

# review: Colonization

by Don Henson

Type: Strategy/Simulation

Publisher: MicroProse Software Inc. (410/771-1151)

Retail Price: \$69.95

Street Price: \$42.00

Requires: 68040 or above processor (will run very slowly on 68030 machines; native on Power Macs), 13-inch color monitor with 256 colors, 8MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM disk drive, System 7.0 or greater, and 13 MB of hard drive space.

Protection: None

Power Mac Native: Yes

Sid Meier's latest game for the Macintosh is the strategy simulation game Colonization. In the tradition of Pirates, Railroad Tycoon, and more recently Civilization, this game takes the best of Pirates and Civilization and then goes on to new places with them. Those familiar with the above mentioned games know what to expect in the well-crafted simulations of Sid Meier. The rest of you will also want to look at Colonization. If you like the creations of great innovators of personal computer strategy and simulation gaming, you will like what Meier does with game design.

In Colonization, the basic premise of the game is to represent the Dutch, English, French or Spanish in sailing west to discover the "new" world. There is the advantage of being able to select whether to play the Americas as we now know them, so that we have an historical advantage that wouldn't have been available to the early colonists.

However, for a more accurate simulation of events, the game allows one to generate "truly" new worlds. The maps are blacked out and only show the areas that you have sent scouts and explorers to check out. So one discovers where there are Indian settlements and where there are competitive colonies of the other European powers that have representative explorers seeking riches in the new world as well. The latter can be set to five levels of difficulty as another way of giving one a constantly varying opponents and game form to play against.

**Getting Started.** For those unfamiliar with Civilization, the object of the game is rather simple, although (almost trite) difficult to master. All you have to do is deal with all the complications of exploring the Americas and claiming as much of it for your imperial sponsors as possible, as soon as possible. During this time one has to develop methods of dealing with food supply, skilled workers, natural resources, manufacturing, the politics of new colonies in new lands, and not the least, the Indians which already lived in these areas. It sort of comes down to finite resources more so than would have been apparent to the explorers and settlers from 1500 to 1800. We readily see after a couple of hundred years of playing Colonization that the resources aren't going to be enough to make everyone as wealthy as they would like and that some compromises, wars and other conflicts will occur.

s the nations stake out their areas of the Americas, harvest the natural resources, and try to firm up trade and diplomatic relationships with the neighbors, the sponsor country in Europe is still demanding more and more taxes on more and more items. Thus one has the choice of having equivalent events to the Boston Tea Party as various commodities fall under scrutiny for new taxes of the royal families in Europe.

At some point before 1800, one should try to be in economic, political and most of all military position to declare independence from the country that sponsored you and your colonies. If not, the game will end. After you declare independence, the European interests that are supporting you disagree and start a war with the you. The other powers make various offers of help, provided you have earned their respect in your quest to found a new country. At any rate, you will get offers, but some will be far more expensive and useful than others.

If you are the first to declare independence before the colonists of any other country your

score will get bonus points. If you declare independence before 1776, you get a corresponding amount of bonus points for each year of difference. You also get points for the number of colonists present, amount of gold left, and, most importantly to your overall percentage score, which of the five levels you chose to play Colonization. The score also depends on the education or skills of your colonists, so schools and colleges are important factors in this aspect. There is also a penalty for destroying villages of native Americans, which is also multiplied by the level that you chose when beginning play.

The improvements that you choose to develop in each of your colonies will have a differing effect on various aspects of the way the game proceeds. More schools, as mentioned, increase the education or skills of colonists and thus their production as farmers, carpenters, miners and so forth. The more churches and preachers increase the rate at which the colonists want to leave Europe to escape this oppression there.

Then there is the choice of which Founding Fathers to get (these are similar to the "achievements" in Civilization). The Founding Fathers are obtained by liberty bell production and after a certain number, a particular historical figure becomes available to you. These all affect the attributes of your colonies depending mostly on the major historical strengths of these figures. Ben Franklin insures that one gets good treaty conditions. Sir Francis Drake gives your privateers an extra attack bonus. Pocahontas allows for better relations with the native Indians. There is online help to explain what each person will change in the way your colonies interact with their world.

In establishing your colony in the rough and tumble frontier areas, you need to find a way to get, buy, or build Privateer ships. These can take advantage of the sea transport of others'

goods without being openly at war. Dragoon land units can also get away with this at some points. I found that it was very helpful to use Dragoons in a fortified position to block the travel of enemy colonists, and the native Americans by eliminating the routes they can travel by land. In the scenario using the Americas as we know them an obvious easy place to create such a blocking line is between north and south America.

If, on the other hand, you don't declare independence before 1800 the game will end and your score will take quite a hit. Another situation is if you declare independence for your colony, but can't win the war with the motherland by 1840. In this scenario the game will again end and one's score won't be as good as early declaration and success in the revolutionary war that ensues.

**Declaring Independence.** While the program was very stable on my system as a whole, there are numerous cosmetic and small annoying functional bugs in Colonization. This unfortunately has been a consistent problem with MicroProse releases of Sid Meier's games in the past as well.

As a total package Colonization is a very well conceived game that offers a great deal of depth to get truly rewarding scoring percentages. At the same time it allows one to play on a much less cerebral level with equal interest and fun, just lower scores. An extremely thorough and well planned strategy game!

#### Pros

- Great graphics and game design.
- Very flexible the way any one game can be set up, which allows for almost endless different gaming experiences.

#### Cons

- Couldn't get the CD sounds to play through my Mac speaker. I assume one needs a multimedia setup to have success at this.
- The other numerous and distracting functional and cosmetic bugs.