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## TycoonPlanet.com/Chris Sawyer Interview

TycoonPlanet.com recently conducted an interview with Chris Sawyer. If you don't know, Chris Sawyer is the creator of RCT, RCT2, RCT3D, Locomotion, and many other games!



- Q- Zet93
- A- Chris Sawyer

**Q.** First, we would like to thank you for creating Rollercoaster Tycoon, Rollercoaster Tycoon 2, and now the promising new RCT3.

We are the greatest fans of RCT and appreciate all of the work you have and continue to do in providing us with such a great theme park/rollercoaster design simulation.

That having been said, it is because of our great respect for your work that we decided to accept the offer of doing an interview with you on your latest project, Locomotion.

At first glance, one might think "oh no, not another SIM City."

What makes Locomotion unique?

- A.** Locomotion is all about transport – You build the transport infrastructure, buy the vehicles, set the routes, and make money by transporting people or goods from someone that produces them to somewhere that accepts them. It's a much simpler concept than SIM City, but playability-wise it can be much deeper as there are so many different ways to play and succeed.
- Q.** We're all anxiously awaiting the 3D features of your new Rollercoaster Tycoon 3 game. Do you have future plans for a 3D version of Locomotion?
- A.** It's always something I would consider, but it really depends on the success of Locomotion and whether the benefits of a projected 3D view outweigh the drawbacks. I first worked with first-person projected 3D nearly 20 years ago so I've probably got more experience in this area than most games developers, but part of that experience is understanding both the pros and cons of a first-person view, how it can benefit gameplay in some ways but can also be detrimental in other ways. A game design which works well in simple 2D or isometric doesn't necessarily work well in 3D, or vice versa. I think a 3D version of Locomotion would need to be designed from the outset with 3D in mind, which could mean that while the game might benefit from some new features it could also lose out in other areas and just wouldn't be the same game any more.
- Q.** What kind of research went into the making of the game?
- A.** I have a whole bookcase full of transport-related books, and I've always been fascinated by transport, particularly railways, so even before Locomotion (and its predecessor Transport Tycoon) I had a good knowledge of transport systems.
- Q.** The focus of Locomotion seems to be transportation in all its shapes and forms. How do the "city" components of the game, such as buildings and people, fit into the equation?
- A.** You have no direct control over these at all – Your job is purely to provide the transport where it's needed and make a profit doing so. But the people, towns, and industries all respond to what's going on around them, so towns expand and more passengers arrive if the passenger services are good, and industrial output reacts to how much goods are transported or delivered.
- Q.** Are there any traffic jams?
- A.** Absolutely, it doesn't take much to bring an inner-city road network to gridlock.
- Q.** How does traffic management work in the game? Are there traffic lights?
- A.** I had originally planned traffic lights for road junctions, but it turned out that they only served to slow down the average delivery times and didn't help prevent gridlock. So vehicles just automatically 'give way' at junctions – If there's nothing in the way they'll go through the junction, otherwise they will stop and wait until the junction is clear. Rail tracks are different – If you want to run more than a single train on a track you need to use rail signals to keep the trains apart and prevent collisions.
- Q.** What types of "ruthless" business practices do the competing companies in the game exhibit?
- A.** The competitors vary a lot in terms of their 'character' and it's fun sometimes to just watch what they get up to. Some competitors will quietly get on with building little transport routes well away from everyone else in the corners of the map, while others will seek out other companies' profitable routes and try building their own networks to directly compete.

**Q.** Since you have been instrumental in getting the Theme Park/Amusement Park gaming industry off the ground with Rollercoaster Tycoon, what are your goals for future versions of Locomotion?

**A.** I think that depends on how successful Locomotion is and how inspired I become to take Locomotion further – At the moment Locomotion is nearly everything I wanted it to be. One new area that Locomotion lends itself to though is massively-multiplayer gameplay – An online version of the game with a large number of players playing within a single world could be fantastic.

**Q.** What are your views on trainers and other mods?

**A.** For legal reasons I can't condone anything which modifies games, but I do admire the ingenuity and talent of the individuals who work on such things.

**Q.** Do you have plans to make a custom scenery creation tool for Locomotion (hint: we really want one for RCT.)

**A.** Locomotion (and RCT2) were designed to be easily expanded by means of custom-created data, but the difficulty is the amount of work involved in creating and testing editing tools, or the legal problems with releasing information to enable others to do so. However, we have a company manager editor utility for Locomotion which will be released as a free download so that players can create companies with their own imported face photos to use in the game.

**Q.** It may seem like a silly question, but do you play your own games?

**A.** Unfortunately not very much, and when I do play them I'm often testing just a particular area of the game rather than relaxing and having fun with it. There just isn't enough time when you've got so much to do in terms of design, programming and management of the project. I do find it fascinating watching other people play my games though – You pick up so much information by seeing how they get on with it, what they find difficult and frustrating, what they enjoy doing, and how they play.

**Q.** It's understandable that this is a business to you, but to many fans of your games it is an obsession. How does user submitted feedback play a role in the creation of your games?

**A.** I've seen an amazing amount of feedback, suggestions and criticisms of my games and it's great to see that so many people take my games so seriously. There's so much information that it's very difficult to look at it all and analyze it objectively but it does make fascinating reading. Often it's not the heated discussions on big issues that influence me, but instead it's the odd little suggestion or something uniquely clever which might catch my imagination and help shape the game design. I do try to stay true to my original game design though – It would be very easy to lose track of my original vision for a game while trying to please everyone else, and ending up with something which was only average and 'designed by committee' rather than being a unique game with its own character (and flaws).

