

Real Life Games: The Sims 2 & MySims

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Overview


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Head-to-Head Comparison

	The Sims 2	MySims
Appearance	Realistic	Cartoonish
Focus	Open-ended	Construction
Narrative	Open-ended	Linear
Customization	Neighborhoods, personalities	Furniture, building exteriors

The Sims 2

- Sequel to best-selling PC game, The Sims
- Strategic life simulation
- User defined sims, environment, & goals
- Elements of immersion & agency through formal & material constraints

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:The_sims_2.jpg.

Formal & Material Constraints

- Formal Constraints
 - Game elements that convey author's intended story
- Material Constraints
 - Anything players are able to control
- Agency & Immersion
 - When players use material constraints to produce story, optimally one that matches formal constraints
 - Balance of formal & material lead to immersion and agency

Game Mechanics

Images removed due to copyright restrictions.
Please see any Sims 2 game image, such as
http://ui31.gamespot.com/1758/sims2deluxemusic_2.jpg

Gameplay

- Formal Constraints
 - Needs, Wants, Fears
 - Time (Aging)
 - Sense of Materialism
- Material Constraints
 - Resources (\$)
 - Actions & Interactions
- Agency & Immersion
 - Actions have consequences
 - “God-like” immersion
 - Interactivity is key

Fun Stuff

- User generated celeb sims & [videos](#)

Images removed due to copyright restrictions. Please see:



<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/293/293370.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/538/538427.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/447/447201.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/434/434762.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/tmp/425/425748.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/577/577023.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/449/449265.jpg>.

<http://isc.thesimsresource.com/images/450/450954.jpg>

MySims

- Released for Nintendo Wii & DS
- Mixed reviews:
 - Gamespot 6.5/10
 - Nintendo Power 7/10
 - Game Informer 8/10
 - Official Nintendo Magazine 94%

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image: Mysims_artbox.jpg.

Shortcomings

- Custom design only on superficial level
- No actual effect -> lack of agency
- Most time spent in dreaded workshop
- Complexity doesn't increase with play
- Gets old fast, like the music

Images removed due to copyright restrictions. Please see:

http://mysims.ea.com/images/screenshots/screenshot_6.jpg □ □

http://mysims.ea.com/images/screenshots/screenshot_3.jpg

Reasons for Shortcomings

- Unbalanced formal & material constraints
 - Formal: renovate rundown town
 - Material: move in sims, build stuff
 - *The extent of how you build stuff doesn't matter to the game, only that you do it.*
 - Agency lost b/c material constraints don't align with formal constraints.
 - “Looks like a danceclub, but doesn't act like one.”

Summary

- The Sims 2
 - Able to create and operate sims in environments that change dynamically with input
 - Formal and material constraints afford agency and allow for interactive experience
- MySims
 - Material constraints misaligned with formal – game is unresponsive to user input
 - Agency is lost

Questions?

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http://mysims.ea.com/images/bg_coolstuff.jpg