

Hawk Soars Again

Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Keeps the Series Alive

By Brian Newland

Tony Hawk's Underground 2

Genre: Action / Sports

1-2 Players (2-8 Players Online)

ESRB Rating: Teen

Available On: PlayStation 2, Game Cube, XBox, Windows PC

Published by **Activision**

Designed and Developed by **Neversoft**

Price: \$49.99

Tony Hawk's skateboarding series has reached another milestone. Six titles have been released under the world famous athlete's name, beginning with *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* for the PlayStation and Dreamcast consoles in 1999, each to excellent reviews and general acceptance by players as the ultimate skateboarding game. *Tony Hawk's Underground 2* (or *THUG2*), the sequel to 2003's departure from the Pro Skater title, brings fresh innovations to the well aging formula, as well as a return to the games' origins.

THUG2 maintains the high standards of the *Tony Hawk* series with excellent and simplistic controls, an ever-growing range of popular music, and real world locations exaggerated for a better skating experience. The graphics are clean and simple in the same visual style as the last *THUG* title. The camera still seems to have angle difficulties in some of the tighter areas and corridors, but this is a problem that has been around since the series' beginnings and has never detracted from the overall experience.

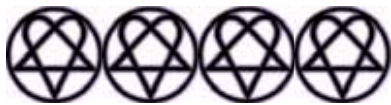
The main additions to this title include the new tricks of "tagging," with spray-paint and stickers, to cover walls with logos players can design and customize. Characters can now enter "focus mode," a slow motion state in which dangerous stunts and tricks are

easier to control, easier to accomplish, and worth many more points. The story has also received an upgrade, with a new, hilarious tale of Tony Hawk's and MTV star Bam Margera's tour of the world creating mayhem and destruction in their wake.

Though many players will be eager to create themselves or a fictional character in Create-A-Skater mode and play through the story, they would be well advised to also look into the new Classic Mode. This section of the game is almost identical to the original *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, in that players must complete several goals, such as collecting the letters in the word "skate" or reaching a certain score, in under a two minute time limit. All the new levels from *THUG2* are included in this mode, as well as six re-released levels from series' past. Classic Mode is by far the most challenging, and will certainly entertain long time fans.

Tony Hawk's Underground 2 contains all the features synonymous with the best-selling series, as well as several welcome additions. The controls are easy to pick up for those who are new to the skating world. Long time players will return for the new moves and tricks as well as the engaging story line, and the overall play never seems to get old. Even those with no interest or experience in extreme sports should give *Tony Hawk's Underground 2* a chance, as its addictive play, humorous story and characters, and beautiful locations are enough to keep any gamer coming back for more.

Score:



4/5 stars.



Colorful environments and classic *THPS* game play.



“Tagging” walls; one of the several new features to *THUG2*.



A Create-A-Skater lobs apples at unsuspecting victims.