

'The Sims' are back -- with more personality

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File photo of Will Wright, creator of computer game hits such as SimCity and The Sims. US videogame giant Electronic Arts launches this week episode three in the life of multi-billion-dollar franchise "The Sims", this time adding a psychological dimension to the computer game.

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Created by computer genius Will Wright, who left EA after letting people play god with his latest brainchild "Spore", "The Sims" video games allow fans to play at real life affairs such as dating, working and raising children.

"The Sims 3", going on sale in the United States on June 2, and June 4 and 5 in Europe, takes the [computer game](#) a step further, notably by allowing gamers to give avatars a personality trait that will determine the

entirety of their virtual existence.

"The most important thing in this episode is the trait system," said associate producer Mary-Jane Chun.

"You pick up five traits at the beginning and it will really impact the way your Sims will react, especially how well he will get on with other Sims."

Among the 60-odd personality traits available that will stay with characters for the rest of their lives are cowardice, bravery, meanness or artistic talent, as well as favourite colours and foods and music genres.

"Your Sim may have very different goals depending on his personality. If you create a character that has the same personality as Barack Obama, becoming the leader of the free world may be his goal," said Melanie Lam, another associate producer.

Another new feature is neighbourhood exploration, allowing Sims to explore the world outside their homes, interacting increasingly with their neighbours and moving about the town to shop or stop in at the library.

"Having a lively city took us a lot of time," said Lam. "Every character has his own [artificial intelligence](#). A Sim can marry or have children."

"It's an open world that evolves constantly and relationships are really important."

Like reality, the world of the Sims comes with social networks evocative of Facebook, [Youtube](#) and Dailymotion.

"In The Sims 3, all players can have their own Internet page. If someone creates an original object on the page another player can take it and incorporate it for free into their own game on condition the two are

friends," said Charlotte Michel of EA Play, the French editor of the video game.

The game also comes with a movie-making tool, enabling players to create and share movies on the game's exchange. "It is very intuitive and accessible to anyone," Michel said.

EA announced last month that Wright was quitting the company, the latest bad news for the former industry leader which at the time had reported a net loss for eight quarters in a row.

EA, which has lost its spot as the world's top videogame maker to Activision Blizzard, also recently announced plans to cut 11 percent of its workforce, or 1,100 jobs, and close 12 facilities.

But PC Gamer last year gave "The Sims 3" a high approval rating.

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