



# TESTING TALENT

The Hyper Stimulators promise a realistic racing experience. We can only agree

Words: Gray Lynskey Photos: Adam Cray

Hyper Stimulator Pricing:

30 mins	\$30
1 hour	\$40
2 hours	\$50
3 hours	\$60
4 hours	\$70



## IT'S THE CLOSEST

you can get to sitting in the real thing. You'd be doing the experience of sliding your way into the cockpit of a Hyper Stimulator at the Hyper Stimulator Race & Retail Centre in Manukau City's Papatoetoe an injustice were you not to describe it in this fashion. Stepping into one of these machines is a far cry from dropping two dimes in an arcade slot and pressing the right pedal.

Here at NZPC, we love our racing games. In fact, we love racing full stop. So sitting 12 of the crew side by side to race for office bragging rights is an opportunity we'll never say no to. The word around the traps was that the Hyper Stimulator provides a racing experience like no other we have played before, and whoever told us that wasn't lying.

Throw everything you know about usual racing games out the window — the platform beneath these machines rules all.

Those who've driven a real car around a track will know that, unlike most car games, it isn't in any way, shape or form forgiving. Neither are the Stimulators. Cold tyres, understeer, oversteer, uncontrollable slides; they're all part of real racing, and something you have to learn to control inside one of these cockpits.

At the Hyper Stimulator Centre you can race pretty much anything from karts upwards, with the most popular options being V8 Supercars and Formula 1 — you can drive all of the V8 Supercar tracks and the bulk of the Formula 1 circuits, too. For our challenge we chose V8 Supercars at none other than Mount Panorama, Bathurst. An iconic and tricky track, we figured it would be a great place to test the office talent.

And tested we were. We were in for a real racing experience, none of this sit-on-the-couch-and-push-the-odd-button-on-the-controller-side-to-side-and-back-and-forth nonsense. Sliding into one of the cockpits can be likened to slotting yourself inside any sort of single seater.

Tight spaces, a small steering wheel with numerous (useful) buttons, a sequential shifter (or paddle shifters if you decide to drive something other than a V8 Supercar) and pedals that give you a real feel for driving a car — they're all present. Sure, the clutch pedal may be AWOL, but the realistically firm brake that lets you know how hard you're standing on the anchors makes up for this shortfall. Many modern race cars don't use a clutch once you are mobile anyway, so what gives?

Donning the headset, turning up the volume and lining up on the start/finish straight, you'd almost think you're actually there, with not only the sound of your own engine roaring, but also that of 11 other angry eights twisting, waiting for the lights to go out. Once the lights drop, 12 angry V8 Supercars fight for traction and track space as you jostle to lead through the first corner and keep the car straight on cold tyres. Just as in real life, not only do you need to take the first corner easy, you need to nurse the car throughout the bulk of the first lap to keep all four wheels heading straight — something that caught every one of us out. This is real racing.

From the moment the lights go out, you slip into a concentration zone that you never thought you'd find playing a racing sim game. As the laps wind on, and you begin to hit your straps and learn the ins and outs of how the car behaves, you find yourself struggling to hit your marks lap after lap. Your battle to find perfection in car control and lap times easily waivers as you momentarily drop concentration — the fact racing drivers can do this for hours on end is nothing short of incredible.

It comes as no surprise, then, that the realism shown by these machines has been recognised by real drivers, with V8 Supercar racers Russell Ingall, Shane Van Gisbergen and 2008 V8SC Champion Jamie Whincup owning and driving these machines on a regular basis.

Take the adrenaline rush and excitement of close racing, factor in a real racing environment and the fact that Hyper Stimulator provides arguably the best value for money motorsport experience available, and it makes for one hell of a night out. And should you accidentally tag a wall (as we did countless times), you don't have to fork out for an insanely large bill to get back on the track, giving you the confidence to fly around with a little less care than were it your own car.

Like real racing, it's not easy, and you definitely shouldn't expect a simple ride. The Stimulators take a good hour before you start to come to grips with the basics and begin to really enjoy the entire experience. We'd recommend sitting for a few hours — not only will you improve, but it's bloody addictive. If you're in the Auckland region and fancy finding yourself a permanent seat, you can either create your own league with your mates or join one of the many currently on offer.

For further information about how you can get involved with what is the next best thing to sitting on top of the tarmac, head online to [www.hyperstimulator.co.nz](http://www.hyperstimulator.co.nz) or give the crew a buzz on 0800 497 377. nzpc