

**New Releases**



**The Folk Implosion  
"One Part Lullaby"  
Interscope Records  
Grade: A-**

Once upon a time, when alternative rock was just beginning its slow death, a small indie-rock combo called the Folk Implosion had a surprise hit with "Natural One," from the "Kids" soundtrack.

The song's success seemed like a fluke at the time. Folk Implosion wasn't even a "band" in the textbook sense of the term but merely a side project for John Davis, a solo artist, and Lou Barlow, member of famed indie rockers Sebadoh. The group refused to tour and released albums only periodically.

The band seemed to ignore its hit by doing nothing for a few years and then releasing an album on the small independent label Communion. The songs were too indie-rock subtle to garner radio airplay, and the low-budget production was a move away from the polished sound of "Natural One."

By staying away from the tainted world of corporate rock and MTV, Barlow and Davis didn't overexpose themselves or compromise their music.

But times have changed. The Implosion is now suckling the corporate teat at Interscope Records, whose vice president is that jerk from Limp Bizkit. They are writing big pop songs with big pop hooks and even bigger choruses. The production is crystal clear and radio ready. The Folk Implosion is big, fat sellout. And the music has never sounded better.

For the first time, the Implosion

sounds like a band. The songs are full, rich and strong. The lyrics are still moody and complex, and there are still weird guitar chords and oddball noises. But the songs are catchy enough for your grandparents to hum. This is the real follow-up to "Natural One."

The title track is a soaring, melodic ballad with a harp adding loads of texture. "Free to Go" is a propulsive pop song that should be a hit if there is any justice in this world. "No Need to Worry" has one of the catchiest choruses of the year, and "E.Z. L.A." has some cool Vocoder effects on the vocals, like a morphine-addled version of Zapp's "More Bounce to the Ounce." Even the instrumental, "Serge," a tribute to French jazz and pop composer Serge Gainsbourg, sticks in the listener's head.

Barlow and Davis have given listeners a batch of very well-crafted pop songs. The arrangements have grown more sophisticated. Drum samples are used on nearly every song in place of real drums, but the songs still sound organic. The punk and indie-rock touches have been largely left to the members' other projects.

"One Part Lullaby" was supposed to be released in July, which would have made more sense. It makes for a great summer record, an album to play while driving in the city with the windows rolled down. Record company delays slowed the release date until now. But songs like these will sound great at any time of year.

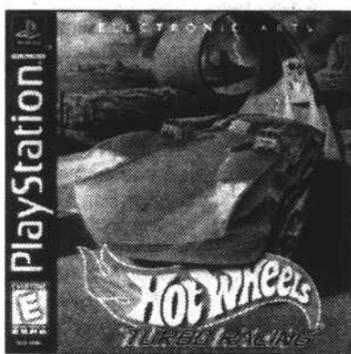
If life made more sense, and God knows it doesn't, this album would be huge. Yes, it's a pop album, but it's pop as in snap crackle, not pop as in popular. In an age in which pop music means morons in backwards baseball caps rapping over metal riffs, teenage girls with breast implants wearing Catholic Church school girl outfits and pretty boy pitchmen for Abercrombie & Fitch, this album probably won't be a hit.

But for anyone sick of substance-free pap who still enjoys a well-crafted pop hook, "One Part Lullaby" is a revelation.

—Josh Krauter

# Game speeds down memory lane

## New 'Hot Wheels Turbo' just as fun as kids cars



**Game: "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing"  
System: PlayStation  
Company: Electronic Arts  
Grade: B**

Let it be said, I'm no video game fanatic.

Let it also be said, sometimes I'm a couch potato. Not always, but sometimes I just can't seem to move my body parts, aside of course, from my hands, which somehow continue to command the remote control or Sony PlayStation controllers.

With the onset of allergy-cold season, I was forced to endure some downtime over the past week. While beached on the couch, I spent my idle minutes, nay, hours, playing Electronic Arts' latest video game release, "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" for the Sony PlayStation.

And I must say, the game was a worthy couch companion.

Essentially, "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" is a race car game. There is no way around that. What sets it apart from games like "Need for Speed" and "Ridge Racer" is the fact that all of the cars are video game representations of actual Hot Wheels toy cars.

The company picked more than 40 of the most popular Hot Wheels cars and put them into the game. Each car has different characteristics as far as speed, stunt ability, control and durability.

A drawback to this is that cool cars such as Red Baron, Super Van, Evil Weevil and the Barracuda are tough,

but slow, so there is really no reason to be those cars if you want to win. In order to get more use out of the old school muscle cars, Electronic Arts would have been well advised to make a demolition derby mode — possibly the most fun aspect of playing with toy cars.

Another difference between "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" and other race car games is that the cars can do tricks when they ramp. The stunts are similar to skateboard moves but with no rider, and there are even half pipe areas where the cars can pull airs just like skaters.

This makes the cars more like the Hot Wheels I remember as a kid. Never once did I just drive cars around in a respectable race. They were always doing flips, rolls and other stunts. In this sense, the game really captures what makes Hot Wheels cars fun for kids — the cars can do things that could never happen in real life.

Of course, what good are sweet cars unless you have sweet tracks to run them on? Luckily, the tracks on "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" are almost as bitchin' as the cars. Tracks include dirt, snow, tunnels and even parts that look like old rubber Hot Wheels tracks that form loopy-loops and big ramps. The game also has a lot of hidden short cuts and secret cars you have to find to add to your collection of already available cars.

The game case proudly advertises a soundtrack featuring Metallica, Mix Master Mike, Primus and The Reverend Horton Heat, but in actuality,

the soundtrack is way less pounding than the case leads you to believe. Most of the songs are instrumentals that just sound like video game songs anyway, and even when the song isn't an instrumental, the game plays it almost three times throughout the duration of a race. If I ever hear Metallica's "Fuel" again, it will be waaaaay to soon.

Another drawback to the game is that it never shows a track map on screen, so you don't know how far ahead or behind you are in comparison to the other cars you are racing. Also, when playing in two-player mode, you can't race the pack; you can only race player two. If player two happens to be particularly bad, like my friend Walter, two-player mode can be pretty boring.

While I personally don't know anything about the technical aspects of video game graphics, I do know that the graphics on this game are pretty good. It never really gets choppy or distorted, even in two-player mode, and the game has a wide variety of colors and angles.

Overall, "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" is a fun game for people too impatient for the more involved role-playing games but still technical enough to make older players think.

If you're going to waste time playing video games, you might as well be playing something fun, and "Hot Wheels Turbo Racing" is a fun, technical trip down memory lane.

—Jason Hardy

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