



AUTOSIMSPORT

Volume 3 Number 3

Slidin the Sport into the Sim



GTL 2 GTR2: GET THE DEMO INSIDE!

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LxMartini



What A Difference A Month Makes

Or forty-seven days, for those who are counting: Yes, we're late, but we're not really late because we decided we'd go this week last month—eh? Indeed!

Phil & I

Felipe Massa ... those of you who read the section know that I have gone on record—though if no-one reads it, does it still reflect as a record?—as touting our man Phil as the next Formula 1 World Champion

Then came Sepang: And what was, without much doubt, the most inept drive by a racing driver this century. There should, in fact, be an award: And, actually, there was, come to think of it—crucifixion in the Italian papers that were, shall we say, less than kind in their assessment of Massa's 'drive'.

For those who missed it, Massa started on pole—making it his fourth pole in five races (the boy is quick, folks, and he has firmly out-paced Kimi all season, as well as in winter testing)—and then managed not only to surrender first place before Turn 1, but, in his haste to make a mockery of his profession, managed to slow up his own team mate and, in so doing, hand McLaren a one-two.

At the same time, my season at GPC—with *netKarPro*—went from bad to worse ... out of a possible 70 laps, I had completed about 10, and 7 of those were with a damaged F2000.

So, coming into last weekend, Phil and I were faced with crunch-time: Both of us had to somehow avoid making a complete balls up of our race!

On the Saturday, I won my race at Spa (Jaap Wagenvoort's version, which is superb, and should be ready for general release very soon—get it!), and, having done so, quickly informed Bob and Jon that Massa—linked, as we are, by an invisible strand of coincidence (as if there was such a thing—as coincidence that is)—was going to win at Bahrain.

I even selected the theme song to Phil and my redemption: Yes, you guessed it, Redemption Song!

So, three races in, three drivers on twenty-two points, and one—Massa—on seventeen: I don't remember when a

championship was this close with so many potential winners ...

Do Not Mention The Name!

Hamilton: Has there ever been a more overhyped sporting personality in the entire history of the universe? From here on in, following on from the Brit-press, Hamilton will forever be known—in these pages—as 'The Greatest Eva'! Indeed: The fact that he has won neither one race, nor secured one pole position, is certainly no reason for the Brits not to claim this child as The Greatest Eva—The First Coming!

In three races, I am now fully conversant with the following: His age, the name of his father, mother, brother, the name of his pet dog, his manager, his 'style' (Peter Windsor's head—while we're here—is so far up The Greatest Eva's ... oh never mind ...), his toilet habits (he goes potty about seven minutes before the start), the fact that he doesn't do interviews prior to race starts, the name of his publicist, his hairdresser, the make of his watch, the size of his ... shoes ... I know what his father thinks of the weather in Bahrain (hot, apparently—who knew?), what his brother thinks of The Greatest Eva (dude, he's got like skillz), what he had for lunch prior to the race in Bahrain, how he deals with pressure, where he lives, what he drives, how big his house is ... and I have learnt all of this simply by watching the first half-hour of the Bahrain grand prix. And it is all good, lest the above somehow convinced you that I believe all this stuff is irrelevant to a grand prix race: *au contraire*.

Indeed, what Formula 1 needs is *more* of this: We should hear from Massa's momma when he bugger-up his next race (Felipe was always like this!), and we definitely want to hear from Kimi's girlfriend (he was out on the piss again last night, whaddya want?), not to mention Rosberg's dad, Keke (in my day, we'd smoke a pack of Marlboro, drink a bottle of vodka, and have sex with seventeen women before a race—and by the way, Kimi is my love child), and ... well, there is it ... enjoy this month's issue, we have, as always, some super-content, and please don't hesitate to support our sponsors, and don't forget to send us a donation please!

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News

Got Milk? ... Got Juice?
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How The Panoz Came To Be, And Other Stories

Spadge Fromley



Starting back at the end of March, ISI began the three-phase pre-release of their upcoming *free* Panoz Esperante mod to paying members of Race2Play. Conflicting opinions and heated debate ensued. More on that later.

With the early release of the carset to paying members of Race2Play—the general *free* public release being 17th April, along with an upcoming 'Sponsored by ISI' Race2Play event or series of events—you may be forgiven for thinking that people are being asked to pay cash for a slight advantage, namely—more time to practice the cars.

But could it also be more than just that? Could it be that, like in the real-software world, users of a system are being asked to pay to take part in a beta-test program? We will know for sure when the final release is made by how many mismatches we see on the public servers.

Back to the opining ...

Over at one of the huge race-sim forums, where it is no coincidence that 'opine' sounds like 'whine', 'bovine', and 'ovine', the conversation touches on the general belief that the early release is either a 'thank you' to the paying members of Race2Play for supporting *rFactor* online league play, or an attempt to coerce people into buying a Race2Play membership, with a touch of conspiracy theory thrown-in as to who is making money out of Race2Play (ISI). From what I can tell, anyway; I got through the first four pages, and now I'm in a bad mood and have a headache.

I should probably just stick to the smaller groups whose forums I frequent, where people get to know one another and mostly don't hate each other.

What it actually seems to be, to me at least, is ISI sponsoring a series of events being managed by Race2Play, and going the extra mile to bring those paying members of the hosting group a sneak preview of what they are going to be racing in. The fact that everyone is talking about it heatedly on the world's largest forum, and writing articles about it in the world's best free online race-sim magazine, proves that whatever the theories on ISI's motivation behind this method of releasing a mod, they know more about how to market a product than they are given credit for.

And seriously, anyone who wants the mod surely has a copy by now; whether they are paying members of Race2Play or not. This is the internet, people, and stuff happens. People talk. Stuff gets shared. Some of it even legitimately.

What is also interesting is how the other race-sim discussion sites are not talking about the mod at all. Or rather, they don't have eight-page threads covering the way in which the mod has been released. Mostly, I'm just reading about how damn good it is, and how it's the first official ISI carset to model tyre behaviour properly. Race2Play have a ten page thread on the mod, sure, but it's not exactly condemning the site or ISI for their behaviour.

In other news, Ed0g's fabulously loud DBR9 mod has been released ... and the release thread at one of the large race-sim forums has been closed pending review. Review for what, however, is not stated; general consensus appears to be that it is another illegal mod as Ed0g has blatantly ripped off the GTR DBR9 mod without asking permission from the original creators of that mod—namely one Ed0g. Perhaps he should have written himself a letter?

Future F1 Renault Tester Alx Danielsson Headlines Swedish LAN Weekend

AUTOSIMSPORT



World Series by Renault champion, and soon-to-be Renault F1 tester, Alx Danielsson, along with Swedish Simracers, and fellow professional race drivers, will be holding one of the world's premiere sim-racing events at Arlandastad, close to Stockholm's Arlanda Airport, April 27 through the 29.

The schedule is as follows: A Le Mans-style race will be held on Friday 27 April, followed by the Cup and Invitational race on the 28. The results of the Cup race will determine the grid for the LAN's Grand Prize race, to be decided on the 29: The winner will win a free driving class, as well as several laps as Alx's passenger in his new Porsche Cup racecar!

For those who think they're not up to winning it all, SimBin have provided more than just logistical support: Each entrant will receive a copy of *RACE*, as well as 'software packages' as prizes. The simulation for the weekend will be SimBin's *GTR2*.

You are invited to sign up for a great weekend of racing. People not residing in Sweden are also welcome to sign up for the LAN.

This is an opportunity to see up-close how racing drivers handle the steering-wheel and pedals, which of course is not possible otherwise. Also, the chance of trying to beat professional racing drivers on a virtual track promises to give you the sim-experience of a lifetime.

This highly anticipated event has been written about on several occasions in Swedish media, and it will be open for the public. Further info [here](#).



\$500 Up For Grabs—The Pro Sim Racing League Opens In Style

Press Release: New York



The [Pro Sim Racing League](#)™ (P.S.R.L) is proud to announce the 'Birmingham 125', presented by Gold Coast Media Solutions. The Birmingham 125 is a multi-stage online racing tournament that culminates in a 125 mile race around the Birmingham, Alabama circuit. The event will give amateur sim-racers from around the globe an opportunity to compete for their share of the \$500 prize pool, and a spot in one of the Pro Sim Racing League's premiere divisions. This event will be run with the Panoz

Esperante™ ALMS GT2 purpose-built race car, and will be broadcast live on the web May 5th, 2007, at [ProSimRacing.com](#).

The Pro Sim Racing League World Championship Series is where the world of online sim-racing comes together. Featuring several types of racing and race formats, there is something for everyone at the P.S.R.L. From free daily organized races to large cash prize paying tournaments, the P.S.R.L. aims to fill the void in your sim-racing experience. Seasoned league veterans, and novice first-time racers alike will find competition that suits their preference. Currently, all events are run on the award-winning *rFactor*™ race simulator software, developed by Image Space Inc. Drivers compete using personal computers equipped with a racing wheel, pedals and optional shifter.

The Panoz Esperante ALMS GT2 is a purpose-built race car that has proven its worth on the track. Recently, Image Space, Inc. announced a partnership with Panoz in bringing this car to their groundbreaking computer driving simulator. A comprehensive lineup of officially licensed Panoz cars will be made available free of charge to all owners of the *rFactor* driving simulator on Tuesday, April 17th.

"By acquiring the Esperante license, we're able to bring *rFactor* players the thrilling experience of driving this acclaimed auto with a level of accuracy not found anywhere else," said Gjon Camaj, Vice President of Product Development at ISI.

Georgia-based Panoz has been building high-performance, customizable cars since 1989. The company manufactures their flagship line of Esperante sports and race cars for domestic and international markets.**

The P.S.R.L. is a race organization committed to advancing driver development through simulator-based racing. Drivers are required to earn racing licenses before being eligible for competition. The P.S.R.L. monitors every race to ensure accuracy, and safeguards against software

manipulation and collusion. Races are also protected by the RELAY anti-cheat system, which detects and removes any driver who attempts to gain an unfair advantage. RELAY is one of many sophisticated techniques the P.S.R.L. employs to ensure fair competition.

In addition to all the racing, the PSRL runs a 24 hour, 365 day a year *rFactor* internet TV channel. This channel will be used to broadcast live large events, a weekly variety show called 'The rFactor Report', and daily server racing all in a friendly chat room atmosphere. Over the coming months, we will be adding additional programming to our lineup as well. For information on putting together a show for broadcast, or advertising with PSRL TV, please contact <mailto:producer@prosimracing.com>

Qualification attempts for amateur drivers are permitted throughout the season. Drivers must earn either an A, B or C class license to be able to compete in one of the professional series. For more information on the P.S.R.L. or the Birmingham 125 visit <http://www.ProSimRacing.com>.
*Source: Image Space, Inc – <http://www.rfactor.net>

BatMobile Mod! AUTOSIMSPORT



Two years in the design-phase, and boasting the talents of some of the greatest physics guys (and gal!) in the modding scene, the BatMobile Mod for *rFactor* is almost with us! Featuring a sublimely-constructed BatMobile, complete with cockpit interior and real-world (erm, okay, well, non-sim-world anyway!) physics, this mod is all set to explode very soon.

"We had hoped to release in April," explained the lead modder, Harold Hush, "but we encountered some problems with the missile launch physics."

Yes, you heard right! The mod will feature a missile-shooting component that will enable the driver to shoot his opponent at any track currently compatible with *rFactor*. "This was the most difficult thing to simulate," Jason Todd explained to us. "The physics of the missile has never been done before for this platform, and we had to start this practically from scratch. As for the missile," he adds "yes, you will be given a GUI-interface on the cockpit—align the target BatMobile into the radar, shoot, and then watch as the missile blows the car up."

Harvey Dent, who built some of the models, explains that the missiles are just the tip of the iceberg: "Oil-slicks, emergency seat ejection, and a lot of surprises as well."

The mod is scheduled for release sometime in May. So get your batsuits out!



ARCA Sim Racing

Bob Simmerman

Not one week ago, a rather detailed post was noted on a popular racing-sim forum. *ARCA Sim Racing*, one of a mere handful of licensed sims on the way in 2007, was being described in some detail by Bill Zimmerman, aka Zippy. Already a bit beyond the initial scheduled delivery date, there is no question that the simulator is still being actively worked on, and I am hoping to receive some news *any day now*, perhaps indicating an inevitable release. Stay tuned, and make sure to keep an eye out, you never know when it just might show up.



Massa And Armaroli

Brazilian design studio [Armaroli](#) have been quite active of late: There cockpit is being well received in the commercial sector, and, to make matters so much the better, Brazilian F1 star Felipe Massa [uses the cockpit](#) for some pre-race practice ... the design now incorporates a nifty element that doesn't simulate G-forces—it actually *imposes* them! This baby is not for the weak—of neck, mind, or cohonos!



Along with Felipe Massa's patronage, though, the Armaroli design group will travel along with the Stock Car Brazil circus (with a Red Bull badge), starting at the first race in São Paulo using their purpose-built cockpit ... You can see the design concept, as well as videos showing their cockpit and G-force emulator in action on their website ... don't miss it either, because it looks to be quite a thrill!




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COMMENT

Virtual Driving: Benefit or Danger?

Nicola "Velocipede" Trivilino—Admin' and founder: DRIVINGITALIA.NET

For some time now, there has been talk—outside our 'world'—of games and driving simulators, in the mainstream press, focusing on a sector that remains a very niche one when taken in the context of the wider 'videogame' arena.

Whilst those who are passionate about our sport have, for as long as I can remember, advocated sim-racing's benefits as a training tool to real-world racing and driving, the press, and public opinion, seems, instead, to hold an opposing view: They seem to have come to the conclusion (as seen in this [article](#), from 'PCFormat', for instance) that racing games, along with racing simulators, contribute to negative reactions in those that use them regularly. They cite examples such as: It teaches future drivers disrespect for the rules of the road, suggests that driving quickly is not a dangerous exercise, and go on to note other ways in which driving games foster a dangerous attitude in those who drive them. The game that provides a particular ire to those who have come to such conclusions is *Grand Theft Auto* ...

I recall very well a rainy night in October 2006; it was about 11pm, and a drizzle, subtle and thick, accompanied me home after an evening out with friends. I was speaking to my wife, going over the laughs we had during dinner, with half-an-eye on the road before me; a road was typically Italian, dimly lit with signs ruined and scarce, much like the road's surface.

Everything happened in less than ten seconds. At the exit of an ugly turn, I found myself—in an instant—driving headlong into the scene of an accident: A car, flipped, lay on its roof right in the middle of the road ahead. My wife let out a blood-curling scream, dry and strangulated, but my mind took no notice, for it was

already elaborating and executing ... I don't remember exactly how I did it, but I remember well that my car did not lock its tyres, or slide too much, as I effected a rather noteworthy controlled slide, thereby missing the rolled-over car, and sliding to a halt.

Reflex, coldness, control, a keen understanding of the car on the limit, timing; all learnt behind a computer and a driving simulator—as I pulled-up, I realized that those skills I had learnt had probably just saved my life. It had been like a stage of *Richard Burns Rally*, but without the possibility of ESCape: I jumped out of the car and ran over to the wreck, from where the poor guy had just managed to extract himself. The first words that came out of his mouth, as he stared at his demolished car, were, "I felt the car slide after the corner, I braked, and I found myself like this ..."

The week after this incident, that guy was at my house, using my pedals and wheel, running a driving simulator: Today, he is one of the many users of our forum (and I'd be remiss not to give him a shout out!).

The videogame sector is in a continuous state of expansion, and embraces many diverse interests. It is capable of simulating everything: Military flight, commercial flight, urban and guerilla warfare, the management of a huge metropolis or a football team, military strategies, sailing or golf, and, by not means last on the agenda, race driving.

The racing genre is, as we know, strictly divided between commercial products, and those that hold no such aspirations. The former is constituted by producers of videogames (software) and peripherals (hardware—encompassing everything from joysticks to wheels and more). The latter is formed by a community who are passionate about videogames, and motor-racing in particular, and who provide their talents to create simulators and racing games for free (freeware), or to improve the graphics, sounds, or physics of already-existing products (modders). This community will also

organize and participate in single races and championships structured in such a way as to compete against fellow sim-racers via the internet.

But the distinction goes further than just commercial versus non-commercial renderings: The key distinction here is between games, and *simulators*. In the former, one will see reproduced a sporting series with a 'code' that will focus primarily on playability, as well as a simplification of the software, and the driving model. This means, for instance, that damage will be limited, or the physics will be fudged in order to create an easy driving experience, usually undertaken by the use of a joystick. The majority of games that are created for the console can be classified in this context, and are referred to, within the community, as 'arcade' racers.

The simulators, however, have a completely diverse *raison d'etre*: That of reproducing, as faithfully as the hardware of today permits, the actual nature of a car's physics, with emphasis, generally, on performance cars, or racing cars, such as NASCAR, Formula 1, Gran Turismo, and so forth. Because of the very nature of the simulator's objective, this genre requires much from the user: It requires dedication, time, and technical competence, all of which will help the driver understand the attitude of the cars as they are taken to their limits. As in real-life, dedication will result in satisfaction where it matters most: On the track.

Racing simulators, with their differing objectives and scopes, have a longevity that is directly tied to the ability of other titles to simulate the behaviour of real-world cars more accurately than those currently in existence.

Imagine then, if you will, an accurate simulator that reproduces the actual behaviour of a Formula 1, and that runs on tracks created with the use of GPS or other such enhanced track-building rendering systems: An ideal situation that will give the gamer—excuse me, the sim-driver—a truly magnificent challenge: That of mirroring his abilities against those of real-world Formula 1 drivers.

Simulators present another advantage, though: They enable the sim-driver a way of bettering their own understanding of the way in which they drive in real-life; they are able to understand and become far more familiar with concepts such as safe-distances, curve-trajectories, tyre grip, and wear on varying surfaces. These are crucial concepts, concepts that are often forgotten the moment one passes one's driving-license test.

What is more, the technical understanding offered by simulators allows one to become more critical toward what one is seeing in the real-world sport of motor-racing, It makes one aware that driving for fun is one thing, driving on the limit is another all-together. Simulators give the sim-driver the ability to understand and appreciate things such as styles of driving, apexes and exists, gear-changes, and so forth, in a way that someone who has not driven a simulator (or a real-world race car) can never fully appreciate.

It is a sad reflection on the main-stream press that, for years, they have associated driving sims with those offered up by the consoles: Unfortunate too, because, as we all know, we are talking here about games which have been created for no other reason than entertaining kids.

However, in the pages of serious auto-periodicals and magazines, the real-face of sim-racing is slowly becoming known: For some time now, simulators have conquered the perception of being nothing more than 'games', and are being afforded their rightful place as training guides to real-world drivers, offering them the technical advantage of replicating the real-world series in which they compete, be this in terms of driving, car-behaviour, track learning, or replicating realistic scenarios encountered in the real-world of motor-sports.

But over-and-above the simulator's use as a training tool, these driving simulators enables those who do not have the time, the youth, or the resources to get out on the track and do what they have a passion for: *Race*. And they can do more than this: In fact, they *should* be doing more than this: They should be enabling those who think of their suburban streets as rightful places to drive like lunatics to get behind the wheel of a simulated car and drive on an actual track, thereby making our roads safer for everyone.

If, after a sim-race, a kid lands up binning his car into a tree, the fault rests not with the simulator: The fault lies only on that person's shoulders. But then, perhaps, we are also to blame: Not because we taught him how *not* to drive, but because we didn't teach him *how* to drive, using a racing simulator.

Now, if only they'd release some tools so we could get some real-world content in there!

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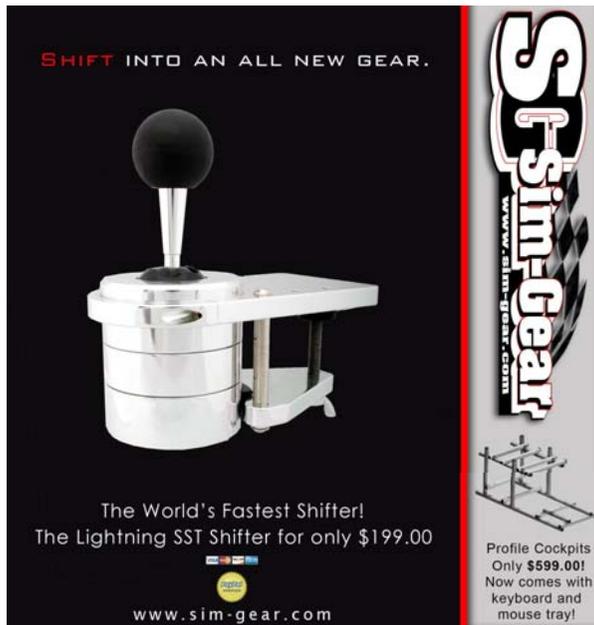
T1

IvanAskew

The Power & The Glory: **A Legend Returns**

The full-scale conversion of SimBin's legendary GTLegends into GTR2 is well underway: Aristotelis Vasilakos drives us on the tour through the highlights of what is one of the most intriguing mods in quite some time ... GTL GTR2-style!





With over 150,000 unique visits a month, the [NoGrip](#) website has been doing a brisk trade since 2003, sucking-up over 1.5 million gigabytes a month. But behind the scenes, a project began life at its forums—a life that matures on the forums of the [GPL Repository](#)—which promises to add some much-needed drive to what has become the slowest year (new-product-wise) in sim-racing for quite some time: *GTLegends*, beautifully converted for *GTR2* (along with an added twist—*realism*).

The conversion takes its first (and bold) step into the light of day this month with the IROC Porsche demo, nominally called the 'Power & Glory: The IROCs Mod', released exclusively with this month's AUTOSIMSPORT.

What is promised—and what will become abundantly clear when sim-racers take the Porches out for a spin—is that this is not a mere 'conversion': It is, instead, a major re-working of *GTL*, with the focus being on recreating not

only the atmosphere of the original, but to capture the very spirit of the era in which it is set, with cars that will look, sound, and *drive* the way they did back then in their glory days.

Aris Vasilakos, who is in charge of the physics side of the mod, explains the genesis of the conversion, and how it went from a simple desire to re-make *GTL* for *GTR2* to something on an altogether more ambitious level: "The NoGrip forum is a very nice community with quite a passion for older cars, and Randy 'rstratton' Stratton started the original thread in which the idea first began to take shape; he did some of the early conversions from *GTL* to *GTR2*, but, unfortunately, he had to abandon the mod, and he passed the work over to Steve 'pbearsailor' Austin, who became our team head and organized the whole project at the start ... unfortunately, he *too* had to abandon the team for personal reasons—and actually," Aris adds, "knowing the guy and the situation, we are dedicating this first demo release to Steve. Take care, Steve!"

The rationale behind re-releasing a mod for *GTL*, Aris says, is to take advantage of the leap-forward SimBin managed to achieve with the release of *GTR2*: "It's all down to the more advanced *GTR2* platform ... better weather simulation, a bit more stable multiplayer, and so forth: But then," Aris adds, "as we started working on this conversion, our skin experts hunted and found an enormous amount of original, historic skins, which truly are amazing, and that body of work, in the end, inspired us to go one step further."

One step further, it turns out, is a bit of an understatement: "The mod," Aris explains, "will not just convert the *GTL* cars, but it will change the physics, skins, sounds—everything, that is, in order to convert the *GTL* cars into the actual historic cars as they were when they first raced, not the modern historic cars that they are racing now in the FIAGT series."



A cursory look at GT-cars of that era that are for sale nowadays will find that the vast majority of them have been modified to incorporate today's technologies, from suspension all the way through safety features and more, and it was around these modified cars that *GTL* was molded. The mod, however, will essentially strip the cars of their modern appendage and set them loose in their original configurations, warts and all.

Not only that, but extra cars are planned as well: "Our demo is already an 'almost' new car, as the IROC 3D model was not present in the original *GTL* game ... erm ... sim," says Aris. "We are also in the talks with some very talented modders to obtain permissions in order to add their cars, too. However, we will only insert cars that are on par with the original *GTL* cars' quality, which, as you know, is very high indeed."

Gentlemen Start Your Engines!



This would make the 'conversion' tag a little 'misnomerish', a point Aris readily agrees with: "Yes, we're converting mainly 3D models—that is, sounds, skins, physics—everything will be changed. We will be using the original *GTL* as a base only. Even the actual 3D models will be modified, and, on some occasions, quite heavily, too ... to be honest, we got in big trouble with all this work, but we are enjoying it a lot! I hope sim-racers will enjoy it too."

The fact that this is not a standard conversion—but rather a re-working of a legend—does not alter what Aris and the team believe they owe: A debt to the developers of the sim, SimBin (along with Ian Bell's Blimey!Games studio, who were, back then, pretty much the core of SimBin). With that in mind, the decision has been taken to ensure sim-racers possess an original *GTL* disk in order to run the conversion: but fear not, StarForce will not feature in the equation. So why the decision to force users to own a copy of *GTL*?

"Well, there are plenty of reasons," Aris says. "Main one is that we totally respect the professional work of the SimBin/Blimey team. *GTL* is their work, and we are using it for our mod, so we think it's right, and ethical to 'force' people go buy *GTL*. It costs very [little](#) nowadays, by the way. Secondly, it's an act of faith towards the SimBin/Blimey people, who have always been helpful if kindly asked ... Still, we thought a lot about this, and we know it's not something people will be willing to accept easily, especially considering the StarForce problem (because the normal method is to take the cars from the *GTL* installation), so our decision is to create an installer that will only check for the original CD/DVD *GTL* disk, and not run the mod off of that in any way: In other words, you put it into your CD/DVD drive, our installer spins it once, and you're done—no installation, no StarForce, nothing like that ... it's ready to go."



Moreover, the guys over at SimBin and Blimey!Games have, albeit tacitly, given the project the green-light. "SimBin/Blimey have always been very open to our work. We informed them of what we wanted to do, and they were happy with it. We didn't ask questions for every single problem, as we understand that we are free-time modders and they are professionals with extremely tight schedules, but for the times we did ask, they were always more than helpful. I'd say that our personal experience is that SimBin/Blimey have honoured their mod-team roots ..."

The questions arose because of the mod's ambition: That is, to recreate the cars as they were in their glory years. Those of us old enough—or mad enough—to have

raced these cars in their original configurations remember them to be far more unwieldy than their *GTL* cousins, which have been modified to reflect modern safety and performance standards. So what can we expect to be the major differences between the *GTL* mod and the original *GTL*?

"The biggest differences between modern and old cars are the tyres, mechanical reliability, and setup of the cars," Aris replies. "Although modern cars use tyres that try to be similar to the specifications of that era, they are usually grippier, and handle differently. This, together with our modern knowledge of car handling and behavior, has also seen some evolution to the car setups, making them generally stiffer, and more agile. Dampers

technology has also made big steps forward since the 1960s and 1970s. We also have some modifications regarding safety that has changed the very nature of the way the cars behave. Better roll bar, stiffened chassis rigidity on the 'modern historics', better brakes with less fade, better understanding of engine management, and so forth, all contributed into making these cars pretty different to the way they were back then: A typical car in our mod, for instance, will allow you experience engine 'choking' at low revs, different tyre behavior, softer setups, and especially dampers, and lot's of little details that we think are delightful. Just take your time to understand the limits of the cars before starting pushing as you do with modern *GTR2* cars, that's my only suggestion."

The technical specs of the cars have been keenly researched by the team, as Aris explains: "I was surprised with some of the real-world data we were able to find: We are extremely lucky to have some amazing experts in our team, and those guys (please read our credits file, it's the best gift you can give a mod-team) have so much detailed knowledge and data for the cars of that era that it is truly unbelievable. We will try to write the history of every car in the tech specs section of *GTR2* showroom, so that people can also learn from this mod. In a way, I like to think that we are recreating a bit of the atmosphere and knowledge that *GPL*, and the *GPL* community, offered to all sim-racers. Drive (and at the same time learn some great historic facts and data) ... As an example, we have precise aerodynamics, engine, brakes, tyre, and suspension data for our IROC Porsches that you can find and drive in our demo. And this goes on for every single car in our mod. In terms of performance, we are looking at about two to five seconds slower laptimes than the original *GTL* cars, at any given track ... but I'm sure aliens out there will prove us wrong as usual, and let's not forget that *GTR2* has a bigger 'Live Track' effect than *GTL* had."

T1 The Power & The Glory: A Legend Returns

continued



The time gap is explained under the all-encompassing umbrella term, physics. How do the cars feel, when compared to the original *GTL*?

"I don't know if it's good to talk about personal work, but I'll try to be as objective as I can. I think our cars have even more character than the original *GTL* cars. You can see our cars lifting the inner wheel, which is great fun (but can also be very dangerous), being more communicative under braking, but also weaving more, rolling more, and diving more. You will also have to deal with brake fade, and, on some cars, 'old' power bands—that can be very peaky—as well as fragile little cars that can bend wheels and suspension at the merest touch, or resistant, big muscle cars that can take quite some beating. Most importantly, you will have to deal with lots of

aerodynamic lift, which the original *GTL* cars didn't actually have: On the contrary, some had slight downforce too. Oh ... and let's not forget rain!

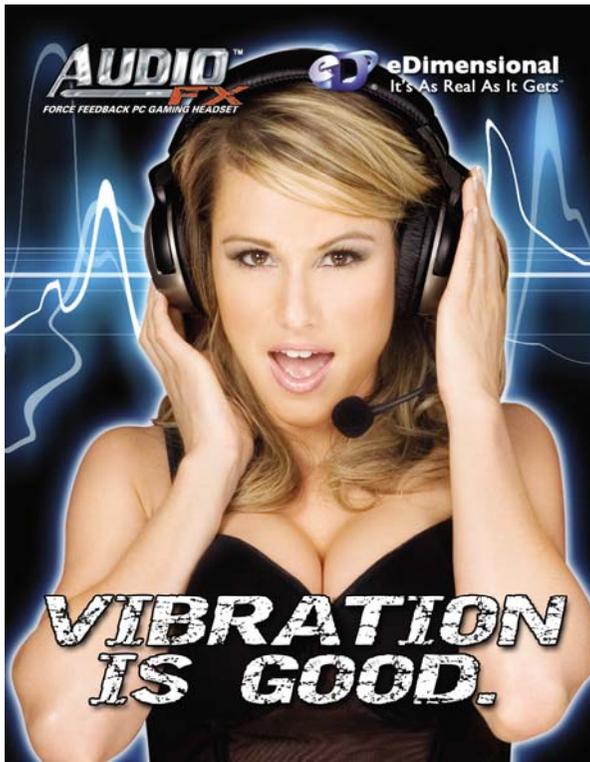
"Mainly though, I think that our cars are easier to drift and catch, and on some occasions, they may even feel more planted, even though they rarely do more than 1.2 lateral or longitudinal Gs ... that's quite low compared to what we are used to from our modern cars. What can I say? We love those cars, that's why we are trying to replicate them with this mod."

The change in physics, of course, will also re-introduce the lost-art of drifting, *GPL*-style. And the demo will be quite challenging to those who did not start their sim-racing careers with that venerable Papyrus title: The cars in the mod are *busy*!

The inaugural International Race of Champions was held at two tracks over two weekends in 1973 and 1974. The first three races were held October 27th and 28th at Riverside International Raceway and the final race was held on the Daytona International Speedway road course on February 14, 1974. Champion Mark Donohue won \$54000 for his efforts and the championship was determined by prize money rather than points. The races were contested in Porsche Carrera RSR race cars. This was the only IROC to be contested entirely on road courses. Only the top 6 finishing drivers competed in all four races.

Source: [Wikipedia](#)

"The main thing to keep in mind," Aris replies, "is that you need to brake earlier. Remember where your braking point is, with stock-*GTR2* cars, and aim to brake 100-150 metres before that—even if you're going at half the speed. This is the main problem with these cars is, they need space to lower their speed. Once you have your braking down, you'll see that it's easy to trail-brake a bit into a turn and slightly rotate the car, then feed (or slam, on some underpowered cars) the gas, and drive the car out in a slide or drift. I think it's a mix of *GTL*, *GPL*, and *LFS*, when looking at the way the cars slide. But you can also drive them on rails too, if need be. It's not that they are sliding all the time—we don't like that, and we don't believe it's realistic—but the main thing is, take care of your braking points, and brake early at first in order to get a handle on the cars—*then* you can start pushing. Also," Aris adds as an afterthought, "one good thing to remember is that, having a soft suspension means the cars are much more sensitive to tyre pressure changes. You can alter the behavior of a car by adjusting their tyre pressures ... try it and have fun!"



Aris's words of caution should be taken seriously: Braking is very challenging on these cars, and landing up in a tank-slapper under hard deceleration can lead to some frustrating wall-banging. (On the other hand, what begins life as a tank-slapper can sometimes end as a wonderfully rewarding drift!)

Aris and the boys are also focusing much of their attention on the atmosphere that will breathe energy into the conversion: The goal is replicating the 1960s and 1970s using *GTR2* as base.

"For us, atmosphere is very important," Aris confirms. "That's why we are going as far as creating a completely new User Interface for the next major releases. You can see just a small 'preview' of what we are going to do on the showroom section of *GTR2* in the demo; no more fancy blue striped floor but, rather, a more adequate, highly-polished wooden floor for our historic. So, new UI, new sounds, and possibly music of the great classics, along with lots of historic data to read about, setups (along with data on the notes section regarding the history and evolution of the cars, and their setups), and so forth—all will add to the unique atmosphere of that time in history. I can't promise different animations and pit crews, yet, as we are still a very small and limited team, and we still don't know how to do some stuff ... but if someone is willing to help us after our initial demo release, then please let us know!"

The demo will feature two cars, the Alan Mann Cortina, and the IROC Porsche 911s: Two cars that could not possibly be any more diverse. But the question remains: Why did they choose the IROCs as a base for the demo, when the 911s display classic 911 handling—that is, *difficult*?

The International Race of Champions, better known as **IROC**, is an [auto racing](#) competition, promoted as an equivalent of an [All-Star Game](#) or [The Masters](#). Drivers race identically-prepared [stock cars](#) set up by a single team of mechanics in an effort to make the race purely a test of driver ability. It is run with a small field of invited drivers (6-12). It was created in [1973](#) by [Riverside International Raceway](#) President [Les Richter](#) and [Roger Penske](#) with [Mark Donohue](#) being the first driver to win the championship, in [1974](#). The cars used that year were [Porsche Carrera](#) RSRs. Donohue's win in the fourth and last race of that season was his last win as he died in a [Formula One](#) practice the next season. The series was not run in [1981](#), [1982](#) or [1983](#).

IROC Champions

Year	Champion	Car
1974	Mark Donohue	Porsche Carrera RSR
1975	Bobby Unser	Chevrolet Camaro
1976	A.J. Foyt	Chevrolet Camaro
1977	A.J. Foyt (2)	Chevrolet Camaro
1978	Al Unser	Chevrolet Camaro
1979	Mario Andretti	Chevrolet Camaro
1980	Bobby Allison	Chevrolet Camaro
1984	Cale Yarborough	Chevrolet Camaro
1985	Harry Gant	Chevrolet Camaro
1986	Al Unser, Jr.	Chevrolet Camaro
1987	Geoffrey Bodine	Chevrolet Camaro
1988	Al Unser, Jr. (2)	Chevrolet Camaro
1989	Terry Labonte	Chevrolet Camaro
1990	Dale Earnhardt	Dodge Daytona
1991	Rusty Wallace	Dodge Daytona
1992	Ricky Rudd	Dodge Daytona
1993	D.Allison&T.Labonte	Dodge Daytona
1994	Mark Martin	Dodge Avenger
1995	Dale Earnhardt (2)	Dodge Avenger
1996	Mark Martin (2)	Pontiac Trans Am
1997	Mark Martin(3)	Pontiac Trans Am
1998	Mark Martin(4)	Pontiac Trans Am
1999	Dale Earnhardt (3)	Pontiac Trans Am
2000	Dale Earnhardt (4)	Pontiac Trans Am
2001	Bobby Labonte	Pontiac Trans Am
2002	Kevin Harvick	Pontiac Trans Am
2003	Kurt Busch	Pontiac Trans Am
2004	Matt Kenseth	Pontiac Trans Am
2005	Mark Martin(6) (5)	Pontiac Trans Am
2006	Tony Stewart	Pontiac Trans Am

Source: Wikipedia

T1 The Power & The Glory: A Legend Returns

continued



GPL encountered a similar problem, in its demo, and that demo hurt sales because it made the cars appear more difficult to drive than they actually were; and having driven the Porsche, everyone at AUTOSIMSPORT has been both mightily impressed—and mightily challenged.

"This was a very difficult decision," Aris confirms. "The 911 is indeed a very difficult car. It can be tricky on its modern version to drive at the limit, and it's even trickier on those old versions, and, as we know, in sim-racing, we are often driving over the limit, even if we don't intend to ... Sill, we wanted to start with this car to show people the major difference between our mod, and the actual GTL cars. We are also including the original radial tyres, and the usual biasply tyres that were used most often that era. The

IROCs, being a single make race, can offer leagues and online sim-racers some good fun while we keep working on our first major release: So yes, they can be difficult, but with the setups provided, along with all our notes that people can read, I think we are offering a good quality mod (even if it is a demo) that can be enjoyed both for offline races and championships, as well as online leagues, while at the same time the information will guide sim-racers through the rich history of those important cars ... Of course, as a small gift, we are also including an Alan Mann Cortina that is really very easy to drive and drift around. That, we think, will make everybody happy, and make people understand what we are trying to create, and what to expect from us in the near future."



IROC Specs

Weight: 1010kg included 80kg driver

Weight bias: 37%/63% front/rear.

Fuel load: 110lt

Max power: 311bhp @ 8000rpm

Max torque: 314Nm @ 6500rpm

Gearbox: 5 gears manual

Available tyres: Bias ply slicks, Goodyear Radials slicks, Rain bias ply threaded.

Optimum tyres temperature: 75°C

Cortina Specs

Weight: 830kg included 80kg driver

Weight bias: 52%/48% front/rear

Fuel load: 60lt

Max power: 176bhp @ 5750rpm-6250rpm

Max torque: 170Nm @ 7500rpm

Gearbox: 4 gears manual

Available tyres: Dunlop Bias ply threaded, Dunlop Rain bias ply threaded.



T1 The Power & The Glory: A Legend Returns

continued



The IROC series comes with a rich history of its own, and bares very little resemblance to the modern off-shoot which, until last year, was nothing more than rainbow coloured stockers running around ovals: Aris explains that, “at the end of 1973, and on to 1974, the IROC series ran with the concept focused on bringing together the best drivers from *all* series together in order to battle in identical cars. So that's why the name ‘International Race Of Champions’. The Porsches 911 RSR (IROC version) were the first cars used for the series ... Initially, the drivers didn't want to join the series because they felt that Mark Donohue (at the time the official Porsche driver) would have had an unfair advantage. But they soon realized—or perhaps were soon convinced—that this wasn't the case, and big names like Fittipaldi, Al Unser, Richard Petty, and others joined the series which became an instant success,

even if, as many had feared, Donohue still dominated the series. The car was reliable and quite fast, but not without problems.

It was fitted with Goodyear radial slick tyres that were very new at that time. In fact, radial tyres were introduced by Michelin, and was pushed by the marketing departments because they had less rolling resistance and less wear: In the middle of the energy crisis of the seventies, that was seen as a good thing ... Goodyear wanted to push this marketing strategy and compete with Michelin, and created those tyres to run on the IROCs. The grip wasn't that bad, but the drivers of that era hated them because of their unpredictable and unforgivable behavior over the limit. Being a new technology, they also tended to overheat if driven over the limit, which, of course, due to the way the drivers of that era drove the cars—that is, in a

slight four wheel drifts—happened all the time. That's why we have also included the biasply tyres that were used at the time in other series, and I won't say more other than—if you don't like the radials (and you're not alone), the biasply may give you a nice alternative. I'm sure you're gonna be amazed by the differences in feel and feedback while you're driving.

“Finally,” Aris concludes, “the car was not setup very well at the start of the series, and after some complaints from the drivers, the organization carried out some modifications, and then some more, and some more again: You can find all those modifications with special historical notes in our mod, saved as different setups. Again, the difference in handling is quite important, and nice to explore and play with. Just a small note, though: All this info' would have been impossible to find without our historic experts ... they did such an amazing job with it. Thank you, guys!”

The ambition to create an authentic ride extends, equally, to making use of current hardware configurations—like those found on the G25—to replicate the physical input of the drivers of that era. “All of our setups will have the original and realistic 28.5 degrees of steering lock; this requires 900 degrees of lock-to-lock steering wheels, like the DFP, and the G25. We understand, though, that not all people have multi-turn wheels, and, as sim-racers, are not used to moving the steering wheels so much; in order to accommodate them as well, then, we will allow the usual changes in steering lock to a value that fits your driving style, and equipment. I must say that our mod team almost had to tie me down to change the steering ratio from a fixed 28.5 degrees,” Aris adds laughing, “but, fortunately for all, I realized that I'm just a hardcore realism freak! Thank the rest of the mod team, because if it was only up to me ... well for the majority of guys, the mod would have been undriveable!”

**DOWNLOAD THE POWER & GLORY:
IROCs MOD AT THESE TOP SITES:**

www.drivingitalia.net

www.simleague.net

www.sim-min.com

www.autosimsport.net

"The driving style, as I said earlier, is all in the braking points: Start by braking early and waiting before feeding the gas. But that is only for the beginning. With more experience, you will be able to trail-brake, thereby rotating the car—even at some ridiculous angles—and power-drift it all the way out of the turns, and in so doing eliminating any understeer. Play with the setup, (although limited on the IROCs), and with the tyre pressures. Keep in mind that the fuel load in the 911s are way up front, and greatly changes the weight balance of the car, and thus its handling.

"Of course, for people who like to be able to change more things in the setups, I can assure you that the actual racing Porsches have total freedom in terms of garage-choices, unlike the IROCs that have been created to simulate the changes enabled in the real-world series of the era (although we *have* allowed some changes which the real drivers were unable to alter in order to accommodate as many racers as we can)."

The final mod will be available in the Autumn of 2007, but sim-racers can expect—should all go according to schedule—car-sets to be released sometime in the summer

The Team

clevy911—Skins, and Porsche expert
daRock—Skins, Abarth expert, physics feedback
David Wright—Historical documentation expert, physics feedback, and contribution
DucFreak—Sound effects expert
Goresh—Conversion expert, file organization, 3D modelling, genstrings
lainT—Skins, Falcon expert
Nack—Skins
Philrob—Track editing expert. Le Mans expert.
Ron—Mechanics expert, physics feedback, and contribution.
Spin Doctor—Historical documentation, physics feedback, and contribution
David "Wessy" Weston—Skins, Jaguar expert
Zoomie—Skins, file organization, physics feedback, research
Vasilakos Aristotelis—Physics, skins, file&team organization
Giorgio2fast4u—Installer&configuration programming



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BRD Race Frame Pro and 3-Pedal

[Classified ID 136](#)

BRD Race Frame Pro (V1) in good condition, with separately purchased Blue Cobra-Monaco bucket seat with sliding runners. 3-Pedal BRD Speed 7's with replaced pedal faces (Sparco carbon fibre pedals), orig. pedals supplied. Good condition, with USB box and calib-button. Also - a Red Momo wheel - with the pedals consigned to the rubbish tip some months ago, and the cable reworked to allow it to be plugged in without the pedals. Custom made carbon facia for centre of wheel and white lettering applied (see photos) - will thrown this in with the Pedals as they go together quite well. Looking for approx £175 for frame seat - £150 for Pedals (with wheel thrown in) - or £300 all-in. Technically, could be couriered (at buyers expense) but would be much more sensible to collect from me here in Leicester, or I'll meet you half way within a sensible radius. Photos here:: http://www.flickr.com/photos/doug_ellison_tps/sets/72157600033077734/ Any questions - doug@rlproject.com or thread ID2387 at ASS Forums

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Australian Sim Racing Group

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Australian Sim Racing Group (www.asrg.org), Since July 1999 and still going strong!! Supported Simulations are rFactor (and Current Mods inc V8 Factor, F1 1979, Australian Tin Top Challenge), GTR2, Grand Prix Legends (GPLAC10) GPL F2 Lites, GPL 69 Full GP and GT Legends. Feel free to try us out and come along and say hello on our forums www.asrg.org/forum Hope to see you there. Cheers Martin Davis ASRG President

Ausmex Virtual Racing League

[Classified ID 138](#)

Ausmexvirtual.com is a new Australian league, dedicated to the Rfactor Simulation. On the lookout for new members, who are welcome whether beginner or advanced. Feel free to drop by and register on the forums. Competition is currently underway with the Formula BMW's, next competition starts June 9 (V8 Supercars). Hosted on a dedicated server, the Ausmex Virtual Racing League is online 24/7, just register on the forum and your in. Thanks Tim, Ausmex Virtual.

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Brick-by-Brick—The Brickyard Cometh

Eric Alexander takes us through the process of constructing a legend—Indianapolis for rFactor—in Part One of his epic odyssey to create the ultimate conversion ...

T2

Eric Alexander





Part One

When people announce new tracks coming for *rFactor*, there's typically a question that pops up: 'Is it a conversion, or scratch-made?' This question is really both misleading and unfair: *All* tracks, when reduced to their simplest form, are 'merely' a collection of 3D models with textures. There is no other way of looking at it, and a conversion is no different than a scratch-made track in this respect. What people are really asking is if the track is an unmodified conversion—meaning is it merely converted without updating textures or cleaning up the models? At least that's what I believe they're asking because otherwise they're not making any sense by making a distinction between conversion and scratch-made.

So let's assume this *is* what they're asking, and let's create, therefore, another category—modified conversion. Let's say a modified conversion is when a modder gets a track converted for *rFactor*, and then starts to work on it like it is a scratch-made track. This means it's more

than a simple conversion—it's actually *better* than the original (at least, in terms of ambition, at any rate).

But let's add yet another category—hybrid. A hybrid is when someone converts multiple independent versions of a track and combines the better parts into one single version. In this case, the term conversion really doesn't do justice to the efforts of the modder.

So with that out of the way, I've thrown my hat into the *rFactor* track-making ring what should be called—bearing in mind what I just explained—with a 'modified hybrid'. It's a long story, but the short of it is—I've waited a year and a half for someone to make a really great version of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and I've yet to see anything resembling that. Finally, with V1.250 making oval racing a legitimate possibility in *rFactor*, I grabbed my Indy 500 photo album, along with my copies of PhotoShop and David Noonan's 3D-SimEd, and set out to do it myself.

I've never touched a 3D-modeling program, yet alone tried to do anything like track editing. So I've approached this as a rookie and, as a result, maybe I can share some of my lessons (along with my pet peeves) about track converting. Now this will not be step-by-step ... sorry—but it *will* be antidotal, informative, and hopefully interesting in highlighting the work that goes into (or *should* go into) converting and making a track for *rFactor*.

Indianapolis: The Concept

The goal was to convert the entire *track*—not just the world-famous oval. I wanted to bring the Speedway to the *rFactor* experience in a definitive way. I wanted to have each event held there represented—that is, the Indianapolis 500, the Brickyard 400, and the United States Grand Prix. I wanted to make it so that, whether you drove a Formula 1 car on the infield road course, or an Indycar on the famed 2.5 mile oval, the sim-racer would get a consistent experience of being *at* the Speedway. This is actually made easier by the very fact that ISI themselves have modeled every aspect of IMS in great detail with prior titles. IMS in EA Sport's *NASCAR Thunder 2004*, and *F1 Challenge*—both developed by ISI and modeled by Mike DiPonia—provided the perfect start to a complete and consistent conversion.

In fact, one thing I can't say enough about is how crucial it is to pick a great base version (or *versions* in the case of a hybrid) of the track you wish to convert. And the deciding factors should be down the actual 3D models themselves. Not the textures, or the resolutions. The models must be scaled accurately, and include the fundamental details of the track. Most prior *rFactor* IMS conversions came from *NASCAR Sim-Racing*. Unfortunately, the scale is simply off on that model, and as a result, most of those conversion were doomed from the start. It's hard to explain, but anyone's who has ever been to IMS and taken a careful look around will notice it. So step one for any track conversion is—research your options, and choose the base model wisely.



Comparing the model with real life photos can help you decide which track will serve you best in conversion. Here I compare Indianapolis Turn 1 with the real deal.

This again reinforces the philosophy that there's little difference between a modified conversion, and a scratch-made track. When choosing the track, you're merely getting a head start on the track-making process. This underlines the importance behind selecting the right track to start with. The better the track, the less you'll need to do with the models themselves, and the more you can focus on textures and AIW work.



This series of Indianapolis evolution screen grabs show how effective adjustment of the 'normals' can be for certain objects. Note how in "A" the people are dark and flat. "B" shows them after the 'normals' have been adjusted and now they appear well lighted from all angles. Also note the added road groove in "C" and how it rounds out the track's evolution.



Note the evolution of the infield road course. The F1 Challenge sand traps and grass were basic flat textures. In the newer image, you see how bump mapping has giving an authentic 3D look to the gravel traps. Also note just how powerful the new textures are at adding depth to the overall track. And better textures are one of the easiest and most rewarding thing you can do as a track maker.

Track Models

3DsimEd offers some outstanding tools for modders to manipulate pre-existing 3D models. The two things that you cannot do easily are remap textures, and create intricate new models. You can swap and resize textures, but mapping is not really an option. And while 3DsimEd does offer some basic 3D modeling features, its real strength is in manipulating a collection of 3D models in a larger overall track model, which is ideal for conversions.



So your models are the real foundation of the conversion. You should always double-check references to be sure your models are the best you can use. Google Earth is a great reference for seeing your track from above, and performing an image search on Google will yield tons of pictures with which you can reference your track.

Another option for finding new models is all of ISI's existing *rFactor* tracks. For example, I pulled caution lights and pit in/out lights from Orchard Lake Speedway. Then I used the Northhamptonshire starting lights. Work, trucks, grandstands, blimps ... all exist in the large ISI-library of stock *rFactor* tracks. Use 'em.

A great example of the modified hybrid track-making philosophy is the Indianapolis scoring pylon: ISI must have had Indy in mind, because the basic design of the scoring pylon at Orchard Lake Speedway is very similar. So I pulled the 3D models from Orchard Lake, then re-scaled their size

to fit the Indianapolis pit wall. I had to modify the top (Indy's doesn't spin), and I modified the texture ever so slightly. All of this was using 3DsimEd. In the end, I had a functional scoring pylon that's very close the actual Indy pylon.

Another aspect to the models involves *rFactor*'s complex real-time lighting. In past ISI-sims, shadows had to be modeled into the track. But in *rFactor*, any object can cast shadows, and all objects, interact with the light source—in fact, this is a potential pitfall I see in a lot of conversions. With things like people and flags, you don't really want them to react to the lighting as much as buildings, guardrails, and tracks surfaces. So using 3DsimEd, I make sure to adjust the 'normals' in the Z-plane (up 'normals') using the built-in edit option. This makes your people appear lighted evenly throughout the day. Without this done, your crowd models will appear as flat dark objects in the grandstands from the cockpit at certain times of the day. Flags are another thing to apply this technique on, as they typically, in real-life, are made of fabric that allows the sun to illuminate through. Without these adjusted 'normals', your conversion will suffer from some objects interacting with the real-time lighting engine, and appearing too dark when the 'sun'light is coming from behind them. It's a common mistake that I see in lots of conversions.

So there's a quick bit about thinking outside the box when it comes to your models. It really pays off in the end to spend some time on the models, and the better the models, the better the conversion.

Textures and Dynamic Lighting

If the models are the foundation, the textures are the window dressing. But with the DX9 real-time lighting and bump-mapping effects in *rFactor*, their options are even more involved. As with the models, you should start with the best textures possible. When converting *F1 Challenge* for Indianapolis, the road and grass textures were really looking dated. *F1 Challenge* is approaching its fourth anniversary

now, and the texture sizes are half of what is considered standard today. So again I set out to look through ISI's library. I can't stress enough how useful this is: I found some great grass in Barcelona. Even then, I adjusted it slightly in Photoshop.

I kept coming up with a dilemma in making Indianapolis: IMS has an integrated pro-level golf course, and so it has wonderfully maintained grounds. They also repave the Speedway about every ten years or so. What this means is that, unlike most race tracks, the grass and asphalt are always in tip-top shape. Problem is, though, that tip-top shape in a racing simulation translates into less character. Nice green grass and smooth fresh asphalt comes off looking like flat solid colors. But I tried to hold true to IMS, and give it a well-maintained look.

The track surface posed an additional issue: Since they repave the Speedway regularly, the asphalt is constantly changing in character, and colour. Add to this the fact that the past re-paving job in 2005 proved less than ideal for the grip of the Indycars, and the track was promptly ground-down and defaced. So, do I make it appear as it does currently (which honestly is rather unsightly)? Or do I make it look like it did before the repaving? I chose the 'Hollywood method', and decided on making it look as though it had been repaved perfectly about 'two seasons ago', and has since undergone two good Indiana winters.

To do this, I basically had to start from scratch. The Indianapolis road textures are therefore made specifically for this conversion, and used some actual track surface photos for reference. In other words, those cracks you see in the asphalt are lifted from *actual* IMS track photos. Making the textures from scratch allowed me to make much higher resolution ROADX.dds file (1024x1024); as opposed to forcing these on all users, I included the hi-res textures in a separate ZIP file for the guys with faster machines. This way, the stock track texture sizes comply with *rFactor* standard resolution sizes.

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rFactor uses many advanced DX9 shader techniques like spectral lighting enhancements, bump mapping, spectral mapping, and multi-mapping. Spectral map is the most important aspect of the DX9 road surface shaders. Spectral mapping allow us to tile in a single, smaller texture with asphalt detail across multiple basic road textures. Not only does this allow the track to have more detail in the road that is consistent across the various different basic textures, but it also gives detail to the light reflecting off the road surface.

Since we're talking about the asphalt, let's discuss another conscience decision, this one regarding bump mapping. Bump mapping is a method that adds a 3D-texture map to the base texture, and the result is really nice detail shadows. The graphics engine applies this underlying shader texture to create more depth when you're closer to the objects that are bump mapped. Roads, curbs, and grass are the main candidates for bump mapping, although any texture can include it (remember, when looking at optional textures to use from other tracks, be sure to note the sub-textures they draw from).

As a side note, a really good example of effective bump maps in Indianapolis is the scoring pylon, and the gravel traps. If you look closely at the top of the scoring pylon, I've bumped the surfaces on the sponsor boards. And the gravel traps have really effective bump maps thanks to Scott Juliano and his wonderful Brianza track. Both of these objects have a great depth to their textures, and respond to lighting well. In addition, the curbs also have a custom bump map to create more depth to them.

Anyway, back to that 'conscience' decision. One goal when creating Indianapolis was to give users great performance in big field racing. The Indy 500 runs thirty-three cars, and the Brickyard 400 runs forty-three. So I tried to make it have higher-than-normal FPS to accommodate these size grids online for most users. So when using bump maps on the road, I noticed that the FPS was inline with other rFactor tracks, but performance degraded quickly with twenty-plus-cars. So I left the bump mapping off of the roads, and compensated with the new, and optional, high-resolution road textures. With bump mapping, I was averaging sixty-to-seventy FPS. Without it, I get 120 to 140 FPS. I think by next year, most users will have the graphics processing power to handle bump maps. So I plan on adding back the bump-mapped roads in V2.0.

Bump mapping is used in the grass as well. Remember the issue I had with making the grass look authentic? Well, bumping the grass adds back in the texture as you drive closer to it.

So aside from the shaders, I can't stress enough just how important the textures are to the look of your track. Any good track maker should spend a good portion of his time on textures. The results can elevate the realism of driving your track.

Next month I'll cover some more texture thoughts, and discuss the all important AIW editing.

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The Wheels On The Bus

Bob Simmerman reviews Czech Republic-based SCS Software's latest title: 'Bus Driver' ... all together now ... the ... wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round ...

BobSimmerman





I have a confession to make ... sometimes, in the stillness of a bleak night, I really enjoy a playing with my ... games; yes, I know, this is not the sort of thing a self-respecting sim-racer ought to be doing, but I bet there are many more like me out there, somewhere, keeping their filthy little secrets from their friends and loved ones. Oblivious, of course, to just how rich their dirty, secret could make them if placed in the capable hands of Jerry Springer.

Bus Stop. Full Stop. *Bus Driver!*

You will have to forgive me as I have been having the time of my life lately, not immersed to my eyeballs in MoTeC drippings, but, rather, deeply immersed in the delicate art of maneuvering a rather large object through rather messy traffic—and it doesn't help matters much that there is a busload of screaming kids riding with me!

Well, you better get used to it, because that is exactly what will happen if you take the new offering from [SCS Software](#), *Bus Driver*, too lightly. Besides looking pretty darn good on screen, *Bus Driver* does an extremely good job of simulating the various duties one may come upon while working as a bona-fide bus driver. While it may seem a bit of an odd thing to simulate—kinda like a postal worker without the guns—there really is a lot that may go unnoticed to the stander-by (also known as someone who is waiting for the bus). Not only do you have to keep in mind the general wellbeing of your passengers, not to mention their very *health*—by not driving like a postal worker—but you also have to observe the rules of the road, watch out for traffic, brave

hazardous conditions, make all your stops, and, most important of all; *be on time*.

Does it get any more challenging than that?

Bus Driver is the latest in a line of 'real-world' driving simulators from the folks behind the very well done *18 Wheels of Steel* series of trucking games which enjoy something akin to a cult-following around the world. While it is true that these games do not offer us the chance to be Formula 1 superstars, they do a great job of giving the user a glimpse of how fun it can be to haul a load of steel across the country (minus, alas, the public-toilet stops). With *Bus Driver*, the fine tradition continues, and so does the good time.

Featuring no less than twelve different bus types (even a double-decker!), you will be hauling all sorts of human cargo to all sorts of places, all of it in a beautifully rendered city complete with varying degrees of AI traffic, as well as interesting distractions such as passenger jets flying (and roaring) overhead as you make your way along your route towards your final destination. Some of your tasks will include the transport of a foreign Olympics team, factory workers, regular passengers, and a gang of prisoners, and each task—there are thirty divided among five levels of complexity—requires some fairly direct attention when the driver workload is fully taken into account.

I don't know about you, but the last thing I want to do is drive the bus with a bunch of angry gang members on board—don't forget the petroleum-jelly-based tub! Kidding aside, some of the tasks are pretty serious matters, at least in terms of getting the job done in the most efficient and passenger-friendly manner possible.



Okay, first things (almost) first—before we dive head first into the sim (and make no mistake, this is a simulator, and the buses offered—not to mention the road-types, weather, and other related features—are very detailed indeed), we have to install it. Offered as a web-download, *Bus Driver* is identical to *rFactor* in at least one regard: Both use an identical TryMedia authentication system, and once my code was entered, the full product was unlocked. Quick, easy, and so non-StarForce-like as to nearly make me jump with joy. I hopped, instead.

After the installation is complete, double clicking the icon brings up a dialogue box in the Windows environment where the user can change the graphics settings, and set sound acceleration preference. The main interface is very well done, and does a great job of

getting the budding bus driver in the right frame of mind. However, the mouse is now useless, so remember where those arrow keys are on your keyboard. Selecting the options menu allows you to map keys and change controller settings, including Force-Feedback strength—which, if you have a G-25, I recommend you keep to the sedate level of fifty or so, as much higher and the wheel, at times, shakes substantially from side to side with a lot of Force-Feedback being generated. This is a good way to indicate an off-road condition, but is definitely on the heavy side, so either turn it down, or get used to the giant arm muscles you will soon develop.

Once you have the game setup as you wish, it is time to proceed to the mission screen. Of the thirty total missions, only six are available at the outset. You must progress through the levels in order to unlock the further—and more difficult—driving missions. The mission screen is quite detailed, and offers plenty of information. Task, passenger type, time constraints, and a detailed route map will give you more than a basic idea of what needs to be done. Off to the bus stop then!

Once you get to the actual game world, you will definitely appreciate the graphics. While we are not lathered in photorealism, it is nevertheless a very attractive and dynamic world in which you will be driving your bus, and it is obvious the developers understood that the key to enjoying the sim was to render a beautiful environment through which you will drive your bus. Toss in dynamic weather and time of day changes, and you have a delightful world in which to ply your trade.

But what of the actual driving of the bus? Well, having never driven a bus before, I can only assume what it must be like, but I can definitely say it handles like a large, heavy, and a bit unwieldy vehicle. The screaming in the back doesn't help you drive any better, either, but it reminds you of one thing—you are not alone on this ride, and you better drive that way or you will have a lot of angry

passengers on your hands. And nothing is as ugly and intimidating as a bunch of angry and frightened five-year olds—I'd trade 'em in for the damn prisoners any time of the week!

It seems second nature, mundane, but you will be surprised at how difficult becoming an ace bus driver can be: Not only will you need to drive the bus through the varying terrains, weather conditions, and city-scapes (suburbs, city-centre, and so forth) with precision (no simple thing, believe me, these buses do not respond to late braking!), but you will need to be dead-on accurate when you bring the bus to a stop—and you'd better be as gentle as Bubba, too, else the passengers will be thrown forward, and the screaming (you bet!) will commence!

And don't fool yourself, either, about how simple the job is: It isn't! Just completing a successful stop will be a thoroughly stressful experience; on my very first attempt, all shiny in my new uniform, I got rather frustrated as I pulled up to the bus-stop where a gang of street thugs watched me with the eagle-eyes of a five year old ... after some minutes of me sitting at the bus stop, counter ticking down and my new job already at risk, I could be heard shouting, "Why won't they get on the bus! How can they possibly know me already?" Turns out my reputation had not somehow preceded me into cyberia; rather, the problem was of a far more humdrum nature: I had forgotten to open the doors!

With that nefarious challenge conquered by my crystalline mind, it was immensely pleasurable to see the folks finally getting on the bus—fully indicated by an extremely detailed passenger information window that indicates how many are waiting to get on, how many are waiting to get off, the status of that situation, and a timer keeping track of it all. When finished, you need to close the door (yup, I figured that one all on my own, I was *born* for this job!) before carefully blending back into traffic and heading—with speed, and yet great care, for the next stop.



The driving of the bus is, as you would expect from this sort of affair, taxing: You have to use turn signals, which at face value seems to be such an obvious thing, but there I was, forgetting to use them, constantly, and losing valuable mission points in the process, and you need to drive with attention very focused on the traffic. I accidentally ran a few vehicles off the road, and I must confess that driving a bus—perhaps like being a postal

worker—is not as simple as it may seem. But after some practice, you will find yourself easing into those bus stops with blinkers on and a busload of happy passengers to your credit, with another bunch about to get on as the bus empties from the last stop. As an aid to the braking process, there is a very handy brake meter located at the bottom of the screen which features a needle that moves along a box with a red and green zone, green being an acceptable level of negative Gs, and red being a level which is unacceptable to your passengers ...

During the mission, there are several on-screen indicators as to how you are doing with your task, and you definitely want to keep the smiling faces smiling as frowns are not good for the final score; if your passengers *are* frowning, odds are there is some sort of 'problem', and you are probably going to be late for the next stop, and lose even more valuable statistics! Upon final completion of the mission, you are presented with a detailed breakdown of the entire ride, complete with a boatload of statistics, and a final score.

Believe me, it can get addictive—just one more try, all happy faces for the entire drive! Now, why don't they thank me when they get off?

There are, unfortunately, a few minor glitches that are more of an annoyance than show stopping. First, the camera views are woefully lacking, and there is—so frustrating, how hard would it have been to incorporate this?—no cockpit view whatsoever. To further add to the complication of wrestling these beasts of burden through the city, the camera perspective—by default, on top of, and behind, the bus—changes as you round a corner! I can live with a view that is outside of the bus, but one that dynamically changes as I drive the thing is a bit of a pest. But, as I mentioned, no showstopper, and after a bit of practice, it is easy to adjust to the disorienting viewpoint. Besides, it is a busload of real human beings, no need for breakneck speed here, just good traffic sense!



It is difficult not to find something to enjoy about *Bus Driver*: You would need to have a heart of steel, and a heart of stone not to feel a warm and fuzzy nostalgia for youth, and fun, as you travel through this city of friendly faces just waiting for your bus to pull-up. It is a perfect game for the whole family, and a great diversion when the pressures of the hardcore get to be too much to bear.

With a manageable learning curve, dozens of missions set in a very detailed and dynamic city, and a 'busload' of fun, *Bus Driver* may just catch your interest, and those whose curiosity I have managed to pique should definitely download the demo and see what this game is all about.

Now, where was I? Oh yes ... *the ... wipers on the bus go swish-swish-swish, swish-swish-swish, swish-swish-swish*

The Pros And Cons Of Bus Driving

The Pros:

- ⊕ Install, get in, and drive. No muss, no fuss.
- ⊕ Beautiful game world to drive in with dynamic lighting, weather, and AI.
- ⊕ Interesting concept, well implemented.
- ⊕ Family Friendly.

The Cons:

- ⊗ No multiplayer modes.
- ⊗ Viewing angle very disorienting, limited options and no internal view.
- ⊗ FFB effects overdone unrealistically at even moderate strength settings, in certain driving conditions.

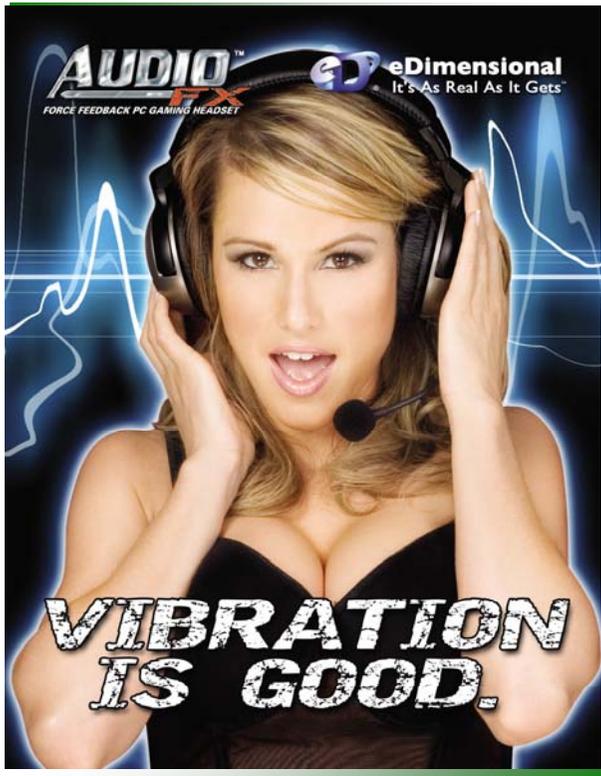


Race Broadcasting— Getting Into The Booth

Becky Rose, one of sim-racing's broadcasting pioneers, explores the challenging technical hurdles that need to be surmounted in the ever-evolving arena of sim-race broadcasting—what you see is not always what you get, but with sim-race broadcasting already dwarfing many late-night real-world race-series round-ups, sim-racing is poised to offer an alternative ... all that remains is to find the technical solutions ...

BeckyRose





The Unidimensional View

After reading last month's article on race broadcasting, I wanted to expand on the subject and talk about some of the technical hurdles in actually putting a broadcast together; innovators around the world of sim-racing are deploying all manner of clever solutions designed to bring spectators closer to the action.

As with all things there's more than one way to skin a cat. Last month we saw what I refer to as the 'media centre model' in action, which involves somebody logging in to the race and physically controlling the camera, before outputting their video feed for the world

to see by streaming the onscreen display to the audience. This person was dubbed the director.

In its most basic incarnation however, this does actually have some fairly rudimentary problems, all of which stem from the simple fact that the director isn't in fact a director at all. Look at any real race series on television, and the one thing we can immediately conclude is that the director has access to *multiple* cameras, and can flick between them at any time. Our sim-director, however, has access to only one camera: What this means is that when the view needs to be altered it is the *camera* that must 'move' rather than the view which, in normal televised coverage, will simply switch directly to a camera that's already in position.

Our sim-director is really just a glorified cameraman, and the result of this one-camera view is that broadcasts made in this way typically result in lots of 'tabbing' up and down the field as the camera seeks out the right car: Typically, one will see much cycling through camera angles to find the 'right one', and more often than not the consequence of this one-camera view is vital on-track action being missed all-together because having just the one view of the action prevents the cameraman from spotting other events on circuit, especially should multiple events be played out simultaneously as in the start of a race. In extreme cases we are sometimes treated to HUD graphics overlaid onto the view whilst the cameraman checks the current positions to figure out what's going on.

Some of these logical minefields can be reduced by multiple assistants logging-in and watching the race to instruct the cameraman where to look (spotters, in other words) but it's still the camera that is moving around the action, and not the action moving around multiple cameras. It's this fundamental obstacle which, more than anything else, makes many sim-race broadcasts appear amateur and prevents them from being taken seriously by the wider motor-racing viewership.

The Unidimensional Camera

More importantly, the camera is limited to the standard cameras and angles offered by the simulation itself, as it's simply impossible for the cameraman to actually control the 'camera pans' whilst doing everything else in real time. Some simulations don't even allow direct camera control anyway, and this brings about another major shortcoming of broadcasting in this fashion.

The fault for this lies directly at the feet of the simulation authors: For reasons known only to them the default camera positions always follow one car, which sits slap bang in the centre of the frame. Why is this important? When was the last time you watched a televised broadcast where the frame followed only one car? Mostly a race broadcast is about finding the cars that are battling on the circuit, so the camera is always trying to capture two, three, or a whole queue of cars at once with only a few very rare exceptions (showing the race leader, a car going off the circuit, pit stops, and so on).

This is a significant obstacle in creating an immersive broadcast, and it completely destroys the immersion of watching the event since it provides a strong subliminal clue that what you are watching is a long way from reality. It's very easy to underestimate the impact that this has, and as of this moment in time none of the sims out there that I have used have made the camera detect nearby cars and re-adjust their focal point accordingly.

So we see there are two fundamental drawbacks to broadcasting in the way that was explained in last month's broadcasting article: Camera focus; and the camera moving about the action, rather than the action moving around the camera.

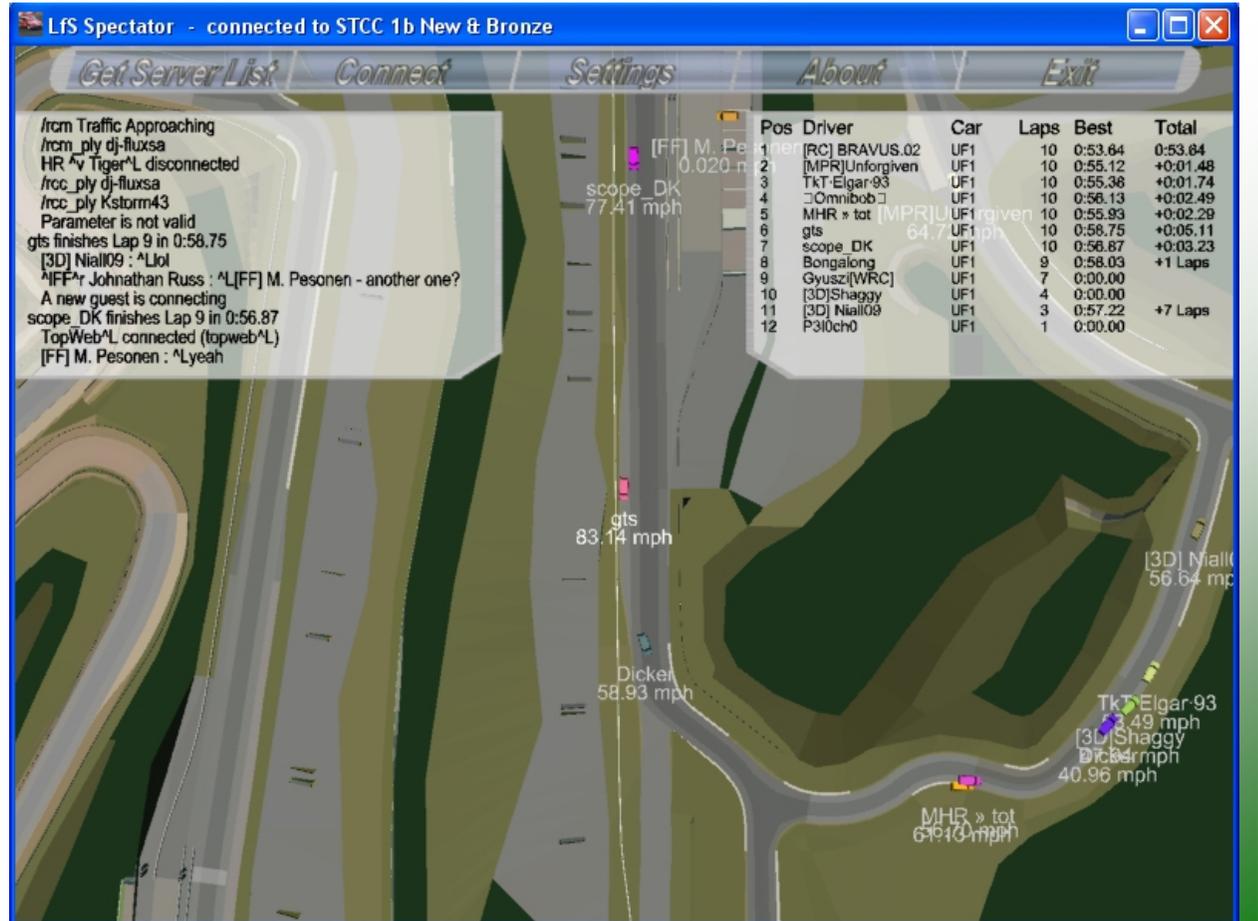
So let's take a look at some of the interesting and innovative ways in which broadcasters have found of getting around these two fundamental problems.



Replay Streaming

One of the more promising solutions is to be found in replay streaming. Talk about interactive television! The user remains in total control of the camera at all times, It's a brilliant approach to the problem and combined with a two person commentary team on an audiocast stream, it really does solve the camera issues very well because it puts the viewer in total control of what *they* want to watch.

The concept is simple; you select a replay to watch from your hard disk but instead of a pre-recorded race you select the 'TV' replay. The file is a standard replay file except the contents of it are missing save for a small buffer. As your copy of the simulation software starts watching the replay the streaming software is busy adding more to the end of the file.



Unfortunately this also comes with a few flaws. Firstly, your spectators need to own a copy of the simulation software so it's never going to bring new people into the sport and remains a niche method of broadcasting. Secondly, the radio commentary can't be synchronised with the replay stream because of the various buffers, and so it falls down to the viewer to synchronise the

timing by pausing or speeding up their replay and hoping they don't run out of buffer as they do so.

This brings us onto the last problem with this method; that is, when the buffer has all been used up. If/when the data for the next bit of the race is delayed somewhere in the internet the simulation software is left trying to read data that does not yet exist, and this is not something

that it was designed to do ... which can all get a bit messy and result in a crash back to your desktop. Sadly, with the limited bandwidth of smaller broadcasters this happens all too often in practice when this method of broadcast has been used.

Look further though, and the problem of end users not having the client software and bandwidth has already been solved. What if you could read off the telemetry of the cars, and view *that* in an independent, royalty-free client, in real-time? Well you can, although the technology is still very much in its infancy and unfortunately, it probably always will be.

I only know of two programs which can do this at the moment, and both are for *LiveForSpeed*, and both work on the same principle: The original was LFS Spectator which takes car position data relayed from the race server to the LFS master server which is then distributed to the viewers.

Although LFS Spectator is a novel concept it displays the race as a 2D overhead view and has never managed to attract a significant number of viewers. To resolve this I set about rewriting the concept into 3D and although it's still very much early stages, the switch to 3D highlights an additional flaw—the lack of a physics engine. Cars appear to drift across the circuit without weight or momentum.

Graphically, however, the potential exists for it to be on a par by loading in the graphics of the simulation itself: Currently, my project does this, but does not yet texture the race circuits, although it does manage to download and use each racers individual car skin.

All then is not lost on the concept: However, what it would need is a broadcast-aware sim-author to produce a royalty-free compact version of their simulator for use as a spectator client by removing all of the control interface and game modes. In this way I would venture to say that the concept could be onto a winning formula, provided that the download is not too big. Ideally, it would be made to work with a web browser by functioning as a plugin

without the viewer having to download and installing anything.

It again puts the camera into the hands of the viewer, but synchronisation of commentary would also need to be solved. As a concept, it's probably a bit too far out there as an idea to appeal to developers right now, but one day such clients could become the web equivalent of an on-demand TV channel in their own right.

For sim racing to reach the masses, however, it has to conform to the tools and mediums that end users expect such as downloadable movie files, YouTube, Google Video, Media Player, and so on. All of which brings us squarely back to the original quest, "How to deliver a broadcast that looks like TV"?

Television Studio Funded Broadcasting

One solution is to take the whole event—steering wheels and all—into a television studio. For an ever growing number of leagues this is not just a pipedream, it's been happening for years in various parts of the globe with Mexico, Spain, Croatia, and Germany all having sim-races broadcast on national television.

One broadcaster isn't stopping there though; as no truly international sports channel exists in order to cover the international audience, Vykos—who organises the ESL league in Germany—also delivers a high bandwidth internet stream. It is amazing to see what is possible when the television channel happens to be owned by the country's largest internet service provider!

I watched the season finale this year, and there where plus and minus points for me. Firstly sim-racing coverage even at this level still doesn't use a multi-camera model. The genre is considered too niche for the television channels to bring along a dozen or so camera operators, but they were able to cut to shots of the drivers themselves, and used shots of Vykos and his co-commentator during fills and in the pre & post race coverage. This connection between audience

and participant adds to immersion that other forms of sim-broadcasts just can't replicate. We all have our favorite drivers in real-race series, and the problem in sim-broadcasts is that usually we cannot see our heroes and pick one—as viewers in most sim-racing broadcasts all that we have to identify with our on screen heroes is their car paint job. The ESL broadcast shattered this barrier and allowed us to 'stand' next to the drivers themselves as they raced.

There're also other quite unique problems, as Vykos explains: "One funny story, which happened at the last EPS finals, which were being driven LIVE: The gaming tables were too thick, and closed at one end, whilst also being too short. The drivers couldn't put their pedals in a comfortable position, and had to saw holes in the tables to make them actually fit to the table".

Contingency problems aside, however, this is a big step in the right direction but without investment in solving the single camera issue it still can't stand next to a real-race broadcast as an alternative to the viewing public. For sim-racing junkies like us, though, this is probably as good as it gets, and will probably remain so until television companies themselves hire people who understand sim-racing—and that won't happen until the market for watching sim-races grows to the point where the broadcasting companies have to sit up and take notice.

Solutions: noobTV

One clever solution to the single camera problem is noobTV; this is a java applet which connects to the *LFS* simulation software and takes control of the camera, with the idea being that you run this on a separate screen or computer. From the applet you can specify which car you want the camera to follow and it will then immediately jump to that car without any camera 'tabbing' or cycling. Combined with a second person logged-in and spotting the car to view and relaying information to the director, it can be a very powerful tool.



Where this currently falls over is that it still, at this time, focuses the camera on one car, but as the technology develops this—and software like it—could become the defacto standard in live race broadcasting. Give the camera operator a second machine with access to LFS Spectator to watch the entire track for action and you have the potential for a real winner.

Solutions: The Mathematical Heuristic Model

For the smaller broadcasting team there're now tools which try to select the right car to watch using a mathematical heuristic model. These are still in the early stages and are not yet powerful enough to detect incidents, but the technology is promising. One big hurdle however is that they lack the ability to read real-time information that hasn't yet occurred: This means that camera switching can occur only *after* the point of interest has already passed.

As we can see, there are many solutions to broadcasting live, and some promising technologies in the pipeline to try and solve the major hurdles that face sim-broadcasters. At the moment though nothing is yet offering that quintessential look and feel of what we see in real-world live broadcasts, which is the standard by which sim-broadcasting is judged by the public. The only way to do this as things stand currently is to delay release long enough to record the race from multiple vantage points, and then to edit it all together afterwards.

The Not-So-Live But Oh-So-Real

Every hurdle that faces the sim-racing broadcaster is based on the limited number of cameras available to record the race with, and a race is only as 'live' as when you first watch it. I love watching Formula 1, and I prefer to see the races live. Why? I think it is for two reasons: Firstly, so that I can find out what happens straight away because I'm a fan; and secondly, so that I don't accidentally hear the result.

In my series, I commit to hiding the results from the main league website, and force the drivers to silence until the broadcast is released. By doing this the series can still fulfill the interest requirement, and there's no reason why the broadcast cannot convey the illusion of being live. In fact it should carry the illusion because that's all part of the immersion factor.

The problem with this method is the level of work involved. With a live broadcast you do a day's preparation and then just do the show; with an edited broadcast you'll be three days just recording the cameras, then you have to edit them, put on the captions, do the pre-and-post show, then get a commentary team together, render off the final result; all of this takes substantially longer than just assembling a team for the show and cobbling it together on the fly.



I know of a few leagues which have tried to copy the format I've used for my series but have fallen foul of the workload when trying to put together the first broadcast. It's no discredit to them either, because if I'd known how much work was involved before I did it, I certainly wouldn't have promised an all year round series!

The other problem is release dates. A broadcast is finished when it is finished, and no sooner, and some tracks are just more work to cover than others using this method. Keeping your audience informed and maintaining a regular release schedule can become very difficult indeed.

So at the moment there really is no ideal solution to broadcasting a sim-race. Many a die-hard sim-racer would very much like sim-racing to stand side-by-side with real racing, or at least to be recognised by the real racing fraternity. The truth is that we are just not quite ready yet in terms of the technology. In a year or two, however, I think we will be—which is not to say that we aren't already gaining the recognition all the same anyway because we are.

Whilst it's true that most leagues are only reaching audiences of hundreds, and only a handful get into the thousands, there are a few leagues which have reached a much larger audience. I can think of three that I know of which reach audience figures in the hundreds of thousands, mostly those associated with television coverage.

My own league has broken the six digit viewing figure barrier without a television deal—a testament, I believe, to the ‘like a race on TV’ production process used. When you compare these figures to real racing series outside of the big international ones, we’re actually doing pretty well in audience figures!

We never will, and can never expect, to compete with Formula 1, IndyCar, NASCAR, Le Mans, and V8 Supercars, but there’re a few lesser series in real racing that would love to have the viewing figures that the big sim-broadcasters enjoy right now. Which begs the question—why are there are so few professional sim-racers?

Professionalism

Well, it’s simple. To race in the real-world, even at a low level, takes a lot of money and most drivers have no choice but to find a sponsor if they want to race. In sim-racing costs are not such an issue, so we don’t *have* to find sponsors. Sure, we’d all *love* to be a professional sim-racer but who amongst us actually spends the time on the telephone? Who amongst us actually does corporate publicity, and sets up corporate hospitality?

The lifestyle is there to be had—just get into one of the big leagues, win everything, and *invest* time in corporate entertainment. It won’t be easy finding the sponsors but it isn’t easy in real racing either.

It’s all yours for the taking because sim-broadcasting has already arrived in a very major way—word is getting out, spectators are tuning in, and viewing figures are already dwarfing late night motor-racing television round-up shows.

The sport is growing and the only ones left on the sideline wondering what happened are the traditional broadcasters who still haven’t figured out what YouTube is, let alone that half their back-catalogue of shows is already on there.



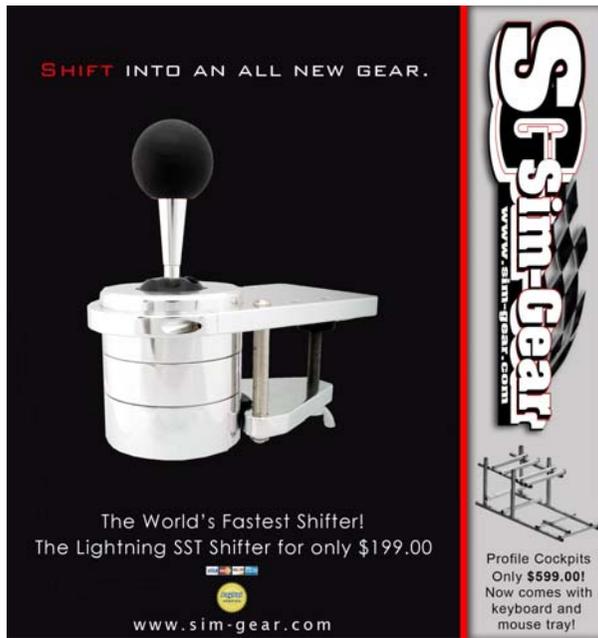
Oval Office

The US Pits' TPSCC Mod for rFactor

Bob Simmerman assesses the long-awaited, two years in development US Pits Stock Car mod for rFactor that has already polarized the oval sim-racing community: Jan Kohl, physics-guru Brian Ring, and Jim Kerekes went along for the ride ...

Bob Simmerman
Pics: Courtesy
Jim Kerekes





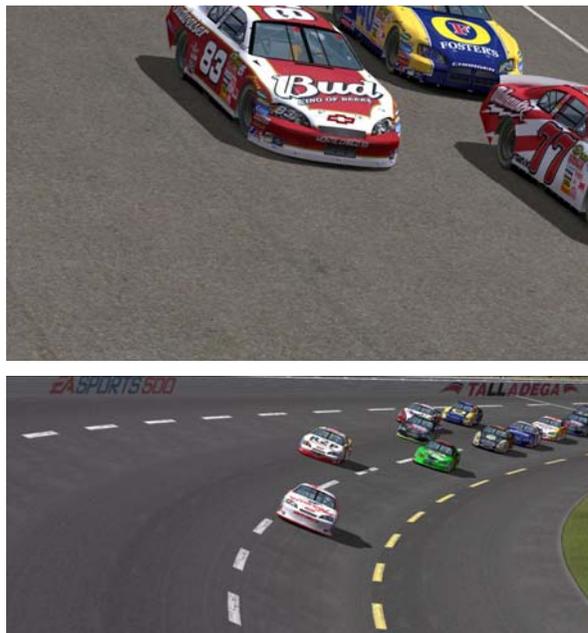
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Two weeks before the running of the 2007 Daytona 500, the US Pits presented thousands of eager stock car simulator fans with something that has been sorely lacking—if the critics are to be believed—from the *rFactor milieu*: A tin-topper US-style mod. But we're not talking about just some cobbled-together tin-topper mod here; we're talking about the sort of intricately created mod that carries with itsome very heavy-duty baggage (read *great expectations*): Released by one of sim-racing's most respected mod-houses, and created by many of sim-racing's biggest 'names', using real-world input, ISI-insider-help, and a host of other features, this mod—on paper at least—is *the* stock car mod that four year veterans of *NASCAR Racing 2003* have been waiting for, not to mention anyone else who is interested in this form of auto racing.



Much has been made of *rFactor's* 'battle' to usurp *N2003* from its mantle as King of Stock Car Sims, and it is indeed testament to Papyrus's legacy that, like *Grand Prix Legends* (in whose wake open-wheel simulators were always judged and, until recently, judged to have failed for nigh on six years), *N2003* remains the Gold Standard for stock car simulators.

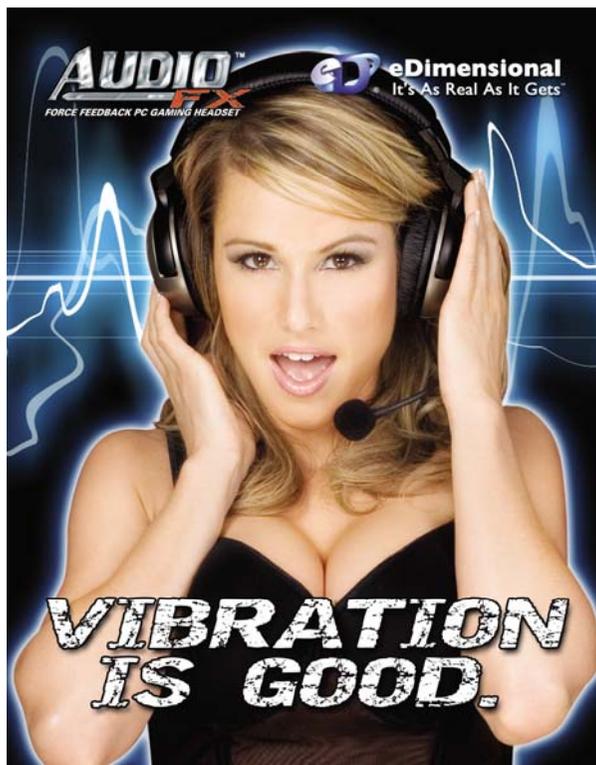
It is certainly not the case however that, out of the blue, *N2003* is no longer worth race-time, but the fact remains that it is simulating cars of several years ago, and you only have to watch a race these days to know that a lot of things have changed in those few years. The annoying problem of 'aero push', and the new setup technique involving 'bound spring coils' are just two new aspects in NASCAR that present great challenges for the modern teams and drivers, and a bit of a problem for anyone wishing to simulate such

things on *N2003*. In the past, many have wondered just how well an ISI-based physics platform could simulate a true-to-life NASCAR experience: History would suggest, too, that the answer to that question was ... not very well at all.

But the folks at SimBin, and then Blimey!Games—let's face it, the developers are the developers no matter what colour their suit—have shown us just how much potential for an outstanding physics model resides within the core of the ISI engine, and it certainly must be the case that a mod-crew (which some, unkindly, have christened SimBin anyway!) could do just as well. The original *GTR* was, when stripped-down to its bare self, itself a mod, as opposed to a licensed product with access to the entire code which it eventually became. And I think there is little doubt that *GTR*, as a mod, caused more than a bit of a stir in the community, and offered an enhanced level of authenticity rarely seen before—or since.



Long story short—if properly massaged, an ISI-based product *can* produce just as convincing a drive as pretty much anything else out there. As such, I let a bit of my skepticism drop on this latest stock car mod, and when all was done, and said, I realized that my review could be encapsulated in a short phrase: A very immersive experience.



In fact, I found this mod so incredibly well done, I began to ponder how many copies of EA's *NASCAR SimRacing* would have sold if the 'okay' physics in that sim had been completely removed, and the US Pits' mod put there in its place—folks, this is the drive that *NSR* could have provided—*should* have provided given their vast resources—but did not.

Before we go on, however, I should let you in on a promise I made myself before downloading this mod: No matter what happened, despite any pressure, I was not going to compare this mod to *N2003*. Absolutely no way was I going to jump into that snakepit. While some may feel this is something that should, perhaps, 'just be done',

it nevertheless overlooks one very important fact—the real-world cars just don't handle as they do in *N2003* any more. If, in fact, the TPSCC mod shipped with an identical driving and physics model as that to be found with *N2003*, two things could have been said: One, it has an incredible driving model and, two, it has failed miserably as a mod of modern day, top level stock car racing.



The only real comparison between this mod, and *N2003*, is one of play quality; to compare the physics and driving of the two is an apple to oranges kind of thing. That being said, some of you may remember my brief addition to our initial coverage of this mod in a mid-2006 issue where I did make a comparison to the venerable *N2003*, but mainly in terms of 'is it any good', in the way that *N2003* is, indisputably, *good*: That is, does it have a great driving model?

Even at that early stage of development, the US Pits' effort was well on the way to providing the type of convincing driving model this community has not only come to expect, but, in some cases, to demand. Further along, I will show you just how intricate the driving model is

to this mod, but in the meantime, while I warm up to that, just take my word for it—the physics in this mod are some of the most complex to be found in any mod ever created, and given the length of time taken to develop them, and the fact that many drivers of the real cars had input here, our expectations—of a top-shelf effort—has been met ... and then some ...

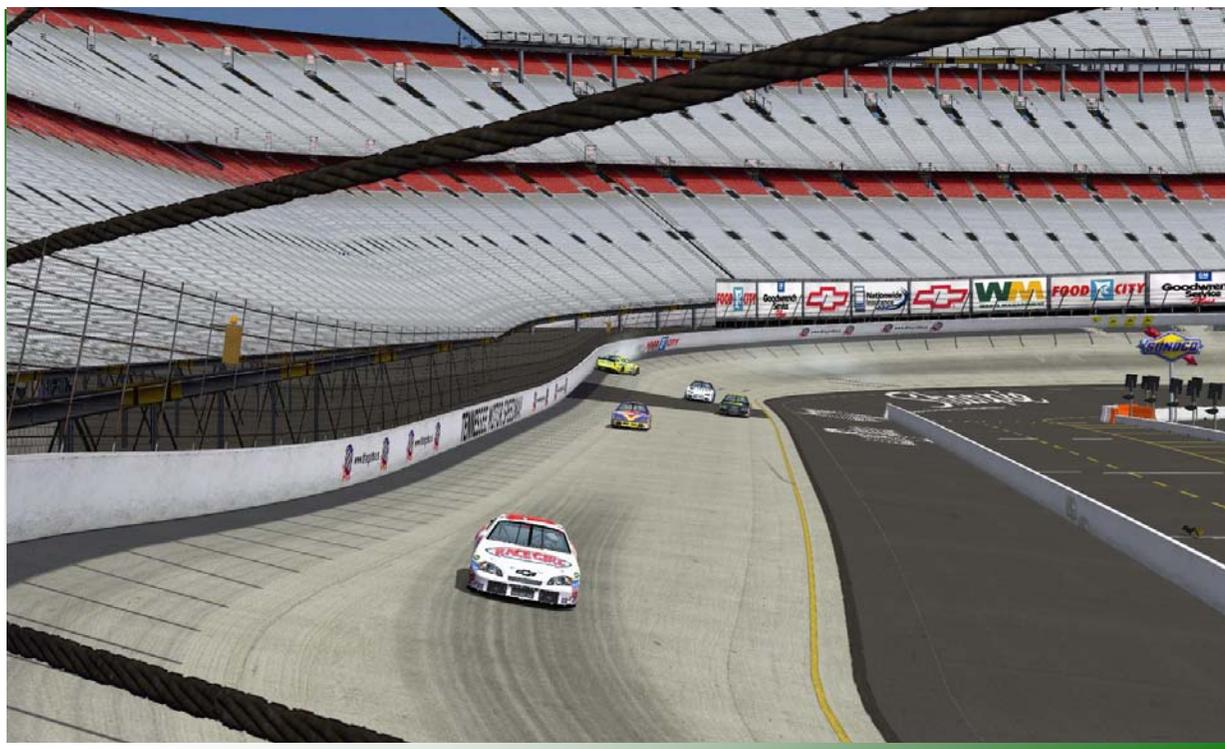


Initial Criticism

Not everyone, however, shares my opinion. Soon after the release of the mod, I found, on a forum that shall remain nameless, what I would consider to be some extremely pointed, not to mention damaging, criticism of the physics of the mod. Given my experience with the mod, I found this rather surprising. Equally as surprising, the critic had posted on a forum outside the US Pits, (as opposed to dropping it at the door of those who created it, something rather common in our community today), but it was nevertheless from a community member of some standing, and was, in that regard, difficult to ignore.

I asked the 'face' of the US Pits, Jan Kohl, to assess that post—and some of the criticism that had come his way.

"You'll notice a lot of the complaints have not found their way to The Pits forums, where we pretty much will entertain any reasonable question, comment or complaint," he told me. "Most of the people on The Pits forums will attest to the fact that, if someone turns up bugs or problems, and brings them to us, we'll jump on fixing them right away, but ... for those who complain *outside* of The Pits ... well, I think that only clarifies many of the complainers."



What he says makes quite a bit of sense when you think about it; in much the same way as you are not going to look for your dropped wallet five blocks from where you probably dropped it because there is better lighting where you are now, so it will do little good to complain of something in the wrong context, and, worse, at the wrong place entirely.

"If someone really feels they have seen a bug or problem, they *need* to come to The Pits and report it in a *reasonable* manner," Kohl continues. "By reasonable, I mean with a little respect ... you know, 'I've been driving it with this card and these settings, and I experienced this, can you take a look at it?' Something like that we'll jump all over. However, we've had a few

people who think that feedback needs to be spruced up by saying, 'this is crap' and 'worst physics ever', and that is supposed to make us interested in helping them? If they don't visit The Pits, but want to complain about our stuff ... well, that pretty much sums up their arguments, don't you think?"

In terms of criticism, though—the constructive kind (and it does exist, really, even if the ego sometimes refuses to accept the veracity of it), because people are just *not* going to agree—it does help to make things better: Hence why Jan and his crew are more than happy to hear problems, and thereby work on solutions to those problems: But there is a limit, of course, a line over which constructive becomes destructive, and much of the criticism that was posted outside the US Pits (in for a where the crew could not even respond) was, justifiably, looked at as now helpful (either in its reception or, indeed, in its creation).

Brian Ring, who did the core of the physics for the mod, welcomed some of the criticism, as he explained to me: "I don't spend a lot of time on forums, and what little time I do spend on a forum is spent on The Pits, so I haven't seen a lot of direct criticism. I knew long before release that this mod would polarize the community. Folks would likely either love it or absolutely hate it, and that seems to be what has happened. These cars do not feel like any game or mod that has been released to date, so this is to be expected. Guys who love to work in the garage will find great rewards in small changes, while those who don't like the garage will struggle. This isn't *N2003*."

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This I can confirm—if you wish to become proficient with this mod, more than a mediocre amount of time is required in the garage. It will be, however, time well spent, and there is nothing quite as satisfying as finally removing the last bit of push from the car and stringing together a nice set of consistent, smooth, and fast laps in an extremely difficult to drive vehicle. And whilst those with whom I spoke did not say this, I think much of the criticism leveled at this mod is a sad indication of where a significant slice of this community are now firmly residing: In a place where they demand a simulator, but, once they are confronted with one that pulls no punches, immediately decry its difficulty.

The fact, however, is a simple one: It is not only money that prohibits most of us from becoming paid racing drivers—it is also talent. And driving a race car at speed is not quite about jumping into a poorly conceived mod with unrealistic physics and bashing around a track pretending to be a super-speed-god: It is about spending time reading MoTeC traces, and about knowing how to use dampers to cure turn-in oversteer, and knowing what front rebounds do in relation to corner-exit traction, and learning the art of power to coast ratios ... in short, many of those who came down hard on this mod did so by making assertions which said far more about their inability to handle a simulator than to the accuracy of the mod itself.

“I will say,” Brian acknowledges, “that the one criticism I am most happy with was the unrealistic setups. Having the community bring this up allowed me to look at things differently, and learn even more to improve the mod by allowing me to change my perspective. This issue has been around in every game or mod as long as I can remember, so it’s no small issue. You might remember back to the setups used in *N2003*, and some of the tricks used there that certainly weren’t realistic.”



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'Tricks' in setting up cars unrealistically go way back: Even first release of *Grand Prix Legends* was plagued by such 'trickery': (sim-racers, like their real-world brethren, will always find a way to extract the maximum from any car), and it forced Papyrus to introduce a patch to raise the minimum ride-heights because *GPL*s were running the Version 1.0 cars at about 1 inch front and aft!

Brian also assures me that work on the mod is continuing from the physics side of things.

"I am very pleased with the mod as it is right now, but am not satisfied. The development of this mod in the future will go in direct correlation with the amount of new knowledge I am able to obtain concerning the real cars, as well as continuing to learn more about the ISI system. I have been extremely fortunate to have gotten a lot of data for the real cars, and am very thankful for that. This mod is more about the great people around me than it is about me."



On the surface, the TPSCC mod deserves kudos—if for nothing more—for being audaciously ambitious. Given that the NASCAR of today must deal with the ever-increasing presence of aerodynamics—the dreaded 'aero push'—teams must also deal with the ever increasing presence of 'keeping up with the Joneses'. A perfect

example of the last is the setup technique of coil binding, or, in other words, setting the car up in such a way that, at a standstill, the lower edge of the front nose is seven-to-eight inches off the ground, but while at the limit, it rides a mere half an inch or so off the ground, providing gobs of front end downforce while reducing drag by riding on a fully compressed spring! Indeed, what was once a spring has now turned into a fairly solid object, and if you can get that just right, there are huge rewards to reap, and if you get it just a little wrong ...well, maybe next time then.

The Nuts, Bolts, And Coils

Of course, you can expect to be able to take full advantage of the coil binding philosophy with this mod, and you will find yourself diving deeply into the dark and turbulent waters of 'aerodynamic balance' too. It is all in there, as it *isn't* in *N2003*. Jan helps to explain this sort of fanaticism and attention to detail to me.

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"The more information Brian was able to find concerning the real cars (and his ability to adapt it to the mod), only made him more excited ... so there was never a question of not adding everything we could get our hands on!"

"I am a data nerd," Brian confirms. "The more info I have, the happier I am. My goal from the very beginning was to have the most realistic physics possible, and real data is key. I spent countless hours working to make sure the information was properly implemented, and loved every minute of it."

In the flight sim biz, this sort of thing would be known as a *study sim*. That is, rather than simulate 477,435 cars

in an okay sort of way, a study sim simulates substantially less, in this case one—albeit in two base forms, with four different chassis configurations for each manufacturer found in the mod—in a balls-to-the-wall hardcore nut job kind of way. You know, the kind of stuff we live for in this genre.

Over-and-above the real-world teams and drivers' input to the mod, Image Space Inc. themselves—presumably keen on adding a quality NASCAR mod to their now very impressive stable—offered up quite a bit of help during the creation, Jim Kerekes explains: "ISI has supported our efforts from the beginning, as many of us have been beta testers for them. As many people know, we worked closely with them on the NSCR add-on released in v1.087. Without going into

details, ISI has implemented many features in *rFactor* that made the release of TPSCC possible. They have been great to work with, and I'm sure we will continue to have a good relationship with them going forward."

Jan and Brian were also both appreciative of ISI's efforts: "ISI have been invaluable for their help," Jan says, "they've been supportive of the mod since day one, and we've tried to make sure that they got the best bang for all the 'bucks' they put into it ... figurative bucks, of course ... we didn't get paid to do this mod!"

"I can't say enough about ISI," Brian echoes, "and how helpful they are. I probably asked a million questions, and they were always there to answer them even though I know they had many more important things to do than help me."

For those of you who have followed the *rFactor* saga from the beginning, you are already aware of the level of support provided by ISI to the users of their product—multiple free patches for one thing, multiple free tracks for another, and, finally, the long-lost art of the forum post or two. Given the small size of ISI, you would think they have a budget of billions of dollars because you certainly don't often see that level of interest in the customer from companies that should know better.



The result of that level of support is, of course, a handful of refined mods (which would, were this a community interested in developing the sport, be paid-for add-ons and stand-alone sims) that have made *rFactor* the success story that it has become.



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As well as some fairly hardcore cars, you get some beautiful tracks added as well—Tennessee, Fontana, Nevada, and Georgia are the four that ship with the mod track pack, and you can also download Virginia, and Florida. Each track has a real-world counter part, of course, so you could say you are getting some relatively awesome facsimiles of Bristol, Martinsville, Daytona, Las Vegas, Atlanta, and California, if you want. But don't.

That is more than enough to get you started, but it's not all that is planned. Jim informs me that, "Yes, we do plan on releasing more tracks, and would also like to release more cars. Tracks will be released in stages as they are developed and tested. We will probably be releasing some 2007 season cars, but a lot depends on new car models. We would like to add more car models to replicate real stock car racing series, but there is no timeframe set for this right now. I don't think we'll be releasing any fantasy car models, but we'll probably include a few fictional and real paint schemes when new body shapes are released."

While it is clear that the tracks must be custom-made for the mod—a common occurrence with many *rFactor* mods—I can say from personal testing experience that they drive just fine at the layout of The Glen that ships with the 1979 mod.

Such a thorough mod—that includes cars (using real-world numbers) and tracks—is clearly a vast undertaking: I asked Jim how many people were actually involved in the mod's creation.

"Several people have been involved since the mod started," replies Jim. "We have credited everyone who contributed in the mod readme. Many of these people are still actively involved with supporting TPSCC. The mod was first started soon after *rFactor* was originally released, although most of the development was accomplished during 2006, which explains why TPSCC was released as a 2006 season stock car mod. Although we are not going to promise anything, we are looking at our options for improving and enhancing the mod."

Jan, however, pegs the actual number at somewhere higher than 'several': "I had a list of almost fifty people at one time," he tells me, "and I'd say that is pretty close to correct, with all the beta testers. However, there are also a few people who will never be counted or never be known (their choice), so I guess you could add a few more." I could almost feel his wink at the 'anonymous' contributors ...



Driving It

Of course, the most important part of all of this is the following—just how does it drive, and why should anyone care? To the first question, well, it drives damn well provided you are willing to put in the time to learn about these beast on more than a superficial level.

If you have the mindset of, 'It's just turning left, nothing to it', you will be splattering cars against walls for the entirety of your career. If, however, you approach this mod with a clear mind and no preconceptions of how easy or difficult it should be to drive a car and 'just turn

left' then, well, you are still going to splatter some cars into the wall, but you will eventually stop doing that as you realize how sensitive—and critical—minor changes to a setup can be. MoTeC is your friend, here, and much like the real teams use telemetry—though it is legal only during testing sessions—the more comfortable you are with the use of telemetry the more of an advantage you will have in understanding what the car is doing, why it is doing it, and how to make it better.

Part driver, part engineer, this mod will definitely reward the fanatic, the guy or gal who just can't get

enough of tweaking the setup just one more time, trying to find an extra tenth, or even hundredth of a second.

Before I go rambling off any further, let me answer the other question—why should you care? Well, if you are like me, a fan of NASCAR, then you are most likely going out of your mind about now wondering where EA hid the NASCAR license. It has been four long years since the benchmark NASCAR simulator hit the streets, and a lot has changed since then. Personally, I would like to get some sort of idea what has changed, and this mod provides, as best as something like this can, a very good answer.

From initial frustration to final enjoyment, this mod is important on many levels, and I find that it delivers on nearly all of them. And the ones that it falls a bit short on—the AI, for example—well, let's face it—*rFactor* is heavily dependent on the multiplayer crowd, and AI means little in that situation. I won't go into how good the *rFactor* multiplayer is because most of you already know, and for those that don't, well, let's just say 'industry standard grade' and leave it at that, lest a giant flame war break out. And, while it is true that the AI is sometimes found exhibiting some rather bizarre behavior, I have had some great races with them, but with field sizes of twelve-to-fifteen cars. Regarding the AI, their behavior is definitely to be addressed.

"Yes, we've recently hit upon a plan that we think will do a great deal to improving AI," Jan told me, and Jim noted that, "We are working with .PLR file settings, and AIW. As we make improvements, we will release upgraded versions. There's only so much we can do though."

Online, your car will not launch miles into the air at the slightest human opponent contact, nor will it stick to the outside walls as if by some sort of giant cement magnet—this mod allows you to use the entirety of the track, and, for the more adventurous, all of the confining barriers as well.



One of the complaints leveled against many of the stock car mods for *rFactor* has been one of chronic understeer, or push—in other words, the car simply will not turn, and you have to back off in an unrealistic manner to get the right front tyre to regain the grip it so recently lost just to get around the corner.

In many discussions, a lot of this was blamed on the ISI base product, and it was often noted that 'ISI sims just don't give a good feeling for the front end', or, words to that effect. And I would tend to agree. While I don't think that all mods suffer from this terminal understeer, I certainly feel that a large proportion of the oval racing mods did, in fact, push a lot, and not due to aero effects either. And that was my first surprise with the TPSCC mod: Fully expecting a very tight car (as is often the case with default setups), I was very surprised at how easy it was to make the thing feel like it had absolutely no rear end grip whatsoever ... with a relatively small change to the setup.

Well, *eventually* I got it to feel like that. You see, when I first tried the mod, I had a difficult time feeling the front end 'bite' into the track, but a lot of that was cured by one simple adjustment—the steering ratio setting in the setup page. Once I got the wandering of the nose taken care of, the car became a much more enjoyable—and believable—driving experience. I am sure that many would use a different steering ratio that I have, so your mileage may vary, but it does go to remind one of the importance of not ruling anything out on an ill-handling car. So you have been warned—there are some great

default setups out there for this mod, but make sure to put your own individual touches on them, and also make sure that you understand what each setting does—this mod is ultra sensitive to setup changes, much like the real cars, and too much of a good thing is always going to let you down in the garage.

I soon came to a better understanding of what I needed to make the car suit my particular style (*slow—ed*), and when I rang up a 15.484 second time at the bull ring of Tennessee, it brought a pretty big smile to my face. Not only had I overcome the sixteen second barrier with a handful of setup changes, I was able to thoroughly appreciate the importance of driving with the throttle as coming out of those short length, high banked corners; if you don't pay attention to throttle delivery, more often than not you would be pulling concrete out of your radiator in a matter of seconds. The simulated feel of the car as it unloads out of the corner with your right foot unleash eight hundred horsepower with barely two rear wheels on the ground, it goes from a visual experience to a 'pit of the stomach' feeling, and really gives an idea as to just how damn difficult it is to drive one of these things. It was also noted that the tyres not only gave a very satisfying 'squawking' sound as they approached their lateral grip load limits, but you could *feel* this as well! That is something that is difficult to get right, getting the thing to feel as if it has tyres up front as opposed to high friction sleds, but this mod pulls it off—no small thing, considering *rFactor*'s well-documented Force-Feedback issues.

And beware—it is extremely easy to lose the rear end of the car if you are not paying proper attention to what it is doing, sound wise or grip wise. Much like a slowly tipping motorcycle, there comes a point where you can no longer stop the event, merely get out of the way. Or, in the case of the stock car, hang on for the ride. In other words, you will often find you have plenty of grip, but don't become complacent, or you just may wind up touching a bit too much of the apron and meeting the wall. In moments such as these, the wall will be happy to meet you—but you won't be ...

The Glen Incident

Brian Ring has posted up an outstanding guide for this mod, providing for the user a better understanding of the situation they are dealing with, whether on a speedway, super speedway, or short track. No doubt, a road course discussion will follow as the proper tracks are released, so I decided what better place to test my limited abilities with this mod than at a road track! When all was said and done, it turned out to be a pretty good idea as I learned quite a bit, and even got a bit faster in the process.

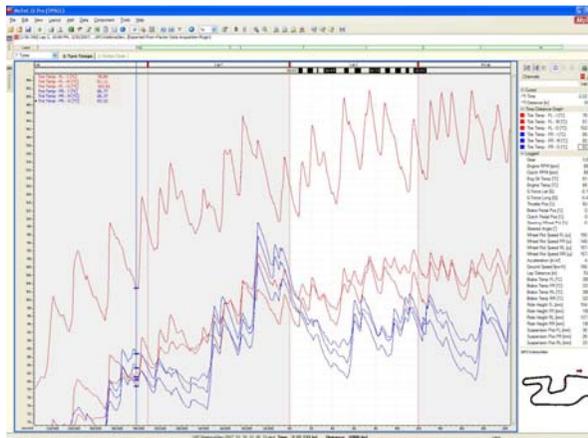
If you have driven the 1979 mod layout of Watkins Glen, you know it is quite a bit different than the one we have today. Off the top of my head, it seems a bit longer. Anyway, I loaded up my car, and went to the Upgrade tab to make sure I had the proper chassis and tyre type selected. Sure enough, when I selected the road course car, the vehicle shape changed in the proper way; gone was the strange looking nose of the super speedway car,

replaced with the life-giving vents for the front brakes. And to further indicate my choice, the passenger side window was now removed, having been in place to reduce the drag on the car in the restrictor plate choked super speedway configuration. With road car chassis and road car tyre in, erm, hand, I made my way to some laps.

On my way to the track, I made a cursory check of the setup, noticed some identical settings on the car that you would expect with a symmetrical setup, and made sure the steering ratio was set to my favorite value, around seven. It became readily apparent, once on the track, that something was amiss. Not only was I slower than usual, the car was a nightmare to handle. I simply chalked it up to not enough lap time under my belt, and kept driving, adjusting to the odd handling beast the best that I could. Finally, I had had enough! Something was wrong.

I wondered if the reason for the evilness would show up on a MoTeC trace, so I exited the sim, and had a look. When I noticed the left front tyre temperature, it was plain to see that something was extremely wrong with the setup, or, more likely, my driving style. The left front outer temperature was about forty degrees Celsius higher than any other spot on any other tyre!

Back to the sim I went, straight to the garage for a talk with my engineer, only to discover that in my haste to assume things, I had failed to assume that there could have been a mistake in the setup, and sure enough there was—the camber on the tyres was set as if on an oval. I don't know how, or why, but that is not the point, the point is that I did not bother enough with the setup, and in my assumption, failed to note a rather glaring error. It is true that an asymmetrical setup is often used, even on a road course, but this was a bit extreme! I made the change and hit the track, amazed at my lack of noticing the camber settings, and further amazed at how quickly MoTeC led me in the right direction for rectifying the problem.



The next problem? Well, it was nearly impossible for me to put my finger on, but something just didn't feel right {*Inability to turn right?—ed*}. It was odd, but one thing was clear—proper camber settings had transformed the beast into a manageable drive, albeit one with a learning curve attached to the brakes. And yet, even though I was able to bang out some laps, there was something not quite right...back to the garage I went, but I didn't notice anything strange. So, I watched the replay, and as I watched my car begin to leave the pits, I noticed it—the orientation of the car! It was obvious that the ride height was asymmetrical! Sure enough, the ride heights were not symmetrical, and not only could I feel that, I could see it as well—a difference of around an inch and a half, mind you, but damned if the car modeling was done so well as to provide that level of visual feedback.

Again, I had simply glossed over the setup package, assuming all was well. Shows what I know! Anyway, I had to fiddle around a bit (as you cannot directly adjust the right front ride height), but with enough tweaking of the others, I finally managed a symmetrical setup, front to back. I also realized just how deep this mod is, and how

wonderful it is to have such remarkable feedback of the car and its condition in terms of feel, telemetry, and just looking at the damn thing. Once back on the track, I managed to break the two minute barrier, which I considered pretty damn good considering I wasn't supposed to be on the damn track anyway!

I could go on for quite a bit longer, but there just isn't the time or the space for it. Suffice it to say that the mod will give the serious enthusiast some extremely challenging and rewarding driving, the kind of driving we have not seen in a while. It may very well be that this is a 'love it or hate it' mod, but that only makes it identical to other great sims, like *Grand Prix Legends*, and I think we all know how good that thing was, hate it or not! The US Pits have delivered a tremendous effort with the TPSCC mod, and those who have been just taking a look should definitely take a drive next.

If you're looking for a modern-day NASCAR simulator, look no further: This is the only sim in town. It is that good.



AUTOSIMSPORT Side-by-Side

Race2Panoz

Todd Weiss sits down with AutoSimSport to explain exactly how his fledgling company got access to ISI's fully-licensed Le Mans thriller, and how R2P's unique business model can help modders earn some much deserved moola ...

AUTOSIMSPORT





Gentlemen Start Your Engines!



Race2Play has been active for a few months now, and already have secured two startling coups: The first was securing the sanctioning from a real-world Body, and the second was securing the exclusive rights to ISI's licensed Panoz car, a month before the rest of the world gets to ride them ... So how did they do it, and what does the future hold for one of sim-racing's most innovative, and sim-racing's most business-orientated sites? Todd Weiss holds the answers.

AUTOSIMSPORT: How is Race2Play going? What was the initial reaction like, and is it growing the way you expected?

Todd Weiss: The opening reaction has been fantastic, but we honestly did expect that. Regardless of industry, the upswing of the adoption curve has always been people who want to be first and foremost into a new thing, who can't wait to jump in and see what it offers. Tim {McArthur} and I dedicated ourselves to scratch-building the very racing organization we always wished had been available to us, as long-time sim racers ourselves ... We were certain the early adopters would fall in love with the result for the same reasons, and haven't been disappointed.

Our affiliation with the National Auto Sport Association {NASA} has been wonderful, and has exposed sim-racing to tens of thousands real-life racers. We've had a write-up in 'Grassroots Motorsports' magazine here in the U.S., and have been contacted by the editor of an international racing magazine as well. NASA's leadership gets a standing ovation from me for being the first to step forward in real life and say, 'Hey, you know what? This sim-racing has a genuine place in the racing world.' I'm sure others will follow, but one needed to go first and it was NASA ... And I'm proud as all get-out NASA deemed Race2Play a professional-caliber organization worthy of the sanctioning.

The only real issue we're having with growth is that all the ideas coming from me and Tim and the enthusiastic adopters are outpacing our ability to put them in place. But having too many ideas is a 'problem' I'll gladly accept.

We actively develop Race2Play, and there's always something coming from just over the horizon.

AUTOSIMSPORT: What are the advantages of becoming a member of R2P?

TW: The analogy of cable television comes to mind. Yes, you can put up an antenna and receive a half-dozen broadcast channels for free. Why, then, would anyone opt for cable TV service? Because you'll get ten times as many choices piped to your set, access to additional features such as movie channels and HD broadcasts, on-demand technology, personalized account settings, and more. Race2Play applies this paradigm to the sim-world. You get ten times as many choices as offered anywhere else, access to additional features such as individual and team homepages with rankings, histories and statistics, personalized settings, not to mention neat bonuses like the Panoz add-on pre-release, and more.

Race2Play is operating from three to eight events per day, every day, and fielding grids of roughly twenty-to-twenty-five cars in each. Every event is monitored by a live Steward, and runs on time. We support every major racing sim, and its major add-ons, with plans to support other sims in the future. We run events across multiple time slots for racers around the globe (the European slots also work great for U.S. night-shifters who are free in the day), and have multiple dedicated servers in North America and Europe to accommodate this reach.

It's fun to watch drivers coming into this environment: For the first few weeks, their eyes get huge, and they



gorge on everything they can. Then comes the inevitable blog or forum post saying, 'If I keep up this pace I'm going to explode!'

Every one of us went through it, too, believe me. What happens is guys end up picking one or two series they'll run for championship points, and then taking the other schedules as something of an *à la carte* menu, picking new mods they'd like to run a time or two but not for a whole season, or finding a race to jump into when the urge suits them ... In that respect, they get something akin to pick-up racing convenience without pick-up racing craziness, because they're joining organized

servers filled with other Race2Play members, presided over by a Steward.

Across from choices, the other major cornerstone of Race2Play is community. You can have all your varied racing adventures in one location, and share them all with the same people you've come to know and call friends. There is a lot of great give-and-take on our boards, blogs, race reports, and such ... Even though you may share a track with some of the guys just once a month, they're still with you every day sharing all your other experiences, engaging in discussions, or offering help. The advantage of not having to fracture your racing

interests across different communities is not having to fracture your community interests, either.

It's a kick to be reading through a thread and suddenly come across this increasingly common post: 'OMG! So-and-so? I haven't seen you in years! We have to jump into one of these races together!' And we're seeing more and more names that were prominent five or six years ago but then slipped off the radar in the darkness of the post-Papy debacles. It's good to see them back in the light.

Panoz Esperante
The Panoz Esperante GTR-1 (also known as Panoz GTR-1 and later the Panoz GTP) was a race car developed by Panoz Auto Development and Reynard Motorsport for grand tourer endurance racing in 1997. Although named after the Panoz Esperante roadster, the GTR-1 actually bore no mechanical relation to the production Esperante, instead sharing only minor styling points. Only two road-legal GTR-1s were built to meet homologation requirements set forth by the ruling bodies which the racing cars ran under. The GTR-1 competed in the FIA GT Championship and 24 Hours of Le Mans in Europe as well as the IMSA GT, United States Road Racing Championship, and American Le Mans Series in North America. (Source: [Wikipedia](#))

AUTOSIMSPORT: What does the future hold for Race2Play?

TW: What doesn't it hold? That's probably a question

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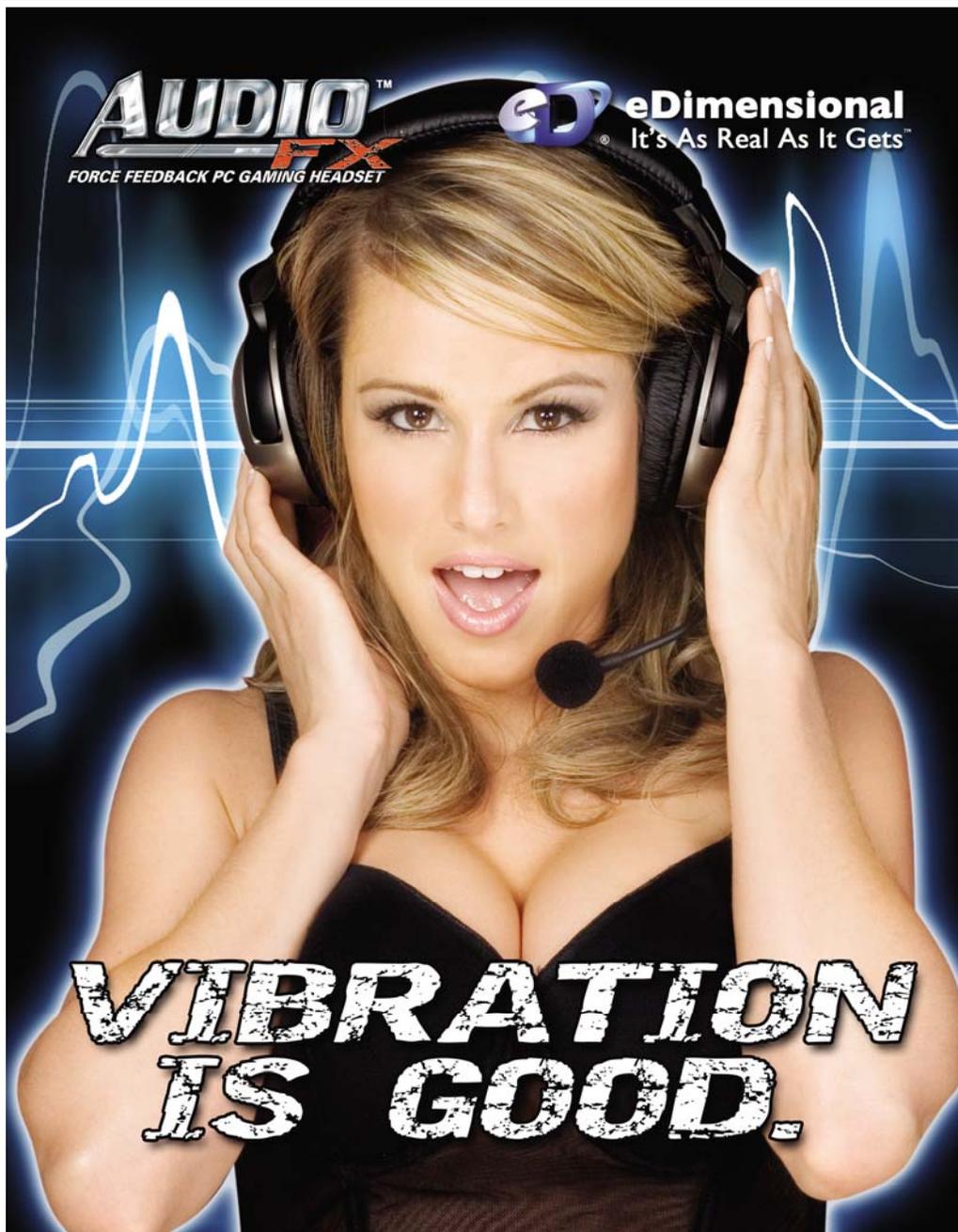


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that would stump me. As more and more people adopt Race2Play as their home, we have greater flexibility to add more racing options, more time slot options ... As Race2Play was built from scratch by two active sim-racers who love the sport, we have the architecture in place to create and include any sort of feature we dream up ... We're really just getting started. The more successfully we grow, the better positioned we will be to develop these dream items, to take Race2Play to its fullest potential. I may be biased, but I can't imagine racing ever again somewhere that didn't offer all these choices, all these features ... I think we're doing something good for sim-racing. Like cable TV, it's all about choices.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Can you explain how you went about acquiring the Panoz from ISI?

TW: Tim first opened a line of communication to Gjon {Camaj} at ISI back in 2005, when Tim and I were sketching out the first skeletons of R2P. Gjon was helpful not only with our questions about *rFactor*, but about the sim-racing business in general. By early 2006, Tim and I arrived at the plan that would become the modern Race2Play, left our day jobs and began pounding it out seven days a week. When we finally got there near the end of the year, Tim picked up the phone again to say, 'Hey, we did it!, and thank you for *rFactor* in general' as it has a prominent role at Race2Play. The conversations progressed from there. Tim and I have so many ideas it's intimidating to look at our to-do list sometimes, and some of those ideas progressed into talks with Gjon of cross-promotional possibilities between our two companies. Pre-releasing the Panoz add-on through Race2Play was the first to take hold.



It's not for me to ascribe the reasoning to the decisions on Gjon's end, but I'll tell you what I believe holds true for both companies, and for sim-racing in general: Race2Play is not only exposing sim-racing to more active and potentially active racers than any other such organization, but, more specifically, is exposing *rFactor* to hordes of *GTR2* racers, *NR2003* racers, *GTL* racers, and so on. These racers soon realize their options on the Race2Play menu increase substantially and immediately just by adding another sim to their arsenal. It doesn't take a genius to see how a company would benefit from getting prominent exposure on Race2Play. And, yes, there is an arrangement between us for ISI to reap some financial return from this pre-release period, though to my thinking the act alone is more valuable than the dollar figure. If Race2Play succeeds, we will be showing that sim-racers are, in fact, willing to support the economic growth of sim-racing, that there's good cause for companies such as ISI or others that even may not yet be formed to go pumping money and man-hours into this market.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Can we expect more of such coups going forward?

TW: Absolutely. We already have a verbal agreement with one mod group to pre-release a greatly anticipated add-on, and welcome the opportunity to speak with any of the mod groups about similar deals. It's exposure for them, a bit of financial return on the work they've done, and exposure for sim-racing in general to take another step toward prosperity.

AUTOSIMSPORT: When you say that modders can reap some financial benefits, can you explain what these are, in general, and how this works for modders? And, obviously, can you elaborate on why modders would benefit from 'launching' through R2P?

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TW: We have three distinct models on which to base the financial aspect of it, and we're not fixed to any specific one. It's a matter of assessing the sim-racing temperature, and the add-on being released, and getting the mod-maker the best deal. Are we buying anyone new sports cars? Of course not, but if, for example, a mod group got its server rentals paid for the year, that's a decent step forward, isn't it?

The intangible benefits also are compelling: R2P's reach is growing, and any company or group would benefit from having prominent exposure with us, and being included in our system. Make Race2Play part of the development cycle, and modders have our Groups, Blogs, Race Teams, and such for chronicling the project and cultivating fans; we can even set up private beta testing groups and servers with a screened cadre of experienced, above-average sim-racers at the ready. And if a mod

group has actual commercial aspirations for its work, it's possible Race2Play can use its connections or NASA's to help acquire trademark licenses.

Modders may have their own reasons for involving R2P, but any avenue gaining them deserved recognition is a good thing. Anyone interested contact me or Tim and we'll get the discussion rolling.

AUTOSIMSPORT: Could you explain some of the benefits your link with NASA has provided you, and provided them?

TW: The big winner in our connection to NASA is sim-racing in general. The first real-world racing body to embrace sim-racing is a genuine news angle that's brought interest from racing magazines and newspapers. It's brought an influx of real-world racers, and the bond between NASA and R2P is a pledge that these racers' exposure to our sport be treated with the same standards of conduct and levels of organization they've come to expect from a racing body. It's also brought an influx of new racers, guys who read the racing news and are avid fans, and suddenly understand there is an outlet to experience the thrill of competition themselves.

At some point in the past right, before we started our own sim-careers, that was pretty much every one of us, wasn't it? Our pledge to these guys is to welcome them into our world and help them succeed.

NASA and Race2Play have plans for programs further bridging the two worlds of racing, whether it's helping interested sim-racers get out there for a real track day, or it's preparing interested NASA drivers for upcoming competition. Hint: If you'd like to spend twenty-five hours of practice for twenty-five hours of something, stay tuned!

AUTOSIMSPORT: There has been the usual vocal criticism of both you and ISI regarding the Panoz launch: Seems—if the forums are any indication, anyway—that the majority (or, more accurately, the vocal majority)

seem to be under the impression that developers and mod-makers should forever offer their products for free, without even a thought to financial remuneration. What do you think of the criticism that says it should not have been released through you guys, but as a free add-on?

TW: Well, first it must be noted the Panoz add-on *is* being released as a free add-on; April 17 is the date, and it has been announced as such from the very get-go. The pre-release deal between R2P and ISI was to the benefit of each company, and yet didn't take away a single thing from the sim-racing public.

Mock Race2Play for working its business model if you will, but the prosperity of any industry is driven by economic growth. Picture a sim-racing future where companies are outdoing themselves to be throwing fantastic new products and services at us left and right. Enterprise is not the 'bad' thing a vocal minority tries to make it to be. Race2Play is the result of some significant investment and calculated risk on our part, and it's rewarding to see our users make blog entries like, 'This is what I've longed for my whole sim-career'. Hopefully, Race2Play's success will serve notice to anyone with The Next Big Idea that sim-racers are ready to support the prosperous future it has waiting. Like cable TV, it's all about choices.



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Driver - Overall						
	NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES
1	Samuel Krueger	8.742	28	18	73	8947
2	Darin Boyd	7.669	7	9	40	4066
3	Tim McArthur	7.503	27	27	119	9058
4	Scott Michaels	7.424	15	12	48	3622
5	Kent Welker	7.416	18	24	90	7944
6	Conor McCarrell	7.043	30	21	93	8198
7	David Banta	7.040	12	7	48	3338
8	Dean Shackleton	6.217	4	7	129	10456
9	Todd Weiss	5.968	3	1	54	5287
10	Grecian Worship	5.934	2	2	58	3187
Driver - Sports car						
	NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES
1	Rick Knapp	9.687	3	1	9	852
2	Wilfred van den Brink	9.401	3	1	8	1828
3	Claus Juel	9.340	23	21	39	5467
4	Janko Glavac	9.177	9	10	19	2125
5	Ari Nieminen	8.552	12	6	40	6210
6	Samuel Krueger	8.526	14	11	43	6667
7	Nuno Coelho	8.274	6	5	32	5324
8	Craig Hattingh	8.151	2	4	9	2124
9	Tolga Incekaraoglu	8.086	4	4	28	3356
10	Steve Smith	7.454	5	3	23	4489

Driver - Touring car							Driver - Stock car						
	NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES		NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES
1	Dmitry Lukanov	10.681	12	11	14	568	1	Bill Johnson	7.678	2	1	10	1432
2	Scott Michaels	10.362	6	7	11	875	2	Mike Maloney	7.559	3	4	9	1437
3	Claus Juel	9.841	19	11	24	1616	3	Todd Weiss	6.529	2	1	8	1216
4	Wyatt Gooden	9.746	6	7	7	392	4	Kevin Sylver	6.492	2	2	10	1232
5	Samuel Krueger	9.219	7	4	17	1541	5	Tom Thomas	6.333	0	0	7	1227
6	Kent Welker	9.099	7	4	30	1869	6	Larry Anderson	5.988	0	0	8	948
7	Ari Nieminen	9.077	1	3	16	1120	7	Rick Bisconer	5.743	0	0	9	1633
8	Bas Zwartebol	9.003	5	4	12	1091	8	Greg Bradshaw	5.739	3	3	7	584
9	Janko Glavac	8.718	7	11	20	1400	9	John Turner	4.557	0	0	8	1284
10	Nuno Coelho	8.706	3	3	7	497	10	Bob Maloney	3.931	0	0	7	907
Driver - Open wheel							Team - Overall						
	NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES		NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES
1	Dmitry Lukanov	9.586	12	7	22	807	1	GTNDC	8.386	96	82	275	29946
2	Pat Dotson	9.057	6	5	19	916	2	McArthur Motorsports	7.813	15	14	67	3721
3	Samuel Krueger	8.834	7	3	13	738	3	Renown 4 Racing	6.767	21	12	95	5888
4	Chris Chappell	8.333	1	0	8	251	4	CanAm Racing	6.488	9	10	99	8934
5	Conor McCarrell	8.236	12	7	20	747	5	Western States Motorsports	6.256	4	5	46	2214
6	Kirill Izotov	8.073	3	3	10	492	6	Race2Play Blue	6.223	9	14	69	5784
7	Wyatt Gooden	8.047	6	8	11	408	7	Over The Hill Racing	6.119	11	6	149	15509
8	David Banta	8.002	11	6	29	1240	8	Team Shark Online Racing	5.955	5	1	63	3671
9	Tim McArthur	7.973	11	8	35	1545	9	OGRacing Team	5.537	5	10	150	11985
10	Darin Boyd	7.912	4	4	11	465	10	SoCal Motorsports	5.449	20	17	172	14604

Team - Sports car							Team - Open wheel						
	NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES		NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES
1	GTNDC	8.268	52	55	145	21665	1	Kamrad Racing	8.652	8	7	31	1220
2	LMTC MotorSports	7.757	5	2	15	2844	2	UltraForce Racing	8.608	6	6	20	937
3	Vorshlag Motorsports	7.123	2	1	18	2037	3	McArthur Motorsports	8.166	8	6	27	1017
4	CoDa Competition	7.118	5	3	38	5193	4	GTNDC	7.293	11	7	40	1745
5	Team ECCI	6.841	4	2	28	6157	5	Feint-Motion MotorSports	7.104	4	0	37	1220
6	RACING for SERBIA	6.704	4	3	16	1897	6	Renown 4 Racing	6.863	12	4	42	1355
7	Race2Play Blue	6.633	8	11	40	4281	7	Western States Motorsports	6.527	3	4	19	760
8	McArthur Motorsports	6.620	3	2	19	1525	8	Over The Hill Racing	6.417	1	0	12	642
9	HM Racing	6.616	5	6	16	2706	9	CanAm Racing	6.302	7	2	34	1869
10	Team Shark Online Racing	6.563	3	0	17	1455	10	Race2Play Orphans	5.978	0	1	45	1688

Team - Touring car						Team - Stock car							
	NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES		NAME	RANK	WINS	POLES	RESULTS	MILES
1	GTNDC	9.060	33	20	90	6536	1	Racing For Jesus	5.615	2	2	38	5744
2	McArthur Motorsports	8.440	4	6	21	1178	2	BMR Racing	5.418	3	4	38	5945
3	Russian eXpansion	8.208	1	2	12	863							
4	UltraForce Racing	7.818	5	5	19	1022							
5	Feint-Motion MotorSports	7.812	9	12	46	4389							
6	Scuderia Bollesnegro	7.742	2	2	17	1483							
7	Ace Mobility	7.728	2	1	12	515							
8	Kamrad Racing	7.593	10	9	30	1510							
9	Renown 4 Racing	7.297	6	7	28	1719							
10	CoDa Competition	7.206	3	3	17	1334							

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**MEMBERSHIP IS FOR 45 DAYS

Shake, Rattle, and Roll

Lou Magyar gets those good vibrations with eDimensional's AudioFX Force-Feedback headset before burrowing into the head of Michael Epstein, eDimensional's President ...

T3

Lou Magyar





eDimensional having been making some in-roads into the world of sim-racing for sometime now: Their innovative headphones have become *the* standard for the serious sim-racer (official gear for some of sim-racing's most professional leagues, such as Sim 500, as well the only units to be officially certified by TeamSpeak), offering not only crystal-clear fidelity, but, by the innovative inclusion of Force-Feedback, creating a unit that not only sounds great, but adds another dimension to the realism afforded the simulated: Not only can you now hear a car buzzing behind you, but you can literally feel its position in your mind's-eye.

eDimensional's AudioFX headset is a unique apparatus—it provides feedback through your ears, and, in so doing, literally gets into your head. The AudioFX headset uses a base-boosting Force-Feedback unit built into the headset to provide vibration straight to your cranium (that's the part between your ears, in case you're wondering).

The headset is a full-cover variety, with comfortable ear cushions that will remain that way for hours on end. I've been using my AudioFX headset for a month now, and it has become the headset I choose to race with. I have a Logitech® headset sitting right next to the AudioFX on my desk—and it remains there come race time.

The AudioFX, though, isn't just about innovation—it also features audio quality of the highest standard. The frequency response is first-rate (20-20,000Hz), and you immediately appreciate the effect of the full-cover headset when you jump into the car.

But what makes the AudioFX transcend the limitations of the stock headset is in its feedback: Even idling in the pits, you can feel the engine vibrate behind (or in front of) you through the headset. Blip the throttle, and the Force-

Feedback in the headset lets you feel like the car is twisting beneath you. It never ceases to amaze me, what a simple vibration input, when combined with visual cues, can make your brain *think* you are doing.

The headset, over-and-above its sound fidelity and comfort, is well-made, and comes along with some nifty LEDs on the ear pieces that lets the guy next to you know you're having a rockin' good time: The intensity of the vibrations determines the LED's color and amplitude.

After extended periods of wearing a headset—or, perhaps more accurately, a mediocre headset—ear fatigue will set in (that dull, almost stinging sensation that sim-racers are all too accustomed to), but I have worn the AudioFX for more than three hours at a sitting without any such problems. This is due to the design of the ear pieces, and the connecting arch: The headset is neither too tight—which causes too much pressure on the ears—nor too loose, with creates a need to constantly adjust them for fit. I have worn headsets that will induce pain after only about an hour of use, or constantly slip down and get out of place, but the AudioFX headset will do neither. Having said that, I should perhaps add that, should you be a pinhead, or a fathead, this might not apply in your case.

The AudioFX seduces your mind by using this nifty thing called 'positional audio', which is a way of saying—things on either side of you will have more amplification on that side of your ear, and head. A car approaching from the right will sound—and *feel*—that way to your head (and the brain, presumably, that is encased within it). It's a lot like having Dolby 5.1 surround sound on your head. Combine the surround sound effect with the bass-boosting Force-Feedback, and you have a recipe for a unique audio

experience in which you can literally *feel* the vibrations emanating from your car, as well as trackside objects like rumble-strips which will provide vibrations not just to your Force-Feedback wheel, but into your head as well. The vibration feels as if the rumble-strip is shaking the whole car, and it adds another dimension—an electronic dimension—of that Holy Grail of simulation: Sensation.

The AudioFX comes along with a noise-canceling microphone that delivers superior sound quality. The whole headset is TeamSpeak certified, and sim-racers I chat with have noticed a difference in the sound of my voice. Those who have met me comment that it sounds like I'm talking on the telephone.

The AudioFX headset also features a control bud in-line, resulting in the user's ability to control both the audio volume, as well as the Force-Feedback strength, and connecting the unit couldn't be simpler; plug in the mic' and speaker connection to your sound card, and then power-up the Force-Feedback by sticking-in the USB connector. Just three connections, and you're ready to feel the good vibrations.

The AudioFX headset is one of the best gaming headsets you can get your head on, even without the Force-Feedback system. Throw in the vibration inducing Force-Feedback, though, and what you have is a crucial piece of gear that will, without any doubt, become as critical to the sim-racer's hardware as Force-Feedback wheels.

I was so impressed with the headphones that I decided to ask Michael Epstein, president of eDimensional, about his company's philosophy as providers of sim-peripherals for the serious simmer.



Lou Magyar: Michael, your company seems to have found a niche market in the gaming industry, offering gaming products that aren't found anywhere else: How did you get started?

Michael Epstein: eDimensional has been around for almost seven years, and we really got our start in the simulation genre. Flight and racing simmers tended to gravitate towards our products because we were always on a quest to make the simulation as realistic as possible. Starting with our 3D glasses that provide real depth perception to games, racing simmers found that they could actually improve lap times by more accurately gauging distances and curves. Since then, we've added a number of additional products to our line, all targeted specifically towards gamers, and

providing a dramatic enhancement to the realism of gaming. Even as we develop new products, we always do so with the sim-pilot or racer at the forefront of minds.

LM: Having such a tight focus on prospective customers might be viewed as limiting by some companies. What made you decide to cater to simmers specifically?

ME: We've really always held the simulation enthusiasts in the highest regard, and often develop products specifically with our simmer customers in mind. Not only do simmers have extremely high standards for product performance, but by definition they require products that produce the most realistic experience possible. That's what our company is all about; not just ordinary peripherals that are an alternative to the standard, but ones with tangible features that are

specifically designed to enhance the realism and genuinely improve the gameplay experience.

LM: You have some extremely cool and apparently magical gadgets, like the 3-D glasses and Force-Feedback headset; where do you get the ideas for new products?

ME: We generally approach product design by determining a conceptual need first, then figuring out how to address it in a unique, innovative way. For example, our first product—the 3D Glasses—came about when one of my associates went to Universal Studios and viewed one of those 3D movie rides. Being gamers ourselves growing up, we immediately imagined the impact true 3D could have on video games, so we set out to find and create the necessary technology. We've continued to apply this method to other products in our product line, ranging from intuitive motion sensing to immersive audio and even interactive voice recognition.

One of our more recent products is our AudioFX Force Feedback Gaming Headset. We designed this to increase situational awareness in addition to providing a high quality audio experience. The headset is equipped with transducers that create a vibration sensation based on what is going on in a game or race. So if a car is approaching high-side from the rear, you should feel the rumble of the approach on your right. We're also the only headset officially certified by TeamSpeak for chat, so you're guaranteed clear communication during online play. We're also proud to be named the official headset of several of the most popular sim-racing leagues, including the Sim 500, Sim Challenge, TASCOR, and others. It's really validating when prominent organizations recognize the value of your products in one of the key genres that they were designed for. Additionally, we know drivers aren't going to sacrifice their own performance to endorse a product, so when we have great drivers using our products, and leagues endorsing them, we know they truly make a positive difference.



LM: From concept to a marketable product can be a challenge. Not everyone will be willing to jump in and try new things. In what way do you try to make sure the hardware will be embraced by prospective customers?

ME: Whenever we consider a new product, we not only work with the best developers and designers in the field, but always seek the feedback of our target gamers. For example, we've worked with a number of top racing simulation websites for many years, and when we have an idea, we like to run it by the leaders of these sites to get suggestions before ever finalizing the product details. Moreover, in addition to our own rigorous internal testing, we often give these experts the first opportunity to test out the final product before we release it to the public, to make sure it meets the highest standards for performance.

LM: Where do you see eDimensional headed in the future? What drives your thought process?

ME: We've been very impressed particularly with the evolution of competitive sim-racing. We feel that sim-racing is ideal for structured online competition and leagues, so it's great to see a number of leagues being formed and growing so quickly. From the qualifying races to the online broadcasts and simply the accuracy of the software itself, the parallels between real and sim-racing is remarkable.

We've really been stepping up our sponsorships as well. We're naming a lot of races in various leagues and sending out a whole bunch of prizes. We want to contribute to the growth of the competitive online racing scene not just because it's good from a marketing perspective, but because it's genuinely entertaining.

Our newest product was really designed for simmers on-the-go. While flight simmers have yokes, race simmers of course have their wheels. It's great to load up a race on a laptop when you're traveling, but packing a wheel might present a problem. The G-Pad Pro is a motion

sensing gamepad with rumble that plugs in via USB. It's compact, but you can actually hold it like a steering wheel and turn your hands to steer just like you were holding a wheel. We've got both wired and wireless versions available. The sensitivity is fully adjustable, and it's really a lot of fun to use.

LM: That sounds like a super product. I might enjoy testing and reviewing that for our readers too. What does the future hold for eDimensional and its line of sim-products?

ME: In the foreseeable future, we're actively working to add more unique products to our product line. We're also always trying to improve our existing products, and more often than not, this is done through free software updates. We see the coming years as a continuation of our current strategy of bringing affordable, innovative products to market, and hope to further expand our retail distribution in order to make our products even more accessible to customers worldwide. We're looking forward to our increased role in professional gaming, and the proliferation of this as mainstream entertainment.

Pros:

- ⊕ Comfortable
- ⊕ Lightweight
- ⊕ Excellent Frequency Response
- ⊕ Noise Cancelling Microphone
- ⊕ Force-Feedback Vibration
- ⊕ Positional Audio Feedback

Cons:

- ⊗ Volume level must be fairly high to operate vibration—I would like to see some sort of gain amplifier to reduce speaker volume, yet provide vibration at desired level.
- ⊗ No mute switch on the control bud



Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing?

T4

Before simulated-racing, wannabe race-drivers competed in the highly-competitive world of R/C racing, and in that scene, Texan Frosty St.Clair (yes, the name is real!) was one of the world's best. Now one of sim-racing's top talents, Frosty took some time off from competing in the sim-racing series du jour, the F1 flogseries, to reminisce on the highs-and-lows of two decades spent racing against the best ... and to answer the question: Can sim-racing ever equal the commercialism of R/C racing?

IvanAskew



T4 Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing? *continued*



Frosty St.Clair, the thirty-three year old R/C veteran and six-time IFMAR Worlds qualifier, hails from Sugar Land, a suburb in the sprawling city of Houston, Texas, from where he sat down to discuss the peculiar world of R/C racing, and the lessons sim-racing can learn from a sport that sees some of its premiere drivers earning in excess of \$100,000 a year, and in which sponsorship has become pretty-much standard across the field.

Frosty, who is single with no kids, and who lives with a cat named Boo Boo, works, it will come as little surprise, in the oil and gas industry, and has been a top-level R/C racer for almost twenty years. He started

racing R/C cars when he was fourteen, after having seen the cars raced on a show called 'That's Incredible'. "I wanted one right away," he recalls, "but my dad thought I was too young—I was seven at the time—and said if I still wanted one when I turned fourteen, he would buy me one then."

Between his desire and his ultimate ownership, Frosty—like many kids—went through the entire gamut of what he calls "Radio Shack type R/C Cars—which is just a way of saying the cheap, plastic kind"—until his fourteenth birthday when, just as he had promised, his dad took him to a hobby shop and bought him his first real R/C car. "It was a Mauri

Hunter; not a great car by any stretch, but that's how I got started".

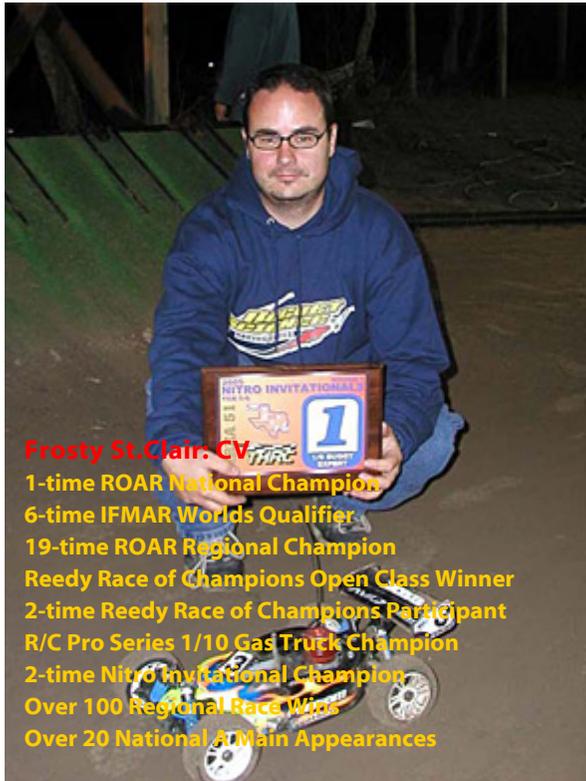
Not long after that, his dad bought him an Associated RC10 {see sidebar} which, at the time, was the, "real deal, the only competitive race car at the track in 2WD." It didn't take long for Frosty to demonstrate his talent: "I won my first-ever stock class race with it," he tells me, adding ruefully, "that was a real surprise to both my dad ... and me!"

Later that summer, his dad bought him a 1/10 on-road Pan Car: As fate would have it, Frosty then read that the first ever ROAR On-Road Nationals was being held in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "I had only run two races with the car before my dad decided we should go, since a lot of our local racing friends were headed to the event. There was a stock and a modified class, in which the modified class was filled with mainly sponsored drivers. Even the stock class had a good amount of sponsored drivers too, with a lot of manufacturer's looking to claim a national title. To everyone's surprise—again—I TQ'ed (top qualified), and then promptly won the stock class. I was the first ever 1/10 Pan Car Stock ROAR (Radio Operated Automobile Racing, the sport's U.S. sanctioning body) National Champion. I got sponsored shortly after by Team Associated, and Reedy, with many more sponsors coming after that."

With his first race ending in such spectacular success, Frosty immediately embarked on R/C racing as a fledgling career, and has been racing ever since, winning numerous big races, and placing in the Top Ten at Nationals several times, as well as competing in World Championships in places as far away as Japan.

With his first national dating back to the tail-end of the 1980s, Frosty is now very much on the downside of his R/C racing career, as he explains: "I have been racing now for nineteen years, and feel like I have done it all, including living in Southern California, and working for an R/C Car company."

T4 Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing? *continued*



Frosty St. Clair, CV
1-time ROAR National Champion
6-time IFMAR Worlds Qualifier
19-time ROAR Regional Champion
Reedy Race of Champions Open Class Winner
2-time Reedy Race of Champions Participant
R/C Pro Series 1/10 Gas Truck Champion
2-time Nitro Invitational Champion
Over 100 Regional Race Wins
Over 20 National A Main Appearances

Along the way, Frosty has picked-up numerous sponsorships, many of which he retains to this day: “I am still sponsored by X-Ray, RC America, Hudy, Pro-Line, Max Power Engines, Rocket Science Fuels, Avid Bearings, and Kinetix batteries. I am only racing 1/8th off-road at the moment, and off-road is really where my heart is. On-road is fun, but to me, it is a bit boring. I enjoy the timing involved in the jumps, and the slickness of dirt racing.”

Frosty is not alone in his love for off-road racing: The popularity of the sport can be traced back to the early 1980s with the introduction of off-road R/C cars. A racer at heart, though, means that Frosty is not hanging up his

racing-gloves, merely swapping one form of the sport with another—that is, R/C with sim-racing. That transition came about because of R/C racing.

“When I first started racing R/C cars, there were, of course, ‘the guys to beat’, as there are in any form of racing. In Houston, there were three guys at the time that carried that mystique with them—the *guys to beat*—the ones everyone would whisper about as they passed by.

“There was a mad scientist-type guy who was extremely smart, and always had these really cool trick-things on his car that were way ahead of everyone else: He was a really nice guy named Doug Fichuk. Then there was this overweight, extremely loud, obnoxious man named Mike Schmidt. Really, he was a good guy, but just a bit loud and overbearing at times. He was more talented than Doug, and took very good care of his equipment, and was very tough to beat.

“Lastly, there was a guy named Ray Pulido. Ray was a hippie of sorts—at least he seemed that way to me at my age. He was a tall, skinny guy who didn’t say a whole lot. Ray was *the guy*—he didn’t have the money to compete with the other two equipment-wise, but rarely lost as he just flat out-drove the others. He was *the guy to beat*, and had the most natural, raw talent. He was the one I most wanted to beat. I remember my first time racing against him; I got a better start in the main event, and led for the first three and a half minutes of a four minute race. Ray appeared to stay right behind me, in no hurry to go anywhere. When the announcer called thirty seconds left, Ray went by me like I was sitting still, and put nearly a quarter of a lap on me before the end of the race. All three of these guys raced a couple years before retiring, and that left me as the guy to beat in Houston.

“A little over three years ago, Ray emailed me when he saw my name on an R/C site: The site was a nationally run series, the first ever in the U.S. that I had started and owned. Ray and I talked on the phone a lot after, and he

begun telling me about sim-racing. It was the silliest thing I thought I had ever heard of at the time. Well, not too long after that, I owned *N2003*, and away I went. I have been sim-racing now for almost three years, and while I am not as good at sim-racing as I am in R/C, I feel I can hold my own with most people out on the track. Sim-racing has really replaced my need for competition that I got with R/C racing. It is much easier to sit at a PC and race against people from all over the world than it is to physically travel that world. And after nineteen years, something new is nice.”

Being competitive in R/C Car racing, Frosty explains, “Is a mix between talent, confidence, and practice-practice-practice,” and, as such, he sees the parallels between sim-racing and R/C racing in the amount of time and dedication the racer has to put into his sport. “I think anyone who is really good at R/C has, at some point in their lives, really worked hard at it. Spending countless hours at the track practicing, learning your car, trying new things, and learning what they do. To be good at R/C, you need to have good car control, as well as an understanding of what makes a good, fast turn. Then you can build upon that and turn it into a good fast lap.”

Where sim-racing requires the racer to model techniques taken from the real-world, R/C Racing has a style very much its own: “Having to wait on your car in a turn in R/C racing is everything,” Frosty explains. “You need to get in and get out. If your car is pushing or understeering, turning the really fast laps is impossible. In off-road, timing of the jump sections is also huge. You have to attack the face of the jump, letting off as you go off the jump so you don’t over jump the landing. R/C Racing is probably ninety percent mental, meaning, if you don’t have the confidence that you can do well, you are beaten before you even hit the track. Confidence, timing, all of this comes by simply practicing ... *a lot*. At a national or world level, the difference between the A-main drivers

T4 Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing? *continued*

(Top Ten qualifiers) and the drivers in say, the D-main (drivers who qualified between thirty-first and fortieth) is likely only going to be a couple of seconds over a five minute qualifier: When you factor in the jumps, the traffic, and all the other elements, it's actually quite amazing to have fifty or so drivers separated by mere seconds over a five or sometimes seven minute qualifier."

R/C Racing cars have also, since their invention back in the 1940s, strayed from their original roots in real-cars, and are now purpose-made for their own environment.

"I don't think there is a ton of comparison between R/C cars and real-life cars anymore," Frosty says. "When the cars first came out, they did look very similar to real-life cars or buggies. But since then, the cars have really transformed, at least on the off-road side. The on-road cars still look like real cars because there is really no form of R/C racing that is open wheel, so to keep those cars looking realistic is just a function of the shell, or what we call the body. Touring cars are the most popular form of on-road R/C, and so those cars look like real cars for the most part. However, it is pretty typical for a body manufacturer to come out with a body that works better than the rest, downforce-wise. For a long time, when touring cars were just becoming popular, a body manufacturer named Andy's made a Dodge Stratus that was far-and-away better than anything else out there. So you had about a hundred Dodge Stratuses running around on any given race day, and eventually all the other body manufacturers copied it. So in that respect, they may look similar to a real touring car, but it's highly unlikely in real-life to see one hundred Dodge Stratuses at a race! I do believe there is a better mix of body types now however, and you may see a couple different body types in a National or World level A-main event, rather than all one make. The 1/8th scale on-road gas cars look still a bit like a CanAm car with the bodies they run.



"However, in off-road, the cars running now look very little like anything in real-life with the exception of the 2WD 1/10 electric powered cars. I think the reason for this is the speed of the cars. In off-road, these cars will travel at around 30mph. So in real scale, that would equal 300mph for a real-life car. The shocks have become more complex, along with the shock angles. The way they build the cars now is much more a case of function rather than aesthetic. When the RC10 first came out, and the cars before it, they still resembled a dune buggy, but these cars are so much lighter and faster. A 1/8th on-road gas cars will approach speeds of 90mph on a straight, and they will get to those speeds in two-to-three seconds. In scale speed, that would be 900mph. So it is necessary to make advances in the cars to handle these speeds. 1/8th scale off-road cars will hit jumps sometimes five foot tall and can launch well over ten feet in the air. If you overshoot the landing, the cars don't break—they may just bounce slightly, and a well setup car won't even do that; it will just continue on its way. Most of our cars are wider, with much bigger tyres than anything in real-life. There are regulations for how wide and tall the car can be, as well as a minimum weight, but as in any form of racing, we tend to push those envelopes quite a bit, and that has caused the cars to transform and lose some of the realistic look. I suppose it would be neat for the cars to look more realistic, but it just didn't work out that way."



Frosty does not see much similarity in R/C racing and sim-racing: That is, in the style one needs to adopt in order to be competitive. "Sim-racing and R/C don't have a lot in common, other than the obvious—both are racing, and both are very competitive, and both are worldwide. But other than that, it's quite different. Sim-racing is all about momentum and braking early to get a good run on long straights, because that is where the speed is. In R/C, the cars can reach full speed in an instant, especially electrics, so it's super-hard into the turn and on the brakes, get the car to rotate as quickly as possible, and back hard on the gas. At least in off-road it is. On-road takes more finesse, but it is still not necessary to brake early, in most cases, on order to carry speed down the following straight. You still need to know about apexes and what a good racing line is to carry the speed, but it definitely is a different mind set. Also, in sim-racing, you have to often concern yourself with tyre wear, where in R/C, it's pretty much balls-to-the-wall as fast as you can drive it for the entirety of the race. The only class in which you ever have to worry about tyre wear from over-driving the car is on-road gas. But even there, for the most part, it's a go-fast-now or get left behind type situation."

In terms of the actual sport, however, Frosty does see many similarities, with R/C playing what should be a big-brother type roll in the commercialization of sim-racing.

T4 Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing? *continued*

Brief History of R/C Racing

1940s: Small, nitromethane-powered engines are introduced: With no 'radio control' available, the cars were attached to a tether, from whence they got their name: 'Tether cars' or, alternatively, 'spin dizzies'

1960s: Diminutive radio control systems are introduced, and R/C cars are now controlled via a servo for inputting steering, throttle, and brake functions remotely controlled via radio-control transmitter unit.

1970s: Mardave, a Leicester (UK) based company, begins mass-producing nitro and gas powered R/C cars. Following on this success, US-based companies (many of whom were former slot-car companies) such as Associated Electrics, Thorp, Dynamic, Taurus, Delta, and Scorpion followed suit.

1979: Japanese firm Tamiya release a series off-road buggies that modeled real-world suspensions. The off-road capability of R/C cars sparked a boom in the sport. With sales rocketing, Tamiya soon modeled an intricate scaled version of the Toyota HiLux Pickup which came with a three-speed gearbox and leaf-spring suspension systems. Tamiya's popularity basically created the R/C market in the early-to-mid 1980s.

1979: International Federation of Model Auto Racing (IFMAR) is created by the R/C racer Ted Longshaw, whereby the fractured sport falls under the auspices of one ruling, sanctioning body. The sport takes off commercially as a result.

1980s: Schumacher (not *that* one) Racing introduces a 'ball differential' in 1980, and thereby opened-up a near infinite tuning and set-up capability for the R/C car market.

1987: First IFMAR World Championship is held at Romsey, in England: Held every two years, the championship has been dominated by drivers from Japan and the US.

"Sim-racing and R/C are alike in the sense that their main audience is themselves," Frosty explains. "Since there is no threat of bodily harm in either though, chicks don't dig it, and we aren't making NASCAR or F1 money here. And while a lot of men might find it neat, unless it is something they are really into, they aren't going to go out of their way to go watch it. R/C drivers do, however,

make a career more often than sim-racers. In fact, the top R/C drivers will make upwards of \$100,000 a year, and do nothing other than race. Of course, that kind of money would mean they had a great year as a lot of the money we make in R/C is contingency money from doing well at the bigger races. But some drivers do get a salary from companies to do nothing but race.

"Also in R/C racing, sponsorships have become common place," Frosty continues. "It is way more common to have sponsors than not, actually," he adds, "which is sad in a way since most drivers now have the feeling that they *have* to go out and get a sponsor. Problem is, most sponsors only give out fifty percent-off retail price sponsorships, and truth be told, you can get pretty much the same price if you got a five percent discount from your local hobby shop. So really, it is all being done by racers to try and feel a part of a team, not so much because it is really helping them. I hope this same thing does not happen in sim-racing. It has really gotten a bit out of control in R/C. While it is cool to say you are sponsored, a lot of times, this is all it is: For a guy who has a fifty percent-off sponsorship, he finds himself having to run that company's products, even if they aren't always the best, whereas, if he just got a small discount from his hobby shop, he could run whatever he wanted, and still be paying the same prices."

Frosty enjoys a sponsored ride in sim-racing, too, courtesy of [Sim-Gear](#). He believes that sim-racing can enjoy the commercial success of R/C Racing, but the sport needs to adapt and move forward.

"In terms of commercial potential," he says, "I think R/C and sim-racing are very similar. Meaning, people may stop off and watch it, and think that it is neat, but likely neither will ever play to much more of an audience than themselves. In other words, drivers like Huttu and Duhan are only likely to become household names in households that have serious sim-racers, or at very least sim-racers who have dabbled into serious league racing or events. I would say the biggest difference would be that in R/C, parts break all the time, whereas, in sim-racing, once you have a good setup, you could be set for three-to-five years. So the market for sim-products has to be much smaller, and this means, of course, that there is more money to be made by an R/C company, and this would see these companies more active in sponsoring racers than sim-producers.

T4 Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing? *continued*

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"I think sim-racing could be more like R/C in terms of sponsorships and drivers earning money, and it will happen eventually but first, some things will need to get ironed out. Right now, you just have all these leagues running races with no clear-cut champion. Plus, it is really hard with all the sims out there (not to mention all the mods for each one). I think iRacing.com may be working on something like this from what I hear, but only time will

really tell. Right now, the biggest thing sim is missing is a governing body. Motocross has AMA, Basketball NBA, and Baseball MLB. Sim-racing is a bunch of scattered leagues with no real organization behind any of it. Your best option right now is to find a prestigious league, run in it, and do well to get notoriety—and this is not ideal for a sim-racing company, for marketing potential, than if there was a more clear-cut championship."

The problem, as Frosty sees it, is inimical to sim-racing as a sport: Since there are so many sims out there, creating one championship—and the marketing potential to be found in that championship, for sim-developers—is something that is likely never to happen, leaving sim-developers little incentive to sponsor their own sport. It would then logically follow that sponsorship is to be found from hardware manufacturers, as is currently the case with Team Redline's BRD sponsorship, and Frosty's own Sim-Gear sponsorship. A one-off championship—in whatever sim—would naturally see hardware manufacturers see more of a return on their sponsorship, but, in sim-racing, Frosty continues, "Leagues are king. In R/C, all the biggest races to determine champions aren't series, but *one* race. In fact, you don't even have to qualify to go to the Nationals anymore, you just have to send in your entry before the race gets full, or have a sponsor who is sponsoring that event that can help get you in."

Both sim-racing and R/C racing, Frosty says, have their pros and cons. "In R/C racing, you have to travel in order to compete, even if it means heading down to your local track. Also, it's hard to go racing and spend eight hours at the track for a club race. Let's say a club race starts at noon: Well, you will want to get there at least by 11am to get signed up and do a little practice, and set all your pit area up. The race will likely run for a good four-to-five hours (if there is a decent turnout), so you likely wouldn't leave the track until around 5:30-6:00pm. In those six-to-seven hours, you will likely get to run three qualifiers, and a main event. Qualifiers are typically five minutes long, sometimes seven if you are racing gas, and the main events are either five minute for electric, or maybe fifteen minutes for gas. So depending on how much practice you can get in when you arrive, chances are you will only get to drive your car for about forty-five minutes of the six-to-seven hours you spent there. With sim-racing, you get to actually drive the car the entire time you are sitting at your PC.

T4 Can Sim-Racing Follow The Road Paved By R/C Racing? *continued*

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“But the downside of sim-racing is, you don’t get to actually see your friends or competition. You don’t have the same feeling you do when you get to see and talk and laugh with your friends in person. And for me, I get to see a lot of my R/C friends from all over the world when I travel, and we do all kinds of crazy stuff: From totaling and flipping rental cars, to massive 100 people water balloon wars that nearly gets everyone kicked out of hotel rooms, to visiting local bars, or pubs, or even those ‘other’ establishments with nice young ladies who don’t like to wear a lot of clothing. All stuff you can’t really do with sim-racing friends, at least not very regularly.”

Good times aside, though, Frosty is now toying with the idea of retiring from the sport. “For me, I have been R/C Racing now for nineteen years now ... nineteen years man, that is a long time. I have seen and done it all, and I feel very much like I am coming to the end of

my R/C career. I haven’t yet decided how much longer I will continue, possibly until the next World Championships. But I have had a great run, and sim-racing now gives me an outlet to fill my competitive nature. Don’t get me wrong, R/C racing is great, it really is. But after almost twenty years, I feel I am ready for a new challenge, and ready to move on to something new. I have even kicked around starting to race KARTs for something new. But I need to officially stop racing R/C before I take on anything like that. If anyone out there has any interest in R/C at all, I strongly encourage them to go to their local hobby shop or racetrack and check it out. It is a great, fun, relatively cheap, and safe way to go racing. It is absolutely perfect for a father and son to do together and have a great time.”

In nineteen years, Frosty has seen some amusing things happen. “R/C racing is different in the most obvious way; you’re not *in* the car. It’s funny how some people react to this. Since you are not in the car, and can’t ‘feel’ what it is doing, it can be quite difficult and some pretty funny things can happen. I have seen everything from the new guys who struggle with steering the car the correct way when it is headed towards them, to driving the wrong car. I remember one race in Dallas, in particular, in which a friend and I were competing: There was a huge pile up at the start of his main event. We were racing 1/8th scale off-road buggies in an indoor horse arena, because it was winter, so the smoke from the cars could get pretty thick at times even though the building was very well ventilated. Anyway, on the start, my friend got caught up in the huge crash, but got clear pretty quickly. He drove off, and was winning the race just a few laps later. He was pretty pleased with how he was driving because he had not raced in quite some time, and thought he was doing a great job. But the announcer wasn’t calling his name in the lead, and he couldn’t really figure out why. Several

laps later, when the car didn’t react quite the way he thought it should, he caught on that he wasn’t following his car—his car, in fact, was still back at the original site of the crash, with the engine now shut off by the corner marshal, just sitting off the side of the track with the wheels turning the entire time as he drove the wrong car. It took him well over a minute to realize this!

“But the not being able to ‘feel’ the car is a very real problem: In fact, I have raced with pro-athletes, professional motocross riders, and others who all say R/C Car racing makes them more nervous when in a close battle than other competitions. And I think a lot of that has to do with R/C racing being so mental. It is literally all in your head. It can make some people really nervous. At a NORCCA Nationals, I was standing next to a driver who is known for shaking really bad while driving, likely from nerves. The track was inside this huge barn-type building, so it was made entirely out of wood. I was in my first qualifier and putting down a pretty good run when I started hearing this noise that sounded like a woodpecker. It was really loud and distracting and I thought, Man that woodpecker has to be really close. It was distracting me enough where I was starting to make small bobbles out on the track. I gathered it back up, and started laying down some better laps when I came down the straight-away that went from left to right, and I heard it again. The guy who was shaking was standing right next to me, and I saw what the ‘woodpecker’ noise was: He was so nervous and shaking so bad, he was trying to put his transmitter down on the railing of the driver’s stand to calm himself down, but he was shaking so bad it was making a sound like a woodpecker! I couldn’t stand it and started laughing, and ended up crashing and ruining my qualifier. Afterwards I wasn’t too happy, but it ended up making for a good story in the end.”

AUTOSIMSPORT
Test Drive

The Eye Of The Needle

Jon Denton takes a lap round Monaco in an F2000 in nKPro ...

JonDenton





I push the throttle as hard as I can into the bulkhead of my little F2000 as I motor down the start/finish straight at a speed that seems mildly insane—the very idea that people do this in cars much bigger and much faster seems just way off the map of mental stability.

I don't get much time to ponder; shortly after engaging sixth gear, the tyre marks of the braking area for St Devote arrive, and the Armco constricts as I brake

hard, the car all on the nose as I turn in, precise, clean, the only way through St Devote. I clip the kerb gently on the apex—one centimetre more would have seen the car bounce and drift too wide and into the wall on exit, not close enough would have meant a severely compromised exit—but it's all academic now, post-apex, as I push the throttle just hard enough to let the back drift unhurriedly towards the outer wall, and we're well on the way up the

Monte de Beau Rivage, the blend of terror and exaltation that St Devote brings, with its confined spaces, now only a distant indicator of what lies in wait ...

The 'straight' up the Beau Rivage hill (which is actually far from it) is the biggest amount of breathing space you get on the whole circuit, and I use it to check my AIM display for problems and psych' myself up for the coming lap. St Devote was the first part of a lap so demanding that I need to take all the time I can to prepare for it; I won't have any more spare thinking capacity for about one minute and forty or so ...

Cresting the hill in fifth gear, skitting over bumps, a brief scuffle of brakes, knock it down two cogs into Massanet, a fast double-apexed left hander, and begin the downhill run to the harbour, in on the throttle, half-lift mid-corner as I hug the inside barrier, and control the mild oversteer that comes with it. Skimming the second apex, I am back on the throttle, just peaking in third gear before a stab of the brakes launches me into Casino. I clip the kerb on apex and run immediately over another steep crest which makes the car go light, and I see the front suspension drop to its maximum extent as the back end skips sideways the moment I bring in the power as progressively as possible, the left rear oh-so-close to the Armco, the car already pointing at the right side of the track, just where I want it in order to avoid the enormous, floor killing hump in the road that has been a feature of the run down to Mirabeau for many a television viewer.

I slice back across to the left of the track after this short squirt of speed for the tricky braking area into Mirabeau. I set the car up for entry, over a bumpy, off-camber surface that threatens to spit me into the advertising hoarding on the left, the aero pushing beyond the bumps and forcing the front of the car to bite; to go wide here means another wall to eat, so I keep it clean in second, and power further down the now gentle slope to the Loews hairpin.



It's always tempting to take too much speed into Loews, and let it die out with understeer, but a second of pace can easily be lost in such a move, at the same time, this corner is made amazingly boring by its low speed, but requires the same level of razor-sharp precision as any other corner on this unforgiving street circuit. Bring the speed low in first, almost so you're tempted to drop the clutch, and turn

in smooth; too early means you hit a kerb big enough to write-off your car, too late means you end up on the detritus on the outside of the corner and scrabbling for grip.

Time to modulate the throttle on exit as the back whips around and threatens to spin; I think I need less rear tyre pressure, no time for that, we're into the first part of Portier

and taking as big a chunk of kerb as we can get away with, the car pivoting over the concrete and already powering towards Portier 2 in second gear this time, a wide entry, right across the track, the *thripp* of brakes causing the back end to start to come round on entry. After the last succession of corners, I really need to cool the rears a little, the tunnel should help. The exit is tight, and the Armco isn't straight, but I let the rear drift out gently as I blend in the throttle for the run into the tunnel.

For the first time since the Beau Rivage, we're hard on the throttle through the tunnel and keeping tight to the inside of the circuit away from the bumpy off-line and inside the 'groove' laid down by the traffic; we burst out of the tunnel and into the sunlight just in time to hit the downhill run and with it a heavy braking area. Facing a wall, I brake from sixth to second and am still deep on the brakes as I turn into the Nouvelle Chicane, a tricky one to get right; I use the weight on the front of the car to pivot it like a top to the right after the initial, left-hand turn in, using the kerb to help this along as the car skips right and is already pointing on its exit trajectory, throttle on, any rear tyre cooling afforded by the tunnel is ebbed away as the car skits sideways on exit, but as the aero starts to work, the grip starts to come in.

It is rare that we get to run the wings as high as we do here, and the feeling of the car at high speed when running such acute angles is pure delight, a little skittish and there is certainly no desire to get too much yaw going, but there is grip there to turn into seemingly anything.

As if reminding me to stop daydreaming, the entry to Tabac arrives in no time at all, a blind apex where the Armco barrier makes you think that it follows a ninety degree curve, but it falls away past the entry, and the apex is actually much faster than it at first seems. I pass within seeming nanometres of the entry wall as I drift through the apex in fourth, the car pushing to the outside lining me up for the first part of the Swimming Pool complex.



A slight lift to add some front end grip, the back end is still feeling skittish, those damn rear tyres! Back on the throttle and over the flat kerb on the right at exit, then almost immediately on the brakes for the slower part of La Piscine, down to second, might need to work on that, turn-in flows, and the car feels well planted as I get into third for the second part, the back drifting out, the Armco

moving back to allow my progress across the track. A quick snatch of fourth gear before some very gentle braking for La Rascasse

This braking area is one of the worst places to be in a racing car; you cannot brake too hard, because you are one handed, piling down gears and trying to steer gently left whilst deftly attempting to offset any oversteer

induced by the back end going light—it's like walking a tightrope but one where you're never quite sure if it crosses the abyss—you just don't know whether you're late or hard enough on the brakes. Eventually, with the car skipping sideways, I push it into an almost WRC-style flick into the right hander of La Rascasse, the second slowest corner on the circuit. Again I am dubious on the throttle; my rear tyre issues have been carefully balanced though, so the traction is adequate, but it's only a short squirt to Anthony Noghes, the last corner and one just as lethal as the first when it comes to threading the ultimate line through the needle of crash barriers.

The exit demands power, but the off-camber drop pushes you towards the kerb on the exit as if goading you to push that throttle harder as you gaze up the straight before you. The car slips mildly sideways; looking briefly at the pitwall, I jerk the car straight and am once again on my way down the start/finish 'straight' for another tour.



The Wreck

Moving Pictures

Julian Dyer brings netKarPro to You—and your Tube ... click to play!

JulianDyer





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netKarPro: This is the simulation commonly known as the 'rough diamond' of sim-racing. Its problems have been well documented in forums across the internet, but for a small band of dedicated racers, *netKarPro* remains the *only* authentic racing simulation that, in its unrivalled and non-negotiable hard-core stance, provides a level of realism unmatched by any other product commercially available. From its highly accurate tyre model to its superb level of chassis detail, *netKarPro* has set the standard when it comes to simulating the real.

However, for newbies, the sim can prove to be a daunting prospect; jumping into one of the four chassis, starting the engines with nKP's unique interactive cockpits, and getting used to what many believe is the best open-wheel simulation ever released is, mirroring its real-world genesis, not as simple as all that.

Hopefully, this is where I can help: I have created four movies which aim to make the process of getting involved with *netKarPro* a little easier. I'm certainly not a fast racer, but I can put my other talents to good use, and in these guides you will find visual explanations on how best to get started—and progress—with this intriguing simulation.

On each movie I have put on-screen indicators of when to brake, when to accelerate, and what gear you should aim to be in for each corner. As I said, I am not the fastest of drivers by a long shot, and I suspect that, within a short amount of time, you will probably develop your own lines, setups, and gears. These movies are only intended to get you up and running, and with a little practice, I'm sure you'll be getting faster laps than I could ever dream of accomplishing.



This video will demonstrate for totally new users the intricacies of starting the F2000 car. This is probably the most user-friendly car to drive, as it has ample power, forgiving handling, and plenty of grip. Please click the picture to take you to the movie which is hosted on my *YouTube* channel. Here you will see the procedure for changing tyres, filling the car with fuel, starting the engine using the interactive cockpit, advice on exiting the pits, the out lap, hot lap, and in lap procedure.

Now that you have seen how to get out onto the track, I will show you how to navigate around the circuits. If you want to use the setup I created the movies with, please find the setup files in this month's issue, and put them into your '*netKarPro* root directory (cars/Formula2000/setup)' folder, and then load them from the *netKarPro* setup menu (click trackday/start session/car setup/load setup/OK on the nKP Windows interface).



Firstly, let's start with Aviano. This track takes the guise of a modern circuit, with fast, sweeping corners followed by slower, tighter turns, all placed on varying elevations. The sections which will challenge you the most on this track include turn 6, which is a long sweeping left hander taken absolutely flat. The kerbs on the outside of this corner should be treated with a lot of respect. If one of your rear tyres so much as touches them, you'll be going the barriers at around 170km/h (this is where setting up the car becomes so crucial in nKPro, and as you progress, you will find ways of making your work over the kerbs: Of course, this will take away from other areas of the track, so it would be best, as I say, to just avoid the kerbs on this section of Aviano because no good can come from hopping onto them!).

Other highlights include the fast right-left section of turn 7 and 8. Again, this is taken flat out, and you may need a few laps to build up enough confidence in the car to be able to do this. The lap in the movie has a time of around 1:32.5, which should be a target to aim for as you get use to the car.



The second track is called Prato, and contains similar challenges to those found at Aviano. This track contains more slow and technical corners, but has a couple of long sweeping turns for good measure as well. Again, you can find the setup for this track in this month's issue, and this should provide a good base to work from as you develop a feel for the car.

Highlights of this track include the very fast turn 1 and turn 2, which lead into the very tight turn 3. Turn 1 and 2 of this complex are taken flat, with turn 2 substantially tighter than turn 1, before you have to jump on the brakes for turn 3. Do not be surprised if you go wide trying to go flat out at turn 2 the first few times, as it is a very challenging corner. You may need to take a comfort lift through this corner just to keep the front end of the car pointing in the right direction, as you hang onto your wheel and prepare to slam on the anchors for turn 3.



After this challenge (you will probably find yourself messing with your brake balance for the difficult brake-test into turn 3), the speed builds up nicely, with a set of corners through which you will continue to accelerate. After a succession of chicanes, you will approach the final turn. This is a corner where you can either gain a lot of time, or lose a lot of time. This corner is fairly open on the way in, but soon tightens through the middle before opening back out onto the straight. You'll need confidence on the brakes while turning-in, and gentle acceleration for good traction on the exit. The movie will show you exactly what this looks like on the T-cam. The time you're looking for is in the 1:32/1:33 range: Again, these times are not terribly fast, but it is a good speed to aim for initially.



The final track I created a movie for is called Newbury. This track is set in Britain, and like many British club tracks, it's short, tight, and technical. There are several clusters of tight corners, separated by sweeping turns which will test your car control to the limit, and the small elevation changes will cause the back end of the car to become very unsettled through the turns.

The most challenging corners of this track include the first couple of turns, as there is a small dip in the track after the first turn, which can cause sudden oversteer, and the final turn, which may very well be the greatest challenge to get right in sim-racing (including its own Wall of Champions: 'Welcome to Berkshire'). The speed of the second turn is slightly faster than the first, but if you put a wheel onto the grass, you'll be swapping ends and spinning down the track rather quickly. The final turn of this track, though, is the real killer: it is similar to the last turn at Montreal, with a concrete 'Wall of Champions' on the outside, and this wall has been the nemesis of not only champions, but rookies, and everyone in-between.

This turn requires nothing short of perfection, since getting through it quick is paramount for a good lap. It all begins with the turn-in (and, depending on your setup, can actually be taken absolutely flat): You need to be very gentle on the throttle, but if you position the car correctly on the way in (do not, for any reason, take any kerb on the entry or you will be in the wall), and keep it steady through the turn, you can get through it with no incident.

This is probably the most satisfying corner to get right in the whole of sim-racing, as it requires many things: Setup, a perfect turn-in, and a perfect exit (oversteer on exit will result in you banging the wall, and in nKP, as in real-life, banging walls is a definite no-no). However, going through this corner consistently for a twenty-one lap race is what is politely known as a challenge!

The file for this track is also available in this month's issue, and here you should be aiming for a time of 0:57.5 initially.

This concludes the *NetKarPro* guide collection. I hope these movies have shown you how to get started with this excellent simulation, and that I will see you on track soon. Drivers usually occupy servers during the evening, at around 22CET (which is 21GMT).

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If you would like to subscribe to Julian's *YouTube* channel, and be informed of new videos, you can do so at <http://www.youtube.com/LiquidSquid86> . Other highlights in his collection include the GPC movies which he creates for most of the events, as well as a movie demonstrating Todd Cannon's excellent CST-3B pedals available from www.cannonssimulationstechnologies.com/ . *NetKarPro* can be purchased from www.netkar-pro.com . If you feel as though you want to compete in either a FF1800 or F2000 *NetKarPro* League, be sure to check out the GPC championship at www.gpchampionship.com where you can sign up and be part of the community. Discussion about all things *NetKarPro* can be found at RSC (<http://forum.rscnet.org/forumdisplay.php?f=244>) and Driving Italia (<http://www.drivingitalia.net/forum/index.php?showforum=7>) . Happy racing, and please keep checking Julian's channel for new videos. See you on track!

A1GP MEXICO 2007

GP Legacy's Sergio Bustamante goes pit-side at the Mexican round of the A1GP series ...

Sergio Bustamante
GP Legacy

Photos: Courtesy of GP Legacy, Carlos Suarez-Peredo,
Magaly Farfan, Cristyan Elizalde, Sergio Bustamante,
A1GP Media and special courtesies from Zimat







Images say more than a thousand words. Is it true? You be the judge! These are exclusive pics of the Mexican round of the A1 GP World Cup of Motorsports. Those with a keen eye will notice that GPLegacy had more than a cursory pit-pass to the event—yes, the GPLegacy logo on the Mexican car is indeed ours!

What the global television audience sees, of course, is just the race: But what happens backstage, as the circus rolls into a city—in this case Mexico City—includes weeks of preparations: GPLegacy was intimately involved in this year's race, and we thought it would be interesting to give you a little look at the logistics behind the event.

Weeks in advance, we were already hard at work promoting the event.

Promotional Tour Around Mexico City

The thrill that is felt before an international event in any major city on earth is an electric buzz, especially for those who love their motor-sports, and those who are in possession of a ticket! It's a rock-concert, a gladiator battle, and the scene of the international jet-set all in one, and this was the situation when A1GP rolled into town for the first time in Mexico City.

The race was scheduled to be run on the historical Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez: Last year the event took place, unfortunately, at the very overrated Parque Fundidora track, which is certainly not a good venue for any formula class cars, but the change of venue—to Mexico's most fabled race track—meant that the A1GP cars would have the chance to show their full power, and speeds would, at the end of the race weekend, top-off at just over 300km/h.

Newstands, posters, spectacular signs appeared all over the city almost a month and a half before the race, with special events featuring local Mexican drivers Salvador 'Chava' Duran, and Sergio 'Checo' Perez providing for some pre-race hype and festivities.



City before the race, getting in A1 mood

In order to promote the A1GP, GPLegacy was given the honour of taking the Mexican entry for a tour of the country, and this presented its own unique problems ... what kind of car would be able to drag this racing-beauty through the streets? GPLegacy's solution was simple: Ever heard of an H2 Hummer with a supercharger that kicks out over five hundred horsepower? Well, that's what we used ... and if you're wondering who would be crazy enough to produce such a beast, look no further than legendary rally driver Jean del Rosal, external advisor, and one of the dearest mentors in GPLegacy.



(Below left): Jean del Rosal shows the massive engine's modifications to Sergio Bustamante. Above): The GPLegacy mule ...



The car was exhibited at Six Flags park, where the team was able to have a fantastic time enjoying the Superman ride, and other attractions while all visitors were able to come face to face with the A1 GP Team Mexico car just a few days before the race



Mexico's downtown had several visits of the A1GP car as well



Sergio Bustamante is detained by the law in front of the A1GP car ... finally!



Hey, there's an A1Car behind a sticker showing rFactor, Logitech, Cortinazo, GoKartmania, Motor Review and ... GPLegacy!



The "Torre Latinoamericana" landmark of Mexico City behind the A1GP Team Mexico Car



Mexicans supported and cheered for the team days before the race, you can barely see the car behind them and the thumbs up.



Yes it is an Enzo, photos courtesy of GPLegacy. Carlos is coming up with special features for AUOSIMSPORT, and ththe A1GP promotional tour was a good opportunity to give you a little taste.

Frontstraight

continued



Ennui, Or Just Plain Hubris?

Have sim-developers surrendered innovation in the knowledge that, despite everything, sim-racers will remain a loyal base for their products? With news that old-time members of the community are moving on, things may be changing ... for the worse ...

AUTOSIMSPORT



With the sim-racing scene now—yet again!—facing another of its half-decade dark eras, and the specter of nothing much new gathering on the horizon (yes, that was a failed metaphor of note!), and those that have been released falling pretty short on innovation and progression, sim-racers have begun yet another exodus ... and the blame, for many, lies squarely at the feet of the developers ... and the community itself.

anything from ISI/SBDT&Friends, even BRD's wheel ... everything's dropped short. The GTP mod pulled off the best effort in the past five years—beautiful work. Now we've got squillion Tflop machines with gigs and gigs of Ram, gfx cards that can render hundreds of thousands of polys in a flash ... and it's just not being used intelligently—the sims that look the best perform dreadfully on even modern hardware—just inefficient

People from all factions act as if everything is wonderful: Well, it's not. It's a bloody mess.

I don't want another email telling me about the next great sim-signing another 'partnership'. I don't want new content for a title that's not working properly with its old content. I want interesting cars that handle well, look good, sound great, and work brilliantly online. You know what? *GPL still* does that better than anything else, and

Sim-racing has grown old—but it hasn't grown up ...

With this in mind, the AUTOSIMSPORT forum was ablaze (twenty posts in three weeks, that is serious action!) with opinions, and, reading through the replies, we decided that what we had was a pretty good indication of where we are, right now, in the sim-racing scene. With *iRacing.com*, Blimey!Games, and ISI not promising to deliver anything new for some time, and SimBin coming off the disaster that was *RACE*, and the best of the Indies (*netKarPro* and *LiveForSpeed*) a year off their target-dates for patches, the community is facing a crisis—while, at the same time, it begins to stake its claim in the mainstream press and real-world arena on motor-sports.

Doug Jellison, for those who don't know, has been a sim-racer since the dawn of the sport: Going all the way back to the glory days of the sport—late night races on VROC. That is, until last month, when he put his race-frame up for sale, and turned his back on the community. His post begat (!) the voices you will read below.

Sim-racing has grown old—but it hasn't grown up ...

Doug Jellison

I've given it all up. I'm tired of waiting for *the* sim to blow me away. My rig's up for sale. Nothing has delivered what I was hoping for in the past five years. *netKarPro*, *rFactor*,

coding: Look at the complexity of something like *HalfLife2*: no sim-developer has come close, and yet a Radeon 9800 can run it beautifully.

The community is partly to blame—when fifty percent of the people will say the newest sim is utterly amazing, and fifty percent say it's utter garbage, the developers have nowhere to go: There's no scope for a middle-ground within the massed opinions. I'm guilty of it, too: I drove one title that felt like complete mush, felt like nothing at all ... but others said it was the most realistic and feedback-giving title ever, and nothing could match it. I'd try something else I quite liked, and others would say it was complete garbage and 'canned' (whatever the hell that's supposed to mean). Evangelists from one corner or the other don't help the situation by giving developers a false feeling of security.

netKarPro and *LiveForSpeed* developers are very guilty here. Twelve months down the line, and *netKarPro* *still* isn't working properly. S2 of *LFS* is *still* in beta—for more than twenty months!—longer than the entire project was supposed to go from L1 to L3. *rFactor*—the title designed for modding—and the mod scene {around it} is an utter mess—God help anyone trying to find the most recent version of anything.

it's a decade old. Can you imagine the FirstPersonShooter community saying, 'You know, the original *HalfLife* is still the best out there'? They don't—because it's not true. Dozens of stunning titles with astonishing graphics, brilliant modding tools, developers producing breathtaking game play with a seamless online experience, have come out since *HalfLife*.

Console titles might have their flaws—but it's for all these reasons that console racing titles have such a broad appeal. They're easier—not to drive, just to *use*. They *work*, they're fun, some of them are even great online. I'm not going to say that consoles are better for sim-racing—they're not—but if you ask me whether I'd rather spend my whole weekend trying to get a title to give proper Force-Feedback, find the latest version of a mod, along with its twelve patches, (then you find that actually, you're missing bits of another mod it relies on—and the whole lot is still just a beta ... pain, pain, tedious, dull), or just pick up *GT4* for half an hour ... it's the PS2 that gets the nod every time.

The mod community has produced some quite stunning work—but it hides it under so much garbage, so many beta releases with a dozen patches ... God help someone coming to it for the first time: They'd be scared

half-way to next week trying to get even the very simplest things working properly.

Every developer for a PC racing title in the past half decade should take a long hard look at themselves and ask: Are we doing ourselves, or the community, justice? Not one could put their hands on their heart and say yes. They have all, without fail, let the consumer down, and let themselves down. By not holding them to account properly, we, the consumer, share some of blame for that. Who knows what the next ten years will bring—but the community today is so fragmented, so confrontational, and so contradictory on many levels that I find it hard to believe the good old days—the days of UKGPL and late night pickups on VROC—can ever be recaptured. The community has grown old, but it's not grown up.

We never got what we thought we would ...

GPL—on a P133 with a TNT2 and 128 megs of Ram *worked*. It was brilliant. 3.2 Ghz P4, 2gb Ram, Radeon X1950, and the only thing to match *GPL* for all round quality in all areas is the NASCAR titles derived from it, and the GTP mod to go with it.

No other developer has stepped-up to the plate and delivered in all areas. *LFS* has been at S2 beta for too long, a year too long. *netKarPro* is a year old and *still* not fixed, and the developers just ignore the problems it has and work on some hillclimb content instead—priorities in fundamentally the wrong place. *iRacing.com* (when they're not on the phone to their lawyers) are sending out emails about lasers and partnerships (although, to be honest, this is where my hopes lie), but they're still not telling us what the pricing structure will be, what it will actually *do*. Chris and Tony are being Chris and Tony (*Racing Legends*), and everything based on ISI stuff just

doesn't deliver for me at all—if you can find the mod you want, everyone else will be on a slightly different version of the track ...

It's been five years of lies and falling short of expectation. Nearly a decade of hardware progress—but sims, relative to the abilities of the hardware they are running on, have gone backwards. *GPL* made me happy. *N2003* did with GTP. *GTR2*, *nKP*, *LFS*, *RACE*, *rFactor* ... don't.

I got bored of waiting for things to be as good as they were in 1997. We used to have a community focused on one product, one brilliant product, and it was great: Everyone knew about all the new tracks or the latest additions, etc. We all played the same thing because it was the best thing. Now there isn't a community. There are multiple communities spread across a mound of

mediocrity, bitching at one another. It's like some sort of sim-racing fundamentalism. Even the leaders of sim-racings former 'church' at RSC have now been found to be about as honest as the Catholic Church. When you've got half a dozen products that all fall short in some fairly significant way, but everyone camps in one faction and, despite those faults, defends it beyond all reason and concedes no ground as to the pros and cons of any other title, then the larger community—and indeed the industry—is going nowhere.

That's what it feels like.

We never got what we thought we would

Dom Duhan

I think Doug has summed up sim-racing very well; we really have never had what we thought were going to get, something is always a let-down. There's little

innovation. I played *PGR3* the other day, the gfx stunned me ... it seems everything that comes out on the PC is a bit half-arsed. I guess there's just no money in sim-racing, but it doesn't have to be that way though, there are hundreds of thousands of racing enthusiasts that just don't know about this community. Let's hope *iRacing.com* do something, and something European-based also.

Things may not be ideal but—try racing for a change!

Jiminee Smith

Well, I feel I must put some sort of counter-argument here: If I was being brief, I would simply say: If you are spending all your time looking for faults when you race, then of course you're going to have a horrible experience. If your mindset is to be that picky, then the only thing

that is going to make you happy is buying a goKART or a Clubman and going racing for real.

Fair enough if you're disenchanted with sim-racing, but I can't agree with the assessment of it being it a state of disrepair. There are things that annoy the hell out of me too (dumbass AI, lack of admin tools), but it is still the best fun I can have with my clothes on (or some clothes on, its gets pretty warm here in the summer!).

Having said that, I do agree with the point about the lack of development in sim-racing, but it's amazing how much my outlook has improved since I stopped trying to figure all the other little noobs out, and just got involved with a similarly 'race' focused group of guys.

I doubt there will be another leap forward like *GPL* offered, there is just not enough room to go up, especially given the size of the market. *rFactor* is really its own worst enemy; I think it is brilliant, but it can be so

I agree with you all—even the ones who disagree with the others ...

bloody hard to get into that, for most people, especially those with limited time, they just can't be bothered.

It can give as good an experience as *GPL*, but only after a lot of work, and that work is not the fun sort; it's not doing hundreds of laps trying to learn the cars, but, rather, it's the grind needed to just get the damn thing running properly. ISI should be eternally grateful (financially to) *rfactorcentral.com* and *all* the leagues out there, because they are picking up the slack that ISI should be doing, even if for legal reasons they have to do it covertly.

I used to look at a V8 Supercar forum—I love finding out all the behind-the-scenes stuff—but the place became so infested with people who just hate everything, it was depressing. They hate pit stops, they have conspiracy theories on everything, they hate the lack of action, call the races boring, contrived ... They complained when we had reversed grid races because they were fake, then complained when we didn't because things became predictable. Well screw them, I love V8 Supercar racing, to me it's the best damn series in the world, and a credit to the people running it. Yes it has its faults, and I don't agree with all the decisions they make, but did I stop watching? No, I deleted the forum off my favourites list instead, and now I am free to enjoy the racing and decide things for myself. The Saturday race at the 500, for example—seventy-eight laps, no safety cars, and five seconds covering the first three at the end. There was passing all through the field, drama in the pits, different strategies, thirty-one impeccably presented cars with professional teams, I mean, what the hell else do you want?

Well, a similar thing is happening in sim-racing; it's no longer easy (since *GPL* really), but a lot of people still want to be involved. Since they suck at driving themselves, or are too lazy to put in the time to practice, they just spend there time downloading 157,639 mods and then whinge

about them. Sadly, those douche bags make up a majority of the 'community', with people who actually just like to drive and race making up the rest. However, because these guys are busy behind the wheel (and probably have full time jobs to help pay for all the good gear), they are not a vocal element. Just look at the crap that got written at RSC over the Panoz thing to see just how many in this community make up the first group, and you will see my point.

I agree with you all—even the ones who disagree with the others

Spadge Fromley

I agree with you all. Even the ones who disagree with the others. When we look back at how we saw things 'back then', and compare it to how we see things now, things are very different. But how much of that is due to our changing? How much of it is due to its changing? I'm going to have to say fifty-fifty. Yes, the community appears to be a lot more fragmented today, even within itself. And this is *rFactor's* weakness, as well as its strength: the massive modability of the game is what attracts people to it, and also what puts people off it. People are hugely excited by the idea that you really can race just about anything, just about anywhere—and then complain because they can't ever join a server because of the track/car combo it is running not being the same as what they've got.

Add to that the lack of people playing on open servers. Everyone is on a password-protected server, all the time. It makes the community appear very cliquey. And yeah, to an extent it is. But then, at the same time, it is hugely welcoming of new people.

There are a few groups out there who run forums/sites/servers where you have to sign up to get the info to join a server. And as far as I can make out, they are pretty much *all* a great bunch of people who will

welcome anyone who joins. And there's still all the crap-talk between races you could ever want.

While this fragments the community further than, say, just having one *big* place for all sim-racers to meet, what it also means is that those fragmented communities are more closely knit.

Where I do my racing, I've seen new guys join and have a bit of a rough ride of it all at the beginning—it's not easy joining a group, and being stuck at the back of things and getting in everyone's way, and feeling like everyone is best mates already, and you are an outsider, or wrecking yourself and taking out race leaders in the process. Cos' that never happens in real life, right? There is no Beginners Guide to online racing like Alison Hine used to have on her site, and all the others she used to link to from there. But thanks to the greatness of the service Eric (and all his little wizards at RACER) provides, these people aren't trolled and flamed off the internets, but rather, they are cultivated and brought round to being valuable members of the group.

Compare that with my own personal experiences with VROC etc., and it's hugely different. The whole thing is a lot less open than it was, but it's also a lot more welcoming at the same time.

Also, judging games against the benchmark that is *GPL* is actually an unfair comparison. If the *new GPL* came out tomorrow, no-one would play it, just like nobody played *GPL* when it came out. Let's not forget that when *GPL* came out, its graphics were crap. It required a stupid-powerful PC to run on. It was unplayably hard. There was a lot less internet, all of which meant that you needed to *want* to play it, and want to play it *bad*. You had to be an enthusiast before you even started. Why else would you invest the time and money required to complete a bloody lap, let alone get good at the game?

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When we compare stuff to *GPL* back when, we're comparing stuff to what *GPL* became after five years of community development and improvement. Development and improvement that we watched happen, or brought about. Young people would put in the hours and hours needed to learn the nature of the beast. Now those young people have careers, families,

responsibilities (or something) and, let's be honest, less 'stay awake all night driving the same car around Monza' stamina. Or inclination.

You know—nightclubs these days are shit. There's too many of them. They all cater to different weird groups. And they are too loud and stay open too late. Plus, I don't recognize any of the music. Now, compare that to the

nightclubs I used to party at back in the day—those were fewer, bigger, catered to larger audiences by having different rooms/floors playing different music, and you know—they were that much better that we didn't mind staying up all night! People just didn't have to get up for work in the morning. It was just better.

Analogies are like old Eastern European cars: they look crap and don't work. So that's what I reckon. Times change, people change, stuff changes with it.

All this hardware, and all if seemingly wasted

Bob Simmerman

I don't really have anything pertinent to add (and this rambling mess is a rambling mess ...), however, what I have seen recently regarding the soon-to-be-free-for-all Panoz, and the idiots complaining about not being able to get it right off the bat made me load up *Silent Hunter IV*! I understand where Doug is coming from—shocking as his retirement is (and surprising as well)—I often think how much better it would be to write for a sim-crowd that doesn't put words into my articles, accuse me of taking money for writing 'false and lying' reviews, and all the other horseshit only an immature 'adult' can think of. The hypocrisy of it all is mind bending.

And, as mentioned above—just what the hell are developers doing these days with some of the hottest hardware around? Not much, in many cases, not much at all. Certainly, finances and team size have something to do with this, but it never seems to end—the XBOX 360 is *just now* being 'beaten' in many regards of processing and video ... but barely—it is taking four cores and four graphics cards to do so, but, all the same, the PC is finally catching up. Too bad the developers won't catch up until DX100,020, and their product will most likely be so jammed with crap as to be unplayable at all but the lowest graphical levels.



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However, go to the 'PC Gamer' forums to see just how 'sucktacular' consoles are vs. the PC, according to all the experts. And don't forget to view the endless threads of, '... won't install, can't patch, which one of the millions of components on my vastly superior PC is not working now...?' Christ, one guy even went so far as to say to the effect, '... if you want a patch for a console game, you have to re-buy a newer version ...' Bullshit, of course, but that is what an elitist attitude gets you these days.

And where am I going with all this? Community. Yes, in many ways, a pure PC or pure Console 'community' is basically useless on a large scale, much like real life. Taken individually, people are extremely intelligent, resourceful, and even helpful—taken as a 'community', they are often idiotic, hypocritical, and, at the worst, utter bloody idiots on a global scale. See the recent Panoz Mod Whining Thread for a perfect example of it. Sickening, really, and yet—the devs keep posting over there, they keep sticking their noses over there, and wonder why they get bit off at

the slightest misstep. I used to think only Americans were assholes, but now realize it is a worldwide disease, and nothing brings this out like a good thrashing regarding a 'free mod' that isn't free just yet ...

Physics cards—forget about it, more pie in the sky bullshit for a community hungry to leap beyond mediocrity in terms of physics modelling and display. In a recent article in a popular gaming mag, the NVIDIA 6, 7, 8 series have, built in, physics processors on the GPU that more than handle anything that Aegia can do—hell,

processors eighteen months ago were able to trounce that thing! Then again, since developers don't like new stuff, it never really got used much, and I would bet a nickel all future physics processing will be handled by the graphics card, or the CPU itself. And don't get me started on one hundred plus dollar NIC cards. God, what next, a Creative soundcard that finally uses one percent of its own power to process sounds? Heaven forbid ...

I strongly suspect you have seriously misjudged the genre ...

What happened to Intelligence?

Andrew Tyler

I used to just enjoy trying to drive fast. I think it just got old like anything else. Once I got good enough so that just going fast was easy (not *really* fast, just fast), the whole thing sort of lost a lot of appeal. Basically, it was fun to learn how to do it. Now that I know how to do it though, it's just same-old-same-old. Now I'm at the point where the fun should be in learning how to do it better. I think I just don't care enough. I don't know.

Whatever it is, I'm pretty sure it's just me and not the scene. I think what I want is a good single-player experience. Nobody cares about single-player anymore, and I don't care about multi-player anymore. So, I guess that's just the way it is.

Of course, I really like the idea of multiplayer. The problem is, if it's anonymous multi-player, it may as well just be AI. Even the worst AI is a much better driver than your average anonymous on-line racer—and infinitely more polite!

I strongly suspect you have seriously misjudged the genre

Becky Rose

If you think this is the dark ages of sim-racing, then I strongly suspect you have seriously misjudged the genre.

Most simmers have a picture of sim-racing based upon a standard computer game with the typical blurb on the back that says 'realistic physics' etc. They play it against the AI, and then pop online in the multiplayer mode to

find that the servers are jam-packed with wreckers, it takes thirty minutes for a five lap race to get going, and your race is over by lap three when some idiot cuts the chicane at the one track you could get a race on—Monza. For most 'simmers', this is sim-racing, and I'm not surprised you think sim-racing is dead.

I've tried playing other sims online; I wasted two weeks practicing before I felt I was good enough to go online. I got online, and spent two nights getting wrecked. League racing is where it's at, I was told. Public servers are always like this.

Jesus, I pity you.

Personally I'll be sticking to *LiveForSpeed*. Not only has it recently recorded the most number of sim-racers online at any given moment in time in the history of online sim-racing, but I can go to a non-licensed race server and know that wreckers will be barricaded, that there are permanent consequences for repeated malicious behaviour, or I can go and get a licensed race on an SRA-endorsed server, and know that detailed notes will be kept on drivers who transgress—knowing that they have

a policy of educating newer drivers before showing them the door.

Sure I can league race too: Looking at tonight's activities as I write this, there are seven organised events to choose from.

If you want to talk about community, then to be quite honest, whilst most sims can give a sense of community by giving you a forum (which usually they don't, and just send you to RSC), the truth is there is really only one online sim-racing community—because it is the only place you get any quantity of online sim-racing. Other sims, in my experience, are just a crash fest with no consequences.

It's no wonder you're feeling down about the future of sim-racing, because you are not playing *LiveForSpeed*.

Oh sure it's 'alpha'. Bear in mind it is 'S2 alpha'. S1, which the game started out as, was a complete game in its own right. The physics really are very realistic too, I'd state my entire trophy collection on it. No built in understeer here, with a game written by a programmer whose only experience of a real car is a front wheel drive.

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Thinking of upgrading your system? Of course you are—it started the day after you upgraded the last time! Question is: Are you savvy enough not to rely on the box reviews, or promises from the producers? If so, you're going to enjoy AUTOSIMSPORT's new, monthly tech'-column, brought to you exclusively via Tech4PCs, and courtesy of GPLegacy.

What you will find here is an easy-to-follow, no frills technical analysis and opinion from experts who are paid not to sell, but to *review*. Experts and gurus like Antonio Reyes, Marduk, Kain, and many others, all widely respected, will bring you—the AUTOSIMSPORT reader—all you need to know about the products that you are interested in. PC magazines, gaming magazines, newspapers, and TV channels, all have been in negotiation to find a way to provide an outlet for these reviews. They are now yours to read.

If you'd like to stay ahead in hardware, especially if you are a gaming or sim racing developer, contact GPLegacy (info@gplegacy.com) to join this huge effort never seen before for PC Gaming and brand new for sim racing. This information will lead to better software-hardware integration without having to program the software with what is "in the market" and rather doing it the smart way, being in the know for the future.

Photos: Courtesy of
www.tech4pcs.com—
www.hardwaremx.com

INTEL's CORE2DUO e4300

Antonio Reyes, and Tech4Ps take a lingering look at the new chip from Intel: The Core2Duo e 4300 ... performance and price combine to make this a sweet deal ...





The e4300 is designed for the mid-low gamma segment, which makes it very interesting in terms of performance, price, and overclocking ability.

The e4300 is nothing more than a Core2Duo using basically the same core that we have seen in the 'Allendale', known commercially as the e6300, and the e6400. All the 'Allendale' cores work at 1066MHz, and bring a couple of Megabytes in Level 2 Cache on top of that: This is the only technological difference between the Core2Duo e4300 and its big brothers which are based on the Conroe Core.

Motherboard	H2O	Air	H2O Vcore	Air Vcore
Asus p5b deluxe	425x9(3825)	390x9(3510)	1.575	1.6
Ecs pn2-sli2+	421x9(3789)	394x9(3546)	1.55	1.5
Msi 945p neo 3		320x9(2880)	1.4	
Msi 965p neo		365x9(3285)		1.45

SUMMARY

INTEL e4300
 Cache: 2MB
 FSB: 800MHz
 Multiplier: 9x (Ascending block)
 Speed: 1.8GHz (imposed by the producer)

OVERCLOCKING

This chip seems to have no problem when increasing its frequencies, even with reasonable voltage. We had to be very careful about the chips behavior on different platforms, though. These platforms are set in here with the maximum overclock in water and air cooling, as well as the voltages used on the processor.

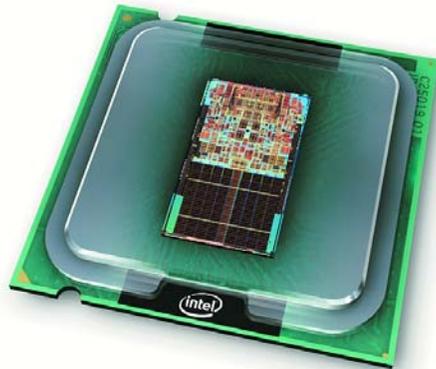
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Power Source: PC POWER AND COOLING 850 watts
 Hard drive: RAID 0 Western Digital Raptors 10k rpm 74gb
 Graphics Card: MSI 7900gt 256mb
 RAM: Kingston HyperX PC 9600, 2gb kit
 Processor: Intel E4300 (es)
 RL: Swiftech Apex with danger den intercoolers and mcw30 blocks (chipsets) and Storm CPU
 Air: Stock dissipators use of Artic Alumina

This microprocessor, in comparison to its e6300 and e6400 brothers, has a Front Side Bus (FSB) running at 800MHz, and it also lacks virtualization technology—an aspect which will be analyzed in further detail below. However, before discussing that aspect, the questions—what does this product have, though, that is of interest for the enthusiastic PC-community—needs to be asked and answered.

The answer is to be found in the e4300's multiplier: This multiplier, you will probably be surprised to learn, is the very same one that is found in the Conroe E6600, which works out at 9'x'. What does this mean? It means this microprocessor works at 1.8GHz, which, in turn, translates to 200MHz x 9 (multiplier), while in the case of the 'Allendale', we find them working at 7x266 1.83 (1.86GHz), and the e6400; 8x266 (2.13GHz): This is a very important difference when we consider the fact that these e4300 processors are able to run well above the 1066 frequency found in the 'Allendales', and thanks to it's multiplier, they become powerful processors which can run at quite incredible frequencies.

To make it simpler: If we want to take an e6300 up to 3.4GHz, we would need about 486MHz in the FSB, which is not easy to achieve for the amateur enthusiast. On the other hand, the e4300 would only need 377MHz in its bus to reach this same frequency, which is, clearly, a lot easier to accomplish.



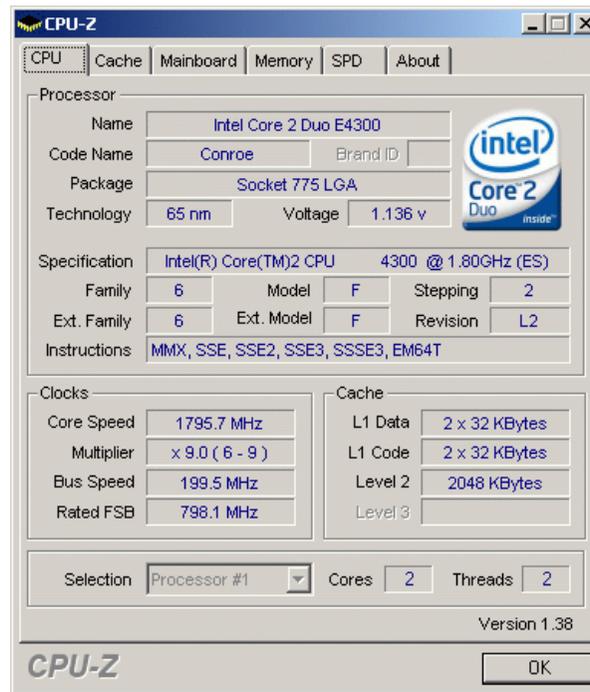
Another interesting element about this processor is that, in theory, it should be cheaper than its e6300. The prices are expected to be under the Core2Duo e6300 by a margin of \$20.00 to \$30.00 USD.

Virtualisation Function

This function allows several operating systems to run virtually without any problem, an aspect that is especially useful if you want to use a server with client terminals, and dumb terminals. If you're not bothered with this, though, it's not that useful, and generally this option remains disabled on the BIOS. While it was 'removed' from the chip, it is not really that important, especially for the average enthusiast, who uses their computer for conventional work or gaming, and where affordability is the key word.

Conclusions

This Core2 Duo e4300 can reach higher frequencies with some ease: With a 1.7 voltage, we achieved 440x9 in an ECS plate, pn2, totally water-cooled. We estimate that it could even go higher. (Keep in mind that these kinds of frequencies are not commonplace for this chip)



In the table (see Sidebar), you can see the frequencies which were studied, demonstrating the result which indicated that the chip could be induced to reach these frequencies. Honestly, this is the easiest to chip to overclock that we've laid our hands on, meaning—if you are getting started in the overclocking scene, the Core2DUO e4300 is a very good start.

We expect to have a further review on this chip for the next issue, however we couldn't miss the opportunity to share this quick glance with our AUTOSIMSPORT readers in regards to its capabilities which, in our humble opinion, takes the crown as the best cost-effective performance (so far) that we have found.



We hope this review has been useful for you, and that this leads to a better sim-racing experience, as well as a higher performance for your PC. We'll be back next month for an even closer look at the technical aspects of sim-racing.

netKarPro Community Report

Jaap Wagenvoort is on the pace with all the developments surrounding the purists' sim of choice: netKarPro

Welcome to Jaap's monthly *netKarPro* report. This column will update each month with the latest news from and for the *netKarPro* community. This allows you to keep up-to-date regarding the developments taking place around the 'sim for purists'..

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JaapWagenvoort



netKar PRO v1.0.3

First of all, the 1.0.3 patch of *netKarPRO*! A lot of talk has been going on surrounding the status of the patch. Stefano Casillo had indicated that it should've been here around Christmas, but loads of things came up in between—work for BRD, development on the hillclimb for Marangoni Group, and other issues—has seen the patch delayed.

Delayed, but certainly not forgotten. My meeting with Stefano focused on walking through a document with community feedback on *netKarPRO*, and to define what should be the focus of the patch. A summary of what the new patch will do is as follows:

- Reduce FPS drops
- Remove join lag
- Improve server stability (server crashes upon drivers leaving the server)
- (Re)introduce improved flat-spotting tyres
- Improve multiplayer performance and experience in general

The patch will not include new content. One of the reasons why the patch was delayed was that the team initially wanted to include the new Osella and the hillclimb in the patch: The whole new car and track, however, is proving to be time consuming, and as a result, the team has decided to move on with the patch, and get it out without the new content.

Even though the patch does not include new content, however, what *will* change is the demo. A lot of people in the community already suggested that what was needed was a demo in which people could test the car online: That is exactly what is going to happen in v1.0.3. With the new patch, unregistered users will be able to drive the F1600 in racemode online, on one track. Basic pick-up racing, in other words, in order to test the simulation online. A lot of people were scared-off from purchasing *netKarPRO* after the comments of

users, and what was seen as a fragility of its multi-player component. Now they have the chance to see for themselves how it drives online. A big step forward, and sure a sign that the *netKarPRO* development team is listening to the community out there.

The patch is currently in the process of being finalised. In the upcoming month, the patch will be tested online in order to test the new features, as well as bug-squashing, and improvements where needed.

Other Cool Things

The join lag problem is solved in a way that we have seen in other sims: That is, when a new client connects during a session, the new client will be loaded as a simple box and texture for the drivers already on the track. As soon as a driver goes back to the pitlane (either by driving the car back to the pitlane, or by pressing ESC), the model and textures of the newly connected client will be loaded. In this way, drivers on track will no longer suffer from join lag upon the entry of a new client, and this solution should greatly improve online pickup races with *netKarPRO*.

Flat-spotting will also make its triumphant return with v1.0.3. This unique feature was implemented in v1.0.1, but removed from v1.0.2 due to the flat-spot 'multiplier causing' issues on high-end equipment: It proved quite difficult to properly implement the flat-spotting feature on different hardware, but a solution has been found, and this will be tested in the v1.0.3 test-phase before it makes its definitive return to *netKarPRO*. What is definitive is that the flat-spot 'multiplier' is gone, which might reduce the effect on 'casual' racing wheels.

I have also discussed various other improvements of the simulation with Stefano, ranging from interface (think of configurable size/font/colour of messages, and setup interface) to time penalty issues (configurable per server).



Track editor

Yes, it really is coming. The track editor is still being tested, and getting better and better. Stefano needs some time to finish the code on the editor. When coding and testing is complete, the track editor will be released to the community.

An issue for the development team is how to deal with various versions of tracks once the editor is out. The team obviously don't want chaos to reign as has been seen in other sims, so they need some time to deal with this issue before releasing the editor.

The features of the editor are almost done. Basically, it will allow users to finalise a track and prepare it for usage in *netKarPRO* by adding and configuring features such as shaders, grid/pit/box positions, light settings, and the whole rendering of the track in the simulation.



New Cars?

The development team is looking to get some faster open-wheel cars into the simulation. This is something of an issue for the team, however, since their ambition to do so is stifled by two problems which will need to be solved prior to new cars being made available: Firstly, the need to acquire a license needs, and secondly, all the required data to accurately model the car in the simulation needs to be assembled. Of course, they could add cars now, but the team wants to do it in a proper way, which simply means having enough reliable data on the car.

What's Going On In The Team?

This week, the *netKarPRO* development team is at a show with the Marangoni Group. Testing of the v1.0.3 patch started this week as well. As soon as the testing is complete, and the reported issues have been solved, the patch will be released. This could take some time,

since it is clearly imperative that this patch must solve many of the outstanding issues with *netKarPRO*.

Current users, however, should be under no mistaken impressions: The patch is being worked on, it is a priority for the team to get it right, and as soon as it is finalized, it will be coming their way.

Besides all this, the development team is also doing some work for BRD, which is required to keep the whole project alive. The track editor is another thing that has their attention. I am writing a manual for the editor myself. When coding and testing of the editor is complete, it will be released, together with a manual, in order for the track editor to be both useful and fun for both drivers—and race-track designers!

Hope this gives you an overview of the current state of things in the *netKarPro* world. Catch you next month for the next community update! If, in the meanwhile, you have any news that is relevant and should be included in the next report, contact me at [this email](#) address.

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NASCAR HEAT

MagnusTellbom

Appeal for news items to post!

I do my very best to hunt down any and all news items in the NASCAR HEAT community, but I'm no search engine. Some things are bound to be missed due to lack of time, or just plain human errors. So I ask anyone with the slightest bit of news to send it to me by [email](#). Anything newsworthy goes. Got a new site? Setting up a new league? Are you releasing a mod or a track? A new utility for the NASCAR HEAT platform? Anything at all? Just send it to [me](#). No news is too small. And ... any news sent in will not only be posted here in AUTOSIMSPORT, but will also be posted on the main page of [SCORE](#).

Installing the Nascar Heat Essentials—The FREE HEAT SIMULATOR

Step 1: Download Nascar Heat Essentials from The Mod Squad. Install it in its default location (do not change installation path).

Step 2: While you are at The Mod Squad, get a copy of the Mod Launcher (Swiss Army Knife Edition) and install that as well.

Step 3: Download and install STCC_Install.zip (located here at [SCORE](#)). Make sure you point the installation to the right location on your harddrive. It should end up in its own folder in the Nascar Heat directory, like this: C:\Program Files\Hasbro Interactive\Nascar Heat\STCC

Step 4: Download STCC_1.3.zip and copy that to the STCC folder. Right click and select "Extract To Here". When asked if you'd like to overwrite existing files, answer YES.

Step 5: Download all the tracks you need from Texas Speed Racing. A look at the schedule in the STCC section on this site will tell you exactly what tracks you need.

Step 6: Install the tracks and make sure they end up in the right location. All tracks should be installed in the run folder in the Nascar Heat directory, like this: C:\Program Files\Hasbro Interactive\Nascar Heat\Run\

FAQ AVAILABLE [HERE](http://www.scoreracing.de/heathelp.html): <http://www.scoreracing.de/heathelp.html>

Suzuka Takes Shape

Magnus Tellbom watches the impossible take shape in HEAT: They said it could not be done, but it turned out to be just so much Smoke ...





At first there was nothing. Because of what can only be seen as a stupid limitation in *HEAT* (I heard about this several years ago after I requested the TCDT Club Circuit from SCGT to be converted to my new favourite sim), the sim does not allow crossovers—that is, it cannot allow a track to cross over itself. At least, that has been the perception since the sim was released back in August 2000.

But since then, there has always been a rumour. Could it be? Was someone out there experimenting, late at night, with the impossible? How? A while back, a picture—one single picture—began to make the rounds on the 'net; it showed a section of a track that couldn't be run in *HEAT*. And, just to prove the

perception correct, silence then reigned supreme again, and the *HEAT* community forgot all about it.

But away from the limelight, nothing could have been further from the truth: The project continued, grew, in silence, on Smoke's computer. Bit by bit it was cobbled together, and suddenly, without much warning, it had arrived. The impossible had been conquered.

Yes my friends, Suzuka is now a reality. Smoke has created, after years of being told it was never going to happen, a crossover track for *HEAT*. With this release, he takes one more step into turning this sim into something complete, and I couldn't be happier. But how? How did he create something from nothing?



As it turns out, his solution was as simple as it was inspired, and it is literally created from nothing: Thin air! Smoke's solution was to strip away the drivable surface from the crossover source, and then replaced it with ... thin air. With an extra bulge in the track, the cars 'jump' over the gap in the track, and you hardly even notice you've done it.



So ... The track comes in at 14.3Mb big, and it's available from [texasspeed](#) racing, a download that took me thirty-nine seconds. Amazing, isn't it, what years of work breaks down to nowadays! It's delivered as an .EXE, and installs with no trouble at all. You can drive this track in any mod at all, 'cause

even the slow Honda mod will manage the overpass without falling through. But I had to test it in the Sportscar GTS beta.

I took the Saleen to the track and, after a few quick setup tweaks, I started to run around the track, taking my first real look at it. The first impression was something in

the line of, 'Shouldn't the track surface be much darker?', and, 'Isn't it a little narrow in places?' Well ... After comparing with pictures from real-life, I discovered that it has been a long time since this track had that really dark shade of freshly laid tarmac. The years have bleached the track to a pale grey state, and Smoke's version does a really good job of capturing the track's current look.

The AI on this track is non-existent since an AI-line would have added some strange black lines in sections, and it was purely for aesthetic reasons that an AI line wasn't packed with the track. But it's fairly easy to create one yourself if you feel the need for it. The setups that came with the track, however, are not good, and are certainly not made for road courses. So no points at all for the stuff 'under the surface'.

Graphically, I've seen sharper stuff, but all that needs to be there *is* there, and I really enjoy the *NASCAR HEAT* logo on the Ferris Wheel. And seeing the pictures from today's original Suzuka, I find it to be well in line with its real counterpart. One could only wish that they restore Suzuka to what it once was, with freshly laid, dark black tarmac, and that our version of Suzuka gets updated to fit that.

All in all, this is a must have. It's not Smoke's best work, but it is Suzuka, and it is drivable, and has made the world of *HEAT* much more complete. Bottom line will be a weak 8 out of 10, deducting points for AI and (missing) road course setups. And I say a weak 8 'cause, if it was any other track than the world famous Suzuka, it would only have gotten a 7 due to blurry textures in some places.

***NASCAR HEAT*News**

Sportscar GTS Beta!

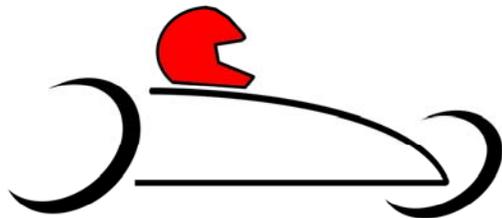
Sportscar GTS has reached beta 0.95, and it is now fully driveable. Members of [SCORE](#) forum have been able to get hold of this beta to help iron out any wrinkles in the physics. Final release? Who knows, but it can't be long now!.

CRAZY MEXICO CRAZY MARCH!

GPLegacy takes motor-sports and sim-racing to new levels ... again!

GPLegacy.com

Photos: Courtesy of GPLegacy, Carlos Suarez-Paredo, Magaly Farfan, Cristyan Elizalde, Sergio Bustamante, A1GP Media and special courtesy from Zimat





The much-awaited event for the entire GPLegacy community—after a year and a few weeks of hiatus—finally ended with GPLegacy reunited again for the A1GP, this time at the historic Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez, in Mexico City.

As they say, when it rains it pours, and in just a few weeks, international motor-sports seemed to make Mexico home in March, with NASCAR and A1GP coming into town.

The efforts made by GPLegacy in such an active month, especially with the formal partnership between AUTOSIMSPORT and GPLegacy, and the introduction of the RacingMediaCenter as a joint collaboration, offer enough material for an entire catalogue of photos and stories from the action that took place in Mexico between the last week of February to the third week of March. One thing is for sure, though: GPLegacy's promotion of sim-racing is finally beginning to pay off, and the sport is now a staple in the thinking of the real-world of motor-sports.

Indeed, GPLegacy was heavily involved with all these events in Mexico, and further details will be disclosed in May's issue of AUTOSIMSPORT. One thing we can reveal though is that GPLegacy can now boast racing drivers

from international series that are part of our community, part of the beta-test team for GPLegacy Developments (including ISI's *rFactor* platform), the developments of some new technology, and platforms developed by GPLegacy International.

In just one month, the world saw GPLegacy sponsorship from the Grand Am Rolex Series in Mexico City, with Telmex Driver Memo Rojas Jr. (who you will remember from two issues ago when he tested the Proton mod as his first approach to Grand Am in a racing simulator at Mexico's International AutoShow 2006), all the way to having a sponsored team (Sport Racing Services, GPLegacy's sponsored team) on the NASCAR Mexico race before the feature NASCAR Busch series (in which big friends of GPLegacy like Jorge Goeters, Carlos Contreras, and Michel Jourdain Jr participated).

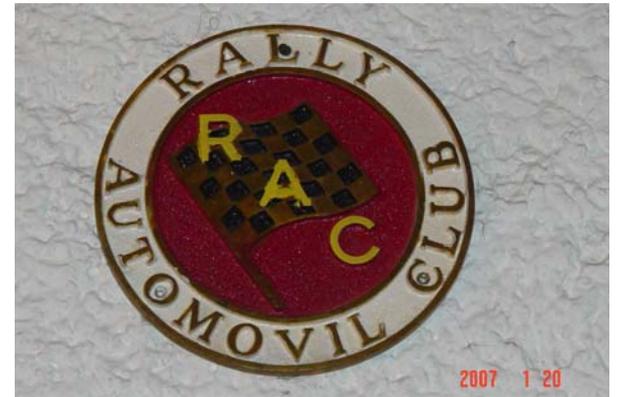
Such activities will result in exclusive interviews as the RacingMediaCenter works to bring better and faster communication than ever as an AUTOSIMSPORT-GPLegacy enterprise, including interviews with the drivers regarding sim-racing, as well as the real-world races themselves.



Rally Automobile Club Mexico

A sim-racing event for rally's most prominent figures, and a celebration of Benito Guerra Jr.'s 2006 championship
By Cristyan Elizalde

Photos courtesy of: GPLegacy, Clara McLean



The legendary Rally Automobile Club in Mexico City



Benito in his Mitsubishi Evo VII, the car in which he conquered the 2006 championship.

In December 2006, Fox Sports and Motor Review set a special *rFactor* race at the Mexican AutoShow that got Benito Guerra driving the fantastic Pagani Zonda mod against professional driver Rod McLeod, who recently assisted the USA Team in Mexico's A1GP race.

This time round, it was Benito's turn to carve out some vengeance. In a strictly controlled guests-only motor-sports event, the legendary Rally Automobile Club proved to have the right atmosphere for straight one-on-one racing in *rFactor*.

Benito Guerra Jr. had his car emblazoned with GPLegacy, and Logitech logos during the 2006 Rally season in Mexico, including the WRC stage, and the celebration of his championship win was to be expected. If anyone thought that rally has not seen a lot of activity in the sim-racing scene, that person would be very mistaken: GPLegacy has been working really hard on some treats, and, while we are, again, not able to disclose what, yet, regarding rally drivers' training programs, stay tuned to this magazine, because there is a lot of exciting things coming on that front.



A very relaxed atmosphere between hardcore motor-sports people, and, as always, rFactor, and Logitech were at the forefront in the anniversary caps.

GPLegacy organised a special event for all Benito's VIP guests; rally drivers, track drivers, racing organizers, promoters, rally legends like Erwin Richter, and highly acclaimed media people from GPLegacy's ally, 'Car Magazine', 'SportCar.com', 'Puesta a Punto', 'Motor Review', 'Fox Sports' and many others were on the scene to celebrate his championship win.



Allan Rudman the finest-of-the-finest joining the GPLegacy's ranks

This also was a fantastic experience for systems engineer Allan Rudman, who not only took part in the festivities, but took the opportunity to forge even tighter bonds with GPLegacy's team in Mexico.

Just a few weeks after GPLegacy organized Benito Guerra Jr.'s championship celebration at the Rally Automobile Club, they were also busy preparing for the Mexican round of the World Rally Championship held in Leon Guanajuato.. This time GPLegacy not only had Mexico's 2006 National Champion Benito Guerra Jr., but also Name Racing Team on hand, led by driving phenomenon Francisco 'Pancho' Name and navigator Armando 'Loco' Zapata.



Benito Guerra Jr. celebrates his 2006 National Rally Championship with GPLegacy at the Rally Automobile Club



A few hours before the guests and media arrived, the Antartida Omega Raceframes were already set.

Two special races with media people were held, proving that driving rally cars is no easy 'game': The stages were about twenty minutes long, and it probably should be mentioned that the cars were pretty much torn to pieces at the end!



With their rally navigators, spotters weren't really needed at this event. Still, Clara again proved to be a great spotter to the newcomers at the sport.



Yes! Social stages in Richard Burns Rally were also at the event in memory and tribute to Mr. Burns. Before the race started, everyone at the RAC held a minute of silence before firing up this legendary racing sim, then the race was on in stages that Benito has raced already in countries like Finland and Australia. (Bottom Left): One of the toughest rally stages was between Charly Suarez-Peredo (on the left) and rally-pro Fernando Name (www.nameracing.com) on the right.

GPLegacy Argentina

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: F-MM Argentina, GPLegacy Argentina, VRacer, Bruno Martin, Gerardo Ferrero

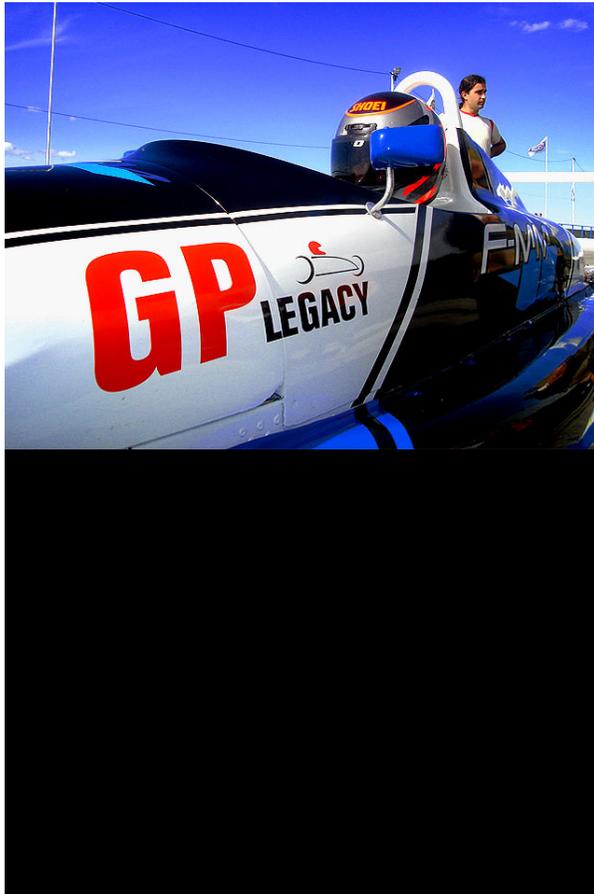
Thanks for all the fantastic support, GPLegacy Argentina is a reality thanks to Bruno Martin. Bruno wanted to wait for the big articles to arrive, but personally I think it is only fair to thank him for all the titanic work he's been doing. Coming up with new ideas, reuniting the teams to make them come true, coordinating with GPLegacy International, trust me, it is really more work than anyone could imagine.



Bruno Martin (leftmost)... Words come short when it is about to describe all his dreams, vision, work and turning dreams into reality.



The investment to promote sim racing, real-racing, and all our dreams, I can only say that Bruno's become a real brother for whom I wish the very best. I know we'll be working together for some time to come.

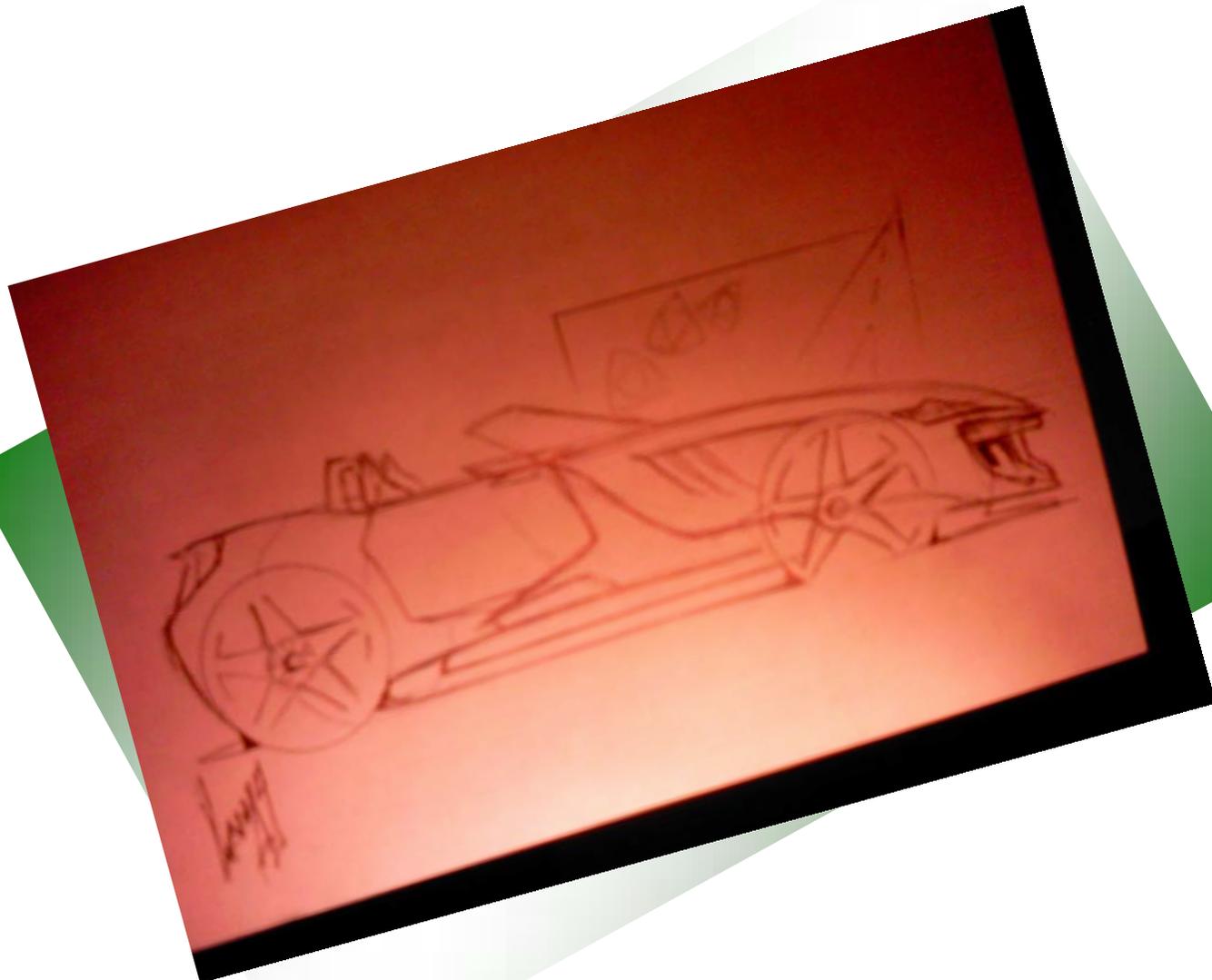


(Left): FFM – GPLegacy Argentina – VRacer Formula Honda

ANTARTIDA CARS FOR RFACTOR PROGRESS

Luis Monroy, Carlos and Omar Duarte, along with GPLegacy's development team in Mexico are making huge progress, this is just the first sketch of the 'Antartida Shark' by Sergio Bustamante (Concept), and Luis Monroy

(execution) roadster; we will show you the model very soon.



AUTOSIMSPORT

Chequered Flag

RacingTimes

All the best action from the best championships and series in sim-racing ...



If you would like to see your series of league featured in these pages, please contact us at alex.martini@autosimспорт.net.



Formula Racing Challenge Preview

The beginning of a new season at [Formula Racing Challenge](#) is approaching, and alongside the usual race preparations, the prizes for the winners have been announced. Both the F1 and GP2 winners will receive special prizes at the end of the year.

But to get them, the winners will have to surpass the best drivers in their own class, as all the leagues have had until now a good affluence, being that the F1 is now fully booked. More than 12 teams have signed up for the F1 league, and more than 30 drivers are already lined up for the FBMW season.

The first race are just around the corner, and the FBMW will have its start on the 2nd of April at Lime Rock Park, being followed in the next day, by the GP2 cars at Melbourne. F1 will be one week later.

The drivers, the ones who will be competing at track, trying to reach the glory, will line up for the following prizes; At the F1 class, the winner will have the chance to ride in a Radical Extreme Sportscar at Estoril, and the winner of the GP2 championship, will have the chance to use a professional racing simulator, in real F1 size cockpit for free, also at Estoril.

As for the teams, the competition will be bigger this year, with a mixture of the old teams, with the new one's, who will be wanting to take over the place. The Champions, GhostSpeed, will want to renew both titles conquered in 2006, and for that a reinforced formation will be participating at the league, with one extra team. The main contestants will probably come from the Evolution Racing Team, who ended up last season on a high, and hired for the new season, one of the top drivers in 2006. They will be filling up two teams, and their main goal, is to conquer the teams championship, as stated on a team press release.

The outsiders will probably come both from, Hype Raceframes, and from the veterans, Virtual-Games.com Racing Team, who will be wanting to maintain themselves, on the same level that their history is. For that they will have the help from a Spanish driver.

The Portuguese team, Sonic Racing Team, will do their first intake at the Open wheels, following this way, the path done by others, as Team Multivisual Motorsports, who coming from the GT, managed to compete successfully at the F1 league. In 2006, they were one of the most regular teams.



Joining all these teams, there will be two foreign teams making their debut at the league. Coming from the UK, Knight Racing, will be joined by the Brazilian Squad of the Apple-Maseratti guys.

So as you see, there are plenty of reasons why Formula Racing Challenge is the right challenge for you, not only for the big competition in track, but also for the motivating prizes ahead of each winner.

Formula SimRacing

The Formula SimRacing season is finally ready to start. This article will focus on the main parties in our championship: the teams and their drivers. Each team presented together with official team staff comments. For full team reports, please refer to the team websites and their press releases, also found on www.formula-simracing.net. Welcome onboard.

Diamond Racing Team

- #1 Bruno Marques FLAG
- #2 Ondrej Kuncman FLAG



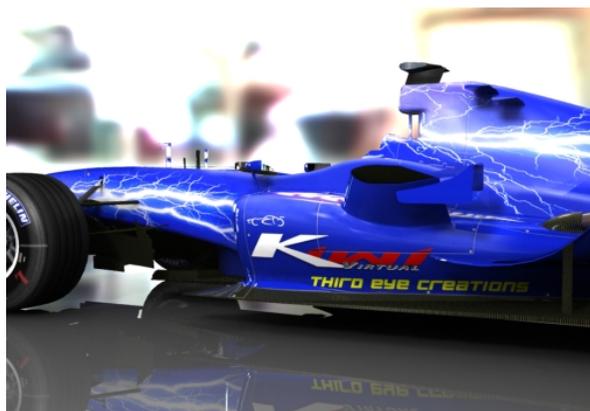
After finishing last season on a high note, with Bruno Marques securing the world championship title and the team finishing on second place in the constructors' championship in its maiden season, the expectations on DRT are once again sky-high. The team has established itself among the top teams in other ways as well, enhancing its structure and media relations. Another indicator for strong future performance was the signing of the cunning Czech, Ondrej Kuncman, after his excellent rookie performances from last autumn. Together with the robust driver line-up and excellent

technical knowledge, DRT are starting the season as favourite numero uno.

Team Sporting Director, Steve Kasimatis: *"My job was not so easy and I really believe I spent a lot of hours testing and programming our team tasks last season, and I am proud we managed to finish second in teams' championship after the great battle with Twister. No need to say the same about drivers champ, it's obvious. This season we have many goals, but first of all we have to face the reality and that is that every team starts from zero points, so we have to work hard again if we want to do the same results or even better... anyway I hope for a good championship to all teams and I hope we all have fun!"*

Kiwi Virtual

- #3 John-Eric Saxén
- #4 Darius Trinká



The Australian Kiwi Virtual had a breakthrough season in 2006. The team had secured three WC licenses and eventually won the constructors' championship almost effortlessly. The first of 2007 didn't turned out to be that effortless and the team was forced to cut a bit on its budget due to a loss of a team owner. The teams' former

stars are Kolbe and Greco are now gone, but instead the Aussie atmosphere has been mixed with a scent of northern humbleness. The team puts its hopes on young talents and the season will show how their occasionally promising practise pace has been transferred to the race situation.

Team driver, John-Eric Saxen: *"I am really grateful to be able to drive for Kiwi Virtual in what I consider the most competitive league in the world. The fact that Kiwi is the reigning constructors' champion is a welcome extra challenge for the coming season and at the same time I feel good to be in a team which has knowledge of how to win. It's too early to speak about any result targets, as that's relative to how the rest of the field performs, but it's obvious that we have a certain responsibility of continuing the success in 2007. The ultimate goal for every racer is to win and I'm sure we can work towards that with the help of consistency, good setups and mental strength."*

Twister-Racing

- #5 Roy Kolbe
- #6 Ernesto De Angelis



Twister came, saw and won. Not the track event, but the pre-season media race. The press turned its attention the first time when the driver line-up was revealed, featuring Roy Kolbe, the most successful FSR driver in history, and Ernesto De Angelis, nephew of the legendary Elio De Angelis. The second success came when the team revealed the TR007, which featured a combination of different shades of blue, light-blue and white, together with well fit sponsor logos and a floating paint pattern, making it one of the best looking cars of the grid. Under the surface all-seen Dennis Hirrle has taken over the Global Administrator post, keeping together the team's vast crew and all the different racing categories. The odds are high for Twister to finish in top positions in both championships, but as Kimi says, let's wait and see what happens in the races.

Team driver, Roy Kolbe: *"First of all I want to say a big thanks to our designers! Look at this car, it's really one of the greatest designs I've seen ever. I love it! I just hope the TR007 will be even better on track, that's what counts finally. But I think we are on a good way. I'm absolutely convinced, that Twister Racing has the right people to have a successful season. Everyone does his part of the work and finally we will puzzle all details together. Nothing will be untested for the first race and I really must say, I couldn't have had have a better preparation! I know it sounds very promising, but nevertheless, I don't want to make a prediction now. We are using a new mod and new tracks, so who knows if anyone can surprise or not? But I'm almost sure the best people will be on top again. Bruno Marques is the man to beat. And I'm looking forward to this challenge, I'm ready!"*

Torrent Motorsports

#7 Andreas Spengler
#8 Petter Kassa



After acquiring one of the former Kiwi team's licenses, TMo is finally represented in, as we believe, the highest category of online sim racing. The jump to a new level obviously doesn't scare a well established and ambitious team as TMo, which even has gathered experience from real life racing (see AutoSimSport February). Similar to Twister the team has drivers in all four categories, with the humble goal of winning one or more champ(s). The WC line-up sums up a mix of experience and youth; previously successful Kassa jumped straight into the team from the Norwegian military forces and Spengler after

just a pair WS Ace appearances. Who knows how high even the pure motivation can bring them.

Team Crew Chief/Driver, Dennis Johansen: *"Torrent Motorsports in WC FSR Brilliant! I have been in sim-racing for many years and I am absolutely sure TMo is going to make some good results. From the Driver Chief perspective I'll now concentrate on the drivers, and help them to improve both in lap times but even more in consistent driving, what is a driver worth if he can make 3 very quick laps but not make a race stint without crashing? Bottom line I'm sure TMo is going to give it 100% and I think its going to be enough for top positions!"*

Roaldo Racing

#9 David Greco
#10 Danny Davison



RR 007-B

After a harsh WC 2006 season Roaldo Racing went for a quiet winter preparing, but in the end the paparazzi were swarming around Roaldo Racing as well. The Italian winning parade, conducted by David Greco, so well remembered from last year's ASRWC league with Inno di

Mameli –hymn in the background, pulled the expectations up at once after it had settled at Roaldo Racing. The team further expanded with few members before the season start and the orchestra with its wonderful red-silver coloured instruments, formerly known as Hernj Grand Prix, is certainly tuned to its optimal frequency once the season launches.

Team manager, Roald Reurink: "I'm happy we are back on the FSR tracks, it has been a while. The league itself improved a lot and we as team, are of course delighted about that. Just think of the live and TV broadcasting, amazing! My team worked hard during the winter and we expect a great season with the line-up we have now. Our goals are quite optimistic perhaps, seeing where we ended last season. The team hopes to be in the Top3 of the constructors championship and win some races. We have been preparing ourself for the first race lately and we hope we are not far away from the top-teams like Diamond and Kiwi. Last season was tough, but this time we will make it all happen! As the music said in our team presentation: 'remember the name!'"

Silva Eagle Rex

#11 Fausto Pappalardo

#12 Paolo Ceccarelli



Da Silva NetRex is making a strong comeback behind the scenes with acquiring a few additional world class drivers for this season. Scuderia Silva Eagle Rex remains Italian, however, with veteran Fausto Pappalardo, already starting his fifth FSR season, and newcomer, former F1-FullSim champion Paolo Ceccarelli. A strong and even performance can certainly be expected.

Team owner, Fabrizio Pescali: "This year it was easy to assign the first two seats, Fausto is a solid rock for our team and we know that if he had more time to test he would make wonders! Somebody considers him just a good pilot but that's a mistake, he will be a real surprise! Concerning the position of Paolo; now he's not a very well known International Pilot but in a few years he will demonstrate to be like the best FSR pilots. Both of them know each other from many years and I'm sure that they'll do a great work."

GhostSpeed Racing Team

#14 Joao Barbosa

#15 Luis Azinheira



The Portuguese GhostSpeed already secured an FSR 2007 license in mid 2006, so the team has had plenty of time to prepare and set up its strategy for the coming season. The team came in with a big budget and expectations are naturally high, simply based on the looks of the car and the media attention, which almost reached Twister levels. The driver line-up features an interesting duo, which actually won both Portuguese championship titles in 2006. Even more curiously, the reigning world champion

Bruno Marques was formerly paired with Barbosa in the same league and team, so who knows how high GhostSpeed will finish in their maiden season.

Team manager, Pedro Rodrigues: "I can say it is like a dream came true. A dream if we remember that we thought about it some years ago when we started our international adventure but in no way we had the funds or the organization to achieve that. More than one year later the dream became one of our main goals, and now we are here to compete among the best in SimRacing, to battle hard for every position, for every corner, for every apex, for every point, but always with fair-play above all. Expect us to work as hard as we can and to compete as fair as possible."

Virtual-Games.com Racing Team

#16 Denis Kiriakopoulos

#17 Sergio Casalins



Moving from the ambitious GhostSpeed to their neighbours, Virtual-Games.com, one can immediately recognise a difference in the surrounding atmosphere. Nonetheless, Virtual-Games seems to be in a very good condition and ready to improve last year results. The Swiss and Spanish driver duo has integrated well into the Portuguese sun and the relaxed, but focused and determined attitude should carry the team towards the better placements. One of the most distinctive cars on the grid.

Team manager, Rogério Barroso: "I am very happy with the F1 Division of our team. I feel that these guys are

enjoying themselves while improving, at the same time, by learning from each other. I don't think a Manager can ask better than this. Having Spanish drivers was an old dream, since we are a Portuguese team owned by a company that also works also in Spain. With the help from Mauricio Gomez, team manager from FCF, (probably the most known SimRacing South American team out there) that was possible. And on the top of it, Sergio and Carlos are simply great people.... With Denis - for me one of the best fighters in FSR - and Sergio leading the boat (with Carlos in the background), I am confident we will improve greatly our performance from last year."



Ash Racing

#18 Geoffrey Veenings

#19 Andrey Lovchy

Ash Racing has been participating in Formula SimRacing ever since 2002, a year when the second season of FSR was held. Thus one could say Ash has become almost an integrated part of the league, even without finishing on the very top positions. In one way Ash could be seen as FSR's Minardi team, which indeed

is no dishonour, but rather can be seen as positive in the all more competitive and serious atmosphere. However, Ash Racing also has certain goals for the near future, which team owner Steve Holgeth will speak more about in the following.

Team owner, Steve Holgeth *"Having just sat and watched the first race in Malaysia, I have to say 2007 is going to be an extremely exciting year not just for my team but for the whole of FSR! The competition looks very fierce, already the top 10 are separated by less than 1 second, and it will be very hard for us at Ash Racing to score points in many of the races. Geoffrey (Veenings) is starting his 3rd year with the team, he is consistent and reliable, but even he will admit he's not the fastest driver in the WC. Andrey Lovchy joins Ash Racing for the first time although he is also manager of the Diamond Racing Team, but again Andrey knows he is not going to be challenging for victory, but all I ask from both my drivers is that they remain reliable, and they have fun racing here. For sure, if 2007 proves to be as competitive and demanding as the first race shows us, then maybe I will need to make some tough decisions on what the future of Ash Racing will be. Having fun in what is a professional environment like FSR is only acceptable so far. In real Formula 1 some teams have smaller budgets and their cars really are slower, but I have no excuse, and in a way I look forward to entering the more serious seasons that lie ahead of us in FSR's future."*

Faster Than Speed

#20 Giuseppe Marconi

#21 Patrick De Witt

Following in the footprints of Juan Manuel Fangio, team Faster Than Speed has had a long history together with sim racing and FSR. The team has achieved impressive championships in the FSR WS Ace category, but the WC results have been lacking the

finishing crème the la crème. But this year the team decided to approach with bigger bets by signing the flying Dutchman Patrick De Witt just after season end. As a respond De Witt, almost slightly surprisingly, turned out to be among the very fastest drivers during the unofficial winter season. Having said that, FTS should comfortably find themselves in the top positions, if we use pre-season testing as a measure. The new, aggressive approach can as well be seen in the car paintwork, which features a really distinct style and colour scheme.

Team driver, Patrick De Witt: *"I am so excited about the upcoming season! My expectations are high. To be honest, I hope I can fight for some podiums this year, although it will be very hard. I hope to learn from my new teammate Marconi, as I learned last year with my previous teams. I hope to score as many points as I can and I want to better the team's last year's results. I am sure we can improve on last year's position."*

Silva Snake Rex

#22 Sebastian Schmalenbach

#23 Dominik Binz

Though having the last numbers of the grid, this team should be considered a serious competitor for victories and podiums. Reviewing the statistics, debutant Schmalenbach finished on a great fifth place in the 2006 championship and Binz on a tenth place, despite having retirements in all racer but two. The German duo should be more in balance this year, and as a bonus Binz and Schmalenbach have been active developers of the CTDP physics that Formula SimRacing now uses for the first time. Expectations are high, but the consistency remains to be seen in the races.

Sim-Challenge.com signs sponsorship deal with eDimensional

By Trayan Sarafov

Good news is that Sim-Challenge.com could sign a sponsorship deal with eDimensional for the remainder of the GTR2 World Championship 2007. eDimensional provides Sim-Challenge.com with four units of the official Sim-Challenge headset, the advanced AudioFX Force Feedback Gaming Headset. The headsets will be awarded to the best placed 2 drivers in the AudioFX standings in each class after the following Grand Prix:

AudioFX Belgian Grand Prix Spa

eDimensional German Grand Prix Oschersleben

AudioFX Italian Grand Prix Monza

eDimensional Chinese Grand Prix Zhuhai

Dominik Binz [PR & Marketing]: "It's absolutely fantastic to have found eDimensional as a new partner and confirms that the work we are putting into the league is not unrecognized by the industry. We are looking forward to work together and this partnership could just be the beginning of successful synergies. As we are an official reseller of eDimensional's product line we will have several exclusive offers for our drivers in the near future. We will also introduce the AudioFX headset to the Sim-Challenge community with a review once the units are shipped to us. I'm extremely happy about the latest developments and I can only thank Mr. Epstein for his trust in our organisation." The review is already online and can be found here: <http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/default.aspx?nid=95>

Michael Epstein [eDimensional - President/CEO]: "eDimensional is thrilled to be an official partner of Sim Challenge 2007. We know that Sim Challenge represents some of the top sim racers in the world and is at the forefront of the growing industry of online racing events. Competitive sim racers need every edge they can get and our AudioFX Force Feedback Gaming Headset provides

the increased situational awareness and top quality performance that they demand. We're proud that the AudioFX was named the official headset of Sim Challenge and look forward to many successful sim races."



Sim-Challenge.com GTR2 World Championship Race Review – Round 4 & 5 & 6.

There is no exact explanation why Sim-Challenge has built its reputation as one of the greatest leagues in the history of the simulated sport, but there is definitely an answer to the question how we get to this level. It is certainly due to the drivers equipe - those people who always do it at the highest level of performance. Those who share exactly the one and only passion - to have fun! Those who are provided with the best conditions to enjoy the whole atmosphere of a simulated FIA GT paddock! By all means and definitions we are all talking about the World GTR Championship held by the Sim-Challenge administration team. Another three rounds of the WC are gone. Another two new GT drivers wrote their names on the wall of glory. They went straight to the Hall of Fame for Season 2007. And as for the nGT they are all already making history. We will cover race four, five and six - the

Dubai GT, Brno in the Czech Republic and Donington - a circuit on the island of the Union Jack. The lately inaugurated in October 2004 Autodrome of Dubai welcomed the GT and ETC championships. A massive action gave the audience a very nice first view of the circuit. It was rumoured that someday this circuit will host a world-wide recognised motorsport event. Surely, in 2007 the Emirates were ready enough to open their doors for the GTR2 Sim-Challenge.com World Championship!

Hungarian Norbi Kiss made it for the second time on the very top spot of the grid - a result that is definitely encouraging including his win at the second round of the championship in Magny-Cours. It was tight between Kiss and Max Dell'Orco at the beginning as they pulled away from the chasing Patrick Gardewall who was questioned about his third position by Jarkko Rissanen and Greger Huttu throughout the whole race. The deadline was broken on lap 8 when Dell'Orco got past due to an error from the 2005 GT World Champion Norbi Kiss. It was not long till Gardewall lost his comfortable podium-giving third position after an amazing battle with the following guys who made the impossible to squeeze in front at turns 13 and 14 at lap 13. Pitting for the first time did not turn as expected for Dell'Orco as he lost it to Norbi. Though Kiss did not seem to enjoy it too much as his engine blew 2 laps later. This had opened an absolutely clear route to the victory for his Italian rival, but was he able to make it? Swedish Gardewall did make some mistakes but at the end of the day he enjoyed his first-ever world podium by finishing second after an engine failure from Rissanen's car which led to a disastrous end of what may seemed to be THE race. Greger Huttu took the best from the occasion finishing in a stable 3rd position. 30 seconds were evidential for Maximilliano Dell'Orco's perfect first win for Season 2007!

40 minutes were enough for Alex Ott to prove to the 2006 nGT World Champion Mark vd Meulen that he

wouldn't get a chance to see how is it to be in the lead of the Dubai Grand Prix! A fantastic battle between the two flying Dutchmen who were unreachable for the rest of the field. Ott had everything to be happy of from this race as his team-mate Albert Priem made it to the podium followed strictly by Ukrainian Evgeniy Mironenko who even with 55kg on-board claimed 4th place! Marcel Groen was Holland's hero today as he finished 5th without being in a Porsche - a strong result, having in mind that the Ferraris this year are highly uncompetitive compared with the 996s.

Masaryk circuit has more than seventy years of history which offers to Brno an important position in the world of motorsports. Things didn't go well for Norbi Kiss this time either. He got disconnected on Lap 2. It is not the best momentum that the Hungarian is having. American Szymczak stormed to pole this time but it was not sure whether he would make it to the chequered flag on first position or not. At the first stops for tyres and re-fuelling Team Finnmotion's Markus Kononen lost some positions. The same happened to his team-mate Max Dell'Orco. The one who gained was reigning champion Roland Ehnstrom who did increase his lead to Ryan Foss. However, Marko Hartikainen was the one to be applauded who accelerated from 7th to 4th! Ehnstrom drove faultless in the remaining laps - perfect race from the Scandinavian who, in fact, missed the apex of a corner in the very last lap of the race. It was a clear invitation for second overall race position for Ryan Foss who took it perfectly on the inside and left no hopes for the 2006 GT Champion. He was outplaced by the K.A.R.T. driver who was fine enough at the end to say that he is "really happy for this second position". Back to the pole-sitter, this time Christian was the one to be caught. No mistakes, no complains, no comments - maiden win in the GT category with team's first-ever one-two win with Foss in second. K.A.R.T. climbed the standings to reach the second position and

be claimed as the well-deserved runner-ups in the championship. A great day that the team will remember among many! Hartikainen was in 4th for a second consecutive race and Huttu with 80 kilos on board still in the Top 10 finishers - an absolutely nerves-blistering race for the Finn!

As for nGT this was probably the most exciting race to date! We advice you to download the replay or wait for the highlights videos because there were so many battles on the track. We name some of the idols of Brno - Jeffrey Ruskus, passing first Evgeniy Mironenko, then Jan Fecker and Rory King at the end to climb from 5th to 2nd and with team orders to get past Jon Moore and finish this race on the very high of the podium. Mironenko, leader in nGT, continued to impress with his fourth positions even that he had been carrying 45 kilos of ballast in his car.

It wasn't long before Donington Park was allowed to be host of car races. Opened in 1931 in the paths of the parkland in front of 'Donigton Hall' this circuit is one of UK's classics for motorcycle racing. However, the wGTRC is not for the first time in here!

Dell'Orco was back. Estimated as one of the best drivers ever Max bounced back in style to clinch his first pole position of the season with Greger Huttu as an amazing second with 40kg of ballast! Dell'Orco was unmatchable on this venue as he pulled away right from the beginning of the race. Nobody had ever provided him with any kind of challenge throughout the whole distance. It was a desirable win for every driver who has title hopes. Portugal's Joao Vaz from VG Racing followed Huttu but never came close enough to threaten him. The reigning champion continued with his miserable luck as his pits were occupied - he lost lots of time and was tumbled out of contention for this race. Easy second position for the momentary GT drivers' leader Greger Huttu as Vaz got disconnected shortly before the race's end. Frenchman Cyril Limosino, the 2005 nGT World

Champion, was unlucky to have blown his engine with less then 2 laps to go. This handed Patrick Gardewall to 3rd and another 4th place for Marko Hartikainen! What proved to be an epic battle was the one between Rickard Hellsten in his F550 and Wilfred vd Brink in his Murcielago who had been conquering 90 minutes throughout the whole distance. A real bumper-2-bumper action for the two drivers!

Dave Nicol, aeroGT's driver, was on pole for Donington. He led almost the entire first stint but a small mistake in the "Old Hairpin" gave the lead to Denis Kozin. Due to different tactics though, and a much better pit-stop, Nicol regained his P1 and drove in style for his first SC win. Behind him there was an epic battle for P2 between Kozin and Ruskus with this time Denis holding on and claiming second place. Even with 35kg weight penalty Evgeniy Mironenko finished 4th for a second time in a row and he slowly starts to build gap in the standings being the one and only contender for this year's prestigious nGT title!

Truly, ladies and gents it was another remarkable period of three races within the 2007 season of the World GTR2 Championship. Stay with us till the end and follow everything live on www.sim-challenge.com! The media team is continuing to present you all the latest from the races with Trayan Sarafov being the official Sim-Challenge voice for Season 2007, so... see you again in the next AUTOSIMSPORT issue!

08.02.2007: Round 4 – GT Class - Dubai GP

Pole Position: Norbi Kiss – 1:48.157 – Pole Replay

Fastest Lap: Max Dell’Orco – 1:50.364

Video Review: <http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Media.aspx?cid=2&vid=12>

Server Replay: http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Files/REPLAY/GTRscWC_GT_DUBAI.rar

Pos Driver WP Team Car Pen Total Lap Best Gap

1	Max Dell’Orco	0kg	Team Finnmotion	Ferrari 550	-	1:29:43.562	46	1:50.364	
2	Patrik Gardewall	0kg	Team SSR	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:14.779	46	1:51.036	30,127
3	Greger Huttu	60kg	Team Redline	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:17.998	46	1:50.948	33,457
4	Marko Hartikainen	0kg	VPP Werksteam	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:31.351	46	1:51.128	45,389
5	Ryan Foss	30kg	K.A.R.T.	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:36.512	46	1:51.106	50,956
6	Wilfred vd Brink	0kg	GTN Drivers Club	Murcielago	-	1:30:48.421	46	1:51.164	62,931
7	Glenn McGee	0kg	K.A.R.T.	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:49.933	46	1:50.952	64,629
8	Rickard Hellsten	0kg	Team SSR	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:51.944	46	1:51.454	66,099
9	Markus Kononen	40kg	Team Finnmotion	Ferrari 550	-	1:31:07.015	46	1:51.647	79,846
10	Jacques Bonet	0kg	LFGTR1	Ferrari 550	-	1:31:07.215	46	1:51.723	80,481
11	Emmanuel Taphinaud	0kg	Frenchie Fox Racing	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	45	1:51.376	1L
12	P.P.Garuti	0kg	Red-Zone	Ferrari 550	-	1:29:55.103	45	1:52.266	1L
13	Joan Pey	0kg	ESP Racing	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:13.176	45	1:52.015	1L
14	Alexander Lugones	0kg	LugoSpeed Motorworks	Ferrari 550	-	1:30:19.523	45	1:52.840	1L
15	Zoran Arsov	0kg	TEAM AM	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	32	1:53.933	14L
16	Jarkko Rissanen	0kg	Ajira Racing	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	28	1:50.675	18L
17	Vincent Staal	0kg	OCRANA	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	25	1:51.200	21L
18	Norbi Kiss	0kg	Virtual-Games.com Racing Team	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	24	1:50.639	22L
19	Jaakko Mikkonen	0kg	GhostSpeed Racing Team	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	22	1:51.139	24L
20	Sami Silventoinen	0kg	Ajira Racing	Ferrari 550	-	DNF	8	1:53.712	38L

(Pos = Position | Driver = Driver Name | WP = Weight Penalty | Team = Team Name | Car = Car Name | Pen = Penalty | Total = Total Race Time | Lap = Race Laps | Best = Fastest Racelap | Gap = Gap To Winner)

05.02.2007: Round 4 – NGT Class - Dubai GP
Pole Position: Alex Ott – 1:56.802 - Pole Replay
Fastest Lap: Evgeniy Mironenko – 1:58.582
Video Review: n/a

Server Replay: http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Files/REPLAY/GTRscWC_NGT_DUBAI.rar

Pos Driver WP Team Car Pen Total Lap Best Gap

1 Alex Ott 0kg R-Force 1-6 Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:47.276 43 1:58.911
2 Mark vd Meulen 0kg Dutch Turtles Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:00.044 43 1:58.715 11,090
3 Albert Priem 0kg R-Force 1-6 Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:01.253 43 1:59.065 13,052
4 Evgeniy Mironenko 55kg Kamrad Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:06.302 43 1:58.582 17,478
5 Marcel Groen 0kg Simracing.NL Ferrari 360 GTC - 1:31:31.342 43 1:59.145 42,322
6 Sasa Djukic 0kg NK competition Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:55.484 43 1:59.544 66,217
7 Jeffrey Ruskus 35kg Team Shark Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:55.911 43 1:59.591 66,818
8 Rory King 30kg GhostSpeed Racing Team Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:56.156 43 1:58.900 68,895
9 Rodolphe Morin 0kg The M TeaM Ferrari 360 GTC - 1:32:09.442 43 1:59.317 80,734
10 Mario Gama 0kg Cyber Racing Ferrari 360 GTC - 1:32:23.942 43 1:59.746 93,360
11 Ari Nieminen 0kg Ajira Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:28.970 43 ? 96,757
12 Manuel Santangelo 0kg DH-R Motorsport Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:52.234 43 1:59.375 105,714
13 Denis Kozhin 0kg Kamrad Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:52.985 43 1:58.692 107,960
14 Marko Jozef 0kg NK competition Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 42 1:59.430 1L
15 Dirk Linden 0kg Dutch Turtles Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:10.692 42 ? 1L
16 Jan Duijs 0kg Dutch Turtles Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:11.422 42 ? 1L
17 Loic Varnier 0kg Team Otau Games Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:11.061 42 ? 1L
18 Andrea Lo Presti 0kg Sajan Racing Team Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:26.776 42 ? 1L
19 Alex Maresta 0kg 3Steps Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:43.024 42 ? 1L
20 Antoine Morin 0kg The M TeaM Ferrari 360 Modena - 1:31:10.922 41 ? 2L
21 Tiago M Guerreiro 0kg GhostSpeed Racing Team Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 39

22.02.2007: Round 5 – GT Class - Brno GP

Pole Position: Christian Szymczak – 1:48.781 – Pole Replay

Fastest Lap: Christian Szymczak – 1:50.808

Video Review: n/a

Server Replay: http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Files/REPLAY/GTRscWC_GT_BRNO.rar

Pos Driver WP Team Car Pen Total Lap Best Gap

- 1 Christian Szymczak 0kg K.A.R.T. Ferrari 550 - 1:30:27.311 46 1:50.808
- 2 Ryan Foss 0kg K.A.R.T. Ferrari 550 - 1:30:40.935 46 1:51.531 13,624
- 3 Roland Ehnstrom 0kg Virtual-Games.com Racing Team Ferrari 550 -1:30:41.520 46 1:51.744 14,209
- 4 Marko Hartikainen 0kg VPP Werksteam Ferrari 550 - 1:30:48.866 46 1:51.586 21,555
- 5 Jarkko Rissanen 0kg Ajira Racing Ferrari 550 - 1:30:52.036 46 1:51.524 24,724
- 6 Max Dell'Orco 40kg Team Finnmotion Ferrari 550 - 1:30:52.474 46 1:51.326 25,162
- 7 Markus Kononen 0kg Team Finnmotion Ferrari 550 - 1:31:00.905 46 1:51.918 33,593
- 8 Wilfred vd Brink 0kg GTN Drivers Club Murcielago - 1:31:08.793 46 1:52.264 41,482
- 9 Joao Vaz 0kg Virtual-Games.com Racing Team Ferrari 550 - 1:31:15.448 46 1:51.704 48,137
- 10 Greger Huttu 80kg Team Redline Ferrari 550 - 1:31:20.392 46 1:52.136 53,081
- 11 Cyril Limosino 0kg Sajan Racing Team Ferrari 550 - 1:31:20.885 46 1:52.063 53,573
- 12 Rickard Hellsten 0kg Team SSR Ferrari 550 - 1:31:25.195 46 1:52.037 57,884
- 13 Zsolt Prezsnyak 0kg tHUNder Racing Ferrari 550 - 1:31:43.830 46 1:51.950 76,518
- 14 Jacques Bonet 0kg LFGTR1 Ferrari 550 - 1:32:16.461 46 1:52.175 109,150
- 15 P.P.Garuti 0kg Red-Zone Ferrari 550 - 1:30:29.394 45 1:52.549 1L
- 16 Victor Rodriguez 0kg Cyber Racing Ferrari 550 - 1:30:31.758 45 1:52.772 1L
- 17 Joan Pey 0kg ESP Racing Ferrari 550 - 1:30:32.167 45 1:52.613 1L
- 18 George Pol 0kg UK-NL Racing Team Saleen S7R - 1:31:39.444 45 1:54.249 1L
- 19 Sami Silventoinen 0kg Ajira Racing Ferrari 550 - 1:31:41.401 45 1:52.989 1L
- 20 Glenn McGee 0kg K.A.R.T. Ferrari 550 - DNF 44 1:52.375 2L
- 21 Fabrizio Hernandez 0kg Sajan Racing Team Ferrari 550 - DNF 15 1:52.464 31L
- 22 Patrik Gardewall 30kg Team SSR Ferrari 550 - DNF 9 1:52.606 37L 0
- 23 Norbi Kiss 0kg Virtual-Games.com Racing Team Ferrari 550 - DNF 3 1:51.320 43L

19.02.2007: Round 5 – NGT Class - Brno GP

Pole Position: Jon Moore – 1:57.585 - Pole Replay

Fastest Lap: Jan Fecker – 1:58.967

Video Review: n/a

Server Replay: http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Files/REPLAY/GTRscWC_NGT_BRNO.rar

Pos Driver WP Team Car Pen Total Lap Best Gap

1	Ari Nieminen	0kg	Ajira Racing	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:30:49.845	43	1:59.661
2	Jeffrey Ruskus	15kg	Team Shark	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:30:51.088	43	1:59.316 1,243
3	Rory King	10kg	GhostSpeed Racing Team	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:30:51.260	43	1:59.172 1,415
4	Evgeniy Mironenko	45kg	Kamrad Racing	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:04.749	43	1:59.399 14,903
5	Denis Kozhin	0kg	Kamrad Racing	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:07.796	43	1:59.622 17,951
6	Mark vd Meulen	15kg	Dutch Turtles	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:15.530	43	1:59.773 25,685
7	Sasa Djukic	0kg	NK competition	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:17.942	43	1:59.691 28,097
8	Albert Priem	10kg	R-Force 1-6	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:32.301	43	1:59.877 42,456
9	Craig Heslop	0kg	Team Shark	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:35.801	43	2:00.137 45,956
10	Jan Fecker	0kg	GTN Drivers Club	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:37.533	43	1:58.967 47,688
11	Marcel Groen	0kg	Simracing.NL	Ferrari 360 GTC	- 1:31:53.978	43	2:00.259 64,133
12	Corey Melton	0kg	GhostSpeed Racing Team	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:31:59.459	43	2:00.123 69,615
13	Mario Gama	0kg	Cyber Racing	Ferrari 360 GTC	- 1:32:13.231	43	2:00.422 83,386
14	Alex Maresta	0kg	3Steps Racing	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:32:14.950	43	2:00.384 85,105
15	Marko Jozef	0kg	NK competition	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:32:32.170	43	1:59.916 102,325
16	Andrea Lo Presti	0kg	Sajan Racing Team	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- 1:32:40.678	42	2:01.419 1L
17	Jon Moore	0kg	Team Shark	Porsche 996 GT3 RSR	- DNF 25	1:58.852	18L
18	Enzo Amico	0kg	R24-7	Ferrari 360 GTC	- DNF 18	2:00.663	25L

08.03.2007: Round 6 – GT Class - Donington GP

Pole Position: Max Dell'Orco – 1:22.824 – Pole Replay

Fastest Lap: Max Dell'Orco – 1:24.148

Video Review: n/a

Server Replay: http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Files/REPLAY/GTRscWC_GT_DONINGTON.rar

Pos Driver WP Team Car Pen Total Lap Best Gap

- 1 Max Dell'Orco 0kg Team Finnmotion Ferrari 550 - 1:29:34.199 62 1:24.148**
- 2 Greger Huttu 40kg Team Redline Ferrari 550 - 1:29:53.478 62 1:24.487 19,279**
- 3 Patrik Gardewall 0kg Team SSR Ferrari 550 - 1:30:20.213 62 1:24.752 46,014**
- 4 Marko Hartikainen 0kg VPP Werksteam Ferrari 550 - 1:30:25.508 62 1:24.762 51,309**
- 5 Roland Ehnstrom 20kg Virtual-Games.com Racing Team Ferrari 550 - 1:30:30.467 62 1:24.562 56,268**
- 6 Ryan Foss 30kg K.A.R.T. Ferrari 550 - 1:30:31.796 62 1:24.713 57,597**
- 7 Carlo Animo 0kg Team Finnmotion Ferrari 550 - 1:30:34.033 62 1:24.729 59,834**
- 8 Fabrizio Hernandez 0kg Sajan Racing Team Ferrari 550 - 1:30:50.616 62 1:24.625 76,417**
- 9 Rickard Hellsten 0kg Team SSR Ferrari 550 - 1:30:59.421 62 1:25.106 85,222**
- 10 Wilfred vd Brink 0kg GTN Drivers Club Murcielago - 1:30:59.766 62 1:25.061 85,567**
- 11 Glenn McGee 0kg K.A.R.T. Ferrari 550 - DNF 61 1:24.701 1L**
- 12 P.P.Garuti 0kg Red-Zone Ferrari 550 - 1:30:38.050 61 1:25.753 1L**
- 13 Joan Pey 0kg ESP Racing Ferrari 550 - 1:30:39.703 61 1:25.723 1L**
- 14 Jacques Bonet 0kg LFGTR1 Ferrari 550 - DNF 60 1:25.269 2L**
- 15 Gerben Bervoets 0kg GB-Motorsports Murcielago - 1:30:06.232 60 1:26.585 2L**
- 16 Cyril Limosino 0kg Sajan Racing Team Ferrari 550 - DNF 59 1:24.676 3L**
- 17 Markus Kononen 0kg Team Finnmotion Ferrari 550 - DNF 55 1:24.964 7L**
- 18 Emmanuel Taphinaud 0kg Frenchie Fox Racing Ferrari 550 - DNF 40 1:24.970 22L**
- 19 Joao Vaz 0kg Virtual-Games.com Racing Team Ferrari 550 - DNF 39 1:24.290 23L**
- 20 Pillas M 0kg PVB Racing Ferrari 550 DNF 32 1:26.410 30L**
- 21 Dmitry Kofanov 0kg FRA GT Murcielago - DNF 26 1:25.225 36L**
- 22 Zoran Arsov 0kg TEAM AM Ferrari 550 - DNF 22 1:26.594 40L**
- 23 Albert Priem 0kg - 0 62L**

05.03.2007: Round 6 – NGT Class - Donington GP

Pole Position: Dave Nicol – 1:28.886 – Pole Replay

Fastest Lap: Jeffrey Ruskus – 1:30.318

Video Review: n/a

Server Replay: http://www.sim-challenge.com/2007/Files/REPLAY/GTRscWC_NGT_DONINGTON.rar

Pos Driver WP Team Car Pen Total Lap Best Gap

- 1 Dave Nicol 0kg AERO GT Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:46.635 58 1:30.731**
- 2 Denis Kozhin 0kg Kamrad Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:57.919 58 1:30.489 11,284**
- 3 Jeffrey Ruskus 30kg Team Shark Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:58.477 58 1:30.318 11,842**
- 4 Evgeniy Mironenko 35kg Kamrad Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:05.242 58 1:30.941 18,606**
- 5 Ari Nieminen 20kg Ajira Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:46.415 58 1:31.514 59,780**
- 6 Marcel Groen 0kg Simracing.NL Ferrari 360 GTC - 1:31:46.787 58 1:30.831 60,151**
- 7 Michael Schreiner 0kg MAT-GRAFIX Virtual Motorsports Porsche 996 GT3 RSR-1:31:52.521 58 1:30.654 65,885**
- 8 Mark vd Meulen 0kg Dutch Turtles Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:52.647 58 1:30.465 66,012**
- 9 Rory King 20kg GhostSpeed Racing Team Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:00.318 58 1:30.804 73,683**
- 10 Albert Priem 0kg R-Force 1-6 Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:32:07.535 58 1:31.265 74,446**
- 11 Manuel Santangelo 0kg DH-R Motorsport Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:55.080 57 1:31.774 1L**
- 12 Jan Duijs 0kg Dutch Turtles Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:56.929 57 1:31.397 1L**
- 13 Mario Gama 0kg Cyber Racing Ferrari 360 GTC - 1:31:13.568 57 1:31.512 1L**
- 14 Alex Maresta 0kg 3Steps Racing Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:31:33.734 57 1:31.354 1L**
- 15 Craig Heslop 0kg Team Shark Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - 1:30:59.343 57 1:31.241 1L**
- 16 Rodolphe Morin 0kg The M Team Ferrari 360 GTC - 1:32:05.663 57 1:31.974 1L**
- 17 Tom Goodall 0kg Cyber Racing Ferrari 360 GTC - DNF 54 1:31.284 4L**
- 18 Alex Ott 0kg R-Force 1-6 Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 38 1:30.903 20L**
- 19 Radoslav Zivkovic 0kg NK competition Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 37 1:31.609 21L**
- 20 T. Leistenschneider 0kg MAT-GRAFIX Virtual Motorsports Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 33 1:31.536 25L**
- 21 Marko Jozef 0kg NK competition Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 7 1:31.640 51L**
- 22 Andrea Lo Presti 0kg Sajan Racing Team Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 6 1:33.488 52L**
- 23 Jon Moore 0kg Team Shark Porsche 996 GT3 RSR - DNF 3 1:34.734 55L**

Sim-Challenge.com GTR2 World Championship Top 10 Standings

GT Class – After Round 7

Position Driver Team Points

- 1 Greger Huttu Team Redline 207**
- 2 Ryan Foss K.A.R.T. 171**
- 3 Max Dell’Orco Team Finnmotion 154**
- 4 Marko Hartikainen VPP Werksteam 131**
- 5 Roland Ehnstrom Virtual-Games.com Racing Team 125**
- 6 Markus Kononen Team Finnmotion 105**
- 7 Wilfred vd Brink GTN Drivers Club 105**
- 8 Christian Szymczak K.A.R.T. 81**
- 9 Rickard Hellsten Team SSR 78**
- 10 Norbi Kiss Virtual-Games.com Racing Team 74**

NGT Class – After Round 7

Position Driver Team Points

- 1 Evgeniy Mironenko Kamrad Racing 232**
- 2 Jeffrey Ruskus Team Shark 183**
- 3 Rory King GhostSpeed Racing Team 148**
- 4 Denis Kozhin Kamrad Racing 117**
- 5 Ari Nieminen Ajira Racing 107**
- 6 Mark vd Meulen Dutch Turtles 103**
- 7 Sasa Djukic NK competition 102**
- 8 Albert Priem R-Force 1-6 88**
- 9 Marcel Groen Simracing.NL 76**
- 10 Alex Ott R-Force 1-6 74**

Guida virtuale: un bene o un male?

Ma di cosa si tratta? Nicola "Velocipede" Trivilino ha un'idea ...

Nicola Trivilino



http://blog.pcformat.co.uk/page/pcformat/entry-bsm_vs_driving_games
<http://www.drivemitalia.net/forum/index.php?showtopic=33483>

Da un pò di tempo si è iniziato a parlare anche al di fuori del nostro "mondo", dei giochi e dei simulatori di guida, con notevole interesse da parte della stampa e dei media in generale verso un settore che rimane comunque una ristretta nicchia nell'ambito dei videogiochi in generale.

Mentre gli appassionati si interrogano praticamente da sempre sul come e sul se il simdriving sia di aiuto ed insegni davvero qualcosa di utile per la guida reale di tutti i giorni, la stampa e l'opinione pubblica sembrano invece andare verso una direzione decisamente opposta, arrivando ad ipotizzare che i giochi e simulatori di guida facciano male ai futuri patentati, insegnando loro il disprezzo del pericolo, delle regole della strada e degli altri. L'articolo inizia parlando di uno dei tanti simulatori di guida in commercio, "Grand Theft Auto" ?

Ricordo ancora benissimo quella sera di ottobre del 2006. Erano le 23 circa. Una pioggerellina sottile e fittissima mi accompagnava a casa dopo una serata passata a cena da alcuni amici. Chiacchieravo con mia moglie ripensando alle risate fatte in compagnia. La strada era la tipica statale italiana, per nulla illuminata, con segnaletica scarsa e rovinata così come il fondo stradale. La vettura l'utilitaria della consorte. Tutto successe in meno di 10 secondi. All'uscita di una bruttissima curva mi trovai di fronte di colpo una vettura capovolta, praticamente al centro della strada. Mia moglie abbozzò un urlo secco e strozzato. Ma il mio cervello per fortuna stava già elaborando ed eseguendo... Non ricordo di preciso cosa e come lo feci, ma ricordo ancora bene che la mia macchina non sbandò più di tanto, nè blocco le ruote, pur effettuando una notevole scodata controllata, evitando la macchina capottata e

fermandosi subito dopo. Riflessi, controllo, freddezza, abilità ai comandi, tutto imparato con un computer ed un simulatore di guida, me ne resi subito conto in maniera lucidissima. Era come uno stage di Richard Burns Rally, ma senza possibilità di esc... Andai a soccorrere il poverino a testa in giù, che evidentemente si era appena girato, fortunatamente solo con qualche livido. Le prime parole che mi disse furono "ho sentito la macchina sbandare dopo la curva, ho frenato e mi sono ritrovato così...". La settimana dopo quel ragazzo era a casa mia a provare con volante e padali, oggi è uno dei tanti utenti del forum (che saluto! he he).

Il settore videoludico è in continua espansione, e abbraccia moltissimi interessi diversi. Attualmente è possibile simulare di tutto: volo militare e civile, guerriglia urbana, la gestione di una grande metropoli o di una società di football, strategie militari, vela e golf, e non per ultima, la guida sportiva. Il settore dei videogame dedicati alla guida ruota attorno a due principali realtà: quella commerciale e quella amatoriale. La prima è costituita dai produttori di videogiochi (software) e di periferiche di guida (hardware): questo termine fa riferimento ai comuni joystick e volanti presenti in commercio, ma non solo. La seconda è quella amatoriale, formata da una comunità di appassionati di automobilismo e videogames, che mettono gratuitamente a disposizione le proprie capacità per realizzare simulatori e giochi di guida freeware (software gratuito) o per migliorare la resa grafica, sonora e simulativi di giochi e simulazioni già esistenti (una pratica comunemente definita modding, da mod, ovvero modulo aggiuntivo). Questa comunità inoltre partecipa e organizza gare singole e campionati strutturati in cui confrontarsi direttamente con altri piloti virtuali via Internet.

Esistono i giochi di guida e le simulazioni di guida. Nella prima categoria rientra quel software che riproduce una serie sportiva privilegiando al realismo giocabilità e

semplicità d'utilizzo. Questo significa, ad esempio, limitare i danni che un veicolo può subire, o alterare l'aderenza e il bilanciamento delle vetture per renderne la guida particolarmente semplice, e così via. La maggior parte dei giochi di guida realizzati per le console presenta queste caratteristiche, e viene comunemente indicata con il termine arcade.

Le simulazioni hanno un obiettivo diverso: quello di riprodurre, nel modo più realistico possibile, il vero comportamento delle vetture, esaltandone le caratteristiche di guidabilità, l'eventuale difficoltà nel padroneggiare veicoli particolarmente performanti quali auto sportive o da competizione (Formula 1, Nascar, Gran Turismo, ecc...). In virtù di tali caratteristiche, questo particolare genere simulativo può richiedere tempo, dedizione e competenze tecniche minime che aiutino a capire il comportamento delle vetture e consentano di portarle progressivamente al limite. Tuttavia, come avviene nella realtà l'impegno iniziale viene compensato dalle soddisfazioni che i risultati in pista garantiscono.

Le simulazioni di guida hanno obiettivi e scopi diversi, e la loro longevità è legata alla realizzazione di nuovi software più curati di quelli di cui già si dispone. Immaginate una simulazione accurata, che riproduce con grande realismo il comportamento e le reazioni di una Formula 1, che corre su circuiti perfettamente riprodotti al computer utilizzando sistemi di rilevazione satellitare: una situazione ideale che pone il giocatore, pardon, il pilota virtuale, di fronte ad una sfida entusiasmante: quella di misurarsi con le prestazioni dei veri piloti e di migliorare costantemente le proprie per realizzare il giro ideale. Oppure, di confrontarsi direttamente in pista con amici e altri piloti, grazie all'evoluzione che l'online racing ha subito negli ultimi anni.

Le simulazioni presentano un ulteriore valore aggiunto: consentono ai giocatori che utilizzano quotidianamente la propria automobile di migliorare la



propria percezione di guida, di familiarizzare in misura più vicina con concetti quali distanza di sicurezza, percorrenza di curva, aderenza e comportamento degli pneumatici. Concetti importanti, spesso sottovalutati e dimenticati in fretta dopo il conseguimento della patente di guida.

In più le conoscenze tecniche acquisite tramite le simulazioni consentono di apprezzare maggiormente e di osservare con occhio più esperto gli eventi sportivi reali, quali appunto le gare di F.1 e di altre categorie, e di rendersi conto che guidare con disinvoltura è una cosa, correre al limite è un'altra. Un percorso di apprendimento che porta il pubblico in pista, ad osservare con attenzione i diversi stili di guida, i punti di staccata e accelerazione, i cambi di marcia e direzione. Un percorso che chiunque può percorrere virtualmente, ma in misura altamente realistica.

Da anni è opinione comune associare le simulazioni di guida ai giochi per Playstation, e ritenere che non possano garantire nient'altro che un divertimento simile a quello alla maggior parte dei videogames per ragazzi.

Niente di più sbagliato. Già da diverso tempo le simulazioni di guida hanno conquistato le pagine dei periodici automobilistici, vengono utilizzate dai veri piloti

che offrono consulenza e le conoscenze tecniche necessarie a riprodurre in modo quanto più realistico il comportamento delle vetture e gli altri fattori che contribuiscono a realizzare scenari realistici e competizioni verosimili.

Oltre a rappresentare un interessante motivo di intrattenimento, le moderne simulazioni di guida costituiscono inoltre un valido strumento per coloro che a causa di limiti di età, di tempo o di risorse, non hanno la possibilità di sfogare in pista la propria passione. E possono, anzi dovrebbero, costituire una sana alternativa anche per chi, non potendo permettersi il noleggio di strutture adeguate, scambia le strade del proprio quartiere per un autodromo, minacciando così la propria sicurezza e quella altrui!

Se dopo una gara virtuale davanti al pc un ragazzo in preda ad estasi velocistica finisce contro un albero con la macchina, la colpa non è del software. E' tutta sua. In parte probabilmente anche nostra: non gli avevamo spiegato ed insegnato abbastanza evidentemente.

Nicola "Velocipede" Trivilino, DrivingItalia.NET

Il videogioco, fonte di divertimento e di polemica. Così potremmo sintetizzare le due correnti di pensiero che

spesso sembrano caratterizzarlo. Da una parte c'è chi lo utilizza in maniera più o meno intensa, dall'altra chi lo critica senza spesso avere una chiara idea di cosa ha di fronte. L'ultima polemica, secondo cui i videogiochi di corsa farebbero diventare più aggressivi alla guida, può essere fatta rientrare a pieno titolo in questo ambito. Ieri era toccato agli sparatutto, oggi pare sia cambiata la moda. Se nel dettaglio gli articoli che trattano questi argomenti possono contenere parti di verità (legate agli effetti che i videogiochi hanno sulle persone più suscettibili o recettive nei confronti di determinate situazioni), nel complesso falliscono miseramente nel tentativo di risultare interessanti per chi i videogiochi li usa, prevalentemente perché scritte da persone (giornalisti e non) che nulla hanno a che fare con questo universo e che pertanto ne possono dare solo una visione dall'esterno. Ciò che più mi ha perplesso negli ultimi articoli comparsi riguardo ai titoli di corsa è innanzitutto il tipo di gioco preso in considerazione: in questo articolo viene citato come esempio Grand Theft Auto, che altri non è se non un gioco d'azione ricco delle missioni più svariate, ma che NULLA ha a che spartire con i giochi di guida (a meno che da oggi le auto non si guidino con la tastiera con una telecamera posta a qualche metro sopra

la testa.). Altrove invece non vengono proprio citati i titoli su cui sono stati effettuati i test, rendendo quindi assai leggere le conclusioni a cui possono essere giunti questi gruppi di studiosi.

Perché non tirare in ballo anche chi si allena per giorni con il solo scopo di avere una guida più pulita possibile, cercando di evitare ad ogni costo un contatto con chi lo precede, in fase di sorpasso? Perché non ascoltare anche le opinioni di chi organizza corsi di "scuola guida" online con i maggiori simulatori, cercando di insegnare anche che cosa può tornare utile nella realtà, di ciò che si fa su computer? Il mondo non è fatto solo da chi scende in pista con l'ultimo arcade e la prima cosa che fa è girare la vettura in senso inverso a quello di marcia, per fare più danni possibili. Questa è a mio avviso la mancanza più grande di questo tipo di studi (dopo il tipo di gioco preso in considerazione).

Chi simula su PC sa bene che, anche vincendo tutte le gare a mani basse, ciò non fa di lui il nuovo Schumacher. Anzi, da questa esperienza virtuale riesce probabilmente a cogliere informazioni utili sul comportamento della vettura, informazioni che poi può ritrovarsi ad applicare (anche inconsciamente) nella realtà in situazioni di emergenza.

Andrea "Uff" Candini DrivingItalia.NET

Mi dispiace di non aver trovato, correggimi se sbaglio, qualcuno che abbia frequentato il corso alla Sim-min, in quanto avrebbe sicuramente detto qualcosa in proposito, soprattutto relativamente a quante volte durante uno dei nostri corsi, poniamo l'accento sulla necessità della prudenza in strada e come anche consigliamo facendo paragoni con situazioni reali.

Ti posso dire che, come tu sai da tempo, la Sim-Min Driving School è nata dall'esperienza di chi ha insegnato a guidare in modo veloce ma sicuro (e rispettando le regole del codice della strada), anche tramite la pista

(proprio per un innegabile fattore di sicurezza). Naturalmente tutto ciò insegnando il giusto compartimento da tenere in circuito, insegnando tecniche e correggendo gli eventuali errori di guida.

Detto questo, ritengo che i simulatori, intesi solamente come gioco (e come tale considerati quindi solamente un divertimento) possano, a chi NON è maturo, dare un sensazione distorta della guida reale, anche se questa cosa mi sembra veramente al limite della follia.....pensare che uno possa interpretare di guidare un auto normale come se guidasse una F1 con la Playstation a tutta velocità affrontando magari una curva a 300Km/h, mi sembra qualcosa che può avvenire sì, ma così raramente da rientrare appunto nella casistica della follia vera e propria.

A favore invece dei simulatori, interpretati come educazione stradale e con la dovuta fase di apprendistato delle varie tecniche di guida, posso con sicurezza sostenere che saranno questi strumenti (non giochi, ma strumenti) la base delle future tecniche di insegnamento dell'educazione stradale, ancor prima di prendere la patente, e daranno l'opportunità di capire meglio che cosa vuol dire guidare un'automobile.

Nei corsi che la Sim-Min conduce, c'è una parte che riguarda proprio la guida stradale e i vari comportamenti da tenere in casi estremi; situazioni che la pista ci dà la possibilità di evidenziare.

Le tecniche di guida vengono espresse in modo chiaro e dimostrando prima di far provare agli allievi gli errori, con una serie di esercizi, si può fare capire come tanti incidenti avvengano, sia per mancanza di concentrazione e superficialità nel condurre un'automobile sia per la mancanza di conoscenza di alcune nozioni basilari a cui, purtroppo, i neopatentati non hanno mai accesso durante il periodo di preparazione all'esame di guida.

Questi esempi come ad esempio un tamponamento a catena, e le cause che lo generano, avvenimento che

purtroppo molto spesso si verificano nelle nostre autostrade con tristissime conseguenze, così come gli incidenti che spessissimo avvengono nelle gare reali nella fase di partenza, può essere mostrato, dimostrato e simulato in modo esaustivo e sicuro solamente con un simulatore; certamente non sarebbe possibile farlo in qualsiasi altra circostanza, sia su pista che men che meno su strada, in qualsiasi altro corso di guida reale.

Quindi è chiara la mia posizione in merito: i simulatori, utilizzati con le dovute tecniche, e con l'adeguata istruzione nonché allenamento, diventano fonte di istruzione e di un nuovo linguaggio per una guida sicura e riflessiva.

Purtroppo con il simulatore non potremmo mai percepire la paura, ma possiamo rendere consapevoli che certe manovre e certi atteggiamenti di guida possano portare a innescare incidenti. Naturalmente da questo punto in avanti molto dipende dalla maturità della persona che usa il simulatore e dall'approccio a cui vi si avvicina. Dobbiamo anche considerare che chi usa i simulatori lo fa anche per cimentarsi nelle gare online. Ora, se in queste gare incontrerò professionalità, lealtà e correttezza, dovrà adeguarsi, e gli verrà naturale farlo, mentre se incontrerò solo gente che si diverte a fare autoscontri, dovrà decidere se si diverti così oppure no....del resto questa è una libera scelta.

Devo dire che a oggi più di 500 persone hanno frequentato i corsi della Sim-Min, e tutti hanno constatato la diversa mentalità e professionalità che si ha nelle lezioni, nelle quali cerchiamo di dare una visione reale della cosa pur essendo di fronte allo schermo di un pc, e il risultato è più che eccellente.

Basta andare sul forum della Sim-Min, nella sezione dedicata "cosa dicono di noi", a questo indirizzo per verificarlo.

Questa differenza di interpretazione tra "gioco" e simulatore porta le persone a cambiare mentalità e

riflettere nel momento in cui il giorno dopo salgono alla guida della propria auto, ricordandosi di alcuni consigli ricevuti la sera prima durante il corso.

Ricordiamoci anche che i simulatori hanno un'altro innegabile pregio: possono portarci a riprodurre tantissime situazioni di guida che nella guida reale otterremo solamente una o due volte, e quindi verremmo colti di sorpresa da una sconosciuta reazione dell'auto.

Quindi, soprattutto con il tempo e l'allenamento aumenterà la consapevolezza che determinati errori di guida possono portare a incidenti, ed allo stesso tempo non si sarà così impreparati alle situazioni d'emergenza. Tutto ciò porterà indubbiamente le persone a guidare con maggiore attenzione e consapevolezza. Ritengo che questo sia un grosso risultato ottenuto dalla Sim-Min, oltre naturalmente al fatto che quando le stesse persone si ritrovano in gare on-line per puro divertimento fanno anche come comportarsi in pista: con correttezza, rispettando quelle stesse regole che si trovano nelle gare reali.

Oggi abbiamo un grosso problema in Italia, manca l'educazione stradale aggiornata sia al traffico che alle auto di evoluta tecnologia; auto sempre più sicure e veloci, che trasmettono una grandissima sensazione di sicurezza al conducente (forse anche sin troppa), tanto che chi guida è spesso distratto dalla guida da tanti accessori...vedi cellulari, musica ad alto volume, navigatori eccetera.....questo fa sì che chi guida non è mai totalmente concentrato e di conseguenza la possibilità di errore cresce esponenzialmente.

E' inutile parlare di guida in stato di ebbrezza.....perché qui entreremmo nel campo delle persone sprezzanti della propria ed altrui vita.

Quindi tornando ai simulatori di guida certamente credo che questi siano il futuro, inteso come educazione stradale e saranno anche gli artefici di una svolta nella mentalità del futuro guidatore e soprattutto del suo

apprendistato alla guida, in quanto ne saranno parte integrante. Il gioco inteso come autoscontro e tanto per fare gare al limite senza regole lo lascio a chiunque voglia solo divertirsi (se di divertimento si può parlare in questo caso) ma credo anche che tale atteggiamento NON influisca sul comportamento di guida reale, a meno che uno sia un folle.....d'altronde la polemica innescata dall'articolo citato nel tuo forum mi sembra abbastanza infondata in quanto, tanto per cominciare, si parla di giochi arcade come se fossero dei simulatori di guida e così non è, ed in secondo luogo credo sia poco acuto arrivare ad osservazioni come quelle citate dallo "studio" visto che in commercio esistono giochi che sono un'autentica aberrazione, dove ad esempio i giocatori, adulti, adolescenti o BAMBINI che siano, acquisiscono punti investendo (!!!) i passanti con le auto.

Credo che, se si vuole parlare seriamente di influenza negativa sul comportamento nella conduzione di un'auto (ma anche nella vita sociale in generale) bisognerebbe in primo luogo mettere alla berlina queste oscenità spacciate per giochi e successivamente fare un bel distinguo tra giochi e simulatori. Dopodiché, all'interno dei simulatori, un ulteriore distinguo tra chi usa questi come gioco e chi li usa come simulatori veri e propri.

A questo punto, va considerata la componente umana ed il suo equilibrio, ossia se chi usa questi giochi, simulatori o quant'altro sia una persona sana di mente.....e senza parlare del proliferare di immagini, film, ed oggi anche cartoni animati che letteralmente incitano alla violenza, anche sulla strada. Mi chiedo quindi, quale sia il reale motivo di quest'attacco ai "simulatori"...

Ricordo ancora una volta, e non ti tedio più, che proprio a tale proposito che la Sim-Min si sta prodigando per insegnare (a chiunque voglia venire ai corsi base, SONO GRATIS) alcune regole comportamentali sia nella guida reale che nelle gare on-line.

Franco Miniati, Sim-Min Driving School



Purtroppo l'articolo parla della maggioranza, cioè di quelli che si divertono con "giochi" magari senza un volante e non partecipano a campionati seri con "sim" e non posso confutare quello che scrivono.

Comunque anche nella nostra piccola comunità, piccola in confronto al popolo dei videogamers, si possono creare dei problemi soprattutto per chi frena col piede sinistro. Un ragazzo finlandese con cui corro in GPL ci ha raccontato che al momento di prendere la patente per guidare una vettura normale ha dovuto prendere lezioni supplementari per abituarsi a frenare col destro ed usare la frizione ed ora si è abituato ad usare il destro anche con GPL, cosa che gli ha procurato non pochi problemi di setup. Ovviamente per chi guida da più di trent'anni come me è difficile modificare il proprio modo di guidare, ed infatti anche nei sim freno col destro anche dopo otto anni di online racing. Invece devo dire che i sim in questi anni mi hanno aiutato ad aumentare la sensibilità nella guida ed ad essere molto più cosciente e reattivo al comportamento della vettura in condizioni critiche come sul bagnato o sulla neve o su fondo sconnesso, inoltre la conoscenza degli elementi che incidono sul setup di una vettura mi ha aiutato a capire meglio la vettura che guido ogni giorno. Un'altra cosa importante per me è l'utilizzo di sim diversi che richiedono tecniche di guida diverse (GPL, GTR2, GTL, rFactor Sport e F179, NetKar) che mi permettono di essere più flessibile nel passare da uno all'altro e poi alla guida reale che è ancora diversa. Come sempre bisogna fare un distinguo però non me la sento di confutare quello scritto nell'articolo dato che parlano di giovani e videogames.

Fulvio Policardi Campionato GPL Formula 2

Non mi sono addentrato a rispondere nel topic per non scatenare ulteriori discussioni. Io penso che, oggi come oggi, alcuni driving games che possiamo considerare, nel loro piccolo, simulatori (GPL, GTL, F1 Challenge, GTR 1 e 2, RACE, LFS, Nascar e rFactor) aiutano parecchio nella guida reale, sia che si parli di strada sia che l'argomento riguardi la pista. Io stesso, che prima di partecipare al Seat Racing Center di Adria non avevo mai messo il sedere su un'auto da corsa (kart escluso), ho constatato che l'aver un approccio serio con i sopraccitati software aiuta in maniera spaventosa quando poi ci si trova in condizioni di rivivere determinate situazioni nella realtà. Lavorando a stretto contatto col mondo delle corse e con il mondo dei driving games, sto notando come negli ultimi anni diversi piloti e team di svariate categorie (basti guardare Balzan e Azzoli, ma potrei citare anche Piccini, Vilander, Zuber, Montermini e altri ancora) si interessino attivamente a questo settore, sia per quanto riguarda l'allenamento e la conoscenza di diversi circuiti, sia per quanto concerne il settore propedeutico con i clienti ove si svolgono dei corsi di guida (la stessa Ferrari ha un simulatore in ogni evento del Ferrari Challenge riservato ai Clienti in Pista dove si può provare virtualmente il tracciato con l'ausilio dell'istruttore, il quale svolge anche i briefing utilizzando anche questi sistemi).

In definitiva penso che occorrerebbe distinguere più marcatamente (soprattutto per i 'profani' del settore) tra "software di guida" e "giochi di guida" e, in secondo luogo, penso che quanto riportato dalle ricerche evidenziate sia un po' ingigantito poiché credo che chiunque abbia un minimo di cervello non si comporta nelle strade di tutti i giorni come si comporterebbe lungo i percorsi di Need For Speed o Test Drive Unlimited.

Certo, tutti rientrano nella categoria driving games, ma c'è gioco e gioco...

Fabio "Magnus" Magnani, DrivingItalia.NET

Sicuramente in persone appassionate degli sport motoristici il giocare a queste simulazioni di guida induce a credere che poi anche nella realtà avremmo la possibilità e la capacità di domare dei bolidi da 600 cv. Questo lo dico per esperienza personale perché conosco persone che dopo aver guidato a Live For Speed con volante e tutto l'ambaradan si sono lanciati in gare di drift su strade aperte al traffico, andandosi a schiantare su un guard-rail. C'è da dire che non tutti siamo uguali e, per fortuna, io credo che la maggior parte di noi è conscia che quello sia un gioco e che la realtà è ben altra cosa, inoltre cosa molto positiva a mio parere è che questi giochi sviluppano sicuramente i riflessi e le percezioni che ci arrivano dal volante, dai pedali e dalla strada e migliorando certi aspetti della guida quotidiana come appunto i riflessi. Nell'articolo poi viene citato GTA, che però non mi sembra un simulatore di guida, ma un simulatore di parolacce, sesso e droga, insomma il peggio che ci possa essere in un videogioco e questo accomunare i simulatori con GTA è disinformazione. In sintesi credo che i simulatori di guida facciano male e bene a meta, 50:50 a seconda delle persone interessate.

Matthias Egger, pilota virtuale

Per prima cosa bisogna distinguere se si parla di driving games o sim games, se l'autore dell'articolo si stesse riferendo ai vari giochi per console, (grand theft auto, need for speed etc.), oppure simulatori di guida in senso più stretto quali GTR2, netKar, GPL, etc. Nel primo caso si potrebbe, seppur con un grande sforzo, paragonare quanto scrivono sugli sparatutto a questo, cioè che spronino alla violenza, ad imbracciare fucili ed uscire in strada a massacrare gente. A persone normali questo non accade, né accadrà mai. Se prendiamo gente deviata già di suo, è ovvio che troveremo terreno fertile per questa ideologia.

Ma non pediamo il punto focale, sono convinto, al contrario di quanto espresso dall'autore dell'articolo, che simulatori di guida affrontati con la dovuta serietà e studio (teoria e pratica alla guida in pista) favoriscano l'attitudine ad

una certa mentalità di guida, che si può esprimere sia con le prestazioni, ma anche e soprattutto con il controllo del mezzo. I concetti di reazione a situazioni extra-ordinarie valgono tanto per un sim quanto per la realtà, l'istinto per il controsterzo atto a recuperare la macchina, la frenata controllata per bilanciare l'auto, verrà senz'altro più sviluppato paragonato ad un neo patentato che sa a malapena controllare la macchina in situazioni standard.

Attenzione, non sto dicendo che di colpo diverremo tutti dei piloti professionisti, ma il rispetto per il mezzo e i concetti delle manovre atte a controllarlo o settarlo (ogni modifica all'assetto cosa implica nel comportamento), varranno sia per il mondo virtuale che reale. Tutto quanto sopra a patto di avere un approccio quanto mai serio e mirato alla comprensione del simulatore (vedi corsi di comportamento in pista, licenze ed altro). Il giocatore di playstation della domenica, o di serate con amici non apprenderà nulla più di quanto già sapeva, quindi se tendenzialmente è uno spericolato non lo diventerà per "colpa" del gioco, viceversa, la conoscenza dei limiti di un mezzo e loro pericolosità, favoriranno la creazione di limiti e freni anche nella guida di tutti i giorni.

Paolo "Uitko" Giannello, SimLeague.net

