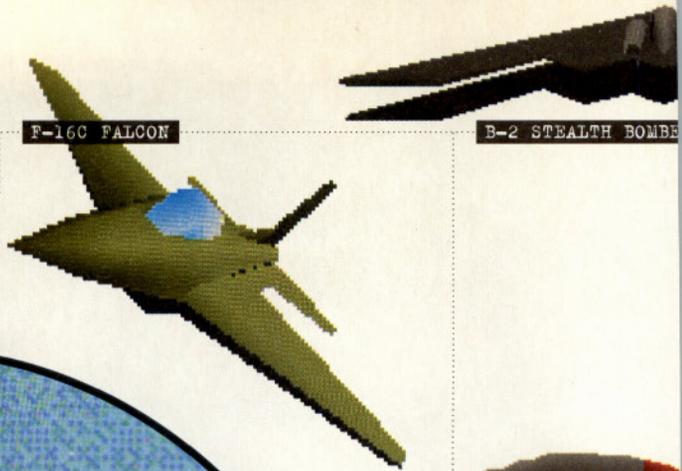


STUNT ISLAND AIRCRAFT

There are 48 aircraft featured in Stunt Island. This tiny sample shows just how diverse they are.



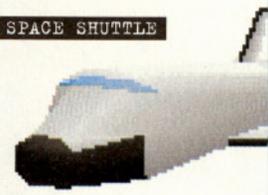
F-16C FALCON



B-2 STEALTH BOMBER



PARAGLIDER



SPACE SHUTTLE



BRISTOL BULLDOG (mk IIA)

Laurence "Crazy Dog" Scottford finally realises his long-time ambition to fly a Boeing 747 upside-down under the Golden Gate bridge, with a little help from Disney's flight and film sim.

Stunt Island



WHAT'S THE FIRST thing you do when you get your brand, spanking new flight simulation loaded up for the first time? Fly the training mission? Read the 300 page manual from cover to cover? Nope, you head straight for the 'quick start' option, jump into several million pounds worth of military hardware and take it for a joyride, that's what.

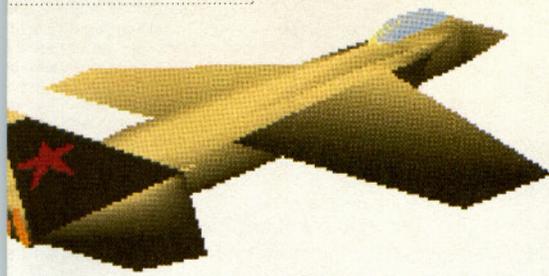
The nice thing about simulations is that you can go right ahead and land that F-15 in the middle of Manhattan without getting court-martialled. You want to eject while flying upside-down only 200 feet above a river, just for the hell of it? Go ahead. The last thing that a lot of games players want to do with a flight simulation is recreate Operation Desert Storm. Sure, accurately dropping a bomb down a four-foot wide ventilation tunnel in Baghdad has its appeal but it's not half as much fun as playing chicken in a Cessna with jumbos taking off from Los Angeles International airport.

Finally a publisher has realised that people want to have fun with a flight simulation and pull off stupid stunts. *Stunt Island* as Infogrames is at pains to point out, is not, strictly speaking a flight simulation, although flying aircraft is a fundamental part of the game. I almost hesitate to use the term game, since this product seems to fit more comfortably within that fuzzy genre which marketing people like to call software toys.

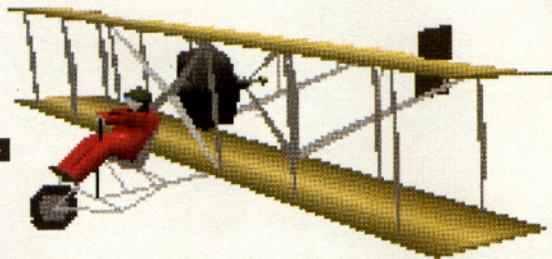
Fantasy Island

The premise behind *Stunt Island* is that the major Hollywood studios are finding it harder by the year to get permission to film the big, dangerous stunts that sell movies. While the general public is quite happy to watch exploding jeeps plummeting off cliffs in the latest *James Bond* movie, they're not so pleased when bits of rusty Landrover keep washing up on the beach and getting caught in their bikinis. The solution is to buy a large island in the Pacific, and stage all the really dangerous stunts there, out of harms way.

MIG-29 FULORUM



CURTISS JUNE BUG



LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

Putting your own production together can be a time consuming process. It needs careful planning if things aren't to go horribly wrong.

STEP 1 Set up props

Having found a location and created a storyboard for your film, the first step is to set up your props. Props are divided into several types. Some are free moving, others move in a set direction, some simply turn to face the prop they're assigned to while the real nightmares are the Seek props that home in on other props. (We're talking missiles here). Finally attach props act like an extension of the prop they are attached to, so that wherever it goes, they go.

STEP 2 Set up cameras

The next stage is to put all the cameras in place. Each production can use up to eight cameras. Two film continuously and are automatically assigned to the stunt and spotter planes. The remaining six cameras can be switched off and on at will. You must decide how each camera is to behave. Is it to be fixed, or should it follow the plane or another prop? Should it zoom during shots or not?

STEP 3 Set up special events and prop animation

Here's where things can start getting a little complicated. If you want props to interact, or filming to proceed in several different ways depending on how the stunt goes, then you need to set up several conditions to be tested for. Conditions are written in a pseudo-code, so this section is specially for train spotters (or should that be plane spotters?). Actually it's nowhere near as complicated as it looks, so railway timetables and a packed lunch will not be obligatory.

STEP 4 Film the stunt

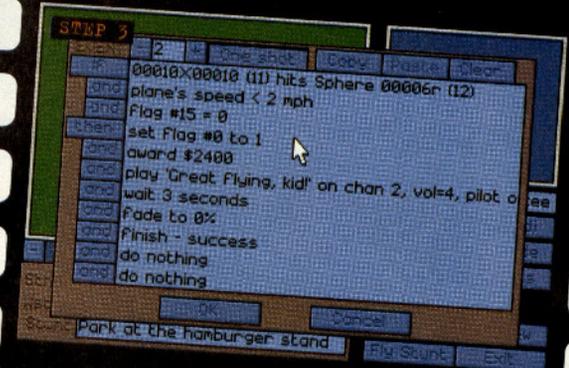
The moment can be put off no longer. It's time to climb into your plane and show the world what you're made of. They'll certainly see exactly what you're made of if you time this badly and smash into that roadblock.

STEP 5 Edit the film

Alright, you've managed to make a complete hash of the stunt but you don't necessarily have to go through the humiliation of another take. Simply install yourself in the editing suite with a large cup of black coffee and a new sense of purpose. Then cut and splice until you have something that looks, as your colleagues are fond of saying, "slicker than a couple of eels fighting in a barrel of snot."

STEP 6 Show the film

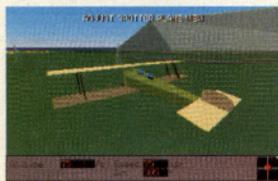
You've finally got something you're happy with, so it's time to toddle off to the preview theatre and impress your buddies with your sixty second long extravaganza. It may not have a multi-million dollar budget or a cast of thousands, but it comes straight from the heart, and by god, that's what Hollywood is all about... Excuse me a second, I have to go to the bathroom...



DUCK



(Right) Some of the stunts are more hair-raising for the other participants than for you. Here one of your colleagues stands at Alcatraz waiting for you to pluck him off with your plane. If you mess up this one, the boss will mince you for making a mincemeat of you for making a mincemeat of him.



(Above) The obligatory before and after shot. On the top, here's how I looked before I discovered the power of fuel-injected turbo 486 33MHz machines, and on the bottom, here's how I look today, safe in the knowledge that I'll never have a frame rate problem again.

(Below) Oh dear! You've lost control over Lynch Canyon and given the Doc an opportunity to rearrange your vital parts. He's sure to get you flying again... walking might be a bit of a problem though, don't you think? Oh do stop dribbling!



The island has been equipped with a selection of permanent sets which can be used for the most popular stunts. These include replicas of landmarks like the Golden Gate bridge, Alcatraz and Stonehenge, there's also a huge properties store which can supply anything from a model of Big Ben to police cars and trains. So it's technically possible to set up the stunts that even the most warped directors dream of. The emphasis on *Stunt Island*, however, is on stunts that involve aircraft.

The Lee Majors school of stunts

You aren't obliged to spend hours and hours preparing for a single stunt, there are many jolly japes to be had from simply hopping off to the airport, taking one of the 48 aircraft out for a spin over the island exploring its 34 fixed sets. There is also a sequence of 32 pre-set stunts which can be flown individually for practice, or in order as part of the Stunt Pilot of the Year competition. For each of these you are allowed just a few takes. Mess up too often and you'll find yourself packing up your busted Jenny stunt plane and lugging it onto the ferry home.

The stunts you are expected to complete include some well known movie highlights, like flying your Fokker Triplane through a barn while dodging the passing combine harvesters. And having finally managed to fly through the barn successfully, what sort of reward did I get? A flurry of feathers and squawking chickens? A half-naked, breathless and desperately surprised rustic couple clasp an old travelling rug for protection? Nope, nothing! Call that authentic? That's actually one of the easier stunts, others are completely suicidal. When, for example, did any intelligent stunt man get talked into deliberately crashing a light plane into the engine of a 747?

If you manage to fly stunts successfully, you not only get kudos, but the spondulicks begin rolling in too, although large sums are lopped off your fee for each plane you crash and each take you use. Get everything right in the first take, however, and you'll be wining and dining the island's traumatised wildlife with a huge cash bonus.

Stunt double

If flying stunts was all *Stunt Island* was about, it would still be a superb product, although not, perhaps, meriting such a large price tag. But flying is only half the story. *Stunt Island* is just as much a film production sim as a flight sim, and it's this that makes it so unique.

If your one and only interest is crashing planes then you can get away with wimping out on the post-production aspects of film making. For those who fancy themselves as the logical successor to George Lucas, however, editing is probably going to be the most enjoyable part of the whole process. Essentially it works exactly as it does in real-life, with the exception that you are working with disk space rather than celluloid, so mistakes are considerably less expensive.

Your objective is to take all the footage that you've shot during the course of the stunt, which could be as many as eight 'reels' of film from eight different cameras, and cut it all together into a single film. Your first half-hour playing

around in the editing suite will make you realise just how little of the original footage makes it to the final print, and just what extent clever editing can disguise mistakes or shots that didn't turn out quite as the director hoped. For example one stunt I filmed worked perfectly except that I managed to clip the edge of a building just after landing. Rather than film the whole thing again, a bit of experiment in the editing room identified a way of cutting two shots together so that the plane appears to taxi and stop without error, and my flying becomes as perfect as it never was.

What's up doc?

Although a lot of thought has gone into the general presentation of *Stunt Island*, and the software is very sophisticated and powerful, it's nice to see that Disney haven't taken their subject too seriously. Crash during a stunt and you'll find yourself coming round under the manic glare of the island doctor. This and many aspects of *Stunt Island* really come into their own when you have a sound device capable of reproducing the hilarious speech. A *Sound Blaster* does the job superbly, but the output from Disney's own *Sound Source* is very good if you're working to a lower budget.

If you don't have a *Sound Blaster*, and are really serious about this product, then a *Sound Source* is actually quite a good investment

because without it you won't be able to dub in the great soundtracks that are supplied. These all sound as if they are taken from mid-seventies film and TV shows. Three tracks labelled 'Action 1, 2, and 3' for instance, would all sound at home in an episode of *Starsky and Hutch*.

Visibly superior

From sound to vision, and we find that the Yanks have poached one of Britain's finest to do all the tricky technical stuff for them. The man in question is none other than Adrian Stephens of *The Assembly Line*, who showed what he could do with 3D on the PC with the visibly splendid but playably challenged *Cybercon 3*. In *Stunt Island* our Ade has really done us proud. The ground detail has been left sparse over most of the island so that it can be highly detailed on the sets, which is where it really matters. But the crowning glory are the planes, which all have glorious technicolour Gouraud shading. You'll need a powerful machine to get the most out of all this visual splendour, but on slower machines the best graphical bits can be sacrificed for a bit of extra speed.

Even the fast machines that we used for the review couldn't disguise the occasional glitch in the system... laugh as your plane apparently climbs over low buildings, squeal as the mountains leap out to momentarily enfold your tiny aircraft, shriek with delight as you fly through the suspension wires on the Golden Gate bridge without coming out the other side in slices.

The final reel

It's difficult to know what sort of games player to recommend *Stunt Island* to. It isn't going to appeal to hardened flight sim addicts; despite the wealth of planes, none of the flight modes seem to be particularly accurate. On the other hand, if you like doing all the things that you're not supposed to do with flight sims, and think that Spielberg is overrated then there's plenty here to keep you occupied. Over to you Dennis Norden... if, like me, you're one of those people who thinks that an aileron is a new kind of washing powder (*Isn't it? Ed*), but who knows the difference between a best boy and a key grip then you are going to like this a lot. **Z**

IN PERSPECTIVE

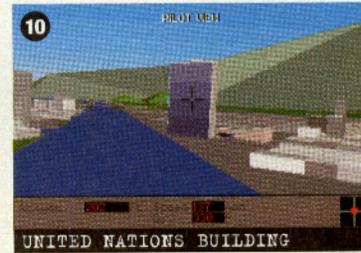
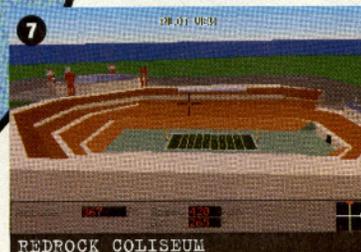
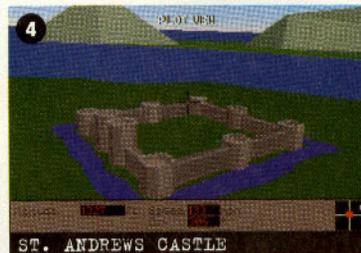
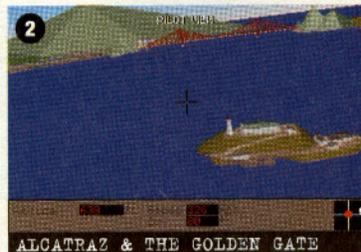
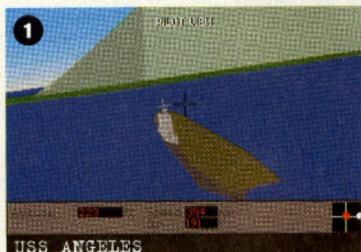
S *Stunt Island* really sits in a unique position. On the one side it is comparable with world creators like *3D Construction Kit II*, while on the other you have playable, challenge based flight sims like *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*, but nothing else really encompasses the range of elements found in *Stunt Island*.

- 3D Construction Kit II
- Chuck Yeager's Air Combat
- Stunt Island**



STUNT ISLAND LOCATIONS

The Island is equipped with 34 fixed objects. Come with us on the Zone studio's tour of ten of the best.



PC ZONE specs

- Minimum Memory: 640K
- Minimum Processor: 386SX
- Minimum Speed: 16MHz
- Installation: Essential
- Minimum Hard Disk: 13Mb
- Minimum Graphics: VGA
- Sound Cards: The Sound Source, Thunder Board, Sound Blaster, Ad-Lib, Roland MT32/LAPC-1
- Controls: Keyboard, Joystick, Mouse
- Comments: Although the game will run with just 640Kb of RAM, 2Mb of expanded or extended RAM is recommended to speed things up a bit. The game gets to a playable speed with decent graphics at around 25MHz, anything less and you'll have to start switching detail off. If your joystick has a thrust control, Stunt Island will support it. If you have a Sound Blaster or a sampler, you can make your own VOC files to use as sound effects and voice-overs.

PC ZONE score

A unique simulation that combines all the fun elements of flight sims with superb 3D construction, film and editing utilities. A bit on the pricey side, but good value for film buffs nonetheless.

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Price: £49.99 Out: Now
Published: Disney Software/
Infogrames Tel: 081 738 8199