



## Vstep game proves runaway hit

The Ship Simulator 2006 program has become a big hit with both ordinary game players and maritime training companies

**S**HIP Simulator 2006, developed by Rotterdam-based Vstep, has been a runaway success with more than 50,000 copies sold in less than eight months. But the simulator is more than "a seriously fun game", it can be a valuable training tool.

Heralded as a revolutionary game, Ship Simulator 2006 lets the player take the helm of various types of ships and sail the harbours of the world on their own computer.

The program, which was launched in March, puts players on the bridge of some of the most varied and detailed ships to be found at sea, where they need to perform a multitude of tasks, all set within a 3D environment.

With over 50,000 copies sold in the European

and US markets alone, Japan and Asia are soon to follow. Nine types of ships, four global ports and 700 sq km of open sea offer players the possibility of testing their manoeuvring skills in 40 trying missions.

Cristijn Sarvaas, director of Vstep, who describes the game as a "seriously fun game", says that users, professionals and game-lovers alike have reacted positively. "In the first weeks after launch, the game was listed in the top 10 games in various European countries. Equally, professional users were keen to receive the game," he muses.

### True to life

Leo Leusink, of global towage company Fairmount Marine, comments: "The realistic behaviour of the



vessels makes it not only a realistic game, but it also proves a useful tool for training maritime operations."

Optional hardware add-ons such as the ship control unit bring the simulator yet another step closer to a professional training tool, says Mr Sarvaas. Particularly noteworthy is the quality of the water effects in the simulator, he adds. "It realistically responds to the variable climate conditions in the game and follows the ship's movements, reflecting the moving vessel and its environment in a natural way."

Players take control of a wide array of ship types, from cargoships to speedboats, yachts, water taxis and even the *Titanic*. They sail a variety of waters, from the biggest ports in the world, such as Rotterdam, New York and Hamburg, to the calm aqua marine waters of the Thai Phi Phi Islands.

Users will experience how challenging it is to steer the *Titanic* through shallow water, or just how it feels to navigate a cargo vessel or tugboat –

including how diverse the controls are. The game contains 50 predefined missions, ranging from navigating to waypoints to rescuing swimmers. Moreover, the game has a built-in scenario editor, which a player can use to create new scenarios and exchange these with other players on the Ship Simulator Internet forum.

### Customised versions

Various companies in Rotterdam have already ordered the first customised versions of the game for marketing their companies. In-game advertising and customised versions allow them to develop a unique promotional product for their clients.

Ship Simulator 2007 is due mid-2007 and will provide new features, such as open ocean missions, multi-player games and many new vessels and ports. Vstep is currently working on a full bridge version of the game, combining its 3D environments and interactive technology with realistic bridge units. ■

Various screenshots of Ship Simulator: users take control of a variety of ship types, from cargoships to speedboats, yachts, water taxis and even the *Titanic*. They sail a variety of waters, from the biggest ports in the world, such as Rotterdam, New York and Hamburg, to the calm aqua marine waters of the Thai Phi Phi Islands