F1 2020 reviewed—Codemasters takes another racing game win



reader comments

22 with 20 posters participating, including story author

Share this story

- In the real world, F1 is having a truncated, socially distanced season that only just started in July. But in *F1 2020*, you get to pretend the pandemic never happened.
- For example, you can race at Zandvoort in The Netherlands, which was due to hold its first F1 race in decades in 2020. Now we have to wait until next year for the cars to turn up here for real. I don't know if it will be the best track to overtake on, but it's a lot of fun to drive.
  Codemasters
- You might be wondering why the lead car has a crap yellow-and-white livery—that's because there's a new feature to *F1 2020* called My Team, which lets you create

a new F1 team of your own.
Codemasters

- The car you build in My Team looks quite a lot like last year’s Ferrari.
- Other career modes are also available. Please see our earlier reviews—linked in the text below—for how those work.
Codemasters
- You can choose from some predesigned liveries or make your own.
Codemasters
- My Team requires you to control what your team does in between each race event.
Codemasters
- Team-building exercises can improve department morale, but maybe you’d rather spend the time bringing in money?
Codemasters
- Choose your sponsors wisely, based on what you think you can deliver.
Codemasters
- As in F1 games of years past, you’ll need to complete various test programs at each race event to gain resource points, which you use to make your car faster.
Codemasters
- There are 16 playable classic F1 cars, from 1988-2010, as well as 2019 F2 cars and the 2020 F1 teams. This Jordan 191 is often called the prettiest F1 car of all time, and it’s the car Michael Schumacher made his F1 debut driving.
Codemasters
- There’s information on all the historic and current cars for you to nerd out on.
Codemasters
- When you start your own F1 team, your facilities are a little basic, like this attempt at a wind tunnel.
Codemasters
- But if you’re successful, you can upgrade that facility

to something like this.
Codemasters

- As simulators go, this one is about on the level with my rig at home. Again, you can upgrade this to something more professional as your team earns more money.
  Codemasters
- Splitscreen multiplayer is back.
  Codemasters
- The new Hanoi street circuit is a lot of fun to drive, with some very fast straights and a great complex of sweeping turns.
  Codemasters
- Even F1 driver George Russell was full of praise for the improvements made to *F1 2020* over last year's game.
  Codemasters

In the before times, pre-pandemic, the annual installment of the officially licensed Formula 1 game would arrive about midway through the championship. But we're not in the long-long ago anymore, and in our 2020, F1 started an abbreviated, socially distanced season at the Red Bull Ring in Austria. So when *F1 2020* launches this week—tomorrow for the Deluxe Schumacher Edition, Friday for the standard edition—it takes players to an alternate universe where there is no COVID-19 and where F1 racing started as usual in Australia, in March.

The team at Codemasters probably didn't intend for a multiverse angle for *F1 2020*, but if this year has taught us anything, it's to make the best of the cards we're dealt. The upside to this digital release is that it means you can race wheel-to-wheel at new tracks in Hanoi in Vietnam and Zandvoort in the Netherlands almost a year before they'll host their first F1 events in meatspace. But the addition of a couple of new circuits isn't the only way that Codies have kept things from getting stale—no mean feat for an official franchise for a sport that doesn't really change a huge amount year-to-year.

Whose team? My team

Probably the biggest new addition to *F1 2020*‘s gameplay is a new career mode. This one is called My Team, because instead of joining one of the existing 10 teams, it puts you in the role of a new team owner (as well as F1 racing driver). You get to pick the team name, design a livery and logo, find a title sponsor, and choose a second driver for the team. Then, in between races, you’ll manage the team, which (hopefully) involves bringing in more money than you spend, all the while keeping each department happy.

As in the past couple of *F1* installments, there are also RPG-like elements involving in-game interviews with the media. How you answer their questions affects the morale of different departments in the team as well as your standing in the sport.

These additions don’t quite make the game as much of a strategy sim as something like *Motorsport Manager*, but they do add an extra dimension to the game beyond “drive car around and around, preferably faster than everyone else.” If you don’t feel like going the My Team route, the other career-mode pathways from *F1 2019* are still present and correct—refer to that review for more information. For more on how the gameplay works during each race weekend, please check out our review of *F1 2018*, since it is largely unchanged here.

Another new feature compared to recent *F1* games is the return of split-screen (local) multiplayer, which joins the online multiplayer and esports modes for those who don’t want to just race against the AI.

F1 driver says the handling is much better

Driving an F1 car at the limit is obviously not easy—there’s a reason it’s considered the pinnacle of motorsport. But a game

like *F1 2020* needs to appeal to a much wider audience than the very best drivers in the world. To that end, Codemasters has added a “casual mode,” which simplifies menus, makes driving off-track easier, and adds some extra assists for players who don’t want to concentrate too hard. (This mode is only for offline play, however.)

But for those who do want a more realistic sim experience, you can configure the various assists to your liking, all the way to “pro mode,” which makes you do all the work yourself. For those who question how well the game simulates actually driving a real F1 car, take note of the praise issued for *F1 2020* by George Russell, who is a member of Mercedes-AMG’s young driver program and currently in his second year with Williams F1 as one of its two racing drivers. Russell said on Twitch that he was shocked by the improvement to the way the cars handle in the game, and other current F1 drivers have reportedly helped Codemasters improve the realism of *F1 2020*.

I’ve not driven an F1 car in real life, but I do get to play a fair few different racing games each year, and I’m happy to report that *F1 2020* is up there with the best of them in terms of fun. It’s incredible engaging with a wheel and pedals, and you can customize the game to match the difficulty level you’re looking for. It looks good and sounds as good as you can hope a turbocharged hybrid F1 car to sound. If you’re a fan of the sport, it’s probably worth picking it up.

The Good:

- Brilliant physics, and the F1 cars are fun to drive
- Does a good job simulating just how much multitasking goes into driving a modern F1 car
- Career Mode is engaging and offers several different ways to race through an entire season
- As difficult or as easy as you want it to be
- The AI is rather good

The Bad:

- Actual F1 won’t visit Hanoi or Zandvoort at all this year because of the pandemic
- Coming up with something new to write every year in these reviews

The Ugly:

- My attempts at making a team livery and badge

Verdict: Worth buying if you like F1.

Listing image by Codemasters

https://arstechnica.com/?p=1689564