





PUB: EA DEV: MAXIS LAST GAME: SIMCITY PLATFORMS: PC ETA: EARLY 2014

## Toying with simulated humanity

motional torment is something

The Sims has been built on since
the very beginning – be it
trapping a new Sim in a ladder-less
swimming pool to get a quick
injection of Simoleons, or naming and
modelling a sim after your real-life
boss so you can deny him toilet
breaks in-game just as he denies you
them in the real world. As with all
great sandboxes, it's the player's
imagination and creativity which
determines enjoyment, just as much
as the tools the developer offers.

At gamescom, Maxis were keen to point out that with *The Sims 4*, they're eliminating as many interface barriers as possible in both the main game and the creation suite, in order to

ensure that the player's creativity is the star of the show, not their mastery of the menus.

Centre to this idea is an all-new set of creative tools revolving around designing both the Sims themselves and their dwellings, from setting a house's foundations to deciding whether that family picture would look best on the dining room wall or in the kitchen. This series has always boasted that kind of varied choice but for the fourth entry, Maxis are adopting the same kind of ergonomic design as they implemented in SimCity. Rooms can be duplicated, including all furniture inside, and snapped onto a house with no fuss. and foundations can be raised or







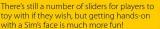
and any other detail, tweaking it to their whim. There's still dozens and dozens of sliders for every facial element you could think of (even to the degree of being able to push a beauty spot all around a Sim's face) but we found the act of extending and shrinking nose bridges and elongating upper lips much more enjoyable when we could pull them in and out with a simple click and drag. Messing around with body types and clothing choices offered a

similar level of freedom. Sims now also have four different walk options available to them (Swagger, Party Walk, Snooty, and Default) but during our hands-on we weren't able to tweak Aspiration, Age or Trait options. As with previous games, those character choices are still there, it's just that Maxis are still tweaking their implementation to perfection.

Unfortunately our hands-on time with The Sims 4 didn't extend outside the editor, Instead we could only take Producer Grant Rodiek's word that the new Al Emotion engine completely changes the way Sims interact with each other. Mood now determines what interactive choices are available to the player – for instance, a Sim won't flirt with another if he or she is. in the throws of depression. Listening to music, watching TV or going nine rounds with a punching bag can shift their mood, but exhaustion, hunger and the need to take a trip to the toilet can still swing moods.









FirstLook | Preview



Even a sim's iris size isn't out of the player's tinkering bounds!





We were essentially shown an extended version of *The Sims 4* demo which debuted during EA's gamescom keynote ending with two lovers flying into the heavens inside a red suggestively shaped rocket ship, but the game still looked impressive in person. The character animations are still delightfully exaggerated in a manner only Maxis and Dreamworks can pull off, and we also spotted a

"The Sims 4 will boast an offline game mode. Score one for the good guys!"

streamlined interface which highlighted any given Sim's current mood status and influences while also offering up more space to show off action between characters.

Other improvements were also fleetingly mentioned during the presentation, such as the ability for Sims to engage with activities and conversations with multiple people

rather than just one-on-one as before – as well as confirmation that *The Sims* 4 will indeed boast on offline game mode. Score one for the good guys! Overall, what we saw and got to play of this sequel seemed massively encouraging, especially for a game that's still in a pre-Alpha state.

What'll be really interesting to find out is how online play factors into The Sims 4, and whether this sequel will make an appearance on either the Xbox One or PlayStation 4 down the line. We'd presume both would be safe assumptions to make, but with Maxis burned so mercilessly on their ambitious 'connected play' idea for SimCity, we wouldn't be surprised if they kept The Sims as it is rather than break an already successful mould.

The Sims has always been about creating stories, and it'll be very

interesting to ries, and rid interesting to see what tale EA and Maxis tell regarding this new entry before it launches on PC only in 2014.



## **PreOrderIQ**

Click here for up-to-date prices and offers now!