

## 10 reasons why YOU should play Live For Speed

After a recent bout of heated posting on the Live for speed community forums, I decided I would write a short piece about Live for speed (LFS).

I first had a bit of a mental block on what to write, but I notice that there is quite a big divide in the sim racing community, those that use LFS, and those that don't, both sides on the fence are quite vehement in their reasoning why they do or don't use it, and this can make it quite difficult for new sim users to get their heads around LFS.

I am going to attempt, using positivity as much as possible, to explain just why YOU, the non-LFS user, should use LFS, of course, with me being as positive as possible about the sim it means I am not going to dwell on LFS's problems, issues or "fall-downs", this doesn't mean for one second I think it doesn't have any, it does, but I am just going to focus on why you SHOULD use it, rather than why you SHOULDN'T.

Ok, what qualifies me to make such a judgment on a sim?, why should you listen to me?, well, of course you don't have too, I have no "qualifications" per say, but, like the vast majority of the sim racing community, I enjoy, VERY much, sim racing, I have no loyalty to any particular sim if something came out tomorrow that "scratched my sim racing itch" better than LFS does, then I would use it in a heart beat.

I have been simming for well over 20 years, well, back in the early 80's it was probably as far from a "sim" as you could get, and in those years I have always yearned for the most realistic representation of racing I could find, over the years I have probably brought, played, installed every race sim known to mankind, and at this moment in time nothing has come as close as LFS has, so with that out of the way, lets get on with the 10 reasons.

### 1) The physics engine.

Lets get the big guns out of the way first, I would hazard a guess that a big percentage of LFS users would state it's physics engine is the sim's USP (unique selling point), and they would probably be right.

As we all know, a sim is only as good as it's physics engine, and LFS's is, certainly in my opinion, the best currently available.

I don't pretend to know the ins and outs of physics engines at grass roots level, but if something feels right, it normally is.

I have driven plenty of cars in real life, RWD, FWD, 4WD, turbo'd, on all manner of surfaces, roads and tracks, and anyone who compares real life driving to sim driving knows that a huge thing missing from sim racing in the "seat of your pants" feel, the way your ass "feels" what the car is doing.

LFS manages to convey this feeling VERY well, while sliding a RWD car around in LFS you can feel the rear tyres scrabble for grip, you can feel when they are gripping, and when they are not, it just all feels very right.

Also, LFS's physics engine has arguably the best tyre model available, not only in the way it performs "in-sim", but also visually, you only need to watch the slo-mo videos that are available in the movies section of the LFS forum to see the tyre physics in action.

All this isn't to say there aren't any problems with the physics engine in LFS, there are, but it is a VERY solid and very realistic engine that is worth the entry price alone.

## 2) Fictional cars/tracks = realism

And here we are, at one of the biggest bugbears that the non-LFS community level at LFS for being a big reason not to use LFS, fictional cars and tracks.

Well, lets put a positive spin on this "problem" shall we?, personally I don't think it is a "problem" at all, so the cars and tracks can't be found in real life, so what?, what difference does it actually make to the sim experience?, in this users opinion NONE.

There seems to be a stigma in the sim racing community that everything has to be uber-realistic, that having real world cars and tracks can help make this uber-realism, I beg to differ, by taking the unique stance of having fictional cars and tracks, the LFS developers are not constrained to matching there chosen simulated steeds or tracks, they are free to let the physics engine do it's stuff with there physics without having to fudge or massage the figures to match the real life car they are simulating, in this respect I would say that LFS has the potential to give a more realistic representation of racing than a realistic simulator which has had to having its "numbers" fudged to matched a particular car.

So does it really matter that you aren't driving a 911?, does it really matter that you aren't driving on Brands Hatch?, from the view of weather it makes the simulation of racing better, no, LFS still simulates racing to a greater degree of accuracy and feeling than any of the sims with real cars or tracks, of course we would all like to see our favorite car or track simulated in LFS, and at some point that may happen, but for now the lack of this doesn't make LFS any less of a sim, in my opinion, it could quite possibly be better for it.

## 3) The community

Another potential big bugbear of non-LFS users, the online community, at first sight, the LFS community can seem very unappealing, they are a very close knit bunch, quite introverted and very protective over LFS, quite why this is a mystery and this issue can sometimes make it hard for newcomers to gel with the community, on the flip side of this is the positive of the LFS community.

It is full of VERY helpful, knowledgeable and resourceful people, you just need to have a thick skin, and scratch the surface a little to get past the guard dogs.

There are a number of notable people in the LFs community that create things for the sim, and many of these people are a credit to the community, just as long as you understand the way some of the community work and give those people or posts a wide berth, then it can be a very nice place to be.

## 4) The graphics

Of course graphics are very important in a simulated world, they have a job to do in suspending our belief that the world we are driving in is as real as possible.

Whilst the graphics in the LFS world aren't as realistic and "gritty" as some other sims, they do a very good job of representing a simulated racing environment.

If you have the computing power, you can push the detail up to maximum then they look very nice indeed, combine this with some of the freely available hi-res texture mods that are posted on the LFS forum and you have a pretty tasty looking sim.

Of course improvements could be made, but as it stands LFS it's quite as pretty as its latest competitors, but they can't offer the frame rates that LFS can, LFS is a great combination of good looks and good performance.

#### 5) The low system requirements

LFS is very light on system requirements you don't need the latest and greatest hardware to run it, sure it helps, you can up the details and up lots of AA and AF, but it is in no way necessary to get LFS to run.

By tweaking the settings you could get LFS to run on all but the very old systems out there, the way it runs so well is testament to how well the sim has been programmed. I use a 3 year old system, it was cutting edge 3 years ago, but its pretty long in the tooth nowadays, but even so, I can run LFS at full details, with 4x AA and 8x AF and still have 60 fps on a full starting grid, try saying that about the newer sims.

#### 6) The development team

One of the great things about LFS is the closeness the development team have to the purchasing public, that and the fact that this is essentially a 3 man team creating a top notch sim is testament to the quality of the sim.

In this day and age, sims this good are normally created by big teams of people, inside of faceless companies, which, more often than not, just think about profit, this means that a certain sim is made, pushed out of the door, and then generally forgotten about so they can work on "the next best thing" and the cycle continues.

LFS isn't like that, sure it makes the developers money, but its more than that, it's a labour of love, and you can feel it in the sim, the support, and the continued development of the sim, I believe LFS is unique in this and is a huge plus.

#### 7) Accessibility / complexity

Combining accessibility with complexity is always a hard task, you want a sim to be accessible as possible so it isn't too daunting for new users to use, but with enough complex options to keep seasoned users happy.

I think LFS achieves this quite well, all the major functions can be accessed with a few button presses, and it is very simple to get online, or start hotlapping, normally only a couple of button presses away, but scratch the surface and you will find a whole host of other options that will keep even the most jaded LFS user busy.

You can setup a car to the nth degree, maybe too much on some cars, you can change the UI to suit your personal preference, you can adjust the in-car camera too a huge degree

too, the amount of things you can change to suit yourself is amazing, whilst still keeping everything accessible for new users.

#### 8) Statistics

LFSWorld, what a great tool, it will provide even the most dedicated "stato" with as many statistics as you want, it records and remembers EVERY race ever raced online, EVERY lap, EVERY lapttime for EVERY licensed user, heck I can even go as far back to 2003 and see what my race results were, it is an amazing addition to a great sim. Also what makes LFSWorld so good, is just how user friendly it is, it is so very, very easy to use, sure other sims have similar features, but personally, LFSWorld is the only one I have found that combines usability with functionality.

#### 9) Online

It is widely known that the offline side of LFS is rather lacking, it mainly consists of either hotlapping alone, or running against the (not finished) AI, thankfully then we have a very streamlined and efficient online system.

LFS is basically an online only sim, and because of this the online mode has been made as smooth as possible to get into, within a few clicks on the interface you will be presented by a list of populated servers which you can join and the joining process is smooth and painless.

LFS performs very well online, and you can get away with playing on a very lowly connection, some people still use dial-up and still get a relatively lag free experience, but in general the online portion of the sim is very good indeed.

#### 10) The "Alpha" tag

Another big stigma that stops people using LFS, the ubiquitous "Alpha" tag, but I think this is a positive, rather than a negative, why?, I'll tell you.

Normally in the computer world, Alpha is bad, Alpha means unstable, Alpha means it might mess your computer up, well, Alpha in LFS world doesn't mean any of that, it just means it's not finished (in the developers eyes), and with a sim as polished as LFS "alpha" currently is, and with the continual development of the sim with small test patches and the larger "main" patches, I can only see this as a plus, LFS is GREAT as it is, and in the future it is only going to get bigger and better, and in my opinion, this is a big plus.

Don't let the Alpha tag fool you, this is a complete sim, even in it's current "unfinished" state, it could quite easily be sold as a V1.0 release, it is way more complete and stable than many of the finished sims about.

Well, there you have it, 10 reasons why you should play LFS, I am sure there are a stack more reasons why you should use it, but anyone of the 10 I have listed should make you at least give it a good try.

Obviously LFS isn't without it's problems, I want to be clear on this fact, it is in no way the perfect sim, there are issues, but I wanted to try a concentrate on reasons why you should be playing, rather than be negative and concentrate on reasons why you shouldn't play, I hope that my point is understandable, and my reasoning for not concentrating on the negative points of LFS is apparent and clear.

As I said at the beginning, I am in no way "loyal" to LFS, if there was something I believe to be better, I would use it, no hesitation, but I think that by concentrating on the positive aspects of LFS is may give some people the push to try it out.

Give it an extended play test, the demo is of course free, if you still don't like it, nothing lost, but you may just love it, heck you could even love it more than I do!.