

= SimTower =

SimTower : The Vertical Empire ( known as The Tower ( ? ? ??? , Za Taw? ) in Japan ) is a construction and management simulation video game developed by OpenBook Co . , Ltd. and published by Maxis for the Microsoft Windows and Macintosh System 7 operating systems in November 1994 . In Japan , it was published by OpenBook that same year and was later released for the Sega Saturn and Sony PlayStation in 1996 . The game allows players to build and manage a tower and decide what facilities to place in it , in order to ultimately build a five @-@ star tower . Random events take place during play , such as terrorist acts that the player must respond to immediately .

Critical reception towards the game was generally positive . Reviews praised the game 's formula , including its open @-@ ended nature and its ability to immerse the player into the game . Criticism targeted the game 's lack of documentation , which some reviewers found made it harder to learn how to play the game . The in @-@ game speed was also criticized for being too slow , which was a crucial issue in the game because time must pass for the player to earn income to purchase new facilities .

= = Gameplay = =

SimTower allows the player to build and manage the operations of a modern , multi @-@ use skyscraper . They must plan where to place facilities in the tower that include restaurants , condominiums , offices , hotel rooms , retail stores and elevators . To prevent tenants from vacating their properties , the player must keep their stress low by fulfilling their demands for medical centers , parking lots , recycling facilities , clean hotel rooms with the help of housekeepers , and an efficient transportation system , which involves managing elevator traffic . SimTower , which was built around an elevator simulation program , places a strong emphasis on good elevator management .

The game begins with a one @-@ star tower with limited building options . To increase the tower 's star rating , it must attract more tenants by providing more living space ( or office space , and later in the game , hotel and various commercial space ) . New facilities are made available while the tower progresses from a one @-@ star rating to a five @-@ star rating . The highest achievable rating is the designation of " Tower " which can only be awarded by building a cathedral at the very top of a five @-@ star building with all possible tower levels above ground developed . The tower is limited to a maximum of 100 floors above ground and nine stories below ground . Standard elevators , which can span a maximum of 30 floors , and express elevators , which can span the entire height of the building , must be used efficiently to decrease tenant stress .

Certain events can take place while managing the tower . For example , terrorists may phone the player to let them know that they have hidden a bomb in the building , and that they demand a ransom . If the ransom is not paid , then security services must find the bomb before it detonates , or else the tower will incur significant damages . If the player builds facilities underground , the game may notify them that their workers have discovered gold treasure , which gives the player a significant amount of funds . At random intervals during the game , there are notifications that state that a VIP will be visiting the tower soon , so the player must prepare for their visit . If the VIP enjoys their visit because of variables such as a comfortable hotel suite and efficient navigation , the VIP will give the tower a favorable rating . A favorable rating would then allow the tower to advance to the next star level , assuming the other qualifications are met . Although it does not have any impact on the tower , at the end of the fourth quarter every year in the game , Santa Claus and his reindeer fly across the tower .

= = Development = =

Developed by Yoot Saito of OpenBook , SimTower was originally titled The Tower . It works on computers that can run the Microsoft Windows or Macintosh System 7 operating systems ; the game will operate on 68k @-@ based Macs at the minimum . It requires 8 @-@ bit colors and four

megabytes of random @-@ access memory . Graphics and sounds used in SimTower are similar to previous Sim games , and high resolution graphics are also used . The sound effects are kept to a minimum ; noises that are played in the background include office " buzz " and elevator bells .

While attending Waseda University , Saito played SimCity on the Macintosh , which prompted him to pursue video game creation after graduating . His first game was a simulation title that was part of a future media project for a publishing house . When Saito asked to develop a second , the business refused because it was not a video game company . He left the company to personally produce the second game , which built on ideas he conceived while working on his first : elevators and towers . Saito teamed up with freelance programmer Takumi Abe to complete the project . To research the gameplay , Saito contacted an elevator company to learn about elevator scheduling and management . However , the company declined to provide the information . Saito handled the graphic design , and started with a monochromatic scaled tower created in HyperCard . The designer added color to differentiate between office- and hotel @-@ type buildings . As development neared completion , Saito noticed that the Mac 's performance had improved and decided to increase the color palette size from 16 to 256 colors . Saito enlisted a second designer to produce animation for the graphics and improve the details for the color increase .

= = Sequels = =

OpenBook , the developers of the original SimTower , developed and released a sequel under a new name called Yoot Tower for Windows in 1998 . A second sequel was released as The Tower SP for the Game Boy Advance in 2005 ; The Tower DS for Nintendo DS followed in 2008 .

= = Release and reception = =

SimTower was successful in Japan , earning the developers a profit . The Nihon Keizai Shimbun awarded Saito the " Best Young Manager / Venture of the Year " for his work on the game . After the initial Japanese release , Maxis president Jeff Braun contacted Saito regarding a worldwide release ; SimCity creator Will Wright informed Braun of the game . The company localized the game for sale in the United States , and changed the name to capitalize on the popularity of the Sim franchise and increase sales figures . Maxis published SimTower for the Windows and Macintosh System 7 operating systems in November 1994 in the United States . In 1996 , it was ported to the Sega Saturn and 3DO Interactive Multiplayer in Japan .

The South China Morning Post praised the game 's formula , noting that it followed in the footsteps of previous open @-@ ended Maxis games . Comparing to SimCity 2000 , the review remarked that it was more interesting to watch people live out their lives in a tower rather than to observe cars moving around . They also appreciated the " homely " feeling of SimTower , in contrast with other Sim games such as SimEarth and SimLife , which they felt were too universal to take on a personal identity . Benjamin Svetkey of Entertainment Weekly praised the game and commented that it is " more fun than [ the concept ] sounds " . However , he stated that the gameplay may be too much for fans of the series . A reviewer for Next Generation panned the game , saying it lacks the bustling interactivity of previous games in the Sim franchise : " There are bug infestations and the occasional fire with which to deal , but most of the time , SimTower sees you standing around waiting for cash reserves to grow in order to add more floors . Not much fun at all . " Australia 's The Age found SimTower a pleasing return to form for Maxis , after the release of the disappointing SimFarm . Lisa Karen Savignano of Allgame stated that the game had decent graphics and sound . However , she also felt that SimTower had good replay value due to the non @-@ linear gameplay , giving the game 4 stars out of 5 .

The game was criticized by the South China Morning Post for lacking documentation , making it more difficult to learn how to play the game . They also predicted that players would be unhappy with the game 's speed , as time plays an important role in earning money from tenants . Before the player can purchase new facilities , a long period of time must pass before income is earned from tenants . The newspaper was also unhappy with complaints from tenants ; specific reasons for their

dissatisfaction are never given . The Age was disappointed by the lack of pre @-@ built towers and scenarios , suggesting that one along the lines of The Towering Inferno 's plot could have been included . Game Informer referred to SimTower as a " lesser @-@ known " simulation game , and described it as " fun and addictive " . Writing for the San Diego Union @-@ Tribune , Matt Miller felt that , when compared to SimCity 2000 ( 1993 ) , gameplay in SimTower moved slowly . He also disliked the moments when he had to wait several minutes to pass by before he could make enough money to purchase new additions for his building . Dragon magazine 's reviewers Jay and Dee praised the visuals and gameplay . However , the two commented that the game can feel slow because it lacks gameplay elements and options present in other strategy games . In 1995 , the Software and Information Industry Association listed SimTower as the " Best Simulation Program " in the Consumer software category of their annual CODiE awards .

The game was followed by Yoot Tower ( called The Tower II in Japan ) , also designed by Yoot Saito , which was initially released on November 24 , 1998 for the Macintosh . It was later made available for the Windows operating systems in January 1999 . Yoot Tower 's gameplay is similar to that of SimTower ? players build hotels , resorts , and office buildings , and work towards building a five @-@ star tower . Sega launched a version of SimTower for the Game Boy Advance , called The Tower SP , in Japan on April 28 , 2005 , and in the United States on March 15 , 2006 . A version of SimTower called The Tower DS was published by DigiToys in Japan on June 26 , 2008 .

Today , Yoot Tower is in the iTunes iOS App Store for iPad devices .