

Metaboli online game rental service

Enough for your gaming fix?

by Chris Hall published on 8 January 2009

If you don't want to fork out your hard-earned for new games, then rental is possibly a more prudent way to go. After all, if you are a committed gamer, there's a chance that you complete a fair number of games and then move on to gaming pastures new. For console gamers, rental has never been a problem thanks to the likes of LOVEFiLM or Blockbuster. For PC gamers, the challenge is slightly different.

Metaboli has been around for several years, but being bundled with the recently announced Packard Bell iPower X2.0 gaming behemoth, we thought we'd have a look at the current face of gaming downloads.

Metaboli works through a client that you have to download and install, which then manages your downloads as well as the all important permissions. As this is a subscription service, you have to have a subscription to access the games you want to play. You simply have to log in and then go off and choose the games that you are interested in.

Interesting elements include checking that you can actually play the game before you settle down and wait for the download, but also some of the delivery optimisation. You don't actually have to sit and wait for the entire game to download, you can begin playing it when you have all the data you need. This takes a lot of the waiting out of the process and means that whilst you start playing, the rest can download in the background.

The process works well and we encountered no problems finding games and getting going. The compatibility scanner is also pretty cool and is not restricted to current subscribers - it is available on the website too, so anyone interested in taking on the service can browse around all the titles, see what they can play and make a decision about whether it is a service that would suit them.



...cont.

The Metaboli client currently only supports Internet Explorer and Firefox, which is an irritation if you use a different browser, because you'll need to change your default browser to get things running smoothly. There is something of a community around Metoboli, tracking stats with some people recording frightening numbers of gaming hours and the community is also supported by a forum for gamers to meet and swap tips.

Of course, there are a few catches, one being that you never actually get to own any games. Whilst you have a subscription, then no problem, but once your subscription expires you don't have access to those games, even though they might be sitting on your harddrive. So when looking at this type of service the real question is how you play games. Will you complete a lot and move on? Do you want to keep dipping back into them?

If, ultimately you want to go back time and time again, you'll have to keep paying. If you want to play and forget, then this is a good way to consume games. If your subscription expires, no problem, you've played, enjoyed and don't want to play them again.

There are two subscription levels available, the relatively affordable Essential Collection, which sets you back £6.95 a month and gives you access to (currently) 204 titles. The second offering is the Ultimate Collection, which will cost you £12.95 a month and give you access to everything, currently 313 games. The real difference that you'll notice is that new games come to the Ultimate Collection first, so if you need to play the latest title close to release, then you'll have to plump for that option. You can also cancel your subscription online in a matter of minutes and just walk away from the whole thing should you decide that you don't like.

VERDICT

The shortcoming of any delivery system is getting to the games you want, when you want them.

At a glance

What is it?

Online game rental service

Good

Website easy to browse, plenty of variety, affordable, can play during download

Bad

Not all browsers supported, if you cancel your subscription you lose all your games, delay before games are available, not all games will be on there

Verdict

There are some shortcomings, but overall Metaboli is an easy to use and clear system at an affordable price

Price 6.94 (Essential Collection), £12.95 (Ultimate Collection)

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3761/metaboli-online-game-rental-service>

...cont.

There is delay between release and the availability of the game through the Metaboli system, so if you normally buy a game on the day of release, then you'll be disappointed.

One of the things we really liked though was the transparency of the whole setup. Potential customers are able to browse through all the content on the website and make a decision based on what they see.

It might not suit all gamers, but at least you can see what you are getting yourself into.