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CAPTAIN SIM

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After three years of development and a lengthy release build up November 2005 saw the much anticipated release of Captain Sim's Legendary C130 package.



The package is available from Captain Sim by online activated download. The base pack includes the C130 E, K and HC130 as used by the US coastguard. Since the release a service pack has been produced to cure many of the reported bugs in the early days and the C130J expansion pack is now available. This review is based upon the patched version with the J expansion pack.

Installation of the package is straightforward. Once the 86 MB file is downloaded the installer will automatically locate FS9 and do the rest for you. When you receive confirmation of your order you will be e-mailed a serial number which is required as part of the installation and online verification process. The software can be installed on up to 2 computers owned by the licence holder. A very comprehensive manual is also installed as part of the package as is the Configuration Editor (ACE) which allows you to select many variables in the software. This utility allows the user to easily add repaints and configure them as desired. The repaints are added using the Liveries tab and installation of them is self explanatory. A good number of liveries are already supplied in the download.



The pre-flight tab of the ACE is the one used to configure the different versions. This allows you to select everything from the national flag flown from the cockpit roof through to panel selections and fuel and payload configurations. The external model of the 130 is nothing short of breathtaking.



Captain Sim has worked their usual modelling magic on this release and has faithfully captured the lines of this classic workhorse.

Just about everything which can be animated has been. As you would expect all control surfaces are animated and the props are well done. Many other elements have been added including the massive ramp at the rear of the Herc, the paratrooper air deflection doors in front of the rear side exits, the emergency exit in the cockpit roof and even a fluttering national flag appropriate to the livery which can be made to appear when the aircraft is on the ground. With the ramps down an icon on the main panel makes a hummer military vehicle appear behind the Herc and a further icon allows this to animate and drive in and out of the load space. Other additions include nacelle blanking plates and chocks when the aircraft is parked.



The 2D panel has been very well made. The bitmaps are all photographed views and the instruments are clear and easy to read. Many sub panels for the various systems are included and these are accessed using the set of icons which appear on the bottom left of the screen and can be toggled on and off using shift + 2. This set of icons also allows switching through the various 2d views such as left and right seat and wing views.

The ACE utility gives a choice of left or right seat views for start up and also a choice of analogue or EICAS engine instruments. A working TCAS radar is part of the panel and it will tell you to climb or lose altitude when it detects a traffic conflict with AI aircraft. It will even tell you when the conflict is resolved. I have found a problem with the different panel layouts where the TCAS is concerned. In the classic instrument version the Radar sits on top of the glare shield in both 2D and Virtual cockpit. If the EICAS panel is selected in Virtual cockpit mode the Radar is set into the main panel as it should be but on changing to the 2D panel is sat on top of the glare shield again. I am informed via the forum at Captain Sim that this has been done to allow full viewing of the EICAS engine instruments in 2D view but it is nevertheless annoying to have the

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inconsistency between the panels. The autopilot can be used with FS Navigator and I am pleased to say it is also compatible with my Go Flight stack.



The Virtual cockpit is one of the best I have seen to date. The textures are sharp and clear. On lower spec systems you may need to disable the window reflection in the ACE as this can affect the time taken to load the VC textures and have quite an impact on frame rates. The gauge refresh rates are also a little slower than in 2D cockpit but this does not cause any great problem. All of the switches and levers can be operated in the virtual cockpit. The interior of the Herc can also be accessed by users of active camera allowing you to stroll round the massive well detailed cargo space. Again the textures have been well done and it can be quite an experience to open the large rear door whilst stood in front of it.



The sound file has captured the deep whine of the Allison turbo props and internal sounds are to say the least fairly loud. I feel the engine sound when reverse thrust is selected may change a little abruptly but the full reverse sound has again been well captured. The TCAS can start to nag a little so it is worth resolving any potential conflicts as soon as possible!

The C130 is meant to have been tested by several real world Herc pilots. All I can say is that it has the right feel. It is no aerobat and rolls gently. That said it will climb steeply and a short stop tactical landing followed by a reverse back along the runway is possible in this model. The day after I installed the review copy I was asked at a meeting of the South West section of FSUG "Can you do a Keh Sanh Landing". You may recall this was a tactical landing used by US forces in Vietnam to avoid artillery fire on the approach and involved dropping steeply on a very short final. I tried and that time the answer was no, I failed miserably. Having had some practice I can now do it. It takes a little

practice but get the aircraft set up on full flaps with gear down lined up at about 1500 - 2000 ft altitude. Get the airspeed down almost to the point of stall and drop the nose. Keep the throttles closed and aim for the piano keys. It takes a lot of work on the trim wheel in the last few seconds and if the aircraft is too heavy with fuel you will end up under the runway!



The C130 was a long time coming and as such expectations were justifiably high. I was dismayed at the attitude of several members of the flight simulator community on one of the main line forums in respect of the C130 package. Many had participated in ripping it to shreds before it had been released led on by a couple of disgruntled beta testers. The company also took a hammering in respect of product support and again many jumped on that bandwagon.

After releasing the C130 I am pleased to say Captain Sim set up a new support forum and within a month of the release a major service pack was produced to put right a vast majority of the bugs inherent in V1.0. Support for the product can be obtained from the forum or by an e-mail service run by Captain Sim.

There are 2 base packages now available. The 130 Pro which includes the E, K and HC variants priced at \$51.30, the 130 standard which is the E only at \$41.30 and the J expansion pack at \$9.30 all by download from Captain Sim at <http://www.captainsim.com/> It is also being released on CD in the near future by Just Flight.

Having had time to become familiar with the package I am very impressed by it. No doubt there are those who will say that certain systems may not work as they do in real life but we have to bear in mind we are using this add-on in a £50 computer simulation which in itself has limitations. If you're looking for full on realism ask the boys at Lyneham how much their simulator cost!

The Legendary Hercules has been very well made and the visuals are nothing short of stunning as we have come to expect from Captain Sim releases. It is pleasant to fly and capable of a few out of the ordinary manoeuvres in flight sim. A nice element of the package is that it can be flown straight out of the box, i.e. kick the tyres, light the fires and go or you can run through the numerous checklists provided in the manual for the full experience from a cold start to full shut down. You will need a decent system to run the Herc as the detail provided does come at a cost in Frame Rates. I find on my current system AMD 3200 with 1 GB of PC 400 RAM and a 128 MB ATI Radeon 9500 pro that I can achieve frame rates consistently in the high 20s to low 30s. Despite my comments on a couple of issues I have found the Herc to be a very comprehensive package which will give me hours of good flying for a long time to come. Thanks to Tanya Kutcher at Captain Sim for supplying the review copy of the Legendary C130 Pro and C130J expansion pack.

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