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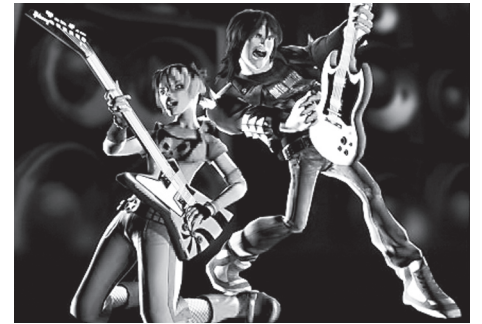
# An average demigod

Unfortunately, *Guitar Hero II* isn't as immortal as its predecessor

## *Guitar Hero II*

Playstation 2  
Developed by Harmonix  
Published by Activision  
Rated E for Everyone  
On sale now

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If you're reading this and you already know what *Guitar Hero* is, then I can safely assume that you're a pretty hardcore gamer, and you're probably just reading this to find out if I'm going to rave or rant about one of your favorite games from last year. For everyone else, though, this is simply a review on the follow-up to one of the most inventive and fun games of 2005.

*Guitar Hero II* is, at the core, just like any other rhythm game: you press buttons in time with visual cues that are in sync with the music. The key difference, though, is how *Guitar Hero* is played. You're given a small, plastic SG guitar with five coloured fret buttons and a strum bar for rocking out, and despite how dorky you look playing on it, it's fucking fantastic.

Unfortunately, though, it took a long time for this sequel to win me over. *Guitar Hero II* is still good, but as is the case with any other sequel, the impact is gone. This game is more or less exactly what you played last year (which is a good thing), except with some new songs. This, however, is where things start to get a little sketchy. In a rhythm game, the songs pretty much make or break the whole experience.

It's not that *Guitar Hero II* is missing good, playable tracks; it's just that it has almost none of the musical variety that its predecessor was able to show off. Gone is the fancy fretwork of "Ziggy Stardust" and "More Than A Feeling." What we have now is purely a selection of how-fast-can-you-strum-and-still-stay-in-time

songs like Thin Lizzy's "Bad Reputation" and Wolfmother's "Woman." There are even a few tracks that are just not fun to play and seem only to be included as must-haves for the popularity of the band (I'm looking at you, "Heart-Shaped Box").

The saving grace of *Guitar Hero II*, though, is that the songs that actually work well are better than the ones from the previous game. The Rolling Stones' "Can't You Hear Me Knockin'" and Primus' "John The Fisherman" are a joy to play, mainly because Red Octane did such a good job of cleaning up the use of the guitar controller. Hammer-ons and pull-offs are far more responsive than they ever were in the first game, and this makes learning how to get through insane solos that much more compelling. Seriously, you'll find yourself being pulled in by that nagging, "I've almost got it, one more try," feeling.

If you're just one of those hardcore *Guitar Hero* fans who stood alone in their basement, rocking the shit out of your mini-SG, then you won't be bothered by any of my criticisms and you'll love *GH2* all the same. If, on the other hand, you really only busted out your *Guitar Hero* when your buddies were by and played it as a party thing, save yourself the 60 bucks and let one of your friends bring their copy over sometime.

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