

# THE MAKING OF

# GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR 2

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**DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS**  
**PRO SKI SIMULATOR**  
 SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS  
 YEAR: 1987  
**PRO BMX SIMULATOR**  
 SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS  
 YEAR: 1988  
**JET BIKE SIMULATOR (PICTURED)**  
 SYSTEM: AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS  
 YEAR: 1988

The Oliver twins' sequel to Grand Prix Simulator was their final contribution to the popular Codemasters simulator series. Philip Oliver explains how regrets over their original game inspired its much-improved sequel  
**WORDS BY RORY MILNE**



[Amstrad CPC] Before starting Grand Prix Simulator 2, players are asked who they want to drive as.

## IN THE KNOW

**PUBLISHER:**  
 CODEMASTERS  
**DEVELOPER:**  
 PHILIP AND ANDREW OLIVER  
**RELEASED:**  
 1989  
**PLATFORM:**  
 AMSTRAD CPC, VARIOUS  
**GENRE:**  
 RACING



[Amstrad CPC] Grand Prix Simulator 2's pit stops show you the time you're carrying over to the next race.

Like many of the Oliver twins' collaborations with Codemasters, Grand Prix Simulator was a huge success. However, aspects of their top-down Amstrad racer bothered the brothers, and so they decided to make a follow-up. "The idea behind doing Grand Prix Simulator 2 was so that we could do the Spectrum version ourselves," Philip Oliver remembers, "but Grand Prix Simulator also had its issues on the Amstrad, and we had always wished it could have been a bit better. We had also just done Jet Bike Simulator, which was already the right resolution for the Spectrum and had a nice clean codebase, so it wouldn't take too much to change its graphics."

Besides being a straightforward project, additional motivation to produce a sequel came when the Oliver twins went on a day out arranged by their publisher. "Because Codemasters sponsored Johnny Dumfries, we went to Silverstone and Brands Hatch," Philip notes. "He was a Formula Two driver rather than Formula One, but it did mean that we took an interest in Grand Prix. Not that an 8-bit computer could reflect it that much, but Grand Prix did feel a little bit closer to us than it had first time around."

Inspired by the experience, the brothers used the Amstrad's high-resolution mode to give their follow-up much more realistic-looking cars than its predecessor. "The cars were pretty nicely drawn," Philip beams. "They really did look like Formula One cars, whereas in Grand Prix Simulator the cars were like matchboxes!"

Further improvements on Grand Prix Simulator followed, as the twins gave their sequel more intuitive controls and less frustrating collisions. "Every course started you pointing up or right, which meant that it was more playable," Philip points out, "because with rotating controls we found that if you started going down it felt back to front. Also, when the cars collided the game could deal with it



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**PHILIP OLIVER**



[Amstrad CPC] Unlike its predecessor, you rarely get snagged on barriers in Grand Prix Simulator 2.



Grand Prix Simulator 2 was the final simulator that the Oliver twins designed for Codemasters.



[Amstrad CPC] Collisions with other drivers in Grand Prix Simulator 2 stop you dead, you don't bounce off.

better, because the computer cars replayed their data slower when there was a collision. That was a trick we got from BMX Simulator."

Another enhancement gave the Oliver twins' sequel more depth, but it was also a concession to realism that its predecessor had overlooked. "With real racing cars, you did not want to crash them at all, because they were expensive!" Philip laughs. "So we thought that a damage meter was another feature that we wanted to introduce. In the first one, it didn't matter how much you crashed, but if you crashed your vehicle in the second game you would slow down a bit. Although it was subtle, so we put a graphic indicator on the screen that showed your damage points."

As well as motivating prospective players of their second Grand Prix game to avoid crashing their cars, the twins also rewarded them for consistently fast race times. "It just made sense to give players a benefit if they did really well," Philip says, "and if they only just scraped through, well then they were already at a disadvantage on the next course. In real Grand

Prix racing, the qualifiers decided what order the cars went in, so it did reflect on that as well."

Given its improvements over its predecessor, the Oliver twins expected GPS2 to get good reviews, but oddly, it was hardly reviewed at all. "Some more reviews would've helped, because the game would have reviewed well," Philip sighs. "Maybe Codemasters forgot to send review copies out, although we'd often drive them to the reviewers ourselves. We would take them out to lunch, load the game up, show it to them, talk about it, and then we got a nice review. Maybe Codemasters thought we were doing it, and we thought that Codemasters was doing it."

Decades later, Philip feels that Grand Prix Simulator 2 outdid not only the original game but also every other 8-bit Oliver twins racing sim, and wishes that the sequel's sales numbers had reflected this. "One of the reasons for creating Grand Prix Simulator 2 was that we had some regrets about the original, so it was really trying to fix all of those things," Philip reviews. "The only regret is that we wish it had sold a little better, but I think we got everything out of it that we could have, and it's probably the best out of all of our 8-bit racing games." \*

## CONVERSION CAPERS

HOW THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS LINE UP ON THE STARTING GRID

### AMSTRAD CPC

Although not quite as vibrant as its 16-colour predecessor, the CPC Grand Prix Simulator 2 exploits the higher resolution of the system's four-colour mode to render far more detailed cars. The Amstrad sequel also introduces damage meters, racing against countdowns, banking time for subsequent courses and three-player races.



### ZX SPECTRUM

The Oliver twins ported their CPC original to the Spectrum, so the two versions play identically. There's also nothing between their music and sound effects when you play the Spectrum version on a 128K model. The Sinclair port differs visually, however, in that its cars are all yellow and its tracks are more colourful.



### C64

The handling of the C64 GPS2's cars is a little more sensitive than its counterparts, but that's no bad thing. Otherwise its gameplay matches the other versions. It does sound different, though. More specifically, it has alternate tunes, its cars' engines are strangely musical and their wheels don't screech around corners.



[Amstrad CPC] If your car takes too much damage it's game over.