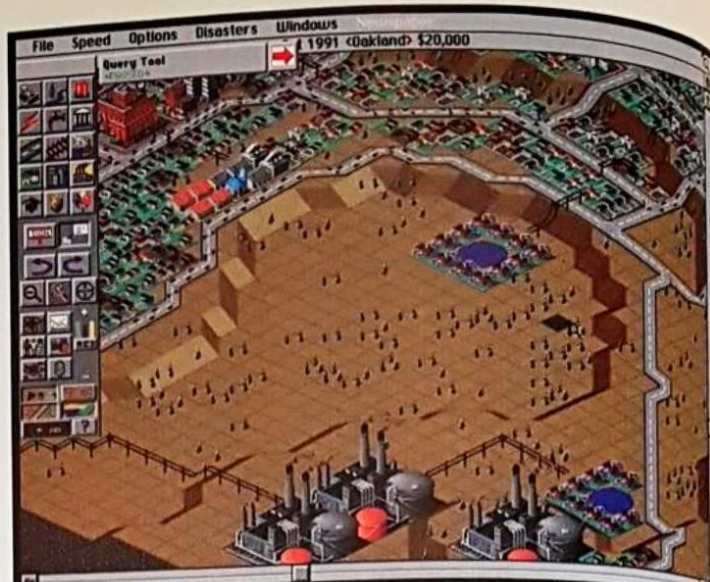




It's got Fire Engines and Fire Fighters but no one could think of what to call it. So the local newspaper held a competition and Tiny Tim sent in the winning suggestion. 'Let's call it a Fire Station' he cried, winning himself a life subscription to The Dundrass Herald. 'God Bless us everyone' said Tiny Tim.



As with its predecessor *Sim City* 2000 is a game of power. Behind every sprawling conurbation is a massive power station. This one has been tactfully sited in an area of huge environmental but little economic importance. City planning at its best.

SIM CITY 2000

PC
ZONE
CLASSIC

Duncan MacDonald's
wish to live in Milton
Keynes, tax the population
of Jersey and destroy
Bracknell was finally
fulfilled by playing Maxis'
new *Sim City* game.



IT'S GETTING on for unfeasible that you won't have played the original *Sim City* but, as there's always an outside chance, I'd better quickly cover the basics. (Skip on a wee bit if this bores you, obviously.) In *Sim City* there was a flat 2D landscape which you viewed directly from above – it was your canvas, and on it you would paint a city. Using the point 'n' click menu bar at the side of the screen you would select 'objects', such as roads, power lines, factories, houses, shops or whatever, and then you could plonk these objects down. The idea was that if you were thoughtful (i.e. didn't put houses too near smoke billowing industrial units and suchlike) then the Sim People would start moving in.

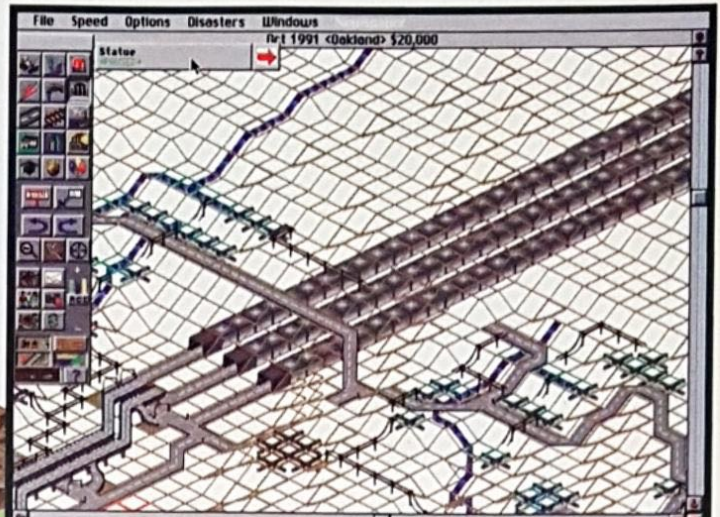
As your population grew, so your city could expand, and it was a constant juggling act as the map filled – with problems coming from all sides. (A simple example: your population was becoming unhappy because of minimal police protection, so you needed to buy, place and fund more police stations to stop the people moving away. The only way to afford to do so,

though, was to raise the taxes – but this also made the population unhappy. And so on). *Sim City* had minimalist, purely functional graphics and virtually no sound. However, it was also one of the most innovative and addictive games ever produced.

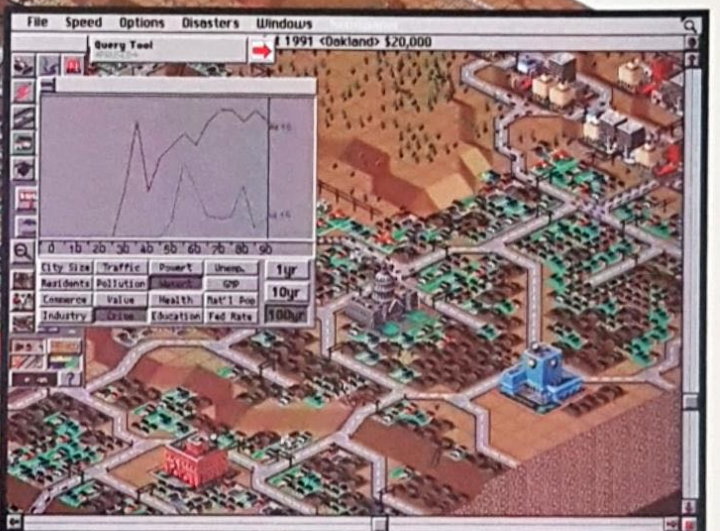
Moving on...

Which brings us back to the present, *Sim City 2000*, and the question you're obviously going to be asking... which is: 'How different is the new one to its prequel?' And here's the answer. It's almost exactly the same, but at the same time quite different and also infinitely better. Sounds like a contradiction in terms, doesn't it? But it's true. To explain, I'm going to use myself as a yardstick – you'll either be the same way yourself or you won't, but either way you should get a better understanding of what I'm on about.

Okay then. When I find a game I really like, I tend to go hammer and tongs to the exclusion of anything else on my hard drive. I use games up, wring them dry and then discard them. I did that with the original *Sim City*. 'Best game ever,



An example of the extent to which *Sim City 2000* reaches the depths no other city simulator even touches. Not only must you fret about your road and rail systems, but there's also all these strange goings on underground to worry about, subways, pipelines, tunnels and of course huge green rats... perhaps.



A quick, mid-term check on the crime and water supply graphs reveals that either the town is in the midst of a drought and a crime wave, or that crime is drying up but the town is about to be flooded. Why oh why didn't you bother to check the key?

proclaimed while I was still addicted, 'I'll never tire of it.' But, of course, I did. The in-built scenarios (where you had to mop up after disasters and so on) never really got a look in, because the joy came from building new cities from scratch and seeing if they worked. As soon as I learnt how to make them work every time, I became bored and moved onto something else; and, what's more, with the original *Sim City* it didn't take very long, because, when you got right down to it, there wasn't a great deal there - not many variables hidden away inside the program.

The main difference with *Sim City 2000* is that there are so many more variables to get involved with, and I'm not just talking about the all-new, all singing and dancing 3D landscape here (it opens up a completely new cans of worms on its own, sure, but there's far more besides). Let's put it this way: *Sim City* was instantly accessible, like in about one and a half pico-seconds, and the 'rush' lasted (personally speaking) for about 30 hours.

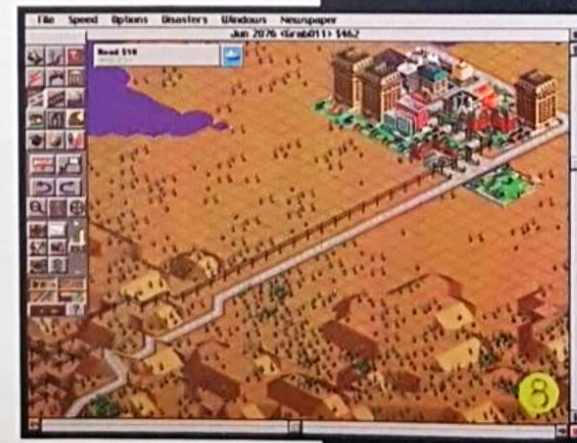
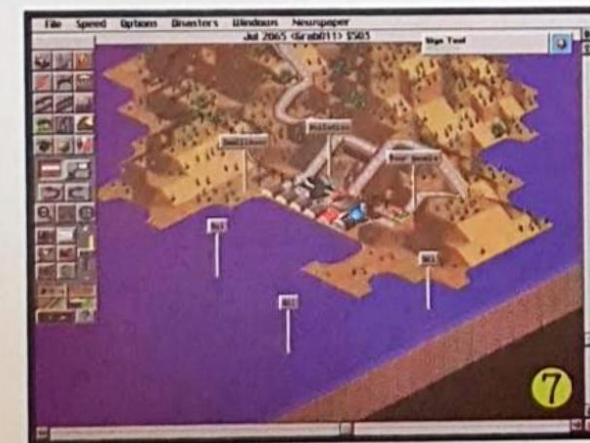
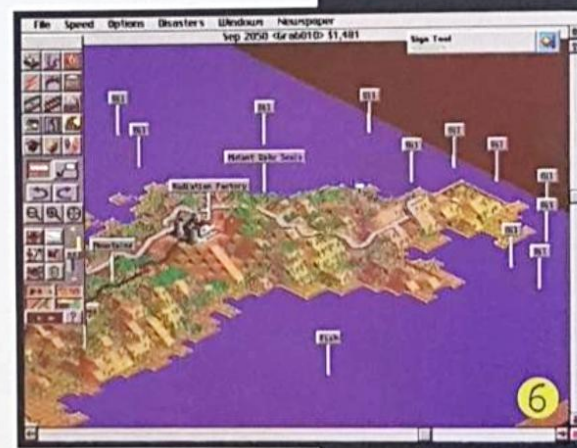
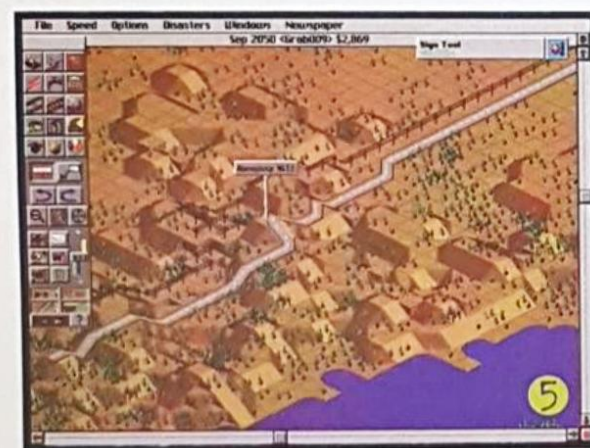
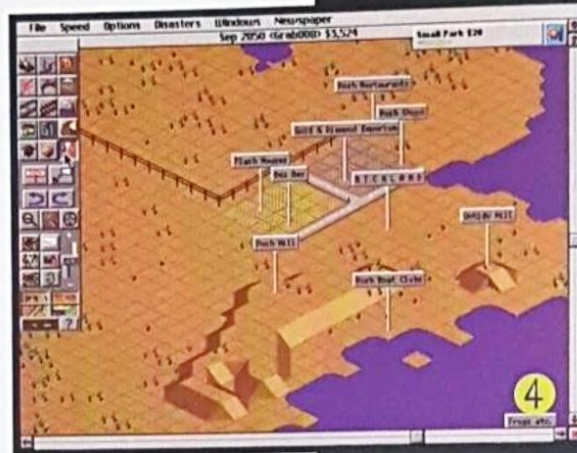
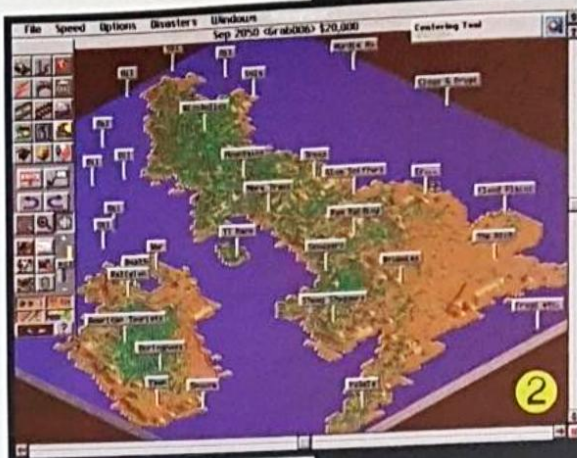
**'Legalise gambling,
or spend a bit of
dosh on shelters for
your homeless,
smelly wino posse.'**

Sim City 2000, however, is not quite so instantly accessible... it takes about half an hour. The addictiveness quotient though, when it kicks in, is even greater than that of the original. From these facts, I've formulated an equation to discover how long it'll take before you tire of *Sim City 2000*, where T_1 and T_2 = the respective games' accessibility times; B_1 and B_2 = the duration (in hours) until you become bored, and A_1 and A_2 = their addictiveness (as a percentage). So check this out:

$$(T_2/T_1) * ((A_1 + A_2)/2) * B_1 = B_2.$$

Remember that B_2 is the duration (in hours) you can expect to have *Sim City 2000* installed on your hard drive. And do you know the result? B_2 ? In hours? Would you believe that it is the incredible figure of:

386,455,289,262,199,259,102,111,452? No, I don't believe it either as it happens. My equation was obviously flawed in its design. But we're certainly talking at least a few months, even if you're as fickle with games as I am and have a concentration span of 0.78 picoseconds.



TO SUCCEED AGAINST OVERPOWERING ODDS

A 'best seller' by Jeffrey Archer

The story of the founding of a city, and the lives of the plucky folk who live there. A story of rags to riches, riches to rags, and in some cases rags back to riches again. A story where everybody is related, but nobody is quite sure who fathered who. You know the sort of thing, crap, basically, and badly written.

① It was a rugged landscape, home to volcanoes, and earthquakes, and giant shifting walls of ice. It was prehistory, the dawn of time. Then some dinosaurs appeared. Then, suddenly, 180 million years passed...

② Jake Topaz, the son of peasants who had fought his way out of squalor and was now a world famous geologist: he knew that the flatness of the land in the southern regions of the island he had single handedly discovered had been caused by shifting tectonic plates (or something). He would build a city there.

③ 'Hoorah!', 'Long live Jake Topaz!', Jake smiled to himself inside his ramshackle hut as the crowd of frontier folk cheered loudly outside. His decision to build the nuclear power-station miles from the proposed city site had gone down as well as expected.

④ 'You shall have flashy houses,' said Jake the next morning, addressing the masses, 'and you shall have posh shops, too.' A troubled voice came from the throng: '...But we haven't got any money.' Jake crossed his arms and puffed his chest: 'Then I, Lord Jake, shall find you some money.'

⑤ There was oil in the north, Jake was certain. 'But how do we get it?' asked Dirk Stone, his twin half brother. 'We build a road,' said Jake Topaz, 'a road unlike any other.' 'What, you mean a very long road?' pondered Dirk. Jake Topaz nodded his newly-crowned head, regally.

⑥ King Jake toiled day and night. Lesser men would have died from muscle strain, but Jake Topaz - the top dog with humble peasant ancestry - struggled on. He lay down hardcore. He covered it with concrete (mixed using just a bucket and a stick), and eventually his road was complete.

⑦ 'You local peasants will work my ships and my docks,' commanded King Topaz, 'and I will send an envoy up, once a week to collect my oil.' The hill-people bowed submissively before the living legend. 'God bless you, m'lord,' said one. 'You're a true son of mine,' said another. 'I would willingly give my breath for you,' said a third.

⑧ Poshville was thriving, and there was plenty of room for continued growth. King Jake's only regret was that his peasant mother had died during his birth... and his father had died three years before that, so they would never see what he had achieved. A tear of sadness rolled down his cheek, but it was followed by one of contentment. (The End.)

Anal...

The joys to be had from a game such as *Sim City 2000* are manifold, but if you had to pin the underlying attraction down, you'd be forced to conclude that the user's anal retentiveness is a major player. And we've all got at least one anally retentive gene, no matter how well hidden and under control it is. Sure, I don't like to admit it either, but when games like *Sim City* and *Sim City 2000* pop up and I can't drag myself away from them, I'm forced to admit it. Tidiness, form, order: everything in its place, and all within an ergonomic utopia. Ponciness, basically. That's what I'm talking about. I'm a ponce, you're a ponce, everybody's a ponce... or they are when they get involved in the design of a *Sim City*. (Adopt Steve Coogan as Paul Calf style voice - the one he uses when he's impersonating a student): 'Ooooh, well we've got a bit of a hill here, and we wouldn't want our road to have to go all bendy, would we... we'd better lower the terrain.' Or 'Ooooh, that residential zone isn't quite symmetrical when compared to its neighbour, we'd better waste £30,000 by demolishing our power station and rebuilding it one square to the left.' Or 'Ooooh, ooooh, ooooh, untidy, untidy.' You'll know what I'm saying by now... or you will if you're at all familiar with the original game. In *Sim City* you could fart around a bit. In *Sim City 2000* you can fart around like there's (a) no tomorrow, (b) no next week and (c) no year or life beyond.

Tight-arse...

Think about the anally retentive possibilities. In the original *Sim City* you clicked on the road icon and were given the road tool with which to build up your city's veins. Easy as falling off a log. In *Sim City 2000*, on the other hand, you click on the road icon and are given access to a sub-menu. Just roads? No. How about highways? Or off-Ramps? Or tunnels? Or bridges (of which there are several types)? And more. And it's the same for everything. Name an icon and there's a sub-menu connected to it. No more,

for instance, do you simply choose between residential, commercial or industrial zones: you have to decide on light or dense coverage. And power stations? Don't talk about power stations... Start with the early scenario and there are three types, but the later scenarios offer nine. (And even if you *do* start early, as time clicks on, the others are made available to you anyway - if your city survives that long). And then, of course, there's the 3D element. You've got to think *underground* now. Pipes, subways, tunnels and so forth. You'll be zooming in and out and rotating the map for hours on end.

Icing on the cake

Forgetting about the actual city construction itself, let's finally take a gander at the equally important feedback parts of the game, which come in the form of maps, graphs, and suchlike. Industry growth? Just look at that 'Y' curve. Check it against an 'X' value of one, ten or a hundred years (and against city revenue or whatever for more illumination. Police presence? Check the colour coded overhead mini-map. Land value? Pollution? Crime rate? Everything you could muse over in the original game can be mused over here... but times about 20. Social life? Forget about it. You can even allocate different tax rates: not just for population, commerce and industry but even for different types of industry (yes, more graphs). And you can use inducements to make your city appear attractive to potential settlers or visitors. Legalise gambling for instance, or spend a bit of dosh on shelters for your smelly homeless wino posse (i.e. hide them). And so on. Indeed to tell you everything about *Sim City 2000* would take at least ten more pages, but suffice to say that if the original *Sim City* was 90 per cent good in 1989 (and it was) then *Sim City 2000* is, amazingly enough, 92 per cent good in 1994. So it's better than it should be. Uncanny. In fact it's a bit like the price of Mars bars going down against inflation. Er, or inflation going down against the price of Mars bars. Or something. (I never did understand economics.)

GROW YOUR OWN...

With the *Sim City 2000* Terrain Editor, you can give yourself as much (or as little) of a challenge as you like. Using tools such as Raise Land, Lower Land, Flatten Land, Raise Sea Level, Lower Sea Level, Plant Forest, Plant Tree and so on, it's entirely up to you as to what your starting point looks like: for instance, the map of the UK in our storyboard was created from here. (It took about half an hour and an atlas, in case you were wondering.) To get an idea of what you can make it's probably a good idea to give you the extremes - and so without further ado, *PC Zone* proudly presents...

(TOP) The Chickenshit Option: drag all the sliders down to zero and click on 'Create'. You can then go even further and manually fill in the little dents and so forth but we've left them in, because a completely flat landscape would have won the 'most boring screenshot ever' award. (And this one's not doing too badly on its own. Ed.)

(BOTTOM) The Ninjascope Hero Option: drag all the sliders right up to the top, click on 'Create', and hey presto... Nightmaresville Arizona. But why stop there? With further vertical coaxing you could create a land and treescap that even the 1998 Roland McButter's Deforestation Program would have trouble dealing with. (Let alone build a city on.)



PC ZONE score

It'll make you anally retentive in the extreme.

92

Price: £39.99 Out: Now
Published: Maxis
Telephone: 071 490 2333

PC ZONE specs

Minimum Memory: 4Mb
Minimum Processor: 386
Minimum Speed: 33MHz
Installation: Essential
Minimum Hard Disk: 6.5Mb
Minimum Graphics: Super VGA
Soundcards: Ad-Lib, Ad-Lib Gold, Roland MT-32, Roland MPU 401, Pro Audio Spectrum, Sound Blaster and 100% compatibles
Controls: Mouse

'Everything you could muse over in the original game can be mused over here...but times about 20.'