models , eerily unrealistic lighting and odd little moments when the player is trying to turn round and ends up banging into a curb " . Knutson , meanwhile , was positive regarding the graphics , art , and animation : he called them " nearly flawless " and praised the realism they brought to the inherently fantastical skateboarding genre . Williams said that " THUG 's cityscapes are incredibly well designed " and singled out the GameCube version of Underground as exceptionally well rendered . Rybicki called the levels " big and beautiful " . Knutson commended the soundtrack 's large size and the sound effects ' realism . Perry appreciated the " hilariously hurtful " injury sounds and the extensive song list . By contrast , IGN 's Craig Harris praised the graphics of the Game Boy Advance version but was more mixed on the soundtrack .

The alternate gameplay modes were received very well . Knutson lauded the game 's high degree of customization ; he summarized that " everything is expounded a hundred fold : from create @-@ a @-@ skater to create @-@ a @-@ park mode , it is simply amazing " . He singled out the level editor as one of the deepest he had ever seen . GameSpy 's Bryn Williams identified the level editor as an " extremely well @-@ designed " feature that contributed to the overall " brilliance " of the full product . Leeper said that each customization mode is " intuitive and user @-@ friendly " , and both he and Rybicki especially enjoyed the trick @-@ creation feature . Reviewers for Famitsu magazine praised the story mode , whose open world format they compared to the Grand Theft Auto series . Knutson and Perry enjoyed the multiplayer , particularly the online Firefight mode . Williams thought similarly and stated that " the most notable disappointment " of the game was the lack of online play for non @-@ PlayStation 2 owners . Harris found the board customization of the Game Boy Advance version to be poorly implemented , though in @-@ depth . Despite his praise for the customization modes , Leeper admitted that his greatest enjoyment still came from " seeking out great lines and beating my scores " .

The walking and driving controls were criticized . Bramwell claimed that these modes felt " like they 've been attached with an old stick of glue that 's about as adhesive as baby oil " . Knutson agreed , though he praised the novelty of these diversions . He stated that " the Tony Hawk series has always had exceptional controls " and that Underground , overall , was no exception . Perry felt that the feature increased levels ' replay value . Similarly , Famitsu reviewers noted that , although the game 's fast pace makes it extremely challenging at times , the high difficulty provides a sense of accomplishment when jumps and tricks are performed correctly . Williams found the GameCube version 's controls mediocre , albeit manageable . Damon Brown from GameSpot stated that the mobile version 's restrictive controls ? many tricks require three button inputs ? were that version 's only caveat .

= = = Sales and accolades = = =

Underground won Best Sports Game at the 2003 Game Critics Awards hosted by Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) . The 2004 MTV Video Music Awards introduced a new category , Best Video Game Soundtrack , which Underground won . In Europe the week after the game 's release , the PlayStation 2 , Xbox , and GameCube versions were respectively the fifth , sixth , and eighth best selling games for those consoles . It would remain uninterrupted in the top twenty of every week until January 24 , 2004 , for the Xbox and GameCube and February 21 for the PlayStation 2 , inclusive . As of December 2007 , the PlayStation 2 version of the game had sold 2 @.@ 11 million copies in the United States . The GameCube version made Nintendo 's Player 's Choice list by selling 250 @,@ 000 copies in the United States .

= = Sequel = =

Neversoft and Activision returned for a sequel , Underground 2 . It was released on October 4 , 2004 , for mobile phones , Microsoft Windows , and the GameCube , PlayStation 2 , Xbox , Game

Boy Advance , and PlayStation Portable consoles . The plot continues that of Underground and focuses on the player character and their team sabotaging an opposing team . The gameplay , structure , and level design are very similar to those of Underground . However , Underground 2 features new tricks and gameplay mechanics , like the Natas spin , the ability to plant customized stickers in levels with the " sticker slap " , a slow @-@ motion " Focus " mode , and the ability to earn points by having a tantrum after bailing . The plot is set entirely in new locations , such as Boston , New Orleans , Berlin , and Barcelona . The game received positive reviews , though less so than its predecessor : its GameRankings scores ranged from 70 @.@ 33 % for the Game Boy Advance to 86 @.@ 20 % for Windows .