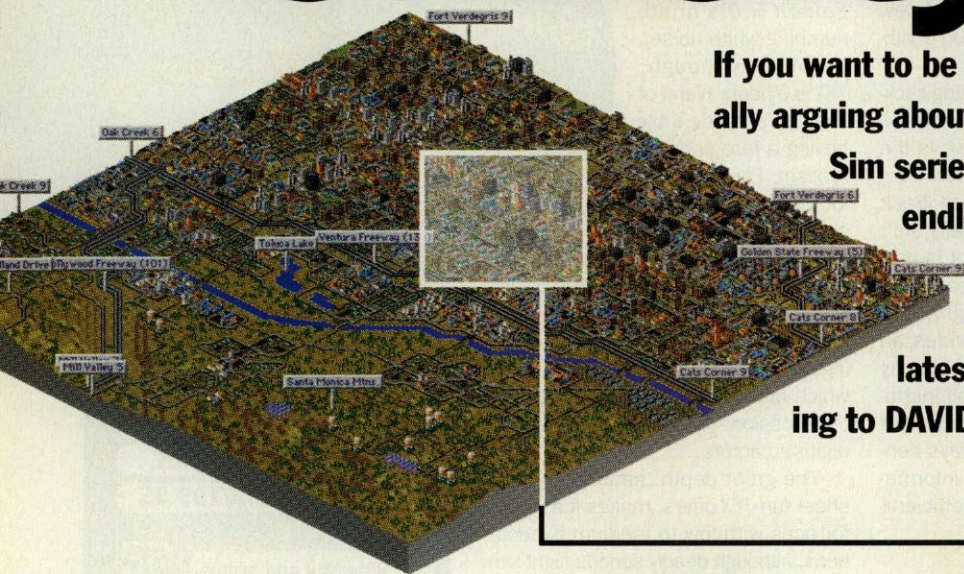


SimCity 2000



If you want to be God, but don't really care for people continually arguing about your existence (or lack thereof), then the Sim series is for you. All wanna-be deities can have endless hours of pleasure creating, destroying or just ruining someone's day with a nicely placed natural disaster. SimCity 2000 is the latest instalment in the classic series, and according to DAVID WILDGOOSE it's far and away the best.

The original *SimCity* was brilliant, make no mistake about it, and was thoroughly deserving of the seemingly endless accolades it was awarded all those years ago (1989 actually. How time flies). A definite classic, in the most sincere sense possible.

If it ain't broke... *SimCity 2000* is better, obviously, and includes many new features and improvements. The basic idea hasn't changed (if it ain't broke...) - you're given a wad of cash, a strip of land and a political lifetime to turn it into a thriving metropolis - but how this is achieved has been complicated a thousand-fold.

The most drastic change is how the graphics are implemented. Instead of the flat top-down view in the original, *SimCity 2000* boasts a spectacular 30 degree isometric display and it looks gorgeous. The buildings now scale real heights and you can also see hills, mountains, valleys, waterfalls and the like, all in glorious 3D. There are two icons which allow you to rotate the display through 90 degrees so you can see every last bit of your city, as well as three levels of magnification. Not only do the new graphics look stunning (on the highest magnification level the detail is breathtaking), but they add a huge amount of depth to a game that is already so deep that, er... the bottom is probably quite dark.

Speaking of depth, the second noticeable change certainly has that.

Your city now operates on three levels. The first, and the one that you'll be concentrating on about 90% of the time, is the standard view. Here is where you design your city, assign various areas as residential, commercial or industrial zones, build roads, highways, railroads, bridges and the many other buildings. There are many new buildings to choose from; for instance, there are eight different types of power plants including solar, gas and microwave, as well as hospitals, prisons, libraries, schools, colleges, museums and later on there'll be military bases and huge arcologies. Most of this will be familiar to those who have played the original *SimCity*.

The second level, however is completely new. Select this and almost everything disappears, leaving only a wire frame outline of the landscape. This is because you're now fiddling about underground where you have to construct pipes to allocate to allocate water to each building in town. You're also able to build a subway system and road tunnels to detour beneath large hills and mountains. Unfortunately, I found the water pipes, although a realistic touch, to be more annoying than anything else.

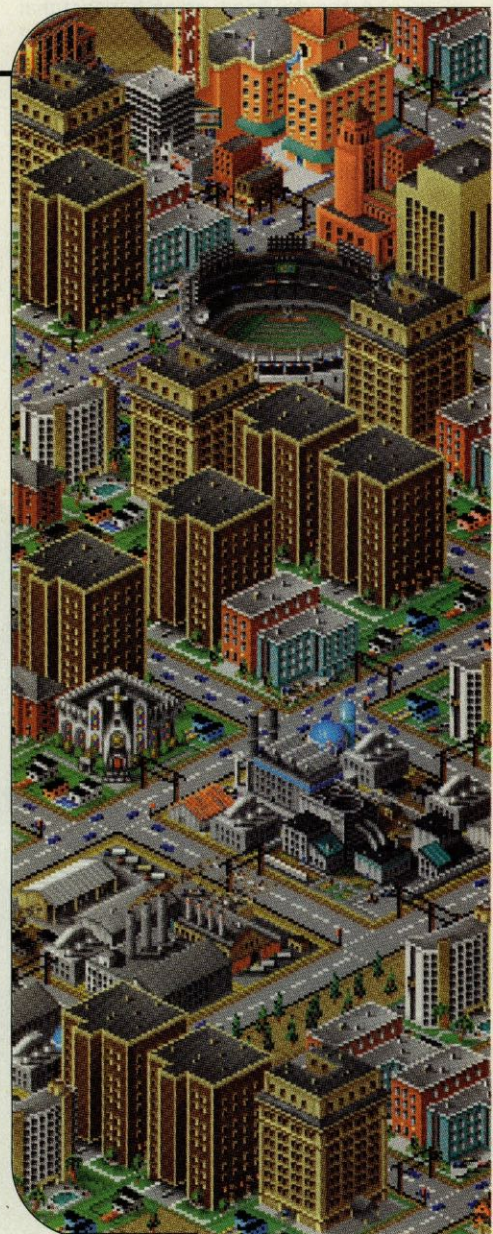
Finally, there's the third level. This is an option to view the cities which neighbour your own. It's not a playing level as such, it's more of a measure of how you're progressing as you can compare the size and

population of each city, but it's a thoughtful touch nevertheless.

Semi-detached While you played *SimCity* did you ever feel detached or distant from the people living there? I did, and if there's any real fault you could find in *SimCity* that was it. *SimCity 2000* goes somewhat towards rectifying this, not only through the improved graphics which allow much finer detail, but each building or zone is actually a mini-Sim in its own right. As an example, click on a school and you will be presented with info, such as the number of teachers and students as well as their grade average and how much the whole place costs to run. The same applies for police stations, hospitals, everything - even individual houses! The level of detail in this game is astonishing.

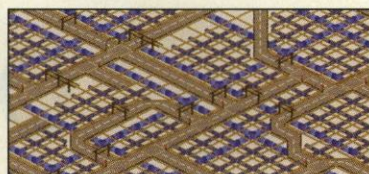
This brings me to the only conceivable criticism someone may have with *SimCity 2000*. Some people could find building and then maintaining a city simply too daunting a prospect and just won't get into it at all. Maxis, however, have tried their hardest to make this accessible and entertaining for beginners and, at the same time, immensely challenging for serious Simheads and I believe they have succeeded brilliantly.

If I had to review *SimCity* a week ago I would have given it 90%. *SimCity 2000* is at last fifty times better. Just how useless are percentage rating systems, eh?

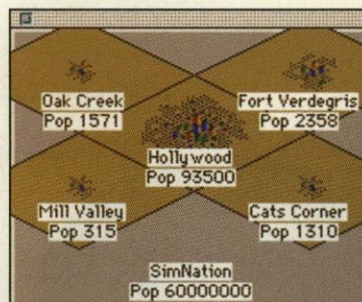




Click on a building with the help tool and get the specs for that building.

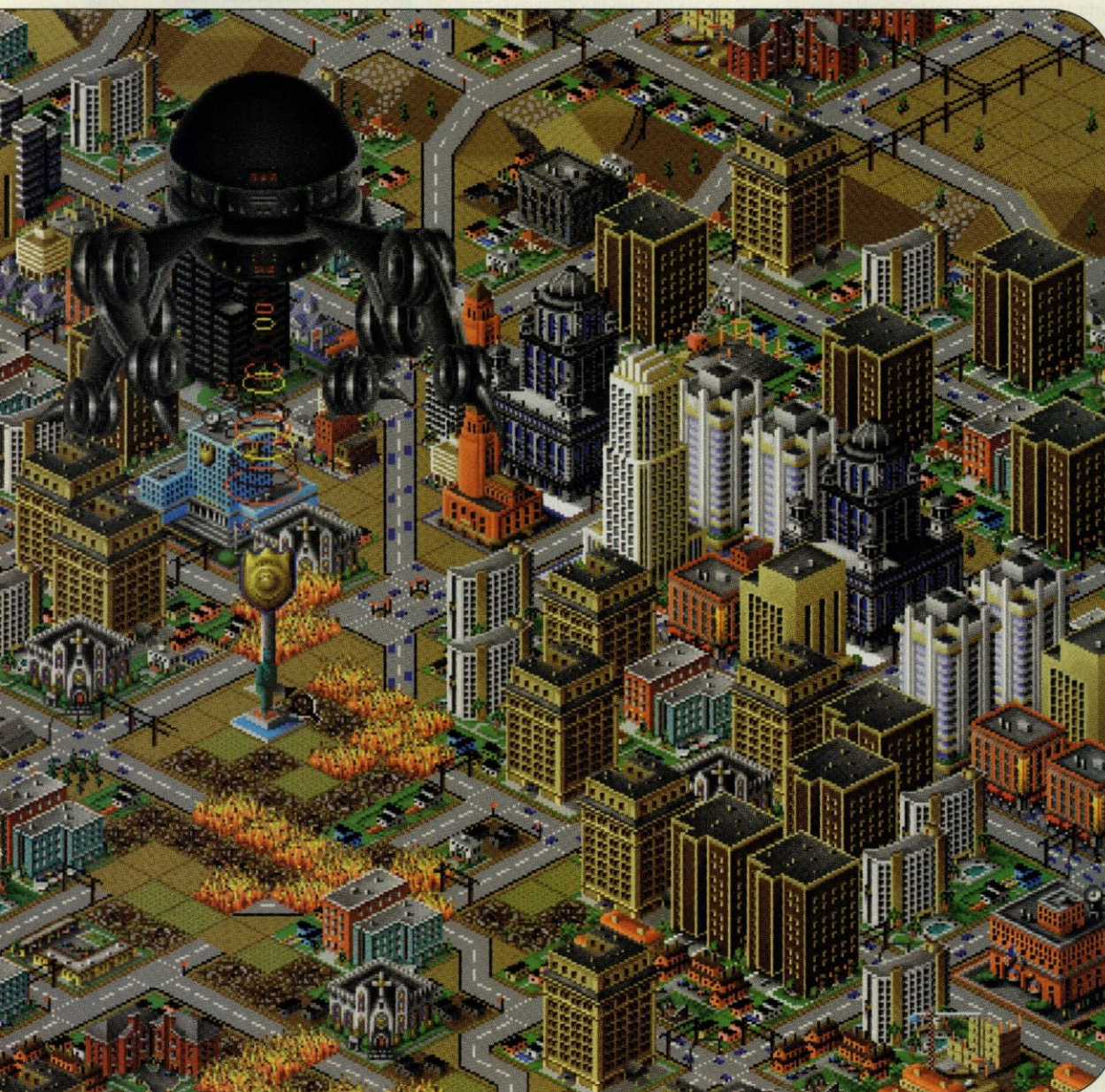
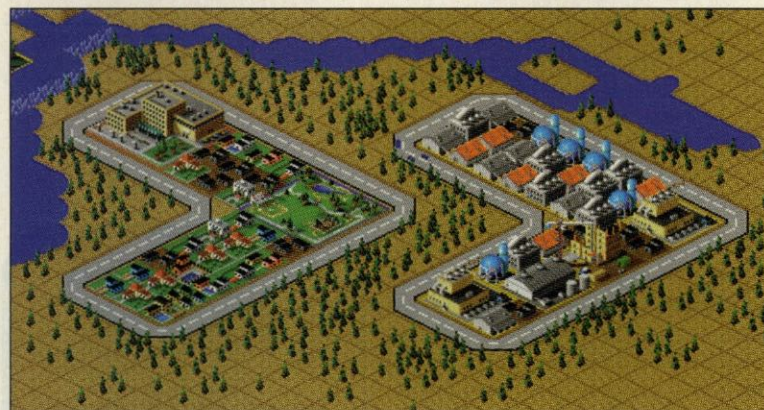


The underground water system can be a pain in the butt to maintain...



Above: Check out surrounding towns. The game has five built-in scenarios for you to play. Each is a different city with a different objective. The Hollywood option below follows the plot – “Back in the recesses of a ‘B’ movie studio lot, a freak electrical storm transforms a prop into a strange monster that takes Tinseltown by storm.”

Left: A magnificent architectural rendering of the Hyper logo – “>>”.



PC/MAC/CD

available

NOW

category

SIMSTRATEGY

players

1

publisher

MAXIS

price

NO RRP

visuals

Incredibly detailed and perfectly formed.

87

sound

For this sort of game sound is utterly irrelevant, but while the music can get annoying, the sound effects are pretty good.

75

gameplay

Deep, compelling, irresistible. You may even learn something too.

96

longterm

“Look, it’s almost 4 o’clock in the morning, will you get off that damn computer!” etc.

97

overall

One of the most enjoyable and rewarding games you’ll ever play.

96%