

Written by Paperpin

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[Sim](#)



[sGalore](#) interviewed marketing director Aaron Cohen during the Hever Castle event. You will find a lot of new information about **The Sims Medieval!**

The original article is available [here](#) .

### **SG – What makes The Sims Medieval unique compared to The Sims 3?**

**AC –** A bunch of things!

We knew that because we were making a medieval game, it would have to be different and feel different. To tell Medieval stories is quite a change to telling Modern day stories – as The Sims 3 is all about modern life, people have their own feelings and preconceptions of what Modern life is like. You get married, have a job, girlfriends, boyfriends, perhaps a family, everyone grows up and life moves on. People kinda get what modern day life is like, and The Sims 3 does a great job of expressing it.

In The Sims Medieval, we knew that instead people get an impression of Medieval times from the stories they've been told. Although people have never been able to experience the medieval times, they have a perception through Shakespeare, Robin Hood, Tolkien, King Arthur and many more stories, myths and legends.

When you make a medieval game, you want to help people tell those kinds of stories – so we really wanted to help people do that. Hence the quest system – which allows people to go and deal with things as diverse as dragons, plagues, royal marriages, tournaments and a lot more besides.

To match these kinds of stories, we thought the look of game needed to be different too. A Medieval game can't look like modern day where everything is so brightly lit, where objects have a lot of right angles because they're made by machine. Look around this castle – everything has a unique feel due to being made by hand, the whole atmosphere and everything feels different because of it. To make a world feel medieval like this, we needed a different art style, lighting and architecture – basically a whole new way to make the world. We

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really wanted to ensure that The Sims, skin and clothes look different too – clothes are a great example, velvet looks more like velvet and leather looks as though it has more texture. To sum it up, Medieval is the heart of The Sims – the people, customisation and humour, but in a new place where you can tell a whole new story.

Once we'd had these key ideas, we tried to make it look as amazing as we possibly could. Then we added things to change the way The Sims can be played, like quests, which are certainly a new addition to The Sims formula. Having a Hero system adds to this too – allowing your favourite heroic Sims to level up and grow with your game. As you play a hero and keep up with their responsibilities, they get more skilled, better at their jobs and more powerful and more abilities as they work through the game. Then we added kingdom management – as you play the game, you can choose what your kingdom wants to do, how to build it, what's your ambition, what do you want to achieve.

By adding heroes, quest and kingdoms we've expanded and changed the way the Sims can be played, but kept the heart of The Sims.

*(Aron laughs)* It's a very long answer, it's complex to make a game this big!

**SG – Some Simmers would love to know about Story Progression – how does your game move on? In my game time just now I saw a physician give someone a remedy, and in the end she was told she was pregnant. Would she then go off to have a child?**

**AC –** How about that – something I haven't seen! Story progression in The Sims Medieval happens in several different ways.

When you first hop into the game you'll select an ambition for your kingdom. It's not important straight away, but later into the game it becomes very important. Say your ambition is to control all the territories on the map – you'll have to decide and play out the story of how your kingdom achieves that goal. Warfare? Trade? Diplomacy, science, religion...there's all the different stories of how you'll get there. Then there are the stories of your Sims – do they get married; are they nice, nasty, or silly people? Then the quests – what are you completing, how will those quests develop and change paths depending on what you choose? There's a whole bunch of twists in the story from how you do your quests – it's a big story you're living through, with lots

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of little small stories. Say I have to make five swords in a quest, but my swords keep breaking. I then have to go find better materials and train my skills; all while meeting people along the way. My kingdom's knight may then use one of my faulty swords in an important fight in the service of the king, who's trying to negotiate a treaty. So, these little stories all contribute to make up the bigger stories of your kingdom.

Families work very differently because of the kind of game The Sims Medieval is – you do have a baby, they can grow up to be a pre-teen but not full adults. We want to make sure that you create all the heroes in the game. There are families though – who can have babies, get married, divorced, affairs, do all the things you're familiar with in The Sims 3 but generational gameplay is different.

### **SG – So Sims don't die?**

**AC** – Oh they do die! Not of old age necessarily, but then again not many people in the medieval times got to die of old age! A king can die of many things though...

### **SG – In The Sims Medieval, you can influence and annex other kingdoms, but can you actually visit them?**

**AC** – Not directly – although you'll see many characters from various places come to your land. Knights, merchants, leaders, people who are key in quests such as marrying between countries. You can also send your characters like your merchant off to trade with them for exotic goods, your Spy to gather information which will help your diplomacy and so on. It's not in the spirit of a strategy game where you'll invade, with armies and see their kingdom burning – what you will hear about though is their kingdom's actions and the effects on your kingdom. You'll see their citizens passing through, their personalities, and goods from them you can't get anywhere else. Also more subtle influences; like their fashion styles and clothing, the influence of their kingdom in yours depending on where you're at in the game. There are some places inspired by the Middle East and Asia – if you see new clothing and foreign people; you'll know they're from a far off land.

### **SG – Say you take over another kingdom, and that kingdom's citizens then come to visit – will they be aggressive with you?**

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If they're unhappy with you they can be! In the game you'll see muggings, and even people attacking each other! Sometimes that's because someone from a neighbouring kingdom came into yours and are up to no good. If you have a higher security rating that'll happen less, so you can protect against it. Diseases can also come in from foreign shores – like the plague from another kingdom – if you have a good health rating and good physicians, that'll help guard against that. So if your people are always getting mugged, you want to invest in a knight, spy and wizard to push up your security. If people are ill, you need to sort your priest and physician out to look after your people that way. So you'll have to respond depending on what's going on in your kingdom and decide how you want to invest your time and effort because of what's happening. So yeah, you'll definitely see good and bad things happening depending on your relationships with other kingdoms.

**SG – It's almost like a mix between a role-playing game and a real-time strategy game in that regard?**

**AC –** There are absolutely elements of those – questing for example. However, they're all put in configured context to suit the game that is The Sims. At the end of the day it's all about telling stories – the RPG features are there, the strategy stuff is quite light – you're not amassing an army and sending it across a border for example. However, you can be at war with a kingdom, that'll affect the story of your own kingdom, which is the important part. All the features in the game serve the purpose of story. Swordplay, magic, physician, crafting – it all comes down to helping you tell your stories in the way you want to.

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**SG – Of all the times in history and civilisations, how did you come to choosing Medieval?**

**AC –** It actually came from a few different places, and all came together at the right time. Ever since The Sims 1 and The Sims 2, the development team always had this idea – “What would happen if The Sims went back in time?” What would they do, how would they react, what kind of game would it be?

With the medieval age, as we're familiar with characters and all the rich history, myth and

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legend, it's easy for your imagination to quickly go there and start playing that game. It's all thanks to those influences we talked about before – Shakespeare, Tolkien, legends of King Arthur and so on – medieval times bring a strong idea to people of what life was like then, and that lends well to fun gameplay. With The Sims Medieval, and images of Kings, Queens, Knights, and Peasants – you could play the game almost immediately in your head. For something like The Sims in Ancient Greece? Ok, you'd know you'd have a lot of Sims in togas, but would your mind as easily leap to how to play the game after that? Senate? It's similar for Ancient Rome, the old Wild West and a bunch of other things.

After focussing on Medieval, we asked a lot of questions and did a bunch of research. In terms of time periods, The Sims Community we're already making a lot of medieval era stuff in both The Sims 2 and The Sims 3 – especially castles! As we looked into it more, we discovered that it was actually pretty tough to do this. The Sims toolset lent itself really well to modern times, as The Sims was a modern game. However, making something look older with lots of sides, detail and to look handcrafted was hard. In buildings, curved roofs and big ceilings could be quite hard to produce in The Sims 3. The Sims Medieval was built to cope with these kind of things, both for the creative community and for the atmosphere of the game. We talked to a lot of fans and gamers to check that we were on the mark with this, and it turned out that we were pretty close. Other eras were looked at and asked about, but Medieval was by far the most popular.

**SG – Will there be expansion packs, like for the Sims 3?**

**AC –** Yes – there'll be content this year that we think people are going to like!

**SG – So will that be “Stuff” or new gameplay features?**

**AC –** Both! Sadly I can't announce anything just yet, but our content will look different than the content for The Sims 3 – The Sims 3 is a different kind of game. So, being as general about it as possible..we have a quest system, so there may well be new quests. There's kingdom building, so we'll add options around that. Our Sims progress and live their lives a little differently, so there'll be gameplay around that. We'll be adding things The Sims Medieval does well, and that “only” The Sims Medieval does. There'll be combo of things people love – clothes, hair, decor, Stuff – but also to the new things The Sims Medieval is doing that other Sims games don't do. Stay tuned – lots more to talk about with the content!

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## **SG – Will The Sims Medieval be patched like The Sims 3?**

**AC** – Sure there'll be patches – especially with a game as big and complex as this, we always want to keep making the game better and respond to what people want. It's one thing to do QA inside of EA and have a hundred or more testers working on it – once you give it to millions of people, even more stuff comes up – so you always want to add things and improve things, for sure.

## **SG – Is Medieval a lot more structured than the Sims 3?**

**AC** – Yeah, I'd say there's more structure – the quests lend themselves to beginning, middle and ends of stories. Clear challenges, rewards, with a lot more writing and story! People seem to like that. A lot like a lifetime ambition in The Sims 3, it's not a written quest but you do have an ambition for your kingdom too.

Depending on what kind of Sims 3 player you are, you could become rich and get the best houses and items, achieve your lifetime ambitions, make relationships, or even break into homes or succeed in careers. People like to alternate and mix up what they do, and there's definitely the ability to do this in The Sims Medieval. There's still a lot of free gameplay, so you can definitely run around and do whatever you want to.

I think we'll see people doing a bit of both, choosing something like "I'm not going to do a quest right now; I want to get this character married". Or if say, your wizard has a brand new spell, you're totally free to go and test it out – who wouldn't want to test Inferno to try setting people on fire? You want to try out all the new effects and stuff in the game, so there's freedom to do that for sure.

## **SG – Will this ever be on consoles?**

**AC** – There's no plans for a console game right now, but people keep asking! That's great, and we are listening.

**SG – Do you think this game is for new players particularly, or for existing Simmers?AC**

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Both! People who love the Sims are very interested and excited in seeing the Sims doing something new that they've never seen the Sims do before, that they weren't expecting a Sim could ever do – that's very exciting for them. We really want people who love The Sims to see it as being cool and different. For new players, it gives a door to people who'd never played The Sims or wouldn't normally play the Sims to discover the world. When you say there's swordplay, a magic system, kings, queens, castles, conflicts and quests, you're getting people who like those kinds of games thinking "that's a Sims game I'd play!" It's certainly not built to compete with hardcore RPGS, but if you like RPGS and especially the softer parts of that gameplay; the stories, interactions, characters, then it's a game you'll find really compelling. So the goal of The Sims Medieval is to create something Sims fans will love, but hopefully also help people to discover The Sims who never would have done before.

**SG – I really like the idea of The Sims Medieval – like world adventurers you go through a tomb and you get through the story of the tomb. Combination of all the things I like! Some people though think Sims is all about total free will, more of a total sandbox. Is this a move away from total freedom?**

**AC** – We still have plenty of sandbox play. Even The Sims 3 has some directional play for those who want it – lifetime ambitions, wishes and needs. The Sims Medieval starts with the tutorial which is somewhat structured, just to help those who aren't familiar with both old and new Sims gameplay. After that it really branches out – with many choices to make, paths to go down \*and\* the space to simply play your people's lives. If you want to totally ignore the quest system, you can! When people hear the mention of a Quest System, they tend to think of a more traditional RPG – "I have to do one quest, then another, follow a path then the game's over". The Sims Medieval isn't like that – there is a quest system but it's branching, giving you the choice of approach you want to take and the characters you want to use, or the choice to simply ignore it if you want to.

Rest easy – we haven't abandoned sandbox play at all! It's still there, you'll have many, many choices to make and a big world to explore in The Sims Medieval.

**SG – You must have played the game a lot now! What are your favourite bits of The Sims Medieval?**

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**AC** – Oh boy – the magic system, you feel very powerful in a way you don't in other Sims games. Inferno as one of the Wizard's spells is particularly cool – you've never been able to blow someone up quite this way in a Sims game before. It's kind of fun and satisfying! The Bard character as well is pretty cool, I like the way they compose music, perform, and brings Sims together as they do so to do all sorts of interesting things. I like the Sims, but love Medieval. Personally, this is the one I'd play between the two.

**SG** – Thanks very much!