



Model flight simulators seem to come in varying degrees of user friendliness and quality. I recently bought one of the new 'sims' from a competitor of Ripmax and I found it a total nightmare to make work and go flying. It took a couple of visits back to the model shop and a visit to the local computer shop before I was able to get it up and running. So, you can imagine my apprehension when the editor asked if I was interested in doing a review of the Ripmax flight 'sim' - I was a little worried about setting it up. But I was assured it would be

easy (again) so I agreed - but that I would get my flying buddy Lee Jones to do the technical side of this review. The review is just a simple report of what it is like to install, set-up and use, plus a glimpse of the possibilities it offers, without any technical jargon to confuse or confound.

NON TECHNICAL BIT

Due to my experience with a flight 'sim' installation, I thought it would be a good idea to do it myself, rather than call on Lee to do it, for the reason that my problems would equate pretty well with the average modeller. I don't pretend to be anything other than a complete beginner where PC's are

concerned, so the fact that I got the programme up and running within minutes, really speaks for the simplicity of the gear and the quality of the supplied instructions. I had a little play around with the models & scenery, to check out the settings, then left it alone as I had invited Lee and his son Steven to come round for a days flying. As our local flying site is currently closed due to 'foot and mouth' outbreak, it would go some way to alleviate our withdrawal symptoms! So, all sat comfortably, supplied with tea and sandwiches by my other half, Eve, we set about passing the transmitter round, and playing with the various models and sceneries, etc. At the end of the

day, we all agreed that the flying characteristics of the models were very realistic, compared with the models that we had flown at the field i.e. the Limbo Dancer, Spitfire, Mustang, Trainer and the Extreme.

TECHNICAL BIT - NEARLY!

The program arrives on the now standard format of a CD Rom, with a small interface that simply plugs into the games-midport of the computer sound card, to which you plug in a lead that attaches to your radio Tx (the buddy box socket). You can use a joystick, or even the keyboard, but as this is an RC Simulator/Training aid, you really should use the interface with a Tx set-up.

1:01 1:35 HANGING OUT WITH X TREME



2:09 2:40 SMOKIN' PITTS



armchair pilot

***It's been a long time coming!
We try out the flight simulator
specially designed by Ripmax...***

With the power to your computer off, plug in the interface and transmitter. The program will automatically start the installation process when you insert the CD Rom. The installation is very straight forward with minimal effort on your part, you simply follow the on-screen prompts - and its done, placing an icon on the desk top for start-up. There are basic PC specifications for running this software, but most modern computer systems will run this quite easily. If not already installed on your system, you can install DirectX version 7a, the interface software and Adobe Acrobat, the latter being required to read the very detailed manual, which is supplied in PDF format - any problems, the answers are there.

START-UP

When you first start up, you will need to calibrate your transmitter with the interface. On the opening

screen, select 'Settings' and you will open the settings screen, where you can choose one of the presets for your radio, or the custom settings. This is probably the best route if you have more than four channels available to you, as flaps, bombs, guns, and retracts can all be assigned to a channel of your choice, with the basic channels all being set to whichever mode you fly.

Calibration is simple. Select the calibration button and the on-screen instructions will guide you through this easy process. Any first time computer user will have it up and running in minutes. It's as simple as moving the sticks in the right direction. There are other settings you can make on this panel, but you can leave these set to their default.

An interface is available for whatever radio system you use - Futaba, Sanwa-Airtronics, Multiplex, Graupner, HiTec and JR.

VARIATION OPTIONS

When you get bored with the aircraft that are on the simulator (that should take some time!) the appearance of an aircraft can be changed to a number of pre-installed skins. This simply means that the aircraft outer covering can be changed to another design, you can even design your own (see picture).

Although not part of the actual program, but included on the CD Rom, are templates for all the aircraft on the simulator. These templates can be opened into a graphics program on your PC (you must be able to open TIFs or Photoshop PSD formats, most PCs can). Once opened, you simply place your design on to the outline of the aircraft and re-save it under a different name of your choice (instructions in the manual). Then, when you select it, your own design is now flying on the simulator, fully mapped to the

contours of the aircraft type. Talking of which, if you want to get new aircraft not included on the basic programme, then just download them free from the Internet. New and exciting aircraft can be found and you can even download software to produce your own aircraft - the possibilities are endless.

The flight performance of the different preloaded models follow the full size models quite well. Twiddle the sticks in the usual manner and you are away - forgiving and gentle when flying the trainer, but pull too hard on the stick when flying the Spitfire or Mustang, and you know what happens next, tipstall, spin and the inevitably crash - and all with glorious sound effects, background music and your model in pieces (yes, even though its only a simulator, bits do break off in flight, or you can and will totally destroy the aircraft). The first

“the aircraft outer covering can be changed to another design...you can even design your own”

3:11

3:33

LIMBERING UP FOR A FINAL APPROACH



3:51

4:23

SPACED-OUT ALIENATOR



5:06 5:57 GO WEST



6:13 6:47 SOARING HIGH



7:03 7:39 TRAINING SCHOOL



Something you'll notice is the accuracy of flight behaviour characteristics that has been achieved, and the accurately produced 3D graphics, which allow you to fly around, through and over buildings, barns with opening and closing doors and even cows in the field (No F & M!) - every detail has been thought out to give you a truly "real feel" to your flying, there really is too much to list, but believe me, the wait was well worth it.

TRY IT OUT BEFORE YOU BUY IT!

Download a demo version of the simulator from www.ripmax.com and try it for yourself. Having tried out most of the currently available sims, this fixed wing sim is superb.

The minimum PC requirements, according to the Ripmax website, are as follows:

Windows 95/98
Direct X 5.0
Standard games port
Tx with a trainer output

SELECTING WHAT, WHERE AND HOW WINDY...

So, what about the flying then? Well, the first thing to do, if you have a printer, is to print out the

'Keyboard Commands' page, as it contains all the keyboard commands for turning on things like smoke bombs, wingtip smoke, music and the various different views. The first screen presented gives you the opportunity for general flying, a flight school or the workshop. If you select general flying, the next screen is titled 'flight set-up'. Click on 'aircraft' first and use your mouse to slide the selector bar down onto one of the ten available aeroplane options that you have chosen to fly - let's say the Kyosho Mustang P-51, for example, click on it - and that's your model for this session. Then click on the 'flying field' and, as with the aircraft, move the slider to select any of the 10 flying sites that you want to fly on. I got to prefer the site called 'Podunk', as it's a typical American flying site, with excellent parking facilities, clubhouse, crash barriers, etc. all represented on screen. Then click on 'weather', selecting one of the 12 sky backgrounds (from arctic summer to outer space) - you can also adjust wind direction, speed, gusts, and thermal strength. Then click onto 'activity' and move the slider to opt for one of the seven activities, including pylon racing, balloon popping, bomb dropping

and general flying. To start with, choose general flying - to get the feel of things.

GETTING INTO THE AIR

So there I was in sunny, warm, USA, with a light breeze straight down the runway and my Kyosho P51 ready and waiting. Open the throttle, correct the swing with some right rudder, lift off the tarmac runway and raise the retracts. After getting the feel of the model, I then hit the F7 button on the keyboard and follow the P51 around the sky, air to air. Then I can see a big green rabbit lurking behind a farm building, so on goes full throttle, into a dive at the bunny with machine guns blazing - BANG!! - loads of exploding green goo and up and over into a victory roll, (plus a disapproving slap from animal-loving Eve), then back to base.

Once over the runway, I click F4 on the keyboard and I am standing back on the flight line, with my P51 overhead. I then lower the wheels and flaps, turn for finals - touch down on the centre line of the runway.

This is just one of the many, many things that you can do with this flight sim. On a more serious note, I shall definitely be using it as a tool to improve my flying

skills, although the depth perception is not the same as in real life - and takes a bit of getting use to.

For beginners, there is a flying school that takes you through various stages of flight and I think that a raw beginner could get a general idea of transmitter use and model orientation, before he or she gets to the field.

One other thing that I must tell you about - if you click on workshop and then customise, you can change the model to your specification i.e. heavier, bigger engines, move the CG, and change wing section. You then give your model a new name and save it, for example, as 'Kens P51', it is then put into the model selection list. I have also assigned a dedicated model memory number on my Field Force 8 for the Ripmax flight sim, so that I can change the trim, rates, exponential and mixing programmes, etc. on my flight sim models.

There is so much more that I can tell you about what this flight sim can do, but it would need the whole magazine to do so. It really is a lot of fun, you can fly lots of different models, break them, hit a key and fly them again! Really lots new stuff to learn all day long - and all night! 10 out of 10! ✪

“fly different models, break ‘em, then fly ‘em again... lots of new stuff to learn all day long - and all night!”



8:01 8:25 INSTALLATION SCREEN



8:44 8:57 CHOOSE YOUR FLIGHT



9:01 9:36 SET THE WIND