CAESAR II

By Paul Anderson

Like many Mac games, the PC version of *Caesar II* has been out for quite some time--but the good news is that the game ages well. As the name might suggest, *Caesar II* is based on ancient Greece--300 B.C. to be exact. Your mission is to develop the infrastructure of the Roman Empire and assist in the Greeks' aspirations of world domination. The game itself shares tremendous similarities to Maxis's *Sim City 2000:* Building the model Roman city complete with cultural amenities and properly placed bath houses are essentially the basics. But rest assured the game is not just an ancient rip-off of the Maxis classic.

Caesar II actually has two modes of play--Campaign and City. The City mode is just like the aforementioned *Sim City*. Through *Caesar's* simple point-and-click menus, you start building an ancient Roman city by placing housing, markets, temples and the city's general treasury. Your mission in the City mode is to please the Emperor by maintaining order, spurring economic growth and contributing to the Roman culture. You do this by building theaters, arenas and gardens. Through proper city planning and management, your city will soon swell into an enormous sea of beautifully designed structures that will make the Emperor proud.

The Campaign mode incorporates more of a worldly view with the existing City mode. Not only will you have to monitor and grow a city, but you'll also be required to keep tabs on neighboring factions through trade and war. The Campaign mode offers impressive real-time battle scenes where your legions of soldiers aggressively defend against attacks from neighboring armies and other barbarians. Pay close attention to your foes, or your city will quickly be pillaged and destroyed.

Although parts of *Caesar II* can become a little tedious (i.e. "More Plebes!"), it has finely detailed artwork and a very addictive play style. Anyone who had the skills to amass booming populations in *Sim City* will enjoy doing the same with *Caesar II*.