

TYCOON TIME

Adam Barnes rediscovers his most beloved comfort games



Call me a loser if you must, but there's a thrill to be found with a fresh install

of Windows. I'm one of those people who periodically factory resets Windows on an annual basis. And I find there's a joy in it. In doing so, I'm forced to make an active decision about what has the honour of being installed onto the hard drive first. Naturally it's always that Edge replacement, but after that the world is tantalisingly my oyster. For me, it's a process that gets me thinking more decisively about what I want to play. If I've upgraded the PC, then there's usually a high-end game that I've put off playing until I can boot it up, switch every setting to Ultra without looking and enjoy it without being able to count the frames. But there's still the classics that I always seem to make sure are installed: *Baldur's Gate*, *Factorio*, *World Of Warcraft*, *The Sims*, *Half Life (1+2)*, *Binding of Isaac* and *Diablo II*. There are others that slip in and out based on my mood at the time, but these are the ones that I tend to install without fail just in case the urge to give them an umpteenth go rolls around.

But there's a duo that hold a particularly special place on each new Windows. *Transport Tycoon* and *RollerCoaster Tycoon* (OK, honestly, it's 1 and 2 here, so not technically a duo) get the supreme respect of being the first on each new hard drive. Moreover, where the others in this circle of retro-gaming life are

typically there 'just in case', I almost can't resist booting these two up for yet another round. There's something inexhaustible about them.

Now of course, the tycoon genre by its very nature is infinite. *Transport Tycoon* especially plops your trains, planes and automobiles business into a new procedurally generated map each time. But it's not just that these games are designed to be replayed, there's a magic in them that really, honestly I can't explain. When John Broomhall's jazz soundtrack kicks in and I'm placing tracks and demolishing villages that dare stand in my way, I'm locked in to another five-hour Sunday session. Even *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, which is decidedly more finite in its experience thanks to its defined campaign missions, still manages to tempt me every time. It's something I've pondered in the past: what is it in these games that speaks to me? The only answer I've been able to reach so far is that they offer a fairly logical, pragmatic topic – that of building a successful business – but the tools at your disposal and the decisions you make are solved with a degree of creativity. Do I need to build a roller-coaster with four corkscrews, three loops and the highest drop in the country to be a successful theme park? No, absolutely not, but I still want it.

But back in May I was required to switch from laptop to a desktop for work and again I could once again live out this fresh-start joy. In the past I've been fairly strict in sticking to *Transport Tycoon Deluxe*, the

ultimate version of Chris Sawyer's excellent game: it's elegant in its simplicity. I enjoy picking a small town, naming my business after it and building a transport business with the explicit goal of helping

TRY THESE REMAKES

WANT TO TINKER WITH OPEN SOURCE GAMES? TRY THESE NEXT

OPENRA

Classic RTS games benefit from modern upgrades but this package is impressive for including *Red Alert*, *Command & Conquer* and *Dune 2000*.

FREECIV

Civilization II is a tough one to beat, but this open source equivalent is more about expanding the core ruleset than improving it.

OPENMW

Morrowind is the definitive *Elder Scrolls* experience. It's not just that OpenMW enhances that, but it comes with its own editor to create mods for it too.

KEEPERFX

Dungeon Keeper remains one of the best examples of its genre, but KeeperFX has given the modern custom content creators a platform to keep their passion alive.

that town to grow into the biggest metropolis on the map. It's the same goal every time, and I've not stopped finding pleasure in beating back all the AI competition as I work with this sole dedication in mind.

This time, however, I finally started to poke around with OpenTTD.

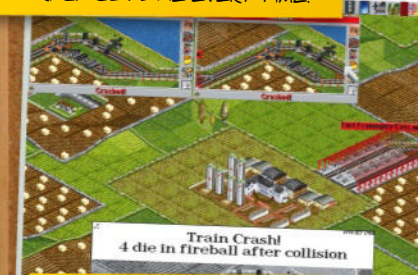
If you're not familiar with the name, it is an open source recreation of Sawyer's original, but expanded by dedicated tinkerers wanting to see more from the base game. It has been mind-blowing, quite frankly. Bigger maps, more vehicles, improved AI, construction improvements; I could go on. Imagine your comfort game, the one you always put on when you can't think of anything else to play. Now imagine there's a whole new campaign you never experienced, new characters to play or a whole new storyline you never heard about.

It's taken me this long to properly try OpenTTD, satisfied as I was with the original, but all of the new and updated features have changed my approach to the game. Where I once had a singular approach to my play, now I'm learning what I can really do with my interconnected network of transport. It has given a new lease of life to something that, for me anyway, hadn't even begun to go stale. It has made my comfort game less comfortable, but I'm locked in all the same. ★

[PC] I DON'T WANT TO ADMIT HOW LONG I SPEND EVERY TIME GENERATING THE FACE WITH THESE COOL NINETIES SUNGLASSES.



[PC] THE SOUNDS OF RCT AND TTD ARE PERHAPS WHAT TRIGGER MY NOSTALGIA BONES THE MOST. THE CAROUSEL TRACK GETS ME EVERY TIME.



[PC] YOU'D THINK AFTER SO MANY YEARS ON THIS GAME THIS SORT OF THING WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO ME ANYMORE...



[PC] THE PROBLEM WITH MODERN ENHANCEMENTS LIKE HIGHER RESOLUTIONS MEANS YOU ULTIMATELY CAN'T SWITCH BACK TO THE ORIGINAL SO EASILY.

“Transport Tycoon and RollerCoaster Tycoon get the supreme respect of being the first on each new hard drive”

ADAM BARNES

ESSENTIAL COMFORT GAMES

Readers share the retro games they always end up returning to

pete

Balloon Fight has been an unexpected ever-present for me since it was included in the 3DS Ambassador program. Really simple, momentum-based controls that feel incredibly satisfying to master. Balloon Trip Mode has that oddly serene, solitary quality too. I love it.

bVork

Doom II. I can always find something new yet familiar with the game. The original id-developed campaign is great but what makes *Doom II* really special is the incredible amount of new maps continually made for it, using the same mechanics but providing a new experience every time.

Keith Simpson

For me it has always been *C64 Impossible Mission*. It always plays different and I'm still trying after 38 years to beat it without one single death... one day I'll succeed.

Woody2610

Donkey Kong Country 1-3. The warm, colourful and chunky graphics as well as their chilled and therapeutic soundtracks always make for a game I take great pleasure going back to.

Alex Young

Chaos on the Speccy. Gotta love 8-way wizard shenanigans – Goopy Blob for the win!

Jason

Sensible World Of Soccer. It's easy to pick up and get into, and brings back all those memories of being ten and not having a care in the world.



[PC] BLIZZARD ARE DOING REALLY FANTASTIC THINGS WITH WOW CLASSIC, THE PROBLEM IS THAT IT'S ABSORBING MOST OF MY TIME REPLAYING OLD CONTENT.



[PC] I'D PROBABLY SAY I ENJOY ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON MORE GIVEN THE CREATIVE OPTIONS AVAILABLE, BUT REPEATING MISSIONS ISN'T ALWAYS FUN.



[PC] IT'S NOT JUST THE TYCOON GENRE THAT GETS ME HOOKED. I OFTEN FIND MYSELF WANTING TO HOP BACK ONTO SIMCITY 2000 FOR EXAMPLE.



[PC] PERHAPS THE ONLY FLAW IN TRANSPORT TYCOON IS THE FACT THAT THE OTHER ZONES JUST AREN'T THAT COMPELLING TO ME.



[PC] THE FACT THAT YOU CAN SORT TOWNS BY POPULATION IN OPENTTD IS A MIND-BLOWING ADDITION FOR ME.

