

= Midtown Madness =

Midtown Madness (also known as Midtown Madness : Chicago Edition) is a racing game developed for Windows by Angel Studios (now Rockstar San Diego) and published by Microsoft . The demo version was released via download on May 1 , 1999 and the completed game was released toward the end of May 1999 . Two sequels followed , with Midtown Madness 2 released in September 2000 and Midtown Madness 3 released in June 2003 for the Xbox . The game is set in Chicago and its objective is to win street races and obtain new cars .

Unlike racing games that restrict the player to a race track , Midtown Madness offers an open world recreation of Chicago . This setting was said to provide " an unprecedented degree of freedom to drive around in a virtual city " . Players can explore the city via one of several modes , and can determine the weather and traffic conditions for each race . The game supports multiplayer races over a local area network or the Internet . The game received generally positive reviews from gaming websites .

= = Gameplay = =

Midtown Madness features four single @-@ player modes : Blitz , Circuit , Checkpoint , and Cruise . In Blitz , the player must reach three checkpoints and an end destination within a time limit . The Circuit mode curtains off most of the city to form race tracks and pits the player against other cars . The Checkpoint mode combines the features of Blitz and Circuit ? it has the player race against other cars to a destination ? but also adds the complication of other traffic , such as police cars and pedestrians . In the Cruise mode , the player can simply explore the city at their own pace . All of these modes except Cruise are divided into missions ; completing one unlocks the next . Environmental conditions that traverse all modes include weather (normal , rain , clouds , and snow) , time of day (sunrise , afternoon , sunset , and night) , and the density of pedestrians , traffic , and police officers . The heads @-@ up display includes , alongside information about the race , a detailed map , but this display can be turned off .

Players start off with five vehicles , and five more are unlockable ; the vehicles available range from a Volkswagen Beetle and a Ford F @-@ 350 to a city transit bus and a Freightliner Century truck . Unlocking vehicles requires completing goals such as placing within the top three of any two races . If the player has previously won a certain race mission , they can change the race 's duration and the weather when replaying it . The Checkpoint mode allows players to also set the frequency of traffic , police cars , and pedestrians .

The game 's city environment is modeled after Chicago , including many of its landmarks , such as the ' L ' , the Willis Tower (then known as the Sears Tower) , Wrigley Field , and Soldier Field . The streets feature a number of objects into which the player can crash , including trash bins , parking meters , mailboxes , and traffic lights . In Checkpoint , other vehicles move in accordance with traffic lights , but the player is under no obligation to obey them .

Midtown Madness supports multiplayer games via local area network , Internet , or serial cable connection . Multiplayer mode was originally supported by Microsoft 's MSN Gaming Zone , but this service was retired on June 19 , 2006 . It is now supported by similar services such as GameSpy Arcade and XFire , via DirectPlay . Multiplayer mode includes a Cops and Robbers mode , a capture the flag @-@ style game in which players form two teams and each team tries to steal the opposing team 's cache of gold and return it to their own hideout .

= = Development = =

Midtown Madness was one of the first games that Angel Studios (now Rockstar San Diego) developed for the PC . Microsoft planned to publish sequels to racing computer games with the word Madness in the title , including Motocross Madness and Monster Truck Madness . According to project director Clinton Keith , the concept behind the game came to two Microsoft employees during an attempt to cross a crowded street in Paris . They proposed their idea to Angel Studios ,

who had tried to sell Microsoft a 3D vehicle simulator . Angel Studios was initially hesitant to accept Microsoft 's offer given the magnitude of the proposed undertaking . They ultimately agreed and decided to use Chicago for the setting because the city was featured in several famous car chases from films , including The Blues Brothers . The development team asked Chicago residents to playtest the game to ensure that the city was recreated faithfully . PC Gamer reported that the recreation was mostly accurate , although certain landmarks were moved to enhance gameplay .

Angel Studios and Microsoft included regular cars in addition to the " overpowered Italian sports cars " often seen in racing games . The developers obtained permission from manufacturers to use the likenesses of selected vehicles . Microsoft received authorization from Volkswagen for the New Beetle , and Ford , for the Mustang , and the F @-@ 350 Super Duty . The decision to make only half the cars available at the outset was intended to promote a sense of competition . Microsoft staff asked Angel Studios employees to prevent players from hitting pedestrians . Angel Studios (after deciding against rendering pedestrians in two dimensions) developed 3D pedestrian models that could run and jump out of the way . Midtown Madness included an option to remove pedestrians , as they do not alter gameplay but may affect system performance when in a group ; consequently , the game does not require a 3D graphics card .

A demo version was released for download on May 1 , 1999 ; It featured three vehicles (a Mustang , a Panoz Roadster , and a bus) , and all driving modes except circuit . In December 1999 , Angel Studios reported that they were considering a race designer for players , but ultimately this feature was not added . The finished game was released on May 27 , 1999 .

Midtown Madness is distinct from other racing games of its time , especially those influenced by the Need for Speed series , in providing an open environment rather than a closed circuit . Project director Clinton Keith said that an open world makes the gameplay more diverse and adds " element [s] of discovery " such as finding shortcuts . Gary Whitta described the game as open world racing : " you still have checkpoints to hit [but] you don 't have to follow the A @-@ B @-@ C @-@ D standard to do it " .

== Reception ==

Reviews of Midtown Madness were generally positive , with video game critics praising its gameplay . IGN wrote that the game " doesn 't rely heavily on driving authenticity ; this game 's all about fun . " The review also praised the simplicity whereby players can " pick a real @-@ world car and go " . GameSpot wrote that " it 's fun to be able to drive like a maniac [...] because you know you can 't in real life . " Computer and Video Games remarked on the game 's humor , provided by other drivers , police , and competitors (described as maniacs) , praising the " carnage that unfolds before your windscreen " . PC Zone recommended the game , calling it highly refreshing ; Total Video Games said the game seemed a good choice , but suggested that it would be outdone by GT Interactive 's Driver , released soon after . AllGame called it a " must @-@ buy for the driving game enthusiast " and said that it would also appeal to players who are not necessarily fans of the racing car genre . Next Generation Magazine concluded its review by stating that Midtown Madness was not innovative , but that " it 'll stay on your hard drive for a while and keep you playing " .

IGN gave high marks to the game 's graphics , saying that " the downtown portion of Chicago is portrayed very accurately " even though other parts of the city looked more generic . Next Generation Magazine said the graphics were impressive , it praised the " thoroughly detailed " random occurrences of " cars hurtling in front of you " and " cringing pedestrians when you lurch onto the sidewalks " . GameSpot approved of the variety in third @-@ person , first @-@ person dashboard , and widescreen driving views . However , it complained of the game suffering from " choppy frame rates " and unconvincing visual effects .

PC Zone praised Angel Studios for avoiding gimmicks , instead presenting " accurately modelled cars and a meticulously recreated city " to the player . AllGame said Midtown Madness " possesses superb , immersive graphics " , using the different times of day and weather as an example . However , it complained that cars not controlled by the player were lacking in detail . Computer and Video Games said that as well as being " structurally and visually consistent " , the Chicago setting

in Midtown Madness was "brought to life" ? for instance , a "city bus legitimately pulling out at a four-way junction" can end the race for a player by destroying their car . However , Total Video Games called the game 's presentation "far from optimal" even at the recommended system requirements . Reviewer Noel Brady pointed out "a serious lack of detail" and blockiness , especially without a graphics card . He was critical of the AI , declaring that cars often drive "without noticing [the player] at all" . In his book AI Game Engine Programming , Brian Schwab described Midtown Madness ' gameplay as "arcade style" and "fast and loose" , and said the in-game traffic was satisfactory .

IGN described the in-game narration as "a nice touch" , but noted some glitches among the otherwise "distinctive engine and horn sounds" . GameSpot called the game 's sounds exceptional , praising its variety of car noises such as the back-up beeper for the bus . PC Zone praised the in-game radio system , and the support for external media players . AllGame said players "get a dose of reality" with other drivers and pedestrians "hurling insults and exclamations your way" .