

Activision has added another new twist to the classic game, Mahjong. With four different ways to play, the addition of video clips, and the narration of Rosalind Chao, Shanghai has brought Mahjong into a multimedia format.

Rosalind Chao introduces you to the game of Shanghai and offers you tips on strategy and matches that you may not have seen. For her part, Rosalind does a nice job of "acting" for this game. Unfortunately things like "find a match" tend to take a long time to see just because of the loading and unloading time of the video footage of Rosalind. But at least she looks like she's having fun.

Great Moments offers four different styles of play. Classic Shanghai is the traditional matching game that has been around for centuries. The Great Wall plays a lot like a nasty Tetris game. As you remove matches from the board, the remaining tiles will fall creating new combinations of matches. Action Shanghai is a high speed matching game that adds new tiles in random intervals. This can be a real pain when you are trying to click on a match and a new tile lands on top of it. Finally, Beijing is a monster. You create matches by sliding entire rows of tiles. I have yet to get the hang of this version of the game, but it is defiantly a challenge.

Along with all of the styles of play, there are also several modes. You can play in solitaire mode, or 2 player mode against a worthy opponent. Or the dreaded contemplation mode, where all of the tiles are upside down and create a whole new twist on concentration.

Some of the new additions to the game of Mahjong are great ideas, things like in depth strategy help, and the shuffle tiles command when you run out of matches. Activision also added tons of video clips. Every match plays a short video clip (which can get real annoying) and when you finish a set of tiles you are treated to a longer video clip of the background screen.

All this said, the video clips really don't do much for the game. After seeing them all once, I turned off the clips and just played the game. The sheer wealth of tiles sets (over 400) are enough to keep any die hard Mahjong player busy for months. This game is a definite must get for any Mahjong fan.