Rockstar Games acquires modding team that it previously banned

Enlarge / Artist’s rendering of FiveM operating free and clear as part of Rockstar after years of Rockstar claiming it was “facilitating piracy.”

reader comments

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Longtime readers might remember popular *Grand Theft Auto V* mod FiveM from a 2015 story where Rockstar Games banned the mod’s developers, alleging that their work “contains code designed to facilitate piracy.” Eight years later, Rockstar is taking a decidedly different tone in announcing that Cfx.re—the mod team behind FiveM and a similar mod for *Red Dead Redemption 2*—is now “officially a part of Rockstar Games.”

With no apparent sense of irony, Rockstar said in a Friday blog post announcing the acquisition that it has “watched with excitement as Rockstar’s creative community have found new ways to expand the possibilities of *Grand Theft Auto V* and *Red Dead Redemption 2*, particularly through the creation of dedicated roleplay servers.”

But that statement ignores the distinct lack of excitement Rockstar exhibited when it barred the Rockstar Social Club accounts of many FiveM modders and others associated with promoting the project in 2015. “Our policy on such violations of our terms of service are clear, and the individuals involved in its creation have had their Social Club accounts

suspended," the company said at the time.

Later in 2015, Rockstar allegedly showed its further lack of excitement by sending private investigators to some of the modders' homes with a demand that they cease their activities.

A new outlook

To avoid, er, misunderstandings like that in the future, Rockstar notes that it has "recently expanded our policy on mods to officially include those made by the roleplay creative community." That policy, as of a June update, says that Rockstar will focus its "legal enforcement" only on roleplaying servers that "[make] new games, stories, missions, or maps" or "[interfere] with our official multiplayer or online services," among some other restrictions.

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While FiveM itself isn't a "crack" for *GTA V* in the traditional sense, the mod has allowed for unofficial and alternative online experiences that can work with cracked copies of the game (unlike the "official" *Grand Theft Auto Online*, which requires a legitimate copy of the game). FiveM's documentation has also assured players that they won't be banned from *GTA Online* just for using FiveM, thanks to its use of a Rockstar Online Services validation method that "can not be detected by Rockstar."

Despite longstanding questions from Rockstar and others about the legality of FiveM's alternative online playspace, the mod and its community have continued to operate and thrive over the years, reaching a reported 250,000 concurrent players across the server platform in 2021. The developers at Cfx.re said in a forum post announcement that becoming a part of Rockstar is "a huge step forward in the growth of our community" and that Rockstar's official support will help them "continue to improve our platform" without noticeably affecting day-to-day operations.

While the reason for Rockstar’s abrupt turnaround on this is unclear, it’s nice to see the company officially embracing an “unofficial” play method that has become increasingly popular with the community.

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