

= Controversies surrounding Grand Theft Auto IV =

Grand Theft Auto IV is an open world , action @-@ adventure video game developed by Rockstar North and published by Rockstar Games . Upon its release on 29 April 2008 for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 , Grand Theft Auto IV generated controversy . The game 's depiction of violence received mass commentary from journalists and government officials , occasionally being referred to as a " murder simulator " . The ability to drive under the influence of alcohol in the game also received criticism , resulting in a request for the ESRB to change the game 's rating . Similarly , some gameplay features were censored for the Australian and New Zealand versions of the game , though these censors were subsequently removed . Several crimes that were committed following the game 's release , such as murder and sexual violence , were attributed to the perpetrators ' experience with the game , generating further controversy . Former attorney Jack Thompson , known for his campaigns against the series , heavily criticised Grand Theft Auto IV prior to its release , filing lawsuits against parent company Take @-@ Two Interactive , and threatening to ban distribution of the game if some gameplay features were not removed . The game also generated further controversy and lawsuits from city officials and organisations .

= = Gameplay features = =

= = = Depiction of violence = = =

Grand Theft Auto IV has been widely criticised for its depiction of violence and murder . On his program , conservative American talk @-@ radio host Glenn Beck used Grand Theft Auto IV as an example to make wider claims about the use of violent video games by the US military , repeating claims made by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman that the military uses shooting games to desensitise soldiers to killing . Beck also spoke to Jack Thompson , who labelled the game as a " murder simulator " . Gavin McKiernan , national grass roots director for the Parents Television Council , added that the game is an " adult product " , claiming that research displays the potential effect violent media has on children . Thompson reiterated that the game should be re @-@ rated in the United States , referring to the Australian release as an example .

There have been a number of reported crimes in which the perpetrators cited Grand Theft Auto IV as their primary influence . On 27 June 2008 , six teenagers were arrested after participating in a crime spree in New Hyde Park , New York . The teenagers mugged a man , knocking his teeth out , attempted to hijack a car , and smashed a passing van with a bat . According to the Nassau County Police , the teenagers claimed that they were inspired by Grand Theft Auto IV . On 4 August 2008 , BBC Newsbeat reported that an 18 @-@ year @-@ old student had been arrested in Bangkok , Thailand for the murder of a taxi driver after attempting to hijack the vehicle . Bangkok police captain Veerarit Pipatanasak stated that the student " wanted to find out if it was as easy in real life to rob a taxi as it was in the game " . Grand Theft Auto IV was subsequently banned in Thailand as a result . On 24 August 2013 , Sky News reported that a 90 @-@ year @-@ old woman was killed in Slaughter , Louisiana when an eight @-@ year @-@ old boy grabbed a handgun and shot her in the head after playing Grand Theft Auto IV .

= = = Drunk driving option = = =

Grand Theft Auto IV lets players become intoxicated , resulting in a shaky and blurry gameplay vision . Players also have the option to enter cars while intoxicated , and to drive under the influence of alcohol . This gameplay feature received criticism , particularly from the nonprofit organisation Mothers Against Drunk Driving ( MADD ) . MADD referred to the action as a " choice , a violent crime " , and that it is " 100 percent preventable " . As a result , MADD requested for the Entertainment Software Rating Board to change the rating of the game from Mature ( 17 + ) to Adults Only ( 18 + ) , effectively removing the game from retail stock . They also asked Take @-@

Two Interactive and Rockstar Games to consider halting the game 's distribution out of a sense of social responsibility , or out of respect for victims of driving under the influence . Rockstar later issued a statement to the Associated Press :

We have a great deal of respect for MADD 's mission , but we believe the mature audience for Grand Theft Auto IV is more than sophisticated enough to understand the game 's content .

= = = Sexual and nudity allegations = = =

On 16 June 2008 , British newspaper The Sun reported the presence of an in @-@ game Internet resource titled Little Lacy Surprise Pageant ? a reference to the fake commercials featured in Grand Theft Auto : Vice City Stories ( 2006 ) . The in @-@ game resource warns that anyone caught viewing the website will be investigated , followed by a statement similar to the quote found at Grokster.com which results in the player being pursued by the in @-@ game FIB and SWAT ( NOOSE ) teams . In November 2008 , 19 @-@ year @-@ old Ryan Chinnery was jailed for performing two sex attacks on women at night . During the court hearings , it was told that Chinnery had spent considerable hours playing Grand Theft Auto IV . The judge said that Chinnery 's experience with the game " cannot have helped him in all the circumstances of this case " .

Grand Theft Auto : The Lost and Damned , the first episodic expansion to Grand Theft Auto IV , features a cutscene displaying full @-@ frontal male nudity . As a result , parents group Common Sense Media condemned the expansion , issuing a public warning against the nudity . The organisation claimed that the inclusion of nudity resulted in the game 's status as " more controversial than its predecessors " . Rockstar vice president Dan Houser stated that the game 's depiction of sexual content is intended as humorous , hoping that " the fans " recognise the humour .

= = = Censored release = = =

Despite confirmation in February 2008 that the Australian version of Grand Theft Auto IV would not be edited , Rockstar later revealed that some features would be censored . The game was assigned an MA15 + rating on 11 December 2007 . Rockstar stated that a special version of the game was produced to comply with the Australian classification system . Features censored in the Australian versions include : the inability to select a " service " when hiring a prostitute , and the restriction of animation and camera angles ; the lack of blood pools and bloody footprints ; the replacement of bullet wounds and blood patches with " slight discolouration " . For the game 's PC release , the uncensored version of the game was awarded MA15 + in Australia . Following the release of The Lost and Damned , Rockstar distributed a patch which uncensored the Australian release for consoles .

On 15 April 2008 , it was announced that the New Zealand release of the game would be identical to the censored Australian release , with Take @-@ Two Interactive attributing " time scales and logistical reasons " . Bill Hastings , Chief Censor for the New Zealand Office of Film and Literature Classification ( OFLC ) , stated that Rockstar " did not tell [ the OFLC ] which version of the game they submitted " , and that " the version [ Rockstar ] submitted for classification was the version they intended to market in New Zealand " . However , the game was resubmitted to the OFLC by Stan Calif , a 21 @-@ year @-@ old student who was unhappy that New Zealand received an edited version of the game as a result of Australian censorship laws . The unedited version was subsequently given an R18 rating and cleared for sale in New Zealand .

= = Political response = =

In 2007 , then Florida lawyer Jack Thompson , who had previously campaigned against other games from Rockstar , stated that he would take measures to prevent the sale of Grand Theft Auto IV to minors . On 14 March 2007 , Rockstar 's parent company Take @-@ Two Interactive filed a lawsuit against Thompson in an attempt to preemptively restrict him from his attempts to declare

Rockstar 's games as a nuisance . Games declared to be a nuisance are effectively banned for sale , which Take @-@ Two believed would be a violation of First Amendment rights . Thompson responded by filing a countersuit , accusing Take @-@ Two of violating federal RICO statues , committing perjury , obstruction of justice , and conspiring against him with third parties to deprive him of his civil rights .

Both parties reached a settlement on 20 April 2007 , agreeing to drop their respective lawsuits . Under the terms of the settlement , Thompson has been barred from suing to ban the sale or distribution of games by Take @-@ Two or its subsidiaries . He is restricted to communicating through Take @-@ Two 's attorneys on any future matter , but is able to maintain his outspoken stance against their titles and may act as counsel in lawsuits against Take @-@ Two by other parties . For their part , Take @-@ Two agreed to drop the contempt of court lawsuit against Thompson regarding alleged improper conduct during the court hearings for Rockstar 's game Bully in 2006 .

Thompson filed a document with a federal court in Florida on 18 September 2007 , claiming that the assassination target of a mission in Grand Theft Auto IV is a lawyer character based upon himself . When the player enters his office and brandishes a weapon , the lawyer yells " Guns don 't kill people , video games do ! " , a phrase often attributed to Thompson . Thompson threatened that he will " take necessary and proper means to stop release of the game " if the similarities were not removed ; the similarities were not removed , and Thompson did not follow through . On 25 April 2008 , Metro reported that Thompson had written a letter to the mother of Strauss Zelnick , director of Take @-@ Two Interactive . In the letter , which strongly criticised both the game and Zelnick 's upbringing , Thompson labelled Grand Theft Auto as a " murder simulator " . He follows :

The pornography and violence that your son trafficks [ sic ] in is the kind of stuff that most mother would be ashamed to see their son putting into the hands of other mothers ' children ... Maybe you , Mrs. Zelnick , were so taken by your handsome son that you spared the rod and spoiled the child . That would explain why he has brought you , by the way he presently acts , " to shame . " ... Happy Mother 's day , Mrs. Zelnick , which this year is ... two weeks after your son unleashes porn and violence upon other mothers ' boys . I 'm sure you 're very proud .

Thompson subsequently claimed that he sent the letter to Zelnick 's lawyer , as opposed to his mother , formulated as a parody intended to induce feelings of " shame " in Zelnick .

Following the release of the game 's first trailer , New York City officials were appalled with the choice of their city as the inspiration for the setting of the game , stating that a game like Grand Theft Auto does not represent the city 's crime levels accurately . A spokesperson for Mayor Michael Bloomberg said that Bloomberg " does not support any video game where you earn points for injuring or kill police officers " . Although points are not awarded in the game and the murder of police officers is discouraged to the player , the game often suggests to players that police officers must be killed in order to advance in the game 's main story without difficulty . As a response , Jason Della Rocca , executive director of the International Game Developers Association , accused New York City officials of double standards , for criticising video games of using the city , but avoiding the argument in terms of other forms of entertainment , such as books , films and television shows .

= = Legal action = =

Take @-@ Two Interactive filed a lawsuit in response to the Chicago Transit Authority ( CTA ) removing advertisements promoting the game from their property , which violates a contract that requires the advertisements to remain until June 2008 . In response , a representative from the CTA attributed the removal of the advertisements to the controversy surrounding the advertisement campaign for Grand Theft Auto : San Andreas in 2004 .