

Yu Suzuki & AM2 Ferrari F355 Challenge Q&A

1. First of all, was it difficult to port the Dreamcast game to the PS2? How have you found working on the PS2?

As the architecture of graphic engines differ completely between two systems, it was very difficult to pursue a conversion. (Especially, converting the textures from Dreamcast to PlayStation®2)

2. What about the new features? Are you going to include some new tracks too?

There are no new tracks but the PlayStation®2 version features the following enhancements.

- Full Distance replays - complete reproduction of your race from start to finish.
- Enhanced car display - more dynamic camera angles.
- Enhanced Replay Option - displays information normally only seen in Driving Data option, like accelerator, brake and steering wheel.
- Additional car view - outside car viewpoint previously unavailable.
- Improved Visual FX - production quality improved more tire smoke and clouds of dust.
- Improved Sound FX - more realistic engine sound.
- New grading function – how well did you race, dependent on factors such as navigating corners or bumping other drivers.

We have added the “Great Driver Challenge Mode” where you are evaluated on how skilfully you drive during the race, with points obtained for good race technique. Also included with the development of the PS2 version are precious images and movies Ferrari offered us exclusively. These images will appear in “GALLERY” as you unlock them by clearing each mode in the game. Also we prepared many original elements for this PS2 edition, such as compatibility with a Racing Force Controller, and the addition of a third-person view.

What I felt during PlayStation development was, since it was a racing game on PS2; it would be an extremely competitive genre. If we are going to release in such conditions, we have to make our game stand out from the rest. I believe we have achieved that objective in Ferrari F355 Challenge as the exclusive PS2 features added to the original concept make Ferrari a unique experience.

3. It seems the PS2 version may support online play. Can you confirm this?

Due to the short development schedule and financial analysis, we are unable to convert the ONLINE feature. However, after the release of the Dreamcast version we had planned to refine the Network racing, so we did have an ONLINE feature in our design document. If we have the chance to release a sequel to the PS2 version, we may consider supporting the ONLINE feature.

4. Do you see any future for your Ferrari license? A game based on the F360, for example?

It is highly probable. We have a very good relationship with Ferrari.

5. It's been a long time since Sega's first announcement to port F355 on the PS2. Do you think the game has still the same, strong appeal to gamers?

The answer is YES. The original concept for this game was the pleasure of driving. If the PLEASURE is simulated in the game properly, the playability should not fade even if the game is dated. We also added key new features including a new game mode called Great Driver Challenge.

6. In terms of controls and handling, F355 is the most realistic racer on PlayStation®2. How did you achieve such astonishing results?

We did extensive work with Ferrari and their engineers and I also own a Ferrari. For in-game interior designs and development of arcade game machine, we referred to my F355.

It is usually far more difficult to drive cars in existing games than actual ones. It is quite easy for people to drive real cars at 100km/h, but it is very difficult to drive cars in games at 100km/h. We thought that if we accurately realized this the game would be more realistic to play than other games.

As a result of our efforts, the game even pleased a professional driver such as Rubens Barrichello. By the way, we were once shown a video that featured Rubens Barrichello "driving" in Monza (in the game F355), he achieved a lot of wonderful time records there, though he had scarcely played the game.

7. What sort of input did Ferrari have in the design of the game?

They granted us great cooperation. We are glad that they generously offered us many images that were used as data in designing the F355, and valuable material such as a plan of their testing circuit, Fiorano. Without cooperation from Ferrari, we would not have been able to complete the title with such quality.

8. What feedback did you receive from Ferrari on the finished product?

There was not particular feedback, but I guess they showed it by their actions. They have placed an arcade machine of F355 in the Ferrari Museum in Maranello, Italy. I think that this is the highest form of recognition.

9. What sort of advantages did you gain from only working with one make of car?

As we had not included other cars, we could concentrate on the behaviour and psychics of the F355.

10. What is the technology behind F355 that make it such a realistic challenge?

The Logics of 3D car games underly F355 that we have been cultivating since AM2's Virtua Racing days. With F355, we had actual F355's run on the Sugo racing circuit that also appears in the game, we took data of the state of the cars on each position of the course track, using telemetry systems, and applied this information to develop the logistics of the game.

11. After so much experience with driving games how do they see the evolution of the driving genre in the future?

The genre has lost the liveliness as it used to have both in the home and arcade. However we believe that there should be some room for further development. As for this, I will not talk about in details at the moment.

12. What are you particularly pleased about with F355?

My favourite point is that the route from beginner to professional is very simple but clearly included in the game. Usually I would not get absorbed in a training mode like that, taking such great labour to progress.