

The Allspark's Hands-On Transformers Game Report

Contributed by Dr Fang
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Our own Mouth04, or "Daniel Ross" if you're not in the know, had the opportunity to join other fan sites in a full-on demonstration of the upcoming astf tie-in video game, coming out later this month from Activision! You can read Daniel's full report by clicking "Read More" down below. We've also got a gallery featuring pics from the weekend here, although no photography was allowed of the actual game.

My trip began with an incredibly cramped flight heading into LAX. I was worried for a while as I waited at the baggage claim, but eventually I met up with my party at the limo to be escorted to the hotel. As I was waiting, I heard a familiar voice and turned around to see Christopher Lloyd walking by and chatting on his cell phone. Oh, if only he could play Dr. Archeville in Transformers 2!

The rest of the evening consisted of a quick bite to eat at the hotel bar and a heavy head hitting my pillows.

In the morning, we all met in the lobby with PR man Neil Wood who escorted us to the restaraunt for breakfast with DS developer and writer Rob Camino. We all did a brief introduction and intermittent Q&A with both Neil and Rob. We also were given information about what was going to happen, as well as what we could or couldn't do during the event. I think most of us were distracted at one point or another. The restaraunt was right in front of the pool and there was an LA female doing some rather extreme sunbathing.. what was I writing about again? OH YEAH, sunbathing... I MEAN NO, Transformers!

After the breakfast, I hung out with Rob for a bit and enjoyed the view from the balcony at the hotel. We both shared our experiences working on these games, and I was pleased to see not only excitement from a developer working on a Transformers title, but passion for the product which only excited me further at what I was going to see at noon.

The event was to begin and we all met in the lower level conference room to sign non-disclosure agreements and have a light lunch. More conversation followed from the other gentlemen I was sitting at the table with, and I ogled the autographed poster propped up directly in front of me. I will only say that the drool coming from my mouth was from my anticipation of the lunch and nothing more. That's my story and I'm sticking to it. We were then moved into the next room and the game event hosted by Activision finally began!

Our official introduction to Transformers: The Game began with Executive Producer Daniel Suarez introducing the development team, going into detail about what Activision set out to create, as well as how the fans expectations influenced their decision making on the project. After our introduction, the lights were dimmed and we were treated to a beautiful cinematic of the games opening. This scene was created by the same company that did work on the recent Marvel Ultimate Alliance game. When the lights were brought back on, we went into a tutorial about the game including a 360 degree shot of Bumblebee with a closeup view of all the detail crammed into his robot mode. I think everyone nearly jumped out of their seats when seeing Bumblebee transform for the first time, but luckily no one did. I doubt anyone would have been distracted either way- all our eyes were focussed on the screen. We were then shown many things as they switched from different parts of the game. This included a battle between Bumblebee and Barricade, Starscream vs. Jazz, and even G1 Optimus Prime vs. a new TRIPLE changer Shockwave which looked remarkably close to his G1 counterpart. I loved seeing the new movie models in action, but seeing the G1 elements such as Prime really made me wish a game with those characters would eventually follow. Who knows? Regardless, everything was beautiful. The characters were fluid and detailed, the fighting was very well done, and the environment interaction was astounding. You could literally interact with EVERYTHING. No human squishing though.

After our guided demonstration, it was time for some hands on action and we were each separated into groups to test the different console and handheld games. I started on the Wii where my character Starscream was ready to wreak havoc on what appeared to be a military airport base. Placing my hands on the Wii nunchuk and controller for the first time was awkward, and I felt like my grandfather playing Nintendo for the first time. It was embarrassing, but at the same time fun to interact with the game this way. Ultimately though, it took me longer to figure out the actions of how to play rather than how to enjoy the game. My next move was over to the Playstation 3 in which I got to play as Barricade. I'm used to playing games on a Playstation controller, so it didn't take me long to figure out how the playing was actually supposed to happen. As a side note, hearing my voice coming out of Starscream barking out orders was odd to say the least. I could barely contain my sheer joy on that front, yet at the same time, I was simply bedazzled by the amazing visuals. There was a clear difference in the jump from the Wii to the PS3. I can't place my finger on it, but maybe my perception was altered because of the Wii-mote handling the camera movements more than I would normally have liked. My time on the PS3 was short unfortunately, but I moved on satisfied that the gameplay was actually quite fun. Briskly moving along, I was placed next on the XBOX 360. Now I'm generally a Playstation fan, but for some reason (maybe it was lighting or just the TV), but this version of the game seemed to jump out at me more. The gameplay was about the same and the

controller wasn't too difficult to learn. Playing as Bumblebee I was pitted against Barricade yet again and treated to some in-game cinematics. They seemed rather comical and silly at times, almost undermining the serious tone the rest of the atmosphere was portraying. Driving was a bit tough, and it felt like I was racing on a wet road or ice most of the time, crashing into objects and people quite frequently, but I thoroughly enjoyed transforming in mid air to thrash some baddies. Moving on to the DS game, I was overwhelmingly surprised. If the console version was only beautiful, this one was just plain fun! The first thing I noticed was the amount of voice and dialogue coming out of this little handheld, coupled with pretty decent graphics. I was reminiscent of the good old days of Game Boy only to be thrust into a fully rendered 3D environment that seemed utterly expansive in my hands. I think ultimately, it might be worthwhile to pick up a DS JUST to have this game. Oh.. and the super secret ending you've probably heard about for the Decepticon game at the other sites? It's very shocking indeed! Very dark for what I considered to be a children's gaming system, but well worth the smirk it left me with as we moved on. Lastly, we moved on to the PSP version. I only got to experience the first person shooter version of the game, which was frustrating a bit because the hand placement can inadvertently turn off the wifi connection which means you have to start over. There was a LOT to do to actually get to playing the game, and I didn't care for that. Although other hard-core gamers would probably be inclined to politely disagree with me. You can also hear me on the PSP as Mixmaster and Hound who I'm told plays a large part, and if the direction of my script held up, there will be some VERY interesting character clashes in this version of the game. I'll say no more! From what little I could play, the PSP seemed to have some interesting gameplay options and visuals that were pretty close to the console yet obviously toned down for a handheld.

The demo was done and we were all escorted to the other room where we were to hold a Q&A session with Peter Cullen, Tom DeSanto, Daniel Suarez, Rob Camino (DS), and Chocko (PSP). To be honest, I think initially everyone was shocked to see Cullen and DeSanto, so the questions were not readily forthcoming. I believe I asked the first question (which I conveniently don't remember at this point) and the other questions began to trickle in. My favorite question to Cullen was if he preferred working with Wally Burr or Michael Bay. Let's just say that he stealthily answered my question while alluding to the fact that Michael was an extraordinary director, and Wally was a director to remember. The panel wrapped up and I had a chance to reintroduce myself to Peter. It was a warm moment and we were both tearing up as I told him about my journey towards landing the role of Starscream and sharing the stage with him as an actor. He received a copy of "The Voice Within", and I received a pat on the back from the voice of my childhood hero saying, "I'm proud of you son. Don't ever give up because you got here for a reason." I think the entire trip was worth that moment alone. I briefly met up with Tom as he was leaving and handed off the comic as well.

The rest of my trip consisted of friendly conversations with the other heads of the Transformers community, and beers for the crew at Activision who were kind enough to let me treat them after they had treated me to a dream come true.

I would like to personally thank Activision for everything they've done for me personally, but also for this wonderful event. The game blew away my expectations and left me very convinced that the Transformers fans who have stuck with this franchise will walk away satisfied. Activision took great attention to detail, and suggestion- including much that was actually derived from these forums! So fellow Allsparkers, give yourselves a pat on the back and brace yourself for the plethora of games that will be sure to tickle your fancy whether you're a G1 purist, or a casual gamer. Transformers is going to rock your socks off!