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[10/4] **Hands-On Review--Ford Racing 2:** Over the years, one of our favorite genres of arcade games has been auto racing. In the arcade, it's right up there with first person shooters. On the Mac, however, auto racing games have never come close to first person shooters in our opinion. But then, our first look at the Ford Racing 2 demo by Feral Interactive gave us hope that there is finally a thrilling auto racing game that plays well on the Mac.



We finally got our hands on a copy of the full retail version and ran it through its paces, stopping just long enough to write this review. Ford Racing 2 was produced for the Mac by [Feral Interactive](#). The game's copyright is owned by Empire Interactive Europe, Inc., and it was developed for the Mac by Zonic.



Ford Racing 2 uses Ford cars as models, as might be expected. Following the game's sub-title *Drive the Legend*, it offers a choice of driving classic Fords ('49 sedan and coupe, '55 Thunderbird, '68-'73 Mustangs and '76 Gran Torino), current models (SVT's, Crown Victoria, Thunderbirds and couple of concept cars), performance models (Focus FR200, Mustangs, Ford GT, Taurus Stock Car and a couple of concept cars) and off-road models (F100s, F150s, F350, Focus Rally Car, Explorer Sport and a concept car). The model detail is surprisingly good. All of the model cars are clearly recognizable as the real cars that they portray. One can even pick their color!

There are eight race modes:

- STANDARD--A straight race between you and your opponents. Beat them all to win!
- ELIMINATION--Every lap the last two cars get eliminated from the race. Can you survive long enough to win?
- DUEL--There are three laps and three challengers. Race one challenger every lap.
- DRAFTING--Catch and eliminate all your opponents before the time runs out. Eliminate them all by driving in each of their slipstreams.
- DRIVING SKILLS--Complete one lap of any track before your time runs out. Drive cleanly through the cones to earn more time.
- SECONDS OUT--Collect the time bonuses to keep your lap time down. Can you collect enough bonuses to bring your lap time under the limit?
- RACING LINE--You will be awarded points for how quickly you complete the lap and for staying on the racing line.
- TIME ATTACK--It's just you, the track and a stopwatch. Have you got the speed to break lap records?

Finally, Ford Racing 2 has six track types with two-three race tracks for each type: City Limits, Big Country, Spring Break, Lost World, Ovals and Race Tracks. Our only disappointment, and a minor one really, is that there is no drag strip.



Feral Interactive's Ford Racing 2 comes on a DVD and also in the optical disk "wallet" is an 11-page printed manual, a *Make Your Play* interactive DVD and a catalog of Feral Interactive's current titles. The Ford Racing 2 DVD has an installer and localized documentation in U.S. English, English, French, German and Italian. The manual is perfectly adequate to get one set up and ready to play. It contains several important tips, so one may wish to read it. The *Make Your Play* DVD has demos of many of Feral Interactive's titles, including: Championship Manager 03-04, Enemy Engaged, F1 Championship Series, Ghost Master, Rayman 3, Total Immersion Racing, Warrior Kings, Worms 3D and XIII.

Installing Ford Racing 2 involves clicking on an installer rather than copying a folder off the DVD. However, to uninstall the game, all one has to do is drag the game's folder to the trash. The installer puts some 1700 files on your hard drive. Don't misplace the DVD because it has to be in your optical drive to play--this is Feral Interactive's means to fight rampant piracy.

The first screen on launch has tabs that provide the game's version number, allow one to set video parameters, check for updates, obtain support and select a variety of advanced settings including allowing the use of a mouse to control the game and language localization. We received version 1.0.1 although Feral Interactive's support page states that 1.0 is the latest and that there are no patches available. Resolutions of 640x480 to 1440x900 are available on our 17" 1.67 GHz PowerBook G4 in either thousands or millions of colors. One can also add 2x full screen anti-aliasing (FSAA). On our dual 2.5 GHz Power Mac G5 with an Nvidia 6800 Ultra DDL graphics card and a 30" Cinema Display, the resolutions go up to 2560x1600 and 4x

FSAA. However, with 4x FSAA, the maximum resolution offered was 1344x1008. The advanced tab allows one to select model detail, visual range and sound detail plus implement dynamic shadows, environmental mapping, depth of field, heat haze and a vertical split screen. Following that, one sets up a driver profiles and selects the various game options.

Ford Racing 2 played very well on both the PowerBook G4 and Power Mac G5. However, there is no comparison between the two setups in game experience. After some practice we were able to control the race car reasonably well with a keyboard and have lots of fun. We tried a mouse but the keyboard offered much better control. Still, this game really cries out for a steering wheel.

The graphics and model dynamics in Ford Racing 2 are outstanding. The graphics on a 30" Cinema Display made us feel like we were in a real race car on a real race course. The model dynamics offer what the game calls power slides (we call them 4-wheel drifts). We could do four-wheel drifts but they were not really as controllable by us as we like when using a keyboard--it will take a lot more practice. A steering wheel controller would fix this.

When starting out using only one's car on the track, the game has a indicator stripe on the track for the line to take through curves. The stripe is red when one is off line and green when one is on line. We found that the line indicator stripe to be quite helpful in learning the performance characteristics of the race car and the characteristics of the race course. Our times improved substantially after using it for a number of laps.

We like Ford Racing 2 a lot. Getting really good at it requires, like any game, real dedication and lots of practice. Once mastered, it's loads of fun. We mastered it enough with a keyboard to have fun. We just need to know what's the best steering wheel controller for the Mac--a [Logitech MOMO?](#)

Feral Interactive's Ford Racing 2 is \$19.99 from [Amazon.com](#). A [demo version](#) is available for download. [Bill Fox]