

AVSIM Commercial Utility Review

Cielosim Flight Enhancer



Product Information		
Publisher: Cielosim		
Description: Flight Sim texture enhancements		
Download Size: 35 MB	Format: Download	Simulation Type: FS9
Reviewed by: Josh Szkoda AVSIM Staff Reviewer - September 9, 2007		

Introduction

Ever since man invented the first car, we've seen where the potential lies. We've built on that to make our cars faster, safer and generally better. The same, I feel, applies to Flight Simulator. Ever since we saw the default offerings; we've seen the room for improvement. Over the years that FS9 has been the dominant product for add-on publishers to focus their time creating new things for, there have been many attempts by publishers to provide programs that give us better textures for something, somehow.

Welcome, then, goes to Cielosim who thought they should have a go in this field too. Cielosim's Flight Enhancer is one that comes wrapped in promise of delivering amazing things to our simulators.

Cielosim's package contains replacement texture sets for water, skies and runway lights; each set of textures has been duplicated two more times to create the textures for day, dusk and night.

Cielosim have produced 2,700 custom textures for this program, comprising of 30 day sets, 12 dawn sets, 11 dusk sets and six night sets. This is then combined with the "Extras", comprising of 6 water sets, 4 cloud sets, 4 sun sets, 5 light sets and 3 environment sets. All these can easily be previewed and applied to the simulator with little or no fuss, as the fairly attractive looking user interface will do all the hard work.

Installation

Download delivery is via the universally accepted Flight 1 wrapper system. The download takes no more than a few minutes over a broadband connection due to its compact file size of 35MB. There doesn't appear to be anything new to comment on with regard to the operation of the Flight 1 wrapper, it remains much the same with a few details and credit card numbers being inputted into the interface and then clicking the purchase button. Simple really.

Test System
P4 2.8G 1024 KB RAM Windows XP (SP2) FS9
Flying Time: 50 hours

When the transaction through the wrapper has been processed, the wrapper will copy the product and installation of the product can continue.

Installation of the product is simple, it's an executable file and requires very little input, just a few clicks of the word "next" will install Flight Enhancer to the specified drive. The program itself requires a mere 38 megabytes of hard drive space; however, untold amounts of space could be used when installing the new texture sets. Overall, the installation process is nothing short of simple; the installer even puts an icon on your desktop.

It is very important that Flight Enhancer needs to be run after installation and prior to launching FS9. Textures need to be selected and saved first or you cannot see anything new, just the default MSFS textures.

The tool has a backup feature which restores default textures if you would like to uninstall the product or just to use former textures. I do not think I will ever use this feature since I like Flight Enhancer, but if anybody needs this feature, it is available.

Using Flight Enhancer

As noted in the documentation, Microsoft .NET Framework V2.0 needs to be installed to make Flight Enhancer work. Do not forget to set up your Flight Simulator settings for best quality as it is described in the PDF manual. After the installation progress, launching Flight Enhancer is about as easy as launching any other program; merely click the icon the installer places on your desktop and you're away. Upon loading Flight Enhancer, you'll instantly be presented with the fairly attractive looking interface that has been implemented.



When you've familiarized yourself with the mass of buttons and options available to you, it's time to start the selection process and deciding upon your sky sets. After navigating to the 'Sky Sets' tab on the interface, there are many more options for you to choose from. First off, you'll need to choose the texture sets you want for dawn. When you're happy with the selection, move onto day, dusk and so on.

Choosing the sets can be a bit tricky. Some of them look fairly similar and the two little preview images that you'll get to see are by no means sufficient, as all it displays is a picture of what the sky will look like depending on the position of the sun. But I suppose half of the fun is sorting through all the different sets and getting a feel for each, right?

The main problem I had with selecting which set to use, is when it came to the night set selection. As I mentioned earlier, the screenshot previews are by no means helpful, this is only exaggerated more with the selection of dark

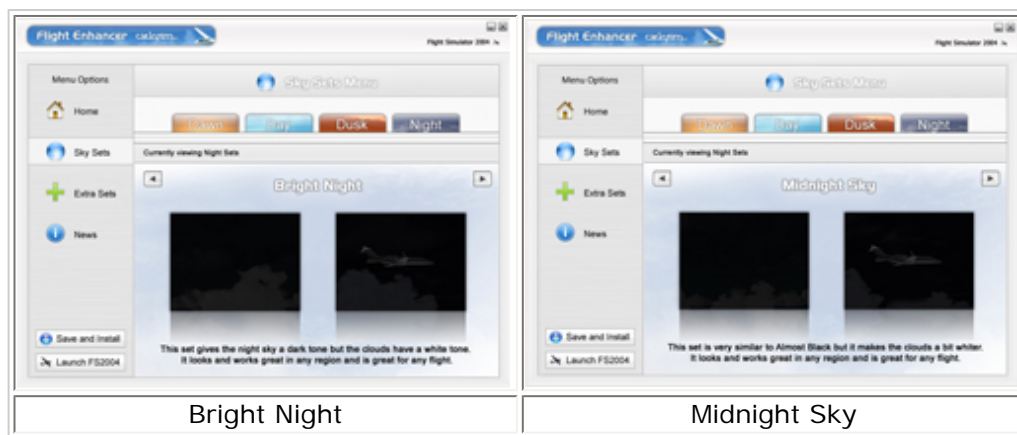
textures. In my opinion, all six sets of screenshots look identical, which will only increase the time that is needed to be spent trying out different texture sets. Personally, I found this to be annoying.

I think there are too many choices of sky texture sets. On one hand, Cielosim tried to do a perfect piece of work and it is evident that they took several hours to provide these kinds of sets. On the other hand, I think they should have paid more attention to beginners who simply want to make their Flight Simulator more realistic.

'Beginner' is perhaps not the perfect word. I have been flying FS for 5 years and I just want to fly in a realistic environment. I don't like to spend a lot of time selecting different kinds of day textures. So if I were the developer, I would make a few presets, offering a full compilation of dawn, day, dusk, night, etc. textures with a simple mouse click.

No doubt, a disadvantage for me may be an advantage for anybody else. So you can browse different amazing sunset scenes and choose which you would like to see during an early morning approach.

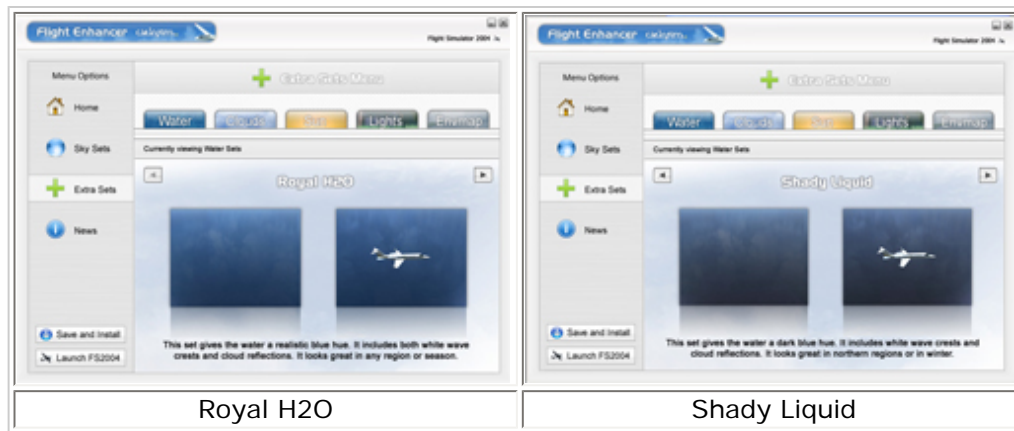
Unfortunately, certain sets of lighting in Flight Enhancer cannot be changed automatically: in the real world, lighting conditions depend on atmospheric circumstances and during a real flight, you may observe one 'texture-set' after another. But this is not the fault of Cielosim. MS Flight Simulator limits human creativity, therefore it was needed to make more texture sets.



As is demonstrated above, two different texture sets represented by the same screenshot is a bit of a let down and is a bit careless too. This is definitely starting to look like a product for people that like to experiment.

After experimenting with the sky sets, it was time to move one tab down on the menu and look at the promising looking title "Extras". From the "Extras" menu a whole new dimension is opened up. From within this menu, the user can customize water, cloud, sun, lights and environmental textures. Unlike the sky textures, this part of the program is rather impressive. It doesn't have the same feel to it like it was nailed together quickly on a Friday evening.

Water textures are all clearly demonstrated and from their screenshots, they look fabulous and the choice is rather good too. The six selections that can be made with regard to water textures work pretty well with most areas of the globe. For example, one might select "Royal H2O" if planning a trip over the pond. Due to the fact that it has the deep blue hue that could be expected to be seen when looking down on the Atlantic. On the other hand, your flight might take you over peninsulas and muddy rivers of Indonesia, in which case the "Shady Liquid" might be more appealing.



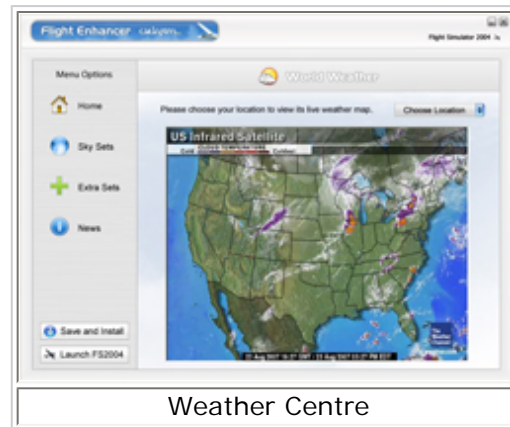
Royal H2O

Shady Liquid

An important feature was that I did not observe any frame-rate loss using this software. As I don't have the latest in hardware configuration (and I'm probably not alone), FPS-usage plays an important role in testing and using new products.

More Features to Flight Enhancer

At the beginning of this review, I gave a brief outline of the good looking main menu of the user interface, along with an update checker, a link to the VATSIM profile flight plan page and an option to back up files. Flight Enhancer also has built-in weather from the Weather Channel website for nearly every continent on the planet.



Weather Centre

You may be asking now, "Why on earth would I need a weather center?" Well, weather depending, it's entirely possible to choose the texture set that is right for that particular time. For example, on a cold winter's morning in Toronto, it would be a little out of place to use a nice summer looking sky.



Summary / Closing Remarks

I think Flight Enhancer is a very useful and high-quality FS-tool. I like using it, as with anything else it makes my simulation more realistic. We mentioned some features which we did not find the best, but I prefer using the several good features instead of worrying about some details which we did not like.

I hope the Cielosim team keeps on developing this product and makes it even better and better. I will continue to visit their website and Support Forum and I offer the same advice to everybody who is interested in this great utility to help make MS Flight Simulator more realistic.

What I Like About Flight Enhancer

- Does not have a bad effect on frame rates
- Texture sets are easily changeable

What I Don't Like About Flight Enhancer

- Too much experimentation needed with the texture sets
- I could imagine a bit deeper manual with detailed texture-set description including offers where and when to apply it to increase reality

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