

Guest Review of "Grand Theft Auto: The Ballad of Gay Tony" by Matthew Gardner
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Sex, drugs, glitz, glam and guns; that's what Rockstar delivers with "The Ballad of Gay Tony", the newest expansion to the Grand Theft Auto IV universe. "The Ballad of Gay Tony" follows the adventures of Luis Lopez, bodyguard and business partner to the titular "Gay Tony" Prince. The main story of T.B.O.G.T. centers on Luis's efforts to preserve Tony's life and keep his businesses and reputation afloat. Anyone who is familiar with the series will instantly recognize the tried and true GTA formula; do a mission for Character A, move on to Character B and repeat until each character's respective story arcs are completed. This of course means the player will interact with quite a colorful cast of characters including small time loan sharks to big time underground crime lords, all bent on collecting past dues. T.B.O.G.T. manages to take the standard GTA formula to a whole other level by combining heavy amounts of humor, satire and absurdity with a lighthearted and upper-class setting comparative to past smash hit GTA: Vice City. There are also a great number of additions introduced in this game including cage fighting matches, club management jobs and drinking mini-games. Also of notable mention is the reintroduction of the parachute; and excellent item in GTA: San Andreas that I found myself sorely missing in GTA IV. With the parachute comes a much higher flight ceiling, additional aircraft, and skydiving and BASE jumping missions. Other additions include three new radio stations, new songs for the previous radio stations, and new weapons such as a golden sub-machine gun and an automatic shotgun with explosive shells. Remember in previous GTA games when you would fail a mission and be forced to drive back to where ever the mission was and start it all from the beginning? In "Gay Tony" that is no longer a problem. In a moment of clarity that should have been had years ago, someone at Rockstar finally came up with the idea to include a mid-mission checkpoint system which allows the player to restart a mission right when the action starts. If the mission is a particularly long one there are usually several checkpoints somewhat alleviating the frustrations associated with those nearly impossible missions; the Zero story arc from San Andreas anyone? Overall if you're a fan of the series you will find great entertainment in this game. While the story is fairly short (10-15 hours) the brilliant writing, sheer amount of side missions and plenty of other additional content will insure that this game remains on your playlist for quite some time. So download "The Ballad of Gay Tony" from Xbox Live Marketplace today, you won't be disappointed. If you're like me and don't have an Xbox Live account you can find it on the standalone disc, "Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City," which also includes the other GTA IV expansion "The Lost and the Damned" all for under forty dollars.

