

= Guitar Hero II =

Guitar Hero II is a music rhythm game developed by Harmonix , published by Activision and distributed by RedOctane . It is the second installment in the Guitar Hero series and is the sequel to Guitar Hero . It was first released for the PlayStation 2 in November 2006 , and then for the Xbox 360 in April 2007 , with additional content not originally in the PlayStation 2 version .

Like in the original Guitar Hero , the player uses a peripheral in the shape of a solid @-@ body electric guitar to simulate playing rock music as notes scroll towards the player . Most of the gameplay from the original game remains intact , and provides new modes and note combinations . The game features more than 40 popular licensed songs , many of them cover versions recorded for the game , spanning five decades (from the 1960s to the 2000s) . The PlayStation 2 version of Guitar Hero II can be purchased individually or in a bundle that packages the game with a cherry red Gibson SG guitar controller . The Xbox 360 version of the game is offered in a bundle that packages the game with a white Gibson Explorer guitar controller .

Since its release , Guitar Hero II has been met with both critical and commercial success , helping the Guitar Hero series become a cultural phenomenon . As of December 1 , 2007 , the game has sold 3 @.@ 1 million copies . It has spawned the " expansion " title Guitar Hero Encore : Rocks the 80s for the PlayStation 2 . A sequel , Guitar Hero III : Legends of Rock , was released in 2007 .

= = Development = =

The surprise success of Guitar Hero readily led to the development of a sequel for the game . According to developer John Tam , the team felt they " hit the sweet spot " of genres and decades within the set list and wanted to maintain that for the sequel . The costs of obtaining licensing rights for music from " big bands " such as AC / DC , Led Zeppelin , Van Halen , and Metallica , in addition to the lack of understanding of how the music would be used prevented these groups from being used in Guitar Hero . However , Tam notes that with the success of Guitar Hero , " They understand that we 're not going to embarrass their music , we 're going to actually pay homage to their music and get it to the point where people are going to fall in love with their music and understand their music in a totally different way than they 've ever experienced it before . " They also had requests by artists to include master tracks within the game .

In addition to working more directly with artists , RedOctane and Activision worked with various musical instrument and equipment companies to provide in @-@ game product placement . Such vendors include BOSS Effectors , DW Drums , Eden Bass Amplification , EMG , Epiphone , Ernie Ball Strings , Gibson Guitar Corporation , Guitar Center , Hofner , Kramer , Krank , Line 6 , Mesa Boogie , MusicMan Basses , Orange Amplifiers , Randall Amplifiers , Roland , Vans and the Vans Warped Tour , VHT , and Zildjian .

Guitar Hero II was originally announced for the PlayStation 2 on April 17 , 2006 . A demo version of the PlayStation 2 version of Guitar Hero II was released with issue # 110 of Official PlayStation Magazine on October 5 , 2006 . Features of the demo included four playable songs on four difficulty levels for single player and co @-@ op modes . Demo releases do not feature the ability to flip the notes for left @-@ handed players . Demo versions feature the songs " Shout at the Devil " , " You Really Got Me " , " Strutter " and " YYY " . The retail game was released for the PlayStation 2 on November 7 , 2006 in North America , November 15 , 2006 in Australia , and November 24 , 2006 in Europe . It was released as both a stand @-@ alone game , and as a bundle containing the game with a cherry Gibson SG guitar controller .

= = Xbox 360 version = = =

When Activision purchased RedOctane in 2006 , the company expressed strong interest in bringing the Guitar Hero series to " every significant new format " in order to take advantage of the next generation of consoles . The Xbox 360 version was announced on September 27 , 2006 at Microsoft 's X06 . Dusty Welch of RedOctane stated that the Xbox 360 " provides an incredible platform for

facilitating downloadable content " due to the integrated hard drive on the console . The Xbox 360 version of the game included 10 exclusive songs and additional content available for purchase through the Xbox Live Marketplace .

The Xbox 360 version was released on April 3 , 2007 in North America and Australia , and then on April 6 , 2007 in Europe (only as a bundle containing the game and a wired Gibson X @-@ Plorer guitar controller) . It was released as a stand @-@ alone game for the Xbox 360 in the UK on January 25 , 2008 .

= = Gameplay = =

Gameplay is based on the successful formula created for the first Guitar Hero game ; the player may use the guitar peripheral to play scrolling notes by holding the corresponding fret button on the guitar neck and simultaneously pressing the strum bar . Alternatively , one can play with the DualShock 2 or Xbox 360 controller by using four shoulder buttons and a face button , mapped to specific fret keys .

Several changes have been made to the gameplay mechanics for Guitar Hero II : hammer @-@ on and pull @-@ off functionality has been improved , and three note chords have been introduced , scored as triple points if played correctly . There are additional statistics available for a song upon completion , and the scores achieved in either Quick Play or Career mode are saved to the same in @-@ game high @-@ score list . The handedness of the guitar can now be toggled from the Pause menu when playing a song (previously , this was only available from the game 's main menu) . For the Xbox 360 version , scores can also be compared with other players through Xbox Live via the Leaderboard feature , and there are 50 Achievements that can be earned in the game .

= = = Career mode = = =

In Career mode , players create a band name and select a guitarist from among the available characters . Eight characters , each representing a unique genre of rock music - are available from the start of the game : Eddie Knox , Axel Steel , Casey Lynch , Lars Ümläüt , Izzy Sparks , Judy Nails , Johnny Napalm , and Pandora . Additional characters can also be purchased , allowing them to be used in later sessions .

Only the lead guitar is available to be played in the Career mode . Over the course of the Career mode the band plays at eight available venues . The venue system from the original game has been altered slightly and has the band traveling geographically from town to town in order to play at the next arena . The venues are Nilbog High School , The Rat Cellar Pub , The Blackout Bar , The RedOctane Club , the Rock City Theater , the Vans Warped Tour , Harmonix Arena and Stonehenge . The venues feature lighting and pyrotechnics that are synchronized with the music .

Not all songs in the main setlist are available from the start . Once a song is unlocked for play within Career Mode , it becomes available for play in all other modes . When working through Career Mode at a specific difficulty level , the next tier of songs is unlocked once the required number of songs on the current tier (3 @-@ 5 , depending on difficulty and console) are completed . Additionally , the encore song for a particular tier is only made available once its requirements are completed . On the Easy difficulty setting , there are no encores available , but the next tier will be unlocked immediately after completing the required songs in the previous tier .

Successful completion of a song on Medium or higher difficulty during Career mode will earn the player in @-@ game cash . Higher difficulty levels and better scoring performances are rewarded with more cash . In @-@ game money can be used at The Store to buy various items . Some items are available only after completing all songs at higher difficulty levels or 5 @-@ star performances . Within The Store , the player can purchase new Gibson guitars , guitar finishes , three additional characters , alternate outfits for the eight characters available from the start , bonus songs , and videos . For unknown reasons , the bonus videos are absent from the PAL version of the game . Within the Xbox 360 version , there is also an option to access the Guitar Hero II content on the Xbox Live Marketplace .

== Multiplayer ==

There are three different multiplayer modes available :

Cooperative

One player plays lead guitar while another plays either bass guitar or rhythm guitar , depending on the song . Both players share a score , rock meter , star power meter , and streak multiplier . Cooperative mode is the only multiplayer mode in which a song can be failed . Star power can only be activated by both players simultaneously .

Face @-@ Off

This is the same multiplayer mode as featured in the original game , though in Guitar Hero II both players can select their own level of difficulty . In this mode , players alternate between playing sections of the selected song . The scores are weighted so that a player who hits fewer notes on Easy difficulty may not necessarily lose against an opponent on Expert difficulty who hits more notes .

Pro Face @-@ Off

Players play the full lead guitar track on the same difficulty . For the PlayStation 2 mode , this is available upon completion of any career level , while for the Xbox 360 version , the mode is unlocked after completing the career mode at Easy level or higher . The score system is identical as the song could be played alone , but songs cannot be failed in this mode .

Although , online multiplayer was not available at the release of Guitar Hero II for the Xbox 360 , RedOctane has stated that they hope to be able provide this later once they are able to work out the technical issues .

== Practice mode ==

Practice mode is a new addition to the game , allowing a player to practice certain sections of a song (" Verse 2 , " " Chorus , " " Bridge 3 , " " Gtr Solo 4 , " etc .) on different difficulties and instruments . Practice mode gives the player the ability to toggle the speed of the notes (Full Speed , Slow , Slower and Slowest) and does not stop a song no matter how many mistakes are made . Players can play the bass guitar lines on most songs . On others , a rhythm guitar line is available instead .

== Soundtrack ==

Both the PlayStation 2 and Xbox 360 versions of Guitar Hero II feature the same core 64 playable songs (40 licensed , 24 bonus songs) . Among the featured tracks are " You Really Got Me " by Van Halen , " Sweet Child O ' Mine " by Guns N ' Roses , " Girlfriend " by Matthew Sweet , " Woman " by Wolfmother , " War Pigs " by Black Sabbath , and " Free Bird " by Lynyrd Skynyrd . The Xbox 360 version of the game contains 10 exclusive tracks not included in the PlayStation 2 version , including " Billion Dollar Babies " by Alice Cooper , " Rock and Roll , Hoochie Koo " by Rick Derringer , and " The Trooper " by Iron Maiden . Additionally , the Xbox 360 version allows for downloadable songs to be purchased on the Xbox Live Marketplace . The Xbox 360 version also features a reorganized set list that provides a more balanced progression in difficulty .

Most of the songs featured in the main set list are cover versions , with the exception of " Stop ! " , " Possum Kingdom " , " Dead ! " , and " John the Fisherman " ; these four are based on master recordings . The unlockable bonus songs are all master recordings , including some specifically arranged for use within Guitar Hero II . Cover songs are credited on screen with the phrase " as made famous by " (for example , " Heart @-@ Shaped Box , as made famous by Nirvana ") , while the original songs are credited with " as performed by " (for example , " John the Fisherman , as performed by Primus ") .

RedOctane stated that the Xbox 360 version of Guitar Hero II " planned to feature more downloadable content than any other 360 title " utilizing the Xbox Live Marketplace , including many

of the songs from the original Guitar Hero a week after the release of the game . Four such packs have been released since April 11 , 2007 . Additionally , two packs featuring new content to the Guitar Hero series have also been released , including songs from My Chemical Romance , Protest the Hero , Trivium , and Atreyu . There have also been individual track downloads featuring songs from bands Los Rodríguez , PleyMo , and Soilwork .

= = Featured instruments = =

Guitar Hero II features many popular real world Gibson , Epiphone , and Kramer guitars , including the Gibson Les Paul , Gibson SG , Gibson Flying V , (these three being the only ones available from the start) Gibson Sonex 180 and Gibson Explorer . Oddities such as the double necked Gibson EDS @-@ 1275 and unusual looking Gibson Corvus also make an appearance . Several available finishes are also recognizable from popular guitarists , including Zakk Wylde 's bullseye Les Paul . As play progresses , several custom shaped guitars become available , although some are notable in the real world such as the USA and Battle Axe (a similar looking bass is played by Gene Simmons , and the guitar was played by John Christ of Samhain / Danzig fame) . Bases , such as the Music Man StingRay , Gibson Thunderbird , and the Höfner bass (as made famous by Paul McCartney , the bassist for the Beatles) are also available for co @-@ op play .

The band itself plays with Orange amps and DW drum kits , along with more in @-@ game endorsements . When the player passes each set of songs in career mode , his / her band is rewarded with money and equipment endorsements , including Ernie Ball strings , Boss effects , Line 6 guitar amplifiers , VHT amplifiers , Mesa Boogie amplifiers , and Roland keyboards . These products then appear on stage while the band plays the ensuing setlists .

= = Reception = =

The PlayStation 2 version of Guitar Hero II was critically acclaimed . It received a 10 / 10 review in the December 2006 issue of Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine and was awarded the Game of the Month award . The game received a rating of 9 @. @ 5 / 10 from IGN , ranking higher than the original game in the series and amongst IGN 's highest rated PlayStation 2 games ever . IGN would later include it on their 2007 list of " The Top 100 Games of All Time " at # 49 . GameSpot reviewed the PlayStation 2 version with a rating of 8 @. @ 7 / 10 , and the Xbox 360 version 8 @. @ 9 , both slightly lower than its predecessor . Game Informer gave it a 9 / 10 , while its " second opinion " rating was better , at 9 @. @ 25 / 10 . According to Game Rankings , the average critic score of Guitar Hero II is 93 % , making it the 9th best reviewed game of 2006 . The Australian video game talk show Good Game 's two reviewers gave the game a 9 / 10 and 10 / 10 .

The Xbox 360 version has earned similarly positive reviews and slightly higher scores with a 9 @. @ 5 / 10 in the March issue of Official Xbox Magazine , a 4 @. @ 75 / 5 from GamePro , a 9 @. @ 5 / 10 from Play Magazine a 9 @. @ 6 / 10 from IGN , and a perfect score of 5 / 5 from Got @-@ Next . As of April 3 , 2007 , the Game Rankings score is 94 % . The popular G4 television show X @-@ Play gave both versions of the game a 5 / 5 . Additionally , the Australian Xbox Magazine has also awarded the game , for the first time , an 11 / 10 , in a reference to This Is Spinal Tap . Hyper 's Daniel Wilks commends the game for its " huge number of tracks " but criticises it for " some really average covers " .

Common praise for the game by critics is aimed at the new multiplayer and practice modes . Common critiques concern the song list , which includes more hard rock and metal than the previous game , deeming it less accessible to casual players . Other common critiques concern the quality of the covers .

The downloadable song packs for the Xbox 360 version have been criticized for being too pricey . The price was seen by many fans of the series as being far too expensive and was met with resistance and angst with a large number of people pledging to boycott the content . Microsoft 's Xbox Live Director of Programming , Major Nelson , defending the pricing and release scheme , and attributed the high cost of the content to " licensing issues " on the Xbox 360 platform , as all

contracts drawn up for songs from the original game had to be rewritten , since they are playable on an additional console .

In 1UP.com 's review for the Xbox 360 version of the game , the downloadable song packs are noted as a " mixed blessing " ; praise is given for retooling the songs with better gameplay elements such as the inclusion of co @-@ op modes , but the fact that the songs come in pricey packs of three " defeats much of the appeal " . In an interview with RedOctane president Kai Huang , Huang stated that the decision to pack the songs in three was made to keep the cost of the tracks down . Though Huang felt the pricing was fair , he noted afterward " we do listen to the fans and take any feedback we receive seriously . "

= = = Sales = = =

In December 2006 , Guitar Hero II for PlayStation 2 was the second best @-@ selling video game of the month , selling 805 @,@ 200 units . It was outsold only by Gears of War for Xbox 360 , which sold 815 @,@ 700 units . It was the fifth best @-@ selling video game of the fiscal year of 2006 , with 1 @.@ 3 million copies sold . It was also the third best @-@ selling game for the PlayStation 2 , behind Madden NFL 07 and Kingdom Hearts II . Total sales of the game during 2006 were \$ 200 million .

On July 12 , 2007 , Dusty Welch of RedOctane stated that there have been over 300 @,@ 000 downloads of the music packs until that point and that the prices were " very attractive and desirable for consumers . " On September 11 , 2007 , Activision reported that with over 650 @,@ 000 downloads , the music packs qualified as " multi @-@ platinum " under RIAA 's definitions .

= = Technical issues = =

No official statement from RedOctane or Activision were made about the discs or the game itself having any issues , but players have reported songs freezing or skipping , causing the audio to be unsynchronized ; unusually long loading screens ; and menus that freeze or lock up entirely causing the game to crash . The RedOctane Support Center Answer Guide states , " We ? re already in the process of looking into this and testing to replicate the experience . We ? ll notify everyone with our results shortly , and will have a positive resolution if need be . "

Two models of the X @-@ Plover controller were released for the Xbox 360 version of the game : model numbers 95055 and 95065 . Of the two versions , the 95055 has an RJ @-@ 11 jack for effect pedals near the controller cord and is subject to having an unresponsive whammy bar . RedOctane later responded , saying that they " isolated this issue to two model numbers that can be found on the guitar 's packaging " . Customers are able to exchange these models for new models .

On April 13 , 2007 , Activision revealed that the issue was not a problem with the hardware , and that the guitars were not defective . The cause of the problem was anti @-@ cheat protection software , and Activision released a patch on Xbox Live on April 14 , 2007 to remedy it . However , this patch may have caused some unintended side effects . Starting on April 16 , 2007 , numerous users began reporting lockups and failures of their system after downloading and installing this patch . RedOctane stated , " We 're aware of the problem and we 're looking into it . "

Numerous game players have also reported problems with static shocks to the X @-@ Plover guitars causing various fret buttons (usually the green one) to permanently malfunction . Multiple exchanges of guitars have not solved the problem , as exchanged guitars also exhibit the problem . To date , RedOctane has not solved the problem , and has refused to extend warranties to replacement guitars , time limiting the warranty back to the original date of purchase .