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## Klitschko Boxing

Just a punch or two short of a knock-out

<b>Product:</b>	Klitschko Boxing
<b>Developer:</b>	Artificial Life
<b>Format:</b>	Mobile
<b>Genre:</b>	Sports
<b>Players:</b>	1
<b>Formats:</b>	J2ME
<b>File size:</b>	795KB
<b>Reviewed on:</b>	N95 other handsets
<b>Version:</b>	Europe

by Keith Andrew

I can safely say that boxing was never one of the professions I lusted after when I was growing up. While I've got nothing but respect for those that take to the ring (I came close to fainting when I happened upon Amir Khan wandering through the outskirts of Bolton one weekend), stepping into those lights and seeing my face being pummeled into something that closely resembles a mouldy mushroom isn't something I'd ever do, even for all the money in the world.



Luckily for me and my beautician, there's a way for me to try my hand in the ring without ending up in my local A+E, and Artificial Life's *Klitschko Boxing* definitely leans towards the softly-softly approach. Not in terms of the physical punches, which are as hard as they come, but because it's far more of an arcade brawler than a hard-edged sim.

Taking a side-on 2D view during the actual contests, *Klitschko* gives you the chance to play as one of two boxers - Ukrainian legend Vitali Klitschko, or his equally famous but slightly younger brother Wladimir - and then charges you with moving up the rankings, taking part in league matches and also taking on challengers when success makes the offers flood in.

The fights themselves involve waiting for an opportunity to strike. On the game's easiest setting (three difficulty levels are offered), it's possible to simply bash your way to a knock-out in no time at all, your rival falling to the ground when you've knocked his health bar down from green, to yellow, to orange, until it finally disappears altogether.

However, when you move up a notch or two, your attacks have to be far subtler. All too often your opponent will be ready to attack and block, taking the opportunity to smash right back at you when you're defenceless. Overcoming this harsh dynamic requires a bit of patience, waiting for your rival to drop his guard before giving him a good smack or two. Even then, your offence is limited by a gauge, which only lets you take two or three punches in a row before draining completely, filling back up in the following seconds.

Far from being a hassle, this teaches patient play and allows for a modicum of realism in what is otherwise a light take on the sport, relying on you dodging attacks before striking back at your opponent. As such, switching between offence and defence is easy enough; all the corner keys, the centre '5' key and '0' at the bottom all relate to punches, while middle keys '2' and '8' form blocking moves, the player also able to dash back out of reach by tapping the back/'4' key twice. All in all it's a positioning of commands that makes perfect sense in the heat of the battle, and leads to some fluid play.

As you move forward, Klitschko's opponents get canner and canner. The matches themselves can consist of a real ebb and flow, swinging one way before swinging back the other, or forming tussles that remain tight throughout. But taking a loss on the chin is almost as important as winning, as each bout teaches you something new, with the ultimate goal being to move up the league table and take the World Championship.

Luckily, that's no ordeal while on Easy, bouts become a little repetitive, when the tension is raised, battles are genuinely fun and rewarding affairs, even managing to raise a smile or two when victory is nothing but a pipe dream. That's an altogether rare quality, and while it wouldn't be fair to describe *Klitschko* as an accurate representation of boxing of any kind, it is thoroughly satisfying and slick to the core, making even this mushroom-face-in-waiting enjoy packing a punch or two.

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POCKET GAMER Klitschko Boxing

Keith Andrew | 21 October 2008

Fun-filled take on boxing from the Klitschko brothers that manages to simulate the natural flow of tussles in the ring without being a slave to detail

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PG TIPS

- Mix up your punches. You'll often find you have more success by following up a jab with a right hook, for instance, rather than simply taking jab after jab after jab. This is even more crucial if you're being blocked at every turn because you're doing nothing more than tapping at the same key.
- Occasionally you'll end up in a physical tussle (or hug, depending on your point of view) with your opponent. When locked in this way, the way out is to hammer the '5' key as quick as you can, moving the gauge over to your side of the screen.

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