

## = The Simpsons : Hit & Run =

The Simpsons : Hit & Run is an action @-@ adventure video game based on the American animated sitcom The Simpsons , developed by Radical Entertainment and published by Vivendi Universal Games . It was released for the PlayStation 2 , Xbox , GameCube and Microsoft Windows on September 16 , 2003 . The game was an Xbox exclusive in Japan . The story and dialogue were crafted by writers from The Simpsons , with all character voices supplied by the actual cast .

The game follows the Simpson family , who witness many strange incidents that occur in Springfield : security cameras , mysterious vans , crop circles , and a " new and improved " flavor of the popular soft drink Buzz Cola ( which causes insanity ) . When the family takes matters into their own hands , along with the help of Apu , they discover numerous shocking secrets , and soon realize these incidents are part of a larger alien conspiracy .

The game received generally favorable reviews from video game critics . Praise focused on the interpretation of The Simpsons television series as a video game and its parodical take on Grand Theft Auto III , while criticism mostly surrounded some aspects of gameplay . The game received the award for Fave Video Game at the 2004 Nickelodeon Australian Kids ' Choice Awards . As of June 2007 , over three million copies of the game have been sold .

## = = Gameplay = =

Hit & Run has seven levels , each with missions and sub @-@ plot . The player can only control one specific character in each level . The game 's playable characters are Homer , Bart , Lisa , Marge , and Apu . Homer and Bart are played as twice . When travelling by foot , the player character can walk , run , and perform three types of attacks : a normal kick , a jumping kick , and a smashing move . To drive , the player can either commandeer one of the vehicles that litter the road , a feature taken from Grand Theft Auto III , or use a phone booth to select a car . The game 's driving missions are also similar to those of Grand Theft Auto III . In both games , the player races against other characters , collects items before a timer runs out , and wrecks other cars .

The game has a sandbox @-@ style format that emphasizes driving , and the player controls their character from a third @-@ person view . The character can perform certain acts of violence , such as attacking pedestrians , blowing up vehicles , and destroying the environment . The Simpsons : Hit & Run has a warning meter that indicates when the police will retaliate for bad behaviour . Located in the bottom @-@ right corner of the screen , the circular " hit and run " meter fills up when the character runs people over or destroys objects , and decreases when they cease doing so . When full , several police cars chase the character for the duration of the hit and run .

Each level contains items the player can collect , such as coins , which can be gathered by either smashing Buzz Cola vending machines , Buzz Cola boxes or wasp cameras , the latter of which become more elusive as the game progresses . The coins can be used to buy new cars and outfits , some of which are required to progress through the game . The player can also collect Itchy and Scratchy cards . By collecting all 49 of them , seven in each level , the player unlocks a special The Itchy & Scratchy Show video . Several events can cause the player to lose coins ; because the character cannot die , injuries cause the player to lose coins . If the player is apprehended during a hit and run , they will be fined fifty coins .

## = = Plot = =

Mysterious happenings are occurring in Springfield , including wasp @-@ shaped security cameras , mysterious black surveillance vans , crop circles , and a " new and improved " flavor of the popular soft drink Buzz Cola . A horde of these wasps descend upon the city at the beginning of the game . One enters the Simpsons ' home and is smashed by Homer , emitting coins . Homer picks up one of the coins , and watches a commercial for the new Buzz Cola on TV , hosted by Krusty the Clown , noticing the logo on the coin resembles that of Buzz Cola . Homer decides he must get Buzz Cola .

Homer at first goes to the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart and purchases Buzz Cola , then gets into more

routine tasks , such as giving Lisa her science project or going to work . At the end of the day , Homer is sent home from work and watches a news report on TV , which informs him that the mysterious cameras and black vans are being spotted all across town . He notices one of the vans spying on him outside the house , and decides to pursue it , leading him to Mr. Burns ' mansion . Homer concludes that Mr. Burns is responsible , and goes to confront him . However , Burns reveals that the black vans were pizza delivery vans , and proceeds to fire and release his guard dogs on Homer .

The next day , Bart skips school in search of the new game , Bonestorm II . After evading Principal Skinner , he does tasks for certain people who give him a lead onto finding the game . The trail leads him to Professor Frink who , in turn for a few errands , lets Bart see the new Truckasaurus . Bart is nearly attacked by it , but escapes before disappearing in a tractor beam . Lisa attempts to find her brother by exploring the Squidport for clues . She learns from Grampa that black sedans that have been appearing around town are connected to Bart 's disappearance , she also learns from Chief Wiggum that government @-@ style agents have been appearing across the Squidport area . Lisa destroys the sedans , but finds them to be empty . After completing a task for the Sea Captain , she destroys a black limo but discovers Bart got out of it and boarded a ship . She finds Bart on the ship ; he appears to have memory loss and is mumbling unintelligibly , while occasionally mentioning the sedans and Buzz Cola .

Marge sets out to learn what has affected Bart. As she investigates a crop circle that recently appeared in Cletus Spuckler 's crop field , Grampa tells her that the crop circle resembles the Buzz Cola logo . Marge gives a can of the cola to Bart , which snaps him out of his stupor . Bart reveals that the new Buzz Cola is an alien mind @-@ control , which he was given while abducted . Marge decides to purge Springfield of cola trucks , but in spite of her efforts , the drink still maintains its popularity .

Inspired by Marge 's efforts , Apu sets out to discover the source of the cola , remorseful for selling it in the first place . After some unsuccessful leads , he finally comes across Snake Jailbird , who tells him that the cola trucks are registered to the Springfield Museum of Natural History . Apu and Bart get to the museum , where they find a meteor as the source of the cola . They eavesdrop on a conversation between aliens Kang and Kodos , who are masterminding a scheme . Apu and Bart learn that the wasp cameras are filming the antics of Springfield for an intergalactic reality show , Foolish Earthlings . The aliens are using the cola to make people insane , by which time Kang and Kodos will distribute laser guns among the populace to drive the town to a violent massacre sure to draw many viewers .

Apu refuses to help any further , so Bart takes it upon himself to foil Kang and Kodos ' plan . He asks Krusty for help , but Krusty informs Bart that he has already helped the Duff Brewery set up free laser gun stands around Springfield . Bart then goes to his father , Homer , for help , and the duo quickly pursue Kang and Kodos to the brewery . However , the aliens escape , and before departing , they reveal that they have already released Buzz Cola throughout Springfield 's water supply . As the cola seeps into the ground , it releases the un @-@ dead from the Springfield Cemetery , who invade Springfield .

On Halloween , when Homer collects supplies to protect his family and home from the marauding zombies , he decides to pursue a black sports car ? which is a probe for the aliens ' ship ? to the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant . There , he finds Professor Frink , who has discovered the aliens ' weakness : nuclear waste . He plans to use the alien ship 's tractor beam to suck up cars that are loaded with barrels of nuclear waste . After successfully loading Frink 's car , along with three more , into the aliens ' tractor beam , the ship explodes . The following day , Springfield is returned to normal , and Homer is seen as a celebrity among the viewers of Foolish Earthlings .

= = Development = =

The game 's developer , Radical Entertainment , received the rights to create games for The Simpsons franchise when they demonstrated a playable prototype . Radical released its first The Simpsons game in 2001 , called The Simpsons : Road Rage , a parody of the Crazy Taxi series of

video games . After Road Rage was released , the development team for Hit & Run decided not to create a direct sequel to Road Rage ( although there are files in the game 's core that refers to it as " The Simpsons : Road Rage 2 " ) ; instead , Radical wanted to steer the franchise 's video game series in a different direction by giving the game engine a complete overhaul . The developers felt that everything else needed a new approach , while only the driving portion of Road Rage was worth keeping ; in Hit & Run , enhanced traffic artificial intelligence is introduced , which makes computer @-@ controlled vehicles react better to the player 's driving . The developers also decided to add an exploration element to the game to make players get out of the car and navigate the area on foot , so that the game offered a better experience of Springfield .

When developing the game 's graphics , the team decided to include landmarks from Springfield . The player is able to enter some of them , including the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart , Moe 's Tavern , Springfield Elementary School , and The Android 's Dungeon and Baseball Card Shop . During Hit & Run 's development , 20th Century Fox , Gracie Films and Matt Groening , the creator of The Simpsons , played important roles in bringing The Simpsons universe into a 3D environment . All character voices were supplied by the actual cast , and the series ' writers wrote the entire story for the game , including dialogue . Tim Ramage , the associate producer of the game 's publisher , Vivendi Universal Games , considered it a blessing to have the opportunity of working with The Simpsons cast , along with the writers , whom Ramage called " the best there is [ sic ] " .

= = Reception = =

The game was released by Vivendi Universal for the Nintendo GameCube , Xbox , PlayStation 2 , and Windows in the United States on September 16 , 2003 and in Europe on October 31 , 2003 . Several reviews considered Hit & Run to be the best Simpsons game to date , and it was given generally favorable reviews , receiving an aggregated score of 81 % from Metacritic for its Xbox version . Praise focused on the move from the Simpsons television series to the video game format , while criticism targeted some aspects of gameplay . Hit & Run won the award for Fave Video Game at the 2004 Nickelodeon Kids ' Choice Awards . Over one million copies of the game were sold as of June 2004 , and three million as of June 2007 .

A number of reviews complimented the transposition of the Simpsons television series to a video game . Game Informer and GameSpot commented on how well the game depicted the fictional city of Springfield from the television series , and called it the most accurate representation of Springfield ever put into a game . Official Xbox Magazine said that the game did the show justice , and Play Magazine felt that it was " essentially the show in real time " , summing up its review by calling the game a " truly great cross @-@ over product " . GameSpot thought that the humor that the game offered included many excellent self @-@ referential jokes , and TeamXbox concluded its review by predicting that the game would be extremely appealing to gamers , especially hardcore Simpsons fans . Entertainment newspaper Variety surmised that Hit & Run was the first Simpsons game to include humor comparable to what was in the television series .

Hit & Run 's parodical take on the Grand Theft Auto III video game was praised by several reviewers . It was considered to " deftly satirize Grand Theft Auto while being almost as entertaining " in a review by GameSpy , which suggested that Hit & Run improved several gameplay aspects that it borrowed from Grand Theft Auto , including instant mission restarts , a superior guidance system , and an easily accessible collection of vehicles . Official Xbox Magazine agreed that Hit & Run was an excellent game in its own right , and found the game to be a " brilliant " clone of Grand Theft Auto . The combination of the Simpsons universe with the gameplay of the Grand Theft Auto series was also praised by IGN as " pure brilliance " .

Positive reviews of Hit & Run focused on its graphics and gameplay . Play Magazine appreciated the virtual world that the game offered , describing it as " grandiose in its expanse and artistic rendering " . GameSpot found the gameplay to be very engaging . The game was found to be " very fun and very funny " by Zach Meston of GameSpy , and Game Informer called it " nothing short of astonishing " . Despite positive reactions , the game also had serious issues that were brought up in several reviews , which focused on the game 's bugs and glitches . Both TeamXbox and Game

Revolution pointed out that Hit & Run had a few gameplay issues and graphical shortcomings that included strange artificial intelligence behaviour and a broken camera system , which they felt hindered the overall experience of the game .