



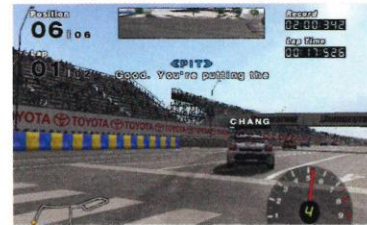
↑ Several racing modes keep things fresh. There's nothing like tearing round small mountain villages in a rally car.



↑ There's a massive selection of cars.



↑ Airbags are first on the safety checklist.



↑ The pit crew's behind you all the way.



↑ Every woman for herself on the track.

Working class to world champion in 16 chapters

R: RACING

WORDS: GAVIN OGDEN

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **NAMCO**
 PUBLISHER: **EA**
 RELEASE DATE: **MARCH 2004**
 PLAYERS: **1-2**
 WEBSITE: **WWW.RACING-EVOLUTION.COM**

THE BRIEF

STORY-BASED touring, rally, classic and drag racing from some of Namco's *Ridge Racer* team.

CHANCES ARE you've come across at least one *Ridge Racer* title in your gaming life and any old-timers in the audience will have fond memories of the now-legendary series. *R: Racing* isn't the latest instalment in the series - it's completely separate - but core

members of the *Ridge Racer* team did create it and the biggest change to the formula is the inclusion of the story mode, called Racing Life.

But before you start pulling your hair out and wondering why developers insist on adding a story to a racing game, this one's a lot easier to get along with than those seen in *TOCA Race Driver* (Issue 15, 8.5) and *V-Rally 3* (Issue 16, 6.4). You play Rena, an ambulance driver who turns into a world-class leather-clad racing goddess with more cleavage than Jordan trapped in a crevasse. You get caught up in catty rivalry with another female racer but go on to become the hottest thing on the circuit over 16 different events, broken down into chapters.

Across the chapters you'll have to put the pedal to the metal in a variety of different race

modes. You'll get to hammer high-powered touring cars round tracks like Suzuka, race rally cars up and down mountainsides, politely overtake rivals in classic models and go as fast as you can in a straight line with some drag action. It's a good mix of modes that helps keep things fresh. One minute you're going flat out for five laps in a championship race and the next you're flying down a mountain dodging onlookers.

Once you've finished the Racing Life mode, you can race for cash (to buy more cars and upgrades) in hundreds of different modes in the Event Challenge option. You'll breeze through Racing Life but Event Challenge will keep you going for weeks.

A quick glance at these glorious in-game screens, and you'll be in no doubt that *R: Racing* looks the business. The tracks, environments and car models look rock hard, even if they are a bit on the *Gran Turismo/Sega GT* side. Sadly, the actual racing and handling lets the game down. All the cars feel similar and they all handle like they're floating an inch off the track. But aside from that, it's business as usual for the latest Namco racer.



↑ Rivals shout while racing alongside you.

BONUS INFO

ME AND YOU

There are no System Link, Live or four-player options here. You and a mate can race for points or battle it out to the finish line, but that's it.

THE VERDICT

POWER

Courses, cars and cutscenes are pure Namco, taking full advantage of the console's extra horsepower.

STYLE

Looks and sounds like part of the *Ridge Racer* family even though it technically isn't.

IMMERSION

It's as deep as the children's end of a small swimming pool. Plenty of races to have a go at though.

LIFESPAN

Lack of multiplayer options and a short but sweet story mode won't keep you hooked for too long.

GOOD POINTS

- + LOOKS GREAT
- + ENJOYABLE STORY MODE
- + GOOD VARIATION IN RACE MODES

BAD POINTS

- POOR HANDLING MODELS
- LACK OF MULTIPLAYER

SUMMARY

Decent racer with some slick touches but the serious lack of multiplayer options bumps it to the back of the Xbox pack.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

7.0 // 10

PREVIOUSLY: Incoming - Issue 18, Preview - Issue 25

COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 28