

Video Game Reviews: 'Transformers' won't convert fans

by *Jeb_Haught*

Game: "Transformers: The Game"

Publisher: Activision

System: Microsoft Xbox 360

Cost: \$60

ESRB rating: T

Review rating: 2 stars

SHAPE SHIFTERS - In 'Transformers: The Game,' each mode is unique, sporting a wide variety of

weapons and abilities. CNS Photo courtesy of Activision. WORK IT UP - In 'Hot Brain,' players must complete challenges in easy mode before they move on. CNS Photo courtesy of Midway. While Transformers fans might not all be thrilled with Michael Bay's vision of the heavily armed robots, there's no denying that the transformations - changing from vehicle to robot - look uber-cool.

Unfortunately, that's the only highlight of Activision's movie-based title, "Transformers: The Game."

In the film, the transformers not only look more intricate than before, but they also pack more of a punch. Each is unique, sporting a wide variety of weapons and abilities.

So why is every single Transformer from the game armed with basically the same weapons, one light and one heavy? The only real difference seems to be the appearance of each armament's projectiles.

Since all projectiles are incredibly weak, players end up using the same three-hit melee combo to destroy whatever they come across. Sure, it's possible to pick up objects and swing or toss them at enemies, but that also gets old fast.

Vehicular combat doesn't fare much better due to loose controls and limited freedom of movement. Call me crazy, but I need more variety to stay interested in a \$60 game.

Players can choose to follow the path of either the Decepticons or the Autobots, but they both lead to the same destination: ultimate boredom. Other than the ability to destroy most of the environment, this title is outdated even for the original Xbox.

Game: "Hot Brain"

Publisher: Midway

System: Sony PSP

Cost: \$30

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 2 stars

If you hear Paris Hilton utter "My brain's hawt," it may not be one more of her idiotic statements; maybe she's been playing Midway's new thinking game, "Hot Brain."

In theory, answering questions in five categories increases brain temperature. Paris could get all 10 brain cells firing and achieve a lukewarm cranium while playing this game.

Each category of the game, developed at Midway's San Diego studio, features three levels of difficulty: easy, medium and hard. Players must complete challenges in easy mode before they move on to medium, and so on. This makes it impossible to start tests in different modes.

Being forced to pass easy challenges every time I take a test is rather tedious. Why not let me tailor the tests to my liking, placing emphasis on my strong points?

Players also can opt to practice using puzzles that stress logic, memory, math, language and concentration as much as they want before taking the big test that determines their brain temperature. One random challenge from each category is presented to the player during the test, which can make the results vary if someone isn't especially good with a particular challenge.

Guiding the player through the Hot Brain Institute is Professor Ed Warmer. While he's supposed to give the game some personality, the voice actor (Fred Willard) offers an average performance and rarely says anything truly funny.

Brain games are much more fun and interactive on the Nintendo DS, mostly because of the touch-screen functionality. "Hot Brain" is a decent attempt, but seems more like a college-prep course than Intelligence 101.

Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

E: Everyone

T: Teen (13 and older)

E10-plus: (Everyone 10 and older)

M: Mature (17 and older) RATING KEY

4 stars - Must have

3 stars - Pretty good

2 stars - So-so

1 star - Don't waste your time

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