

SCOOP!

SIM CITY

Your Second Chance To Build



New for *Sim City 2000* are these newspaper pages which explain what's been happening in your town of late. In fact, there are two different rags (at the time of going to press), one of which is more downmarket than the other – all part of the drive to make *Sim City* more varied and more fun.

LOTS OF GAMES LAY CLAIM TO the title, but *Sim City* really is a classic program. The idea is very simple: you scroll around a map, pick a plot of land, and then, using a set of icons and a whole wad of money, start to build your metropolis from scratch. But what begins easily enough as a construction exercise – a power station over here, an industrial area over there, a couple of

High unemployment, rising crime and alien invasions – add a slice of 3D and it's *Sim City* with brass knobs on. BY MATT BIELBY

roads to connect them up – soon develops into a desperate race against time, as the needs of your expanding population become increasingly more complex. They're getting bored, so you build them a park or a sports centre. Crime is on the rise, so you'd better invest in a police station quick. A fire's devastated the whole downtown area... Maybe you should have established that fire department half an hour ago. And so it goes on. Your task is to help create a prosperous and thriving town. Do so and everything's hunky-dory. Fail and you'll be voted out of office. It's that simple.

Unfortunately, so are the game's graphics – the aerial map plan providing a fair representation of what's going on, but hardly qualifying as realistic, and certainly anything but pretty. The current belief at Maxis seems to be that, yes, they did their job, but the simple visuals also rendered the game a little less emotionally involving than they'd hoped for.

So it's hardly a surprise then that the vastly improved graphics are the most obvious change

made to this long-awaited sequel, with the overhead view now represented by an isometric 3D landscape reminiscent of a cleaned-up *Populous*. Not only are we much closer to the action – individual buildings are shown in much more detail – but the three-dimensionality means that you can now tell if your building is on a hill or not. A terrain editor enables

“Potential disasters include riots, floods, earthquakes – even an alien invasion!”

you to create pretty much any environment you want (waterfalls or forests, for instance). No more standard squares for the zones you build on either. This time you can make 'em any shape you like.

There's also a choice of viewpoints to be had – you can observe your town using three different levels of magnification, or rotate the highly-detailed

F.Y.I.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

In a nutshell *Sim City*, the game that put Maxis on the map, may look a bit crude now, but it still remains one of the most playable PC titles ever. The latest version, rebuilt from scratch, boasts isometric 3D graphics and a host of new features, including a new set of disaster scenarios – the alien invasion is a particular *PC Gamer* fave.

What's so special? Enjoying Maxis' other games (*Sim Ant*, for example) is very much down to personal taste, but everyone can get stuck into *Sim City*. The idea of playing an improved version had us salivating right from the outset.

Why should I care? Because you'll be missing out terribly if you don't. This is one of those games that really *will* have you sitting up all night if you're not very careful.

And when's it coming out? February 1994 is the current release date. For some of us it's going to be a real struggle to wait that long.



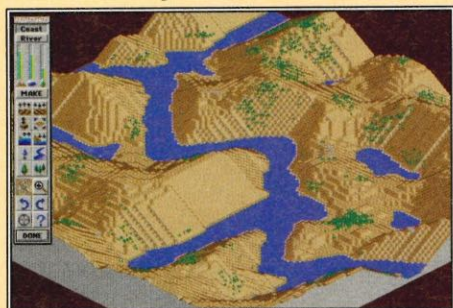
Now isn't this a bit better looking than the old *Sim City*? Not only do you get this beautiful isometric 3D perspective, so things like hills are much more apparent, but you also get three different degrees of magnification, which provides you with much, much more detail. Those little blue cars actually *drive* along the roads, for instance. And then, of course, there are all those completely new elements – the most obvious one being that massive city block thing, or 'Arcology', in the middle of the screen.

2000

A Dream City



Game *Sim City 2000*
Developer Maxis
UK Publisher Mindscape
Projected Price TBA
How Complete? 90%



Okay, so where exactly shall we build our city? A flat bit of land would be ideal – and there's got to be water nearby, of course (particularly useful if you want to build one of 2000's pretty new marinas later on in the game). Luckily, you can view the lie of the land from many different angles, so choosing a prime site isn't quite as difficult as all that.

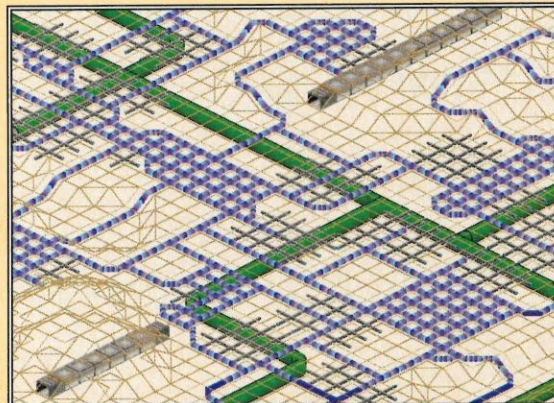
display through 360° left or right (so you can see behind individual buildings).

These visual differences, however, are only the tip of the iceberg as far as overall improvements are concerned. It's with its sheer range of options that this new *Sim City* really gets one over on the original. Although, as Maxis' Jo Cooke is keen to point out, "We've made sure we still use lots of the original features that people are familiar with from the first game, so fans will be able to start playing straightaway." (Indeed, it's so compatible with the old title that existing *Sim City* owners will be able to transfer towns they've created in the first game into *Sim City 2000*, and actually see for the very first time what they really look like in three dimensions!)

To give you some idea of quite how extensive this new range of options is, check out the number of different power plant types you now have – seven, as opposed to the original two, including newbies like microwave, solar and hydroelectric. You also have a lot more control over your town, so services are no longer dealt with automatically.

There are many far more complex information graphs to cope with as well. Keep an eye on the health, age and education of your citizens, for example, or your town won't be able to support the kinds of industry you need to survive. What's more, everything that happens in your domain is affected by what goes on in the neighbouring burghs, each of which is vying for both your people *and* your business. To cap it all, the types of thing that can go

We liked that finished city shot on the facing page so much, here's another one! The town we've got here is a bit more realistic though – imagine it's San Francisco (Maxis' home town) or something. The little yachts even sail around the bay. (Now where shall we land that alien invasion? How about the city centre? What a spectacle that would make!)



New to *Sim City 2000* is this view of events – the network of tunnels that lie underneath your thriving new town. The thin grey lines are the foundations of buildings, the blue lines carry water around the place, while the thick green tubes are actually an underground railway system! (The thick grey bit is a line that hasn't been connected yet.) Now all you need are stations...

wrong have increased tenfold. Potential disasters include riots, nuclear meltdown, floods, earthquakes – even an alien invasion! Maxis claims many of these new ideas have been incorporated into the game as a result of comments made by fans of the original.

Two original additions to the basic *Sim City* gameplay, however, deserve a special mention. For one thing, you can now go deep underground to add a network of water pipes to service your homes and industry, or to build a full underground railway system. Even more radical are the sci-fi inspired 'Arcologies' – complete cities in their own right, built within huge buildings, which give your whole town the look and feel of Judge Dredd's Mega City 1. Constructing these can really help boost your population levels...

Sim City 2000 looks, quite simply, brilliant. Having played the almost-finished version, we can hardly wait to get our hands on the finished game. It looks like, after a four year wait, *Sim City* is about to start eating into our evenings all over again... **PCG**



A bluffer's guide to Maxis facts

Where? San Francisco, California.

How Large? Maxis employ over 100 people at present – a far cry from the five they started with when the company was first set up in 1987.

Best Known For? Surprise, surprise, the original *Sim City*. The game is still extensively played even today, the main reason for its classic status being that it isn't actually a game at all – more an open-ended city simulation, where there's no real winning or losing, just an ever-increasing number of more complex problems to deal with.

Worst Aspect? Some of Maxis' other sim games, which continue in the 'not actually a game as such' vein, but focus on far less fascinating subjects. It's vital to maintain a big gaming element and simple user-interface, as Maxis have learned. The danger is, of course, that you'll make things too complicated or 'educational' for the punters.

Greatest Asset? Probably ace programmer Wil Wright, one of the original five, who's a co-owner of Maxis and the creator of both *Sim City* games. He seems to have the knack of writing programs with long-term appeal.

Ultimate Aim? To create an entire 'simulated world', in which you can do absolutely anything. This would be a combination of all Maxis' other sim programs, interlinked and operating as parts of one giant program.

You could create a city, walk or fly through it using the flight sim bit, construct individual buildings with a house sim, manage the local baseball team with a sports sim, and, finally, people it using a life sim!

With this ambitious project in mind, the company has split itself up into three parts: a publishing wing, which will take on affiliated labels as well as Maxis stuff, a business division, which will create business titles (*Sim Oil Refinery* for fuel company Chevron, for example), and the special 'Sim World' development company, which will strive to realise the above philosophy in all its glory.