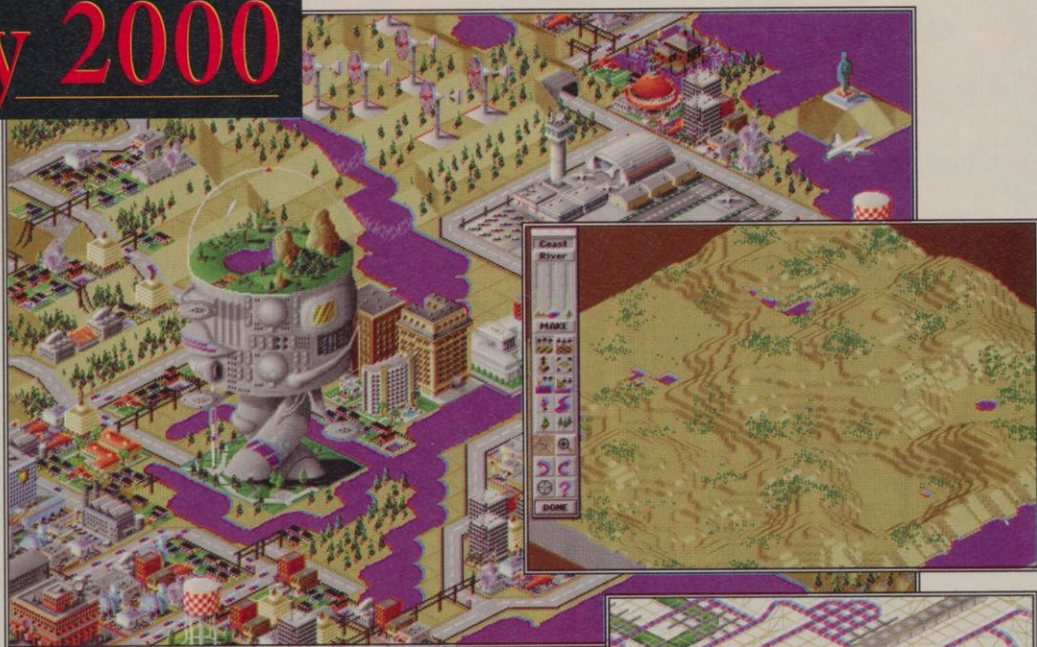


Develop

SimCity 2000

Could Maxis really have improved on the control freak's dream game that was *SimCity*? It would seem so...



Publisher	Maxis
Developer	In-house
Price	£39.99
Minimum System	386
Recommended	386+, 4 Mb RAM, VGA, DOS 3.3
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out Now

(Top-right) Unspoiled virgin land is soon transformed into (above) a crowded, pollution-filled, crime-ridden metropolis.

(Right) These networks of underground tunnels and pipes are the most fundamental addition to the original game.

THE END OF OUR civilisation is at hand! Or, to put it another way, *SimCity 2000* is here. Businesses are going to fail, economies collapse and promising careers falter, as billions of work hours across the globe are lost to the compulsive addiction of Maxis' latest. Anyone familiar with the original *SimCity*, which appeared around four years ago, will have already prepared themselves for the impending global malaise.

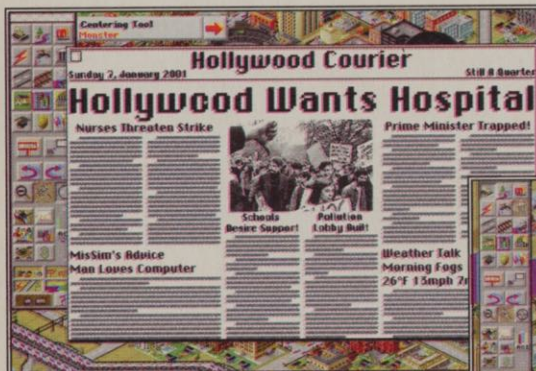
You've probably already put in an order for the new game at your nearest retail outlet, and warned family members not to expect any attention from you for the next six months. The only thing wrong with *SimCity 2000*, you see, is that it's a single-player affair – which effectively means that you might as well forget about interacting with the real world. Once the delights of creating and sustaining your own metropolis take their insidious toll on your consciousness, you won't have the time...

SimCity 2000 makes you mayor of a city, with total control over its construction, budget and economy. Say it quickly, and it doesn't seem like anything to get too excited about. Games that enable you to play god over a hapless population are nothing new. So what makes this latest attempt at silicon divinity so special? Well, depth for a start. Depth and simplicity. Depth, simplicity and variety. Depth, simplicity, variety and – oh, hang it all – this is impossible. Let's just say that *SimCity 2000* is the most

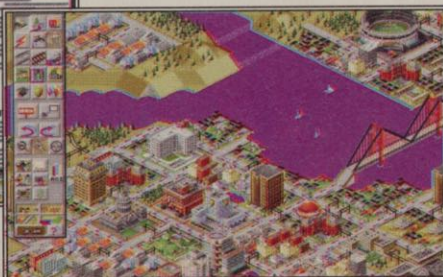
impressively detailed and involving game on any computer system ever, and leave the rest of the superlatives for the packaging.

Without turning into the 140-page manual, it's difficult even to scratch the surface of *SimCity 2000*'s mind-frazzling array of features. But I wouldn't want to give the impression that it's

"The most impressively detailed and involving game on any computer system ever"



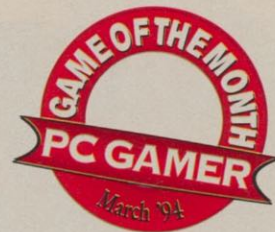
(Above) A wise mayor pays heed to the demands of the press to maintain a happy and riot-free city (right).



bogged down with trivial novelties... One of the game's greatest strengths is that it develops along with you as you explore the myriad levels behind its approachable façade. A brief description of the most notable aspects, though, should assuage the doubts of those who already own the original *SimCity* and are sceptical that the additions merit a further purchase. Hopefully, this will also convince any newcomers to rush out immediately and buy a copy, so they might finally discover what they've been missing all these years.

The biggest shock with the new version is that it's all in 3D. Gone are the flat, top-down antics of its predecessor, and in their place come isometric views of the urban sprawls, beautifully sculpted and reassuringly solid. The implications are far-reaching,

ment



and fully explored with the inclusion of – wait for it, *SimCity* fans – hills and valleys! Mountainous areas can now tower above the city centre, complete with discrete residential abodes tucked away among the foothills. You can even sink deep craters into the landscape, and then fill them with water or leave them to cradle micro-communities.

Yes, it's true. Now you can terraform any aspect of the landscape in *three* dimensions. Aside from lending your creations an impressively undulating profile, this extension to the game mechanics also provides you with an even deeper level of detail to explore. You can bore tunnels through hills to carry either roads or railways, for example – and don't forget the subways and water mains you have to lay beneath the city.

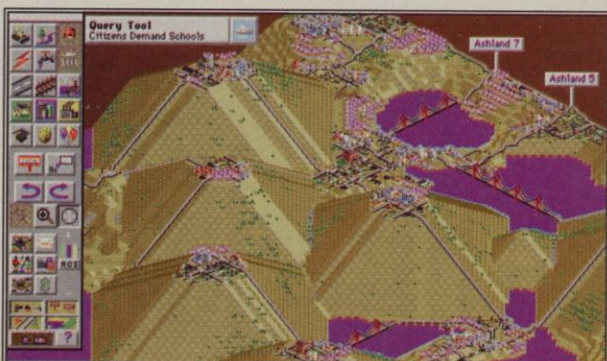
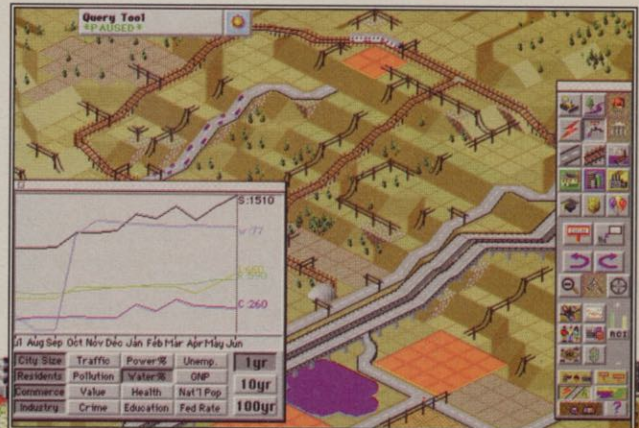
Unfortunately, this level of realism occasionally demands some irksome precision, especially when you're attempting to lay tracks, roads or wires over an inconstant gradient. Being able to rotate your view of the world helps immeasurably, but such tasks still require more detailed work than the earlier *SimCity* had prepared me for. These were the only times that my impatience won out over *SimCity 2000's* leisurely amiability, although it was a small price to pay for the environment's improved plasticity.

SimCity 2000 provides you with much greater control over the district's economy too. You can tax each local industry at a different rate, for example, to ensure that the supply of every item is closely regulated to the demand for it, both within the community and from the neighbouring cities (which exist as separate and uncontrollable entities). You can issue bonds to raise cash, and implement specific ordinances to deal with a particular problem (at a price). Every aspect of funding is dealt with in much greater detail than in the original game, although novices will still be able to manage perfectly well with the 'Auto-Budget' option. Digitised 'advisors' are even on hand to recommend courses of action within their specialised fields.

The new *SimCity* has also become much more historically sensitive. Start your city in the year 1900, for example, and you'll find only the most rudimentary of technologies available to you. As time progresses, however, newspapers inform you of significant inventions, which you can then use in your own constructions. Subways, airports and even

(Right) There's an astonishing amount of statistical information available in *SimCity 2000*, but one of the game's strengths is that it never relies too much on the data, so any novice can get by quite happily without them.

(Below) Dealing with disasters, like this escaped movie monster, is second nature to any seasoned *SimCity* mayor.



(Left) With the built-in terrain editor, you can place the city of your dreams in the landscape of your dreams.

fusion power generators all become available in time – highways and sliproads come in around 1930, for instance. The list of enhancements goes on and on... You're now responsible for building hospitals and prisons, as well as maintaining the high educational standards of the city with adequately-funded colleges, universities and libraries. Your mayoral progress is rewarded with houses, statues and other novelties. The weather plays an important part, affecting your water supplies and power output if you are using 'alternative' energy sources... But the most remarkable achievement of all is that even with all these rich embellishments – there are far too many of them to mention in

full here, unfortunately – *SimCity 2000* has somehow retained the likeable simplicity of its much loved ancestor.

It's a unique and fabulously entertaining game that deserves its rating – the highest score we've ever awarded a game – because of its inexhaustible challenge, its continual ability to surprise and delight, and its utterly convincing and self-contained sense of reality. Oh, and did I mention the sports stadium? Not only can you choose what kind of sport will be played in it, and name the home team, you can even keep track of its win-lose ratio to assess your population's sporting performance. Amazing, isn't it? Believe me, real life's got nothing on this.

JON SMITH

PC GAMER *Final Rating*

94% Highs
Lows

The Verdict Looks beautiful, and plays even better. This is a game you'll never leave alone. Ever.