

# **AVSIM Commercial Simulator Review**

## *PMDG 737 NG Update Release "Lightweight to Heavyweight" by Aidan Williams*

In all my time flying MSFS (which is more years than I care to remember) I've spent 95% of my time flying GA and occasionally a small bizjet. The "heavys" have never really had that much of an interest for me. I enjoy flying and being able to see where I am going, what's around me and especially mountainous terrain that is now in abundance with the addition of terrain mesh. When PMDG first announced the 737NG project, no particular alarm bells started ringing to suggest that this should be something I should look at. With the decision to write a review on this particular aircraft (including the recent upgrade to the -800/900 model) I offered to do some screenshots to be included in the review.

After loading the 737 into my simulator, I encountered my first problems right from the beginning! So, there I am sitting in the cockpit, looking around wondering what half of the buttons, dials and displays worked. At the time it was all started up and both engines were turning and burning. Ok, no problem I thought, drop some flap, a bit of trim, set the autopilot (so I thought) and advance the throttle. Surprise No1.. This alarm started, and whatever I tried I couldn't get rid of it. Flipped this switch and that one, turned this and turned that and the alarm kept going! After about 5 minutes it drove me almost to insanity!

After shutting the sim down to get rid of the infernal alarm, I proceeded to the documentation to try and find out what was causing it. Off I went to the PMDG website, clicked on the download section and looked at the listed documentation. My initial idea was just to find the cause of the alarm, but then I saw the "737TNG Advanced Operations Tutorial v2". Hmm, well instead of just finding out one thing, how about running through the tutorial and seeing what this aircraft really has to offer? I will just remind you again at this point that I have never really flown heavies in the past, and as for my using/programming an FMC... well that is unheard of!

After I had printed out the manual, I read through what it was all about and pretty quickly came to the conclusion that this could be the start of something new! The tutorial is written by Timothy M. Metzinger, who is a real world pilot with extensive experience in both single- and multi-engine

aircraft, and holds various licences. He is currently building his hours to achieve his 737 licence.

The manual is broken down into steps which in turn are spread across 5 days of flights. This is exactly what I was looking for as it caters for the likes of me—an absolute beginner.

### *Day 1*

The first day is broken down into various stages which takes you through the basics of what the 737 is all about. It concentrates on a relatively small area in Florida when you are actually flying. It is written in a very easy to follow manner, and explains each procedure in a clear and concise way. Tim does assume that you have a good understanding of aircraft dynamics, as this is not a "teach you to fly" tutorial. Likewise, when you look the panel and the corresponding sub-panels—whereas they might seem complicated and totally foreign—most things should be familiar to you even if you don't understand their operation.

After following the day's lesson and completing all the objectives, I was very impressed and couldn't wait to move onto the next day! I actually started the lessons on a Sunday evening, and as I write this I have just finished the final flight to KBNA. I think for the beginner to attempt flying more than one day at a time would not be of benefit. Having said that, going back and practicing the procedures you have learnt that day is a good idea!

### *Day 2*

Day 2 takes you on a tour of Florida. The procedures you learnt on day 1 are tested to ensure you have understood and absorbed what you have learnt. It is also an introduction to the FMC. It teaches you what that is all about, what it can do, how you programme it and how it interacts with the MCP. It is certainly a masterpiece of programming, and far more complex than any other instrument I had previously used in an aircraft. I was totally amazed at its versatility and to be quite honest, how easy it was to learn. I think a lot of the credit has to go to Tim for his method of writing and how he explains things.

### *Day 3*

Again, you're off on another tour of Florida. Adding to your ever increasing knowledge of the systems, you learn more of the functions that the aircraft and FMC can achieve, which if like me you are new to this game, is quite eye-opening!

### *Days 4 & 5*

Now that you have pretty much been taught all the functionality of the systems, the next two days increase in range and you again put into practice all you have learnt. The way Tim continues the manual at this point really makes you think! It tells you what needs to be done, but it is not a step by step explanation. You have to rely on your previous lessons to carry out the tasks in order to achieve your goals. I must admit I did find myself on a few occasions pausing the sim, flicking back through the pages and reading the section relevant to the particular part of the flight I was currently at.

## **Summary**

If like me you are predominantly a GA flyer but every once in a while decide to try something a little bigger, then I couldn't recommend this particular aircraft and tutorial highly enough. I know in my own mind that on Sunday last week I knew nothing, and this evening (Thursday) I approached the aircraft in a "cold cockpit" condition, started it up correctly, programmed the FMC, flew the route I had selected and did a Cat III autoland. I felt very impressed that I was able to achieve this.

I don't think this will convert me from being a GA pilot to an air transport pilot, but it has certainly opened my eyes to a whole new world in the simulator. I would go as far as saying, that at least once a week I will do a flight using electronics as opposed to old fashioned charts!!

Oh, by the way, that nagging alarm was warning me that I shouldn't be advancing the throttles without first extending the flaps!

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