

Review

# Grand Prix Legends 2004

by Jens "McGonigle" Lindblad



In late 1998 Papyrus released their long awaited new racing simulation, **Grand Prix Legends**.

Early reviews agreed that this simulation of the 1967 Formula 1 season was a masterpiece and that it set the bar very high for future racing simulations. Unfortunately they also said that it was a tough, hard and extremely unforgiving simulation.

Some potential customers may have been frightened away by the reviewers mention of the steep learning curve, or by driving the early original demo and finding the cars to be a bit too much of a handful.

In 1998, we hardly had PC's that could run GPL properly. You needed at least a 133-200MHz speed CPU and either a Rendition or a 3Dfx graphics card.

Having a steering wheel was not the norm back then. It's probably safe to say that steering wheels are much more widespread today if you're mad about driving racing simulations.

My own early start with GPL was in software mode which gave me framerates that were never higher than 20-22 fps and that was just not good enough.

GPL came out of the box in version 1.0.0.0 without force feedback and with default setups that were a bit tricky to master. I would spin out of the pits, completely out of control, trying to steer with a joystick and no driving aids...



Fast forward to today. Any decent CPU will handle GPL.

Today, we're at GPL version 1.2.0.2, excellent force feedback has been added by the developers and better setups

were added by Papyrus in one of the very early patches. OpenGL and D3D was also supported by a patch, and the GPL community has been working away for years giving us more than 400 real as well as fantasy add-on tracks and absolutely gorgeous, stunningly beautiful and accurate car shapes and liveries. Even what seemed completely impossible and out of the question a few years back has now been achieved — a complete 1965 carset with it's own physics. A 1969 mod is also on it's way, as well as some other goodies.

There's a very good illustration of the achievements made at the tracks database [here](#). Look for the item on the main page called *Evolution 98-03*. While you're there, take a look at the slide show as well!

What has also happened in between 1998 and today is that PC-sim'ers are much more advanced and sophisticated. Quite simply, there was nothing like GPL or even remotely close to it back then. It was light years ahead of anything contemporary. In a way, it was the first true sim, and I think that came as a shock to some people.



If you have the disc lying around somewhere and would like to give it another go, there is a very user friendly way to ensure that you get the greatest looking updates for the cars by downloading the 2004 GPL Demo [here](#) from **Blackhole Motorsports**.

Install that, and just add the tracks from the GPL CD. The only track that is included with the 2004 GPL Demo is Watkins Glen, so don't use that track from the CD. Despite it being called the 2004 GPL Demo, it has the latest greatest, and highly authentic 1967 car shapes and liveries.

Plug in your wheel and be prepared to be amazed! Yes. This looks and feels so good that you'd be hard pressed to notice that this sim was released almost six years ago and not just last month!

It's true, the physics are still awesome, even compared to any modern sim like Richard Burns Rally, EA's F1 C, GP4 or what you care to compare GPL with.

Your hands will be sweaty, you will be perspiring heavily and regret you didn't fit a safety belt to your chair before taking your 1967 Grand Prix car to Silverstone, Nurburgring or any of the classic circuits before they were deemed to be too unsafe and taken of the F1 calender, or being emasculated by chicanes and



sand traps. Make an error at Spa-Francorchamps and you'll hit a tree or barrel-roll into a barn or some other building located right at the side of the track.

Perhaps you'll find, as several returning drivers have stated, that GPL is not as hard as they remembered it after all. And you should find it incredibly immersive too.

The trick is to know that in 1967 they didn't have wings or aero and the brakes were of steel and not some space-age composite. If you crashed, you could almost be certain that your car would catch fire and Dr. Sid Watkins and the medical car — I'm sorry to inform you — was not invented until some 15-20 years later.

So adjust your driving to accommodate those facts and take it slowly until you get to know the ropes, the do's and don't's.

The carsets available today are ultra-high on realism. Generally you'll find the drivers driving correct cars in correct liveries. If you need a special car / livery for a specific driver, chances are that it has been made and that a trip to **RaceSimCentral** will unearth where they can be found.

The GPL community is the friendliest community I know. If you go to the GPL forum at RaceSimCentral, saying you're a newbie and that you need some directions, they'll welcome you and provide you with links to all you ever wanted to know about GPL add-ons. If you need help with your driving or setups, just save a replay and upload it to the GPL forum and you'll receive friendly good advice within the hour.

Here on SimHQ we also have a GPL dedicated forum to discuss everything GPL related. **Click here.**

Before you download carsets and tracks, you should know a bit about the way things work with different editors, and how you switch between carsets and seasons.



## Essential Editors / Utilities

GPL has seven slots available for cars, but the ingenious editors have found numerous ways to work around this limit and add little specialities. So while you can drive one of the seven 67-cars e.g. the Eagle, you'll have Bruce McLaren driving a red car, like he did in '67. Want to add Silvio Moser? Guy Ligier? Just search for it on RaceSimCentral or ask in the GPL forum there.

The seven cars are stored in GPL's cars67 directory, so in order to switch between carsets, you need some basic utilities like GEM+2 or Carset Changer which switches everything in and out for you.

GEM+2 is the only switching utility you'll need if you only want to run the 1967 cars or the 1965 mod. The coming 1969 mod will also be supported by GEM+2.

It lets you switch the layout files, the car files, physics and sound files without you having to worry how it's done. It happens at the click of a button. You can even adjust the speed of the AI with this utility / editor.

The Carset Changer is a slightly older carset manager, but if you should wish to try out the graphical updates that make up the 1966, 1968 and 1969 carsets, you can use Carset Changer, which incidentally is included when you download the 1968 carset.



As implied by the term "carset" the '66, 68, and '69 carsets currently use the stock 1967 physics.

A word of caution though — you should familiarize yourself with the GPL folder structure and the way Carset Changer works before attempting to install it. It's not too complicated, but it's not quite a no-brainer either.

## Tracks Management

All tracks are stored by GPL in one "tracks" folder and are being controlled from a "season.ini" file residing in the "seasons" folder. The season.ini file holds information on what tracks you have installed.



As such, you can drive any car at any track as long as it is listed correctly in the season.ini. Most add-on tracks come with a self-installer that takes care of all the .ini files so you won't have to worry about that.

Future versions of GEM+2 will also let you manipulate season.ini files so you could have the tracks relating to the 67 season in the 67season.ini, tracks concerning the 65 season in a 65season.ini and tracks used in 1969 in a 69season.ini. Until GEM+2 supports this feature you can manually edit the season.ini's using Notepad.



Online

GPL has the second-to-none Papyrus online code so you can race against other drivers once you've grown tired of the AI which is by no means bad. Actually, it's rather good.

Traditionally, online racers connected through **VROC**. Since the release of the 1965 mod, a new online tool has been in use called iGor. The great advantage with iGor is that it checks and prevents cheating, so if you were entertaining hopes of sneaking in in a race with 65 cars using a 67 car, you can forget that. Thankfully it can't be done. iGor can be downloaded as a part of the 1965 mod.

## Where to Get Updated!

From the tracks database **here** you should get the "all-in-one-patch". This ensures you have the latest patched exe file and the patches are installed in the correct order.

You can also download add-on tracks. These days they come with an easy to use track-installer and there are more than 400 tracks to choose from!

Another brilliant offering is that you can download a small file (GEM+autoupdater) that will let you connect to the tracks database, and then it will ensure that you have the correct entries in your .ini files!

## Carsets

Then go to **GPLEA** to get the latest, greatest '67 cars. They have been hugely improved in the last year or so. Top, top quality work!

While you're there, download the GPLEA tracks. They're *all* stunning, especially Clermont-Ferrand.

Get *GEM+2* and the *65 mod* **here** with accurate graphics and new physics. Highly recommended. *iGor*, in the same package is the new online tool that will get you going with other racers around the world.



There is a 1968 carset (with the original GPL physics) **here**. At the bottom of the page there is a single download with all the cars and if I remember correctly, the files are packed in such a way that you will get an additional season and not overwrite any of your existing stuff. To change between seasons you use the Carset Changer utility which is included.

There are good carsets (with the original GPL physics) for 1966, and 1969, but the installation procedures are not terribly friendly for newbies.

## Tracks

Here are my favorites:

Huge and highly updated Monaco from **here**. Absolutely a must-download!

The brilliant Monza update **here**.

Isle of Man — absolute high-speed terror on the isle from **here**.

Clermont-Ferrand from **here**.



## Other essential downloads

GPL Today: Klas' extremely fine gfx updates for some of the Papyrus tracks is [here](#).

The legendary GPL Replay Analyzer is [here](#). This simply amazing tool to analyze your laps to bits in terms of where to change gears, G-loads, entry, exit and top speeds, rpm's, comparing your own lap with laps driven by other GPL drivers, etc. etc.

The links page [here](#) is a sure way to check out all possibilities with GPL!



## Reviewer's System Specs

- Intel Pentium 4 2.53 GHz CPU
- 512MB RAM
- 128MB Geforce 4 Ti 4200 / NVIDIA drivers v61.77
- AC97 onboard sound
- DirectX Version 9.0c
- Windows XP Home with SP1
- Logitech Driving Force Pro

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# GPL: A Returnee's Point Of View

by [Alex "Zander" Keep](#)

For most people 1967 represents the beginnings of Flower Power, the Vietnam War and some truly terrible fashion sense! Ask any motor racing simmer what was special about 1967 and the answer will usually be that it was the last year of "proper" racing and the year that Grand Prix Legends was based on. Having first tried the sim when it first came out, I overcame my initial distrust of its leary handling. Soon I was chucking it through corners and controlling the drift with my right foot and twitching on my unresponsive Microsoft Force Feedback wheel (lack of force feedback really annoyed me at the time!).

Although there was no doubt that its handling was second to none, dodgy frame rates, lack of force feedback and the more immediate temptations of contemporary F1 sims distracted me from Grand Prix Legends and my box containing the game slowly made its way down the ranks of games in my shelving.

Fast forward five years and Jens mails me suggesting I give it another try. In my conclusions of Richard Burns -v- Colin McRae 2005 you will see that I compare Richard Burns Rally to Papyrus' old master and so, spurred on by Jens' enthusiasm, I dug out my old copy, popped the CD in and reinstalled the game not knowing quite what to expect.



Having installed the original game (numerous times as it wouldn't run until I patched it!). I thought I would get the hang of it before installing the new files. The first thing that immediately struck me was just how old it looked! with 640x480 as maximum resolution the stock cars and tracks looked cartoonish! I changed the car setup to something slightly more acceptable (like Richard Burns you really need to hone the setup to your style of driving rather than just go flying off) and hit Kyalami. Several spins later I was beginning to return to a semi-decent standard so I exited the game, installed the GPLEA cars and the GEM+2 file and got ready to see what had changed.

Having fired up the new EXE on my desktop, I got ready to be amazed and got the *same* intro screen! Had I installed this right? Was this the right file? The initial loading screen had gone through enough files so it looked installed but you never know. I went onto the next screen, selected Kyalami, upped the resolution and....

Wow! That's a bit better! The cars look far more detailed and having then installed the GPLEA cars, they look a hell of a lot better too! I took the Eagle out for a quick spin (spin usually being the operative word when describing my driving!) and found that there was some force feedback! Fantastic! Unfortunately the amount seemed quite limited and the steering felt far too light for my tastes (I like some resistance at all times as it seems silly to enter the Parabolica and find a nice easy turn in as you are hitting 160 mph!). The physics are unchanged and it is amazing just how good they are.

Having slipped and slid around Kyalami for a few laps I went onto Monza and noticed just how vibrant the hoarding appeared after the drab hoardings in the original version. The GEM+2 editor makes manipulation of the data easy (even for someone as averse to reading as myself!) though it would be nice if the offline simple manipulation was on a separate screen / tab from the online racing / league information.

## In Summary

I would heartily recommend GPL2004 to any reader, whether a traditional racing simmer or a flight simmer wanting to try his or her hand at the sport of race driving. The graphics, whilst not the equal of F1C (esp with Ralph Hummermich's carsets) are now well up to current standards and the modelling of mechanical grip is second to none.

The carsets and alterations that have come out have arisen out of a desire to make the original GPL as good as possible, realizing the original releases limitations and overcoming them, making the game amongst the very best simulators (flight or racing). It can be picked up for £5. All the downloads are free and there is a *huge* amount of

support available on the web.

So, what are you waiting for?



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