

review: SimCity Enhanced CD-ROM

by Dan Radmacher

Type: The original city simulator

Publisher: Maxis, MacPlay (800/4MACPLAY)

Retail Price: \$59.95

Street Price: \$40.00

Requires: 256-color Mac w/ 2.5 meg RAM free, System 7 and double-speed CD-ROM drive (25 MHz 030, 4 meg RAM free recommended)

Protection: None

Power Mac Native: Yes

Enhanced? Not hardly. The most difficult thing about this review was deciding how many joysticks to give this enhanced version of SimCity. Should I base it on the quality of the original, groundbreaking program? Or on the quality of the "enhancement" that Maxis is trying to milk for revenue?

I decided to split the difference. The original simulator was and still is astounding. It puts you in the mayor's office as you build a city from the ground up. It also makes you a god, as you can smite your city at any time by visiting an assortment of disasters upon the population.

SimCity is a marvelous waste of time. I've spent hours tweaking my cities, building roads here, mass transit there; tearing down blocks of commercial development and rezoning it for industry. I've watched with joy, and then growing aggravation as the traffic multiplied on my busy roads.

If I had reviewed SimCity when it originally came out, I would have given it 4 1/2 to 5 joysticks. But the CD-ROM promises more. It promises to enhance the original simulation, make it more compelling. To quote the hype: "Technology simply provides us with new tools to invent a product that is bigger, better and more exciting than anything we've ever done before."

orry, guys. The copywriter had greater ambitions, I'm afraid, than did the programmer. To a one, the enhancements are minor and/or irritating. Take, for example, the voice that tells you which tool you select and how much it will cost. "Residential. One hundred dollars," your computer says when you click on the house. That's kind of nice. The first time. After that, it loses most of its appeal and quickly becomes grating.

Of course, there are QuickTime movies in abundance. That seems to be how most CD-ROM developers decide to fill the 600 MB of space at their disposal when they have nothing original to do. Unfortunately, the movies add little. There's a little eye beneath the customary pallet of tools. When it opens, you can click on it and get a peek at your sims. Unfortunately, they don't do much that is either interesting or comprehensible. Several are sleeping or preparing for sleep. That should tell you something.

One thing that still boggles my mind is the fact that Maxis decided to enhance the original SimCity rather than SimCity 2000. I don't understand the decision. Certainly the enhancements would have worked just as well with the new, more complicated version of the program, and that might better justify the price of the CD-ROM.

The only thing I can figure is that Maxis/MacPlay is trying to milk the old program all it can. To Maxis' credit, it is clear from the graphics on the box that you're getting the original version of the program.

Conclusion. SimCity Enhanced just isn't very enhanced. If you're into voices and QuickTime movies, it might be worth the price. Otherwise, stick with SimCity Classic, or make the move to SimCity 2000.

Pros

- It's SimCity

Cons

- It's SimCity Classic
- QuickTime movies irritate more than they enhance
- Voice options irritate more than they enhance