

# Preview - Full Throttle (DOS, 1995)

(IE recommends that you read this article while listening to Steppenwolf's "Born To Be Wild.")

Are you tired of games that cast you as an unwilling anti-hero type? Looking for an adventure that will let you be the macho man you know you are? Want to get your hands dirty? Want an enormous chin? Then get ready to sink your teeth into LucasArts' Full Throttle, a hard-hitting, gritty chase with a larger-than-life hero, rival gangs, a murder plot and bikes, bikes, bikes!

The player takes the part of Ben Throttle, the leader of a rough and tumble motorcycle gang, the Polecats. In your travels, you meet up with Malcolm Corley, the owner of your favorite company, Corley Motors. This is, in fact, the only company still making real motorcycles, instead of hovercraft. Corley and his second-in-command, Adrian Ripburger, are on their way to a shareholder's meeting, and they come up with the idea of having the gang escort them as a publicity stunt. Naturally, the Polecats are thrilled to cooperate.

Unfortunately, what seems like a happy accident turns out to be a set-up orchestrated by Ripburger. On the way to the meeting, the group is overtaken by mercenaries who assassinate Corley. Ripburger, now the head of Corley Motors, accuses the Polecats of the murder, and they are carted off to jail . . . all except Ben, who manages to escape!

There is photographic evidence of the real killers, and Ben has to locate it to clear the good name of the Polecats. But more than that, he soon learns an important bit of information that somehow escaped Adrian Ripburger in his planning. There is a direct heir to the Corley "throne", a surviving child who has managed to stay in hiding through these horrible events. Ben must locate Corley's rebellious daughter and get her to the company headquarters to take the reins of power before the murderers find her.

If anyone can accomplish this nearly impossible task, it's Ben Throttle! This guy is superhumanly agile, practically tireless, and has the most impressive chin this side of Fearless Fosdick. He's got "hero" written all over him.

While the overall look of the game is strongly influenced by animated cartoons, this is not a very humorous game, and it certainly doesn't follow the pattern of LucasArts' other "cartoon" games, "Sam and Max Hit The Road" and "Day of the Tentacle." Project Leader Tim Schafer cited more dramatic animation influences such as Akira, Batman: The Animated Series and Liquid Television's Aeon Flux. The game combines its compelling story with gripping action scenes, including explosive motorcycle gang conflicts, first person on-the-road sequences, and a climactic showdown between the Polecats and their rival gang, the hovercraft-riding Vultures.

The cinematic graphics offer a unique blend of techniques. While the characters and backgrounds are very stylized and animated in 2-d, the vehicles are rendered in 3-d. This emphasis on what the characters drive is very deliberate and important to the game. As a result, it is easy enough to identify your allies and your opponents. The bad guys all drive hovercrafts, and you can trust anyone on a hog.

While many games are now trying to make their interfaces invisible, Full Throttle decided to make their toolbox as dramatic and stylized as the rest of the game. The actions and inventory items are incorporated into an icon that looks like a flaming skull tattoo, complete with articulated eyeballs. All the actions are depicted graphically, rather than just using verbs. Schafer describes it as not just an interface, but an "in-your-face."

There is a lot of traditional adventure-type puzzle solving in Full Throttle, but much of the action and combat in the game is also puzzle-like. You will need to find certain items and learn specific moves to defeat your opponents, and you won't get very far just punching away.

Full Throttle was designed using SCUMM (Script Creation Utility-Maniac Mansion) version 7 for the sequences where Ben is on foot, and for some of the slower motorcycle sequences. However, for the fast-paced cycle combat segments, like the big gang showdown with the Vultures, it shifts to the engine used in Rebel Assault.

In many ways, this is an iconoclastic game. It is unusual enough to find an adventure game that isn't Tolkienesque fantasy or space-opera, but on top of that, computer games with animation-style graphics are almost required by law to be humor-driven. It is always a pleasure to see the boundaries on computer games being stretched, and Full Throttle isn't like anything you've ever seen before. Of course, you can always watch "The Wild One" a couple of times to get in the mood

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