GTA IV wrap up

Monday 30 March 2009 03:20

Being level 8 in multiplayer GTA IV is enough for me. Earning $1M seems a lot when you just start out, but once you get better than the average player it becomes more fun and more efficient to get there. But taking it to $2.5M or $5M is insane. I've been mostly doing Mafiya Work, but if you really want to get the Wanted trophy I think you'd better calculate what makes the most per hour and stick to that. And that is probably Deal Breaker, but that gets boring after a while. Racing is nice to get some skills to use in Mafiya Work, but I don't think anyone would want to spend so much time racing in a non–dedicated race game to get even close to $1M. But for casual playing racing and deathmatch are popular enough to always have some players available.

Since the only other multiplayer online stuff I've played is Counter–Strike the GTA IV online stuff just sucks. You can select the type of game, but then you can't filter on other options, so if you want Mafiya Work, but not on Bohan, you can't select that unless you're lucky enough to be hosting the game. And you can't choose with how many players you'd want to be. A lot of times some loser hosting a game doesn't start it and wastes everybody's time in the lobby, probably while there is no manual or hint for average players to kick such a loser to get rid of a zombie lobby. And the server could monitor that shit and find out by itself there is not much point waiting more than 1 minute for a 10 minute round. Another issue I have is that the PSN connection is so unreliable that going for a game lasting over 30 minutes or $10k has the huge disadvantage you might be disconnected with a significant amount of earnings before the game is over, and those earnings are then lost. And there are very annoying bugs in the game, which make Bomb the Base unplayable and in Mafiya Work spawn tasks in unreachable places, so on an earnings limit round the players are screwed when that happens. I've had to have myself killed 13 times to let the other guy reach $10k to walk away with my own $4k when that once happened. That should not happen on a top–selling console game that has been out for 11 months.

The ranking system makes players calculate and find unbalanced parts of the game. One big mistake is that it's possible to do nothing in Deal Breaker and still get about $4k if the other players finish the mission, so there's a guy who spend about 25000 rounds doing nothing making over $100M. That kind of power leveling should not be possible. The tasks in Mafiya Work could also be more balanced. After a while you know what tasks you shouldn't waste your inventory on, and you can let some n00b have himself get killed a couple of times for a couple of hundred dollars in some far away task while you are then in a perfect position to complete the next nearby, easy and high paying task.

The best approach to Mafiya Work is to first get kitted out with a powerful weapon, body armor and fast vehicle, and then focus on the tasks. Once you get into deathmatch style killing of everyone you encounter, somebody else will be completing the tasks and make significantly more money. The spawning points don't help much, so with all players marked on the map that often leads to n00bs doing a deathmatch while a more experienced player can finish all tasks without being bothered by them. That's why I prefer to only mark the leader and keep the game focussed on Mafiya Work. Which player completes a task is determined a lot by where the tasks randomly spawn. Sometimes you've just killed a player just to see him spawn closer to a task, so there would be some respawn time that would make a death always disadvantageous, but I don't know what it is and waiting 30 seconds per death in a 10 minute game seems a waste of time. I'd rather see the creators of a game put more effort in setting up a balanced multiplayer game, and not just give players options that could make it a strategic or tactical different game, or make it totally different depending on whether there are two or sixteen players. Now it seems there is this online mode and while every player gets some dollars to help his level go up to keep him happy there aren't many occasions where the gameplay alone would keep him happy.

Too bad the tasks in Mafiya Work don't require the full range of solutions available in the game. There are no tasks on Happiness Island, none require a boat, helicopter, motorcycle or walking. It's fun to complete some tasks with the help of a helicopter, but it's not the preferred solution. It would also be nice to have a mixed single/team mode where for some tasks you'd have to temporarily form a team to complete a task. I mean GTA IV is a brilliant platform, but the multiplayer part isn't what it could be and it feels like nobody involved with the game cares about what is happening there.

Future DLC? Why would I buy downloadable content for a game that doesn't get it's bugs fixed? And since there is this whole GTA universe for Nintendo DS, PSP, XboX and PC that I'm missing anyway because I'm not buying the hardware for it, I have no problem skipping some DLC for PS3. While some hardcore gamers may have all platforms and can experience every aspect of the GTA line of games, as just a PS3 owner I feel just left with half of a buggy game while the developer seems to be busy with other platforms. And they think I pay EUR 70 for the next half? DLC might work if they give the game away for free and then sell DLC content for those who are interested, but first selling a game for EUR 70 and then selling EUR 2 DLC items for it that could have just been part of the game seems not like a good deal, especially if you don't know how much DLC there will be when you buy the EUR 70 game. They could come up with another EUR 70 worth of DLC after that, and maybe you aren't interested in paying EUR 140 for a complete game. They don't sell the original GTA IV with only 30% of the content for around EUR 20, so what's the business logic behind these things?

by Roland van Ipenburg http://www.xs4all.nl/~ipenburg/blog/posts/play/2009/03/30/gta−iv−wrap−up/