## In the Matter of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. and Rockstar Games, Inc., File No. 052 3158

## Analysis of Proposed Consent Order To Aid Public Comment

The Federal Trade Commission has accepted, subject to final approval, an agreement containing a consent order from Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. and Rockstar Games, Inc. ("the companies"). The proposed consent order has been placed on the public record for thirty (30) days for receipt of comments by interested persons. Comments received during this period will become part of the public record. After thirty (30) days, the Commission will again review the agreement and the comments received, and will decide whether it should withdraw from the agreement or make final the agreement's proposed order.

This matter involves alleged deceptive representations in advertising and on product packaging concerning the content in the video game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* ("*San Andreas*"). In September 2004, the companies submitted materials to the Entertainment Software Rating Board ("ESRB") for the purpose of obtaining a rating for the PlayStation 2 version of *San Andreas*. The companies did not inform the ESRB about the existence of an interactive sex mini-game that was embedded in the game's computer code, but was inaccessible during normal game play. Nor did the companies tell the ESRB that the game disc contained data files (unused in game play) for female skins, which, if accessed, render the female characters partially or completely nude. However, the ESRB's published requirements in effect at that time did not state that game companies were required to disclose unused skins in the game software or content in the game code that was inaccessible and unplayable without modifying the code. Based on the companies' submission, the ESRB assigned *San Andreas* a M (Mature 17+) rating and content descriptors for Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, and Use of Drugs. The companies released the Playstation 2 version of *San Andreas* in October 2004.

On June 7, 2005, the companies released versions of San Andreas playable on PCs and the Xbox console. The PC and Xbox game discs also contained the same code for the sex minigame and the nude skins. As with the PlayStation 2 version, the companies did not disclose the existence of the disabled sex mini-game or the nude skins on the PC and Xbox game discs. The ESRB rated the PC and Xbox versions of the game M (Mature 17+) and assigned the same content descriptors previously assigned to the PlayStation 2 version.

The ESRB rating information appeared in print, television, and retailer advertisements for *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, and on game packaging, for all three versions of the game. Among other things, the companies made the following claims about the game: "MATURE 17+... M..." and "CONTENT RATED BY ESRB." None of the advertising mentioned that the game contained nudity.

On June 9, 2005 – two days after the release of the PC version of the game – game enthusiasts posted a program on the Internet, which, when downloaded and installed on a user's PC, enables the sex mini-game code. This program was dubbed "Hot Coffee." A subsequent version of the program imported nude skins resident on the game disc onto several of the female characters. PlayStation 2 and Xbox players eventually were able to access the mini-game by physically modifying or adding a hardware accessory to their game console, installing special software, and inputting cheat codes developed by third parties.

On July 20, 2005, the ESRB revoked the existing rating for the game as a result of, among other things, viewing *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* as modified by the Hot Coffee program and the widespread availability of that program. The companies entered into an agreement with the ESRB that provided that they would not contest a change in rating for the game from M (Mature 17+) to AO (Adults Only 18+) with an additional content descriptor for nudity. The companies also agreed to re-label or recall all existing inventory, and to make available to consumers a downloadable patch rendering the Hot Coffee content inoperable. In response, most retailers decided not to sell the re-labeled AO version of the game. In September 2005, the companies released a second M-rated version of San Andreas without the Hot Coffee content.

According to the FTC complaint, the companies represented, expressly or by implication, that the ESRB had rated the content of the original versions of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* M (Mature 17+) and that the ESRB had assigned the following content descriptors as part of the ESRB rating: Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, and Use of Drugs. The complaint alleges that the companies did not disclose to consumers that the game discs contained unused, but potentially viewable, nude female skins and disabled, but potentially playable, software code for a sexually explicit mini-game that the ESRB had not rated. The presence on the game discs of this unrated content that might change, and, in fact, did change, the rating of the game to AO (Adults Only 18+) with an additional content descriptor for nudity, would have been material to many consumers, particularly parents, in their purchase, rental, or use of the product. The complaint alleges that the companies' failure to disclose these facts, in light of the representation made, was and is a deceptive practice.

The proposed consent order contains provisions designed to prevent the companies from engaging in similar acts and practices in the future. Part I of the consent order requires the companies, in connection with the advertising, sale, or distribution of any electronic game, to disclose, clearly and prominently, on product packaging and in any promotion or advertisement for an electronic game, content relevant to the rating, unless that content has been disclosed sufficiently in prior submissions to the rating authority. Part I also prohibits the companies from misrepresenting the rating or content descriptors for an electronic game, and requires the companies to establish and implement, and thereafter maintain, a comprehensive system reasonably designed to ensure that all content in an electronic game is considered and reviewed by the companies in preparing submissions to a rating authority. Finally, Part I of the order states that nothing in the order shall constitute a waiver of the companies' right to assert that any of their conduct is or was protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or any analogous provision of a State constitution, except that the companies nonetheless acknowledge their obligations to comply with the order.

Parts II through V of the consent order require the companies to keep copies of relevant advertisements and promotional materials, to provide copies of the order to certain of their personnel, to notify the Commission of changes in corporate structure, and to file compliance reports with the Commission. Part VI provides that the order will terminate after twenty (20) years under certain circumstances.

The purpose of this analysis is to facilitate public comment on the proposed order, and it is not intended to constitute an official interpretation of the agreement and proposed order or to modify in any way their terms.