

AROUNDTOWN

Need For Speed grinds series to halt

W Rexly Penafiora
Managing Editor

Electronic Arts' (EA) *Need for Speed (NFS)* series has always brought gamers octane-filled races, high-speed police chases and a collection of the most popular and exotic cars known throughout the world. However, in EA's new release, *Need for Speed Undercover (NFSU)*, all of the previously mentioned elements do not meet the standards of previous *NFS* games. With a plethora of glitches and unnecessary additions to the game, *NFSU* doesn't quite impress this reviewer.

The main character is a cop who is sent by his boss (played by actress Maggie Q) to infiltrate a small gang to find evidence that could put a big-time criminal boss behind bars. As the game progresses, the character moves up the criminal hierarchy until the player reaches the top boss, who eventually sends the player to retrieve the evidence, at which point, the predictable betrayal of an ally and inevitable downfall of the villain occurs, which usually signals the end of a very repetitive and short game.

The look of the game is great. The city is huge, and the details of each car are very precise. Damages that cars receive when hitting obstacles and rival cars are surprisingly detailed, even though it might be saddening that a player would be looking at his paint-ridden Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution X and half of the front fender is grinding across the ground.

As for the story line, it is not even an original idea that was created by the production team. It looks as if they tried to recreate the movie *The Fast and the Furious* with the exception of Vin Diesel joining the cast in the game. The cast itself performs under the standard, and it also looks as if they were torn out of the script from another movie, *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*. The actors voicing the characters try too hard to sound confident that they can be beat the player, and their overall performance probably won't win an Academy Award anytime soon.

As for the game play, the controls are about the same as previous *NFS* games, but the feel of the game is somewhat strange. When trying to avoid traffic, the animation seems choppy. It feels as though the speed of switching from lane to lane can be compared to the same way the video game Frogger tries to cross a certain area without getting eaten or run over by a truck. There are a lot of tight corners during races, and the game tries to make the player drift through the turns instead of just making a smooth turn that can maintain the car's acceleration. There are also moments where the game will momentarily freeze and then resume the race. This ongoing distraction can sometimes mean winning or losing the race. However, if there is one thing that epitomizes the many mistakes of the game, it is, ironically, the hallmark of the entire series—the police chases.

Police chases are what made the franchise as a success, but in this game, they are the Achilles' heel. The way the police chases work in *NFS* is that the longer the player is in a police chase, the more intense it gets. This means that on a level one chase, there are only standard squad cars chasing the player, but on a level six chase, there can be SUVs, trucks, Corvette police cars, massive roadblocks and helicopters trying to take down the player. In this game, the police chases become more intense at a faster pace that at a level six chase, the odds of successfully evading police are second to none. Another mistake in the police chases are the cars used by the police. As police chases get more intense, faster cars are used. This reviewer is perplexed as to how a Chevrolet Cobalt SS can keep up with a Lamborghini Gallardo in a police chase. In a way, the chases are only in the game to keep the player from boredom during the races.

No *NFS* game is complete without its numerous races. Of course, there are the usual types of races: **circuit**, **checkpoint** and **sprint**, but there is also a new race that adds

to the game's huge list of unneeded additions. **Highway battles** put the player in a one-on-one race against a racer. The point of the battle is to be ahead of the opponent by 1000 feet. From playing numerous highway battles, the victory is easier said than done. All of the highway battles are filled with a large amount of traffic that can be compared to any freeway in Chicago on a Saturday night, and the slightest hit to any car going at the speed limit can decide victory or defeat for the player.

Without a doubt, the negative characteristics of the game seem to dominate a good amount



of the gameplay, but there are some good things that can be found in the game.

The car list is amazing. No current racing game can give the player a more satisfying car list that includes the Nissan GTR, Shelby GT500 KR and the all-powerful Bugatti Veyron. Car customization is another positive side of the game. With Autosculpt, players can make their spoilers, tires and hoods as big or small as possible, all of which produce a very unique car.

Overall, the game looks as though EA were making a game for the sake of just making a game. It looked as if there were not a lot of effort put into the

game, and minor glitches could have been fixed to make the game run smoother. In his IUP.com review, John Davidson stated that the game could be considered a "greatest hits" of the *NFS* franchise, and he could not have been truer.

Borrowing cop chases from *NFS Most Wanted*, a deep storyline from *NFS Carbon* and the amazing graphics from *NFS ProStreet*, the game seems not to have its own unique mark. When put to the test, *NFS Undercover* fails to evade this reviewer's negative criticisms.

Need For Speed Undercover



Multiple Systems

Million Dollar Quartet brings legends' hits to life

W Naomi Prale
Around Town Editor

On a cold afternoon in December of 1956, four of the greatest musicians of all time coincidentally showed up at Sun Records in Memphis, TN, on the same day, gathering together to create a series of recordings under the watchful eye of owner/producer Sam Phillips. Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis were united and when word was spread of this foursome, the boys were dubbed the Million Dollar Quartet. This foursome never reunited again.

Million Dollar Quartet, the theatrical re-enactment of that fateful day, is a performance that should not be missed. The musical numbers stun the audience with the power of a grand concert. In between musical numbers, the characters interact, providing insight into the distinctive personality of each.

As the play opens, Sam Phillips (Brian McCaskill), already has promoted the skyrocketing careers of Cash (Lance Guest), Perkins (Rob Lyons) and Presley (Eddie Clending). Jerry Lee Lewis (Levi Kreis) is a newbie to the world of music, but is filled with talent and attitude, played through the chords of his piano.

Phillips takes an active role in the recording process; he constantly encourages the artists to

create great sounds. He is the story's narrator and tells the audience the history of Sun Records and the history of each of the four stars. Phillips is the glue holding the musicians together, because sometimes the musicians don't get along. Tensions flare in the story when Cash and Perkins decide to leave Sun for other record companies. Phillips defuses the situation by saying that he believes that it is more important for the young men to create great music, even if that means them leaving the company.

The actors fills the 400-seat Apollo Theater's small, three-quarter thrust stage to create a rocking show. Despite the small work area, the characters do a good job of blocking the play without ever changing the scenery.

The characters in this show are realistically defined, adding more drama to the show. Tempers flare between the brash Jerry Lee Lewis and the angry Carl Perkins, who dislikes the fact that he created a hit ("Blue Suede Shoes"), that was popularized by Presley. Each actor brings his character's quirks into the performance, such as Elvis's popular shaking of his leg, adding to the reality of the performance. Kelly Lamont (as Elvis' girlfriend, Dyanne), shows off her strong vocal cords in a few songs.

The performances tend to re-create the characters as opposed to impersonating them. Kreis, Guest and Lyons all do a stellar job of

re-inventing the lost legends of the past, but it is Clending who does not come through with a fiery Elvis. Although he is still a fantastic guitar player, Clending's low-key approach to his character pales in comparison to the other performances.

Musical numbers feature all four of the players together and also feature them separately. Songs such as "Blue Suede Shoes," "Who Do You Love?" "Sixteen Tons," "Great Balls of Fire" and "Whole Lotta Shakin'" are performed memorably. Each of the 22 musical numbers is worth seeing over and over again. Each member of the foursome is a master his instrument, doing justice to Lewis on the piano and Cash, Perkins, and Presley on the guitar.

Million Dollar Quartet proves itself worthy of the music icons it portrays. Of the four, only Lewis survives, so this brilliant recreation is as close as modern audiences ever will get to hearing these pioneers play live. *Million Dollar Quarter* is a combination of a concert, a play and a history less, and (great balls of fire!) it is a hit.

Million Dollar Quartet



Apollo Theater

Spears' Circus proves to be merely a freak show

W Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

Circus could not be a more appropriate title for the latest album from Britney Spears. *Circus* is Spears' sixth studio album, more appropriately labeled an attempt. Having helped write only four of the 15 tracks on the deluxe album, Spears cannot be totally blamed for the monotonous, boring album. However, agreeing to perform any of these songs seems to be a good reason for finger pointing.

Spears only assisted in writing three of the 12 tracks on the CD and one of the bonus tracks on the 15-song deluxe version. These songs, coincidentally, are the worst songs on the album, which is a difficult distinction to make because all of the songs lacked any sort of meaning and seemed to be the same beat over and over with different lyrics. It is surprising that writers actually got paid for creating any of these songs because they are so bad, listening to an entire song was excruciating. This reviewer had to take frequent breaks while listening to the CD because it is so bad.

The first track on *Circus* is the well-known song "Womanizer," which is probably the worst choice for the opening song. If compilers wanted the public to listen to the music, they should have chosen a song with at least some appeal. As if this song has not already been way

overplayed on the radio, the repetition of the same lyrics over and over with a way too heavy beat in the background makes the track even more monotonous.

Trying to describe the remainder of the songs on the album is like trying to describe the differences between identical twins. Every track sounds like the one before it, and all are equally bad. The only two songs that sound different from the ongoing bass thump are the tracks are "Out From Under" and "My Baby," in which Spears tries to be a serious songstress, but actually just sings a string of seemingly unrelated notes that bore the listener. If the album had any sort of depth, it would be easier to do a detailed analysis of Spears' music, but any evidence of intellect is absent from *Circus*. This album is definitely one in which intelligence and meaning have taken a backseat to animal-like instinct.

The spastic tone of the album makes the listener feel nervous and agitated. Every song sounds like one of Madonna's modern songs, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but although imitation is the highest form of flattery, the last thing Spears needs is to become a sound-double. The similarities between her

tracks are copies enough.

However, what Spears lacks in depth, she definitely makes up for in sexual innuendo. It is interesting to hear a song called "Blur," in which Spears voices her concern about not being able to remember what she did last night, a mere three tracks away from "My Baby," which is obviously about her children. If Spears has two children, shouldn't the title be "My Babies"? Additionally, "My Baby" is the last track on the non-deluxe version of the album and "Womanizer" is the first, which obviously displays the order of Spears' priorities.

Although the album bears no substance whatsoever, the idea for the theme of the album is not a bad one. It is rumored that her concert will be arranged like a circus, with Spears performing in the center ring.

Even so, how this CD became the number one seller on the iTunes store and on the *Billboard Hot 100*, this reviewer will never fathom.



Britney Spears

Don't Jamaica mistake — avoid this eatery

W Zoe Ljubic
Editor in Chief

Jamaica Jamaica Cuisine and Fresh Juice Bar, a new restaurant that opened in September in Evanston, is advertised as offering patrons a taste of authentic Jamaican cuisine.

Although the restaurant offers patrons a comfortable ambiance featuring casual décor with limited seating and a bar, and the table arrangements, music, lighting and Jamaican jerk sauce aroma blend together to evoke a natural Caribbean setting, the food fails to complement the atmosphere.

Jamaica Jamaica features entrées, wraps and salads mixed with the eatery's prime ingredient—jerk sauce.

The first course of the jerk wings (\$6) includes buffalo wings dipped in jerk sauce. Although the reviewer thought she would enjoy authentic buffalo wings dipped in a spicy sauce, the sight of the wings dipped in jerk sauce nearly turns the stomach and destroys the savory taste of the wings.

The jerk chicken breast and fries (\$7) dinner includes a large portion of barbecued chicken, French fries and a side of jerk sauce. Thankfully, the jerk sauce is placed to the side,

allowing diners to devour the plain chicken breast and French fries without even glancing at the jerk sauce. The chicken delights because of its barbecue flavor, and the French fries, with a side of ketchup, complete the dish.

Some patrons may prefer a low-calorie dish such as the jerk chicken salad with Italian dressing (\$10). The salad includes mixed greens, ripe cherry tomatoes, cauliflower, carrots and barbecued chicken with a side of jerk sauce and Italian dressing. The chicken presents some problems, with tiny chicken bones appearing amongst the meat. However, the Italian dressing offsets the jerk sauce and occasional crunch of the bones to produce a satisfactory repast.

The restaurant's menu also includes seafood.

The jerk shrimp (\$13) includes shrimp and assorted vegetables savored in a warm tangy jerk sauce with a side of white rice and fried plantains. The shrimp is cooked to perfection; however, the warm jerk sauce destroys the taste and is, frankly, rather disgusting. The plain white rice fails to neutralize the taste of the sauce in the dish; however, the fried plantains salvage the dish somewhat.

After the horrid feast, one can decide whether or not to go with a dessert.

The Carmel cake (\$4) served by the slice and the vanilla ice cream topped with Chambord raspberry liqueur (\$3) disappoint, with the cake's dry, cold texture and mediocre ice cream that

can be easily compared to Häagen-Dazs™. The delicious raspberry topping does offset the dessert's deficiencies somewhat, but not enough to recommend it.

In addition to the Jamaican staples, Jamaica Jamaica offers patrons a variety of fruit and vegetables to create a smoothie or choose one on the menu.

The signature Jamaica Jamaica smoothie—that includes papaya, mango, strawberry, banana and pineapple—is a refreshing, natural treat that is the best item on the menu, one nobody should miss.

Although the wait staff provides excellent service and the smoothies taste delicious, these do not compensate for the unsatisfying meal.

One disclaimer: the tangy jerk sauce that plays an important role in Jamaican cuisine is an acquired taste and not for everyone. Those who enjoy tangy spices may enjoy the authentic jerk sauce and have a completely different opinion of the restaurant's entrées.

For this reviewer's tastes, however, Jamaica



Jamaica Jamaica's tangy jerk sauce undermines its unique cuisine. Photo by Zoe Ljubic

Jamaica Cuisine and Fresh Juice Bar, located at 1512 Sherman Ave. in Evanston, is one place patrons should avoid.

Jamaica Jamaica



1512 Sherman Ave., Evanston

Best-selling novel turns into successful movie adaptation

W Hillary Lindwall
News/Wire Editor

Usually, when books become runaway bestsellers, a movie adaptation is soon to follow. The question then becomes: will the movie live up to the book's success?

Although many fans of the book are sure to attend the film, not all will enjoy it. Fans will compare the book and movie to decide whether they like the film adaptation or not.

This process was seen in action just a few weeks ago at the premiere of the film adaptation of Stephenie Meyer's best-selling vampire novel, *Twilight*.

Although no film could possibly live up to the transcendent greatness of Meyer's book, *Twilight*, directed by Catherine Hardwicke,



comes very close.

Having moved from her home with her mother in Phoenix, AZ, to her father's house in Forks, WA, Bella Swan (Kristen Stewart) has a hard time relating to her new classmates. Her life changes when she meets the mysterious and radiantly beautiful Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson). Edward and Bella are instantly enamored of each other.

However, this is not the typical teen love story. Bella discovers that Edward is the most dangerous predator in the world: a vampire. Although they try to resist each other because of the dangers of their love, they cannot be apart. Edward's condition causes them to undergo an adventure that involves life, death, love and intense danger.

Compared to the novel, the film does not match up exactly with all characters and events. Many viewers may not enjoy the

film because of this, but they should look past this fact and judge the celluloid *Twilight* on its own merits rather than comparing it to the book. These cuts are understandable because of time limitations, budgeting and other cinematic concerns. For example, the novel's characters Ben and Eric are combined in the film, and many events are left out. Although any reader of *Twilight* would agree that no aspect of the story should be cut, this happens whenever any book is converted into a movie.

Even though each individual reader has his/her own vision of what the setting, characters and other elements should be, the film adaptation does a good job of creating a visual experience for the viewer. Although the special effects are not very impressive, it would be very difficult to materialize all of the maneuvers that occur in the novel. The film has a dark nature, which complements the story's setting in rainy Washington state and the fact that the story itself has rather dark elements. This helps set the mood of the film, and also helps to exaggerate the vampire theme.

The actors portraying the characters are

perfect for their roles and truly add to the film's greatness. Robert Pattinson, who plays Edward Cullen, seems to fit this role perfectly. Although the actor is British, save for one or two slips, his accent is barely noticeable.

Because his character is described as being the most beautiful human being in the world, Pattinson is put under a lot of pressure to convey absolute perfection. He delivers, however, and makes the film that much more enjoyable.

When compared to the novel, the movie is not very congruent with its events. However, when considered independently, *Twilight* the film is a great story with good actors and settings and is very successful overall. These elements compensate for the rather pedestrian action scenes to bring Stephenie Meyer's book to life.

Twilight



Directed by Catherine Hardwicke

Toni Morrison creates sorrowful novel that captures readers' attention

W Naomi Prale
Around Town Editor

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (Knopf, 2008, 176 pages) is a tragedy composed by the Nobel Prize-winning author that is a powerful look at relationships during the slave trade in the 1680s.

A Mercy reflects on the story of a young female slave who is cast off from her mother in order to be saved from a life of rape. Florens is sent to live with her owner Jacob, his wife Rebekka and the other slaves living on the farm. Living in a world characterized by class divisions, prejudice and oppression, these slaves and their owners seem to have a connection that is more emotional and friendly than most slaves and slave owners.

The couple previously tried having children; however, after multiple infant deaths, only one child reaches the age of five and dies shortly thereafter. Young Florens comes into the couple's lives not as a slave, but as a person for Rebekka to take care of as a companion.

Jacob and Rebekka become ill with smallpox, and when Jacob dies, Florens is sent to find the

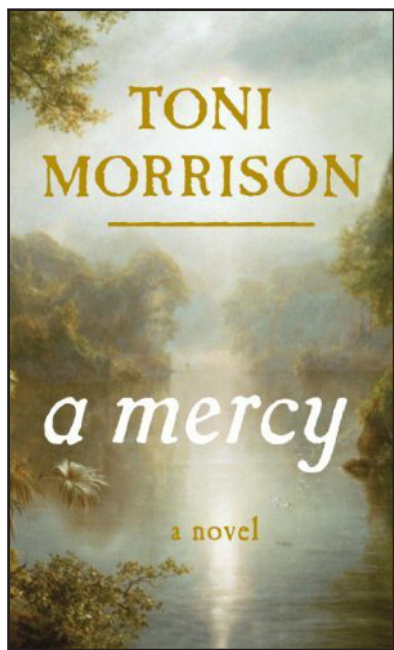
blacksmith, the man with whom Florens happens to be in love. As it chronicles Florens' journey to the blacksmith, the novel reflects on the stories of how Florens and the other people on the farm came to work on the plantation. One by one, each of them speaks, becoming united for different reasons; marriage, money, prejudice or mercy, as it is seen in Florens' case.

Florens tells the novella from her point of view for half of the book, and the other half is told in third person. The book blends the different perspectives of the characters in creating a union of stories

and voices that are interesting and full of emotion. Florens' stories are especially unique

because the language that the author uses is unsophisticated as if Florens were speaking her story aloud. Morrison uses short, choppy sentences, displaying Florens' lack of language skills and words. This is a way to further describe the main character, using available resources such as the point of view.

The book's descriptions are so vivid and powerful that readers are able to imagine the scenes in their heads. Morrison is especially brilliant in creating images of metaphorical sentences, such as "silence would fall like snow floating around her head and shoulders, spreading outward to wind-driven yet quiet leaves." This passage



illustrates how silent the room in the story was. With the use of complex imagery, Morrison adds to her use of sophisticated prose.

Morrison has a firm grasp on the time period that she re-creates in her story. Set in the late 1600s, Morrison's novel accurately creates characters and a setting that is not out of place. It is obvious that the author did extensive research before writing her novel because each character and part of the plot is a realistic and believable representation of life in the late 1600s.

Florens' journey turns out to be an experience where she learns the true meaning of mercy. After finding the blacksmith, her life takes a twist in which she returns home sad, solemn, and with a broken heart. It is the unexpected ending of *A Mercy* that truly brings the novel to its height.

A Mercy



Toni Morrison