

AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

*Sikorsky CH-53A*

*Sea Stallion*



Product Information		
<b>Publisher:</b> <a href="#">AlphaSim</a>		
<b>Description:</b> Helicopter Add-on.		
<b>Download Size:</b> 37 MB (FS9) 30 MB (FSX)	<b>Format:</b> Download	<b>Simulation Type:</b> FS9 & FSX
<b>Reviewed by:</b> <a href="#">Brian Smith</a> AVSIM Staff Reviewer - February 23, 2008		

## Introduction

Based on my past reviews here and elsewhere, you may know that I like to fly helicopters and I like military aircraft. When I saw the CH-53A, I knew I had to take a look at it. I had made the switch to FSX, but I then reinstalled FS9. So for this review, I took a look at the Flight Simulator 2004 or FS9 version of the product.

The CH-53 is part of the S-65 line of Sikorsky's heavy-lift helicopters. Included in the line are the MH-53 PaveLow, and the HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant that served to rescue a lot of downed airmen during Vietnam. The S-65 line was primarily created for the United States Marine Corps, but has also been purchased by the United State Air Force, and the Air Forces of Germany, Mexico, Iran, and Israel.

The CH-53 is a fantastic aircraft. If you ever have the opportunity to see one, you should take it. Just the sound of its engines gives you a sense of its power. But this aircraft is more than just muscle. It has passenger doors on both sides of the fuselage, it is watertight, though not intended to be amphibious, has mechanical controls with redundant hydraulics, and an armored cockpit to protect the crew. The CH-53's rear loading ramp and ability to fold its rotor blades and tail for storage, makes it a perfect machine for placing U.S. Marines on the beach and taking their gear along as well.

## Installation and Documentation

Installation is an absolute breeze. As with all the Alphasim products I have purchased, you can download the FS9 and the FSX product with your purchase. Two products for the price of one, and no need to worry if you need to purchase an upgrade. After the download, it is simply a matter of unzipping the files and then running the self-executing installation program.

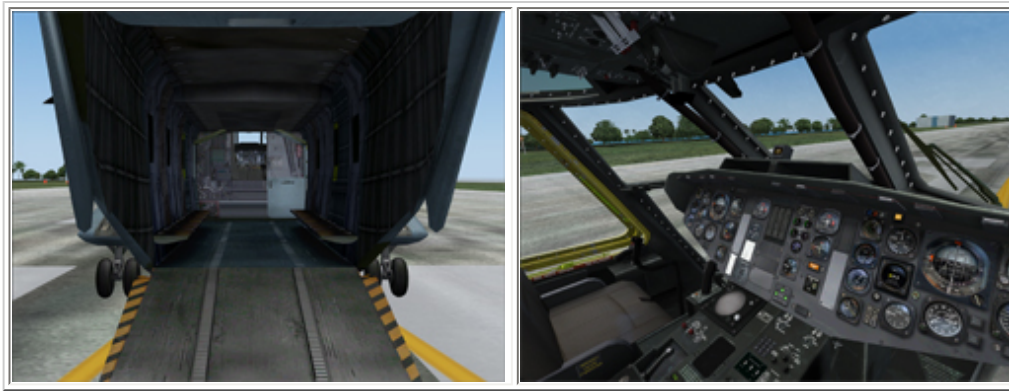
Documentation for the CH-53A is rather sparse. The documentation consists of a checklist and an aircraft specification sheet in HTML format, and a readme.txt file. This is not, however, an attempt to sell you a product to simulate the startup procedure of the helicopter, please keep that in mind.

The CH-53A from Alphasim comes with five paint schemes. The textures are clear and well done. The rotor blades texture shows wear on the leading edge.

Test System
Intel Duo Core 3.4 Ghz 2 gigabytes of RAM Nvidia 6800 GT Track IR 4 Saitek 290 Pro Joystick
<b>Flying Time:</b> 11.5 hours

	<p>U.S.M.C. Early 70s paint</p>
	<p>U.S.M.C. Late 70s paint</p>
	<p>U.S.M.C. 80s Paint</p>
	<p>German Heerflieger paint</p>
	<p>German Heerflieger/ United Nations paint</p>

The textures in the cabin are also well done although the textures on the bulkheads are not quite as clear as I would have liked to have seen. The crew did an excellent job on the Virtual Cockpit, and it is evident they spent time getting the details right. The gauges in the VC are all crystal clear, making this aircraft easy to fly from the VC point of view. This is always a good thing, as I like to use the TRACKIR for my flights.



The model of the CH-53A Sea Stallion is well done. I enjoyed the detailed work that went into it. That said, there were some issues with the tail lights. When you fold the tail, it folds properly up against the rear fuselage, but the main rotor blades do not fold. That alone is not a huge problem, unless you are like me and are trying to make room on a carrier deck for other landing aircraft and you want to take up as little space as possible. It also detracts from the realism of the product. Also when the tail folds, if you leave the lights on, the lights stay put.



Notice the white tail light has stayed put after folding the tail.

## Panel



The 2D panels in Alphasim's helicopters are very good, but they are a compromise. I do not mean this as a bad thing at all. The panels themselves are very clear and unobtrusive. They do not detract from your enjoyment and they look like the panel in the real thing. However, Alphasim must appeal to as many buyers as possible.

Alphasim produces products with a wide appeal. Helicopters have a limited appeal. Military aircraft have a limited appeal. Technical recreations of one of these genres could be successful; but I would imagine that the profit margin on a technical simulation of a military helicopters must be very slim indeed. So in light of this, one must recognize the need to produce a high quality product that will not leave the majority of simmers frustrated with their heads in their hands and a 300 page manual on the floor.

On that mark, Alphasim has got it right. They maintain a realistic look and feel without being overly complicated. They provide crystal clear gauges that are smooth as the glass they sit behind. Anyone can turn on the engines, and if they

have any experience flying an FS helicopter, they will be able to fully enjoy this product.

## Sounds

I was really impressed with the quality of the sound recording for this product. Alphasim has included a sound package that has none of those typical glitches you find even in high-dollar flight sim models. The engine sounds give you a sense of power that is at your command. There was a problem with the shut-down sequence for the sounds; after shutdown, the sound of the engine continues. The blades will be stopped dead, the power and fuel cut, no life to the helicopter, but the sound continues. This was disappointing, but certainly not a deal-breaker. I have purchased some extremely expensive payware aircraft that had bigger problems. I suspect this will all be addressed in a patch.

## Airfile

When you lift off in the Alphasim CH-53A, you know you aren't swinging a saber. This is more like a Roman Broadsword. You can feel the weight and power and you can't swing it around the way you do some of the lighter helos. I tested the CH-53A at high-altitude in Colorado and found that it performed as expected. I think that Alphasim got it right here as well. The airfile makes it feel massive. The inertia takes a while to build, but when it does get released, you feel it.

## Summary / Closing Remarks

Alphasim is one of the few developers in the Flight Simulator add-on market that provides quality military titles. For that alone they should be applauded. They provide the titles at a reasonable price, and the quality is as good as or better than almost any payware out there. The Alphasim folks also deserve applause for giving us this value. They provide both FS9 and FSX models for one cost.

Over the years I have purchased a number of payware CH-53 models. This one was definitely among my favorites. It has some issues, but it will remain on my hard drive for a long time. When I need to fly the big bird and I don't want to spend a lot of time just to get it started, the Alphasim CH-53 is where I will turn.

### What I Like About The CH-53A Sea Stallion

- It's a military helicopter
- It's a great Value
- Good Model
- Clear 2D Panel
- Smooth Gauges

### What I Don't Like About The CH-53A Sea Stallion

- Tail-folding light bug
- No folding Rotor blades
- Issue with the sound file

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