

• While *IL-2* still looks pretty fabulous by today's standards, the anthology lets you optionally tweak the configuration file for improved cloud and water-surface effects.



# IL-2 STURMOVIK: 1946

All of Oleg Maddox's Sturm-o-vik-in-a-box

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: 1C: Maddox Games/RRG Studios GENRE: Flight Simulation AVAILABILITY: Retail, E-tail ([www.direct2drive.com](http://www.direct2drive.com)) ESRB RATING: Teen  
 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 1GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 1.1GB hard drive space (flight stick recommended) MULTIPLAYER: 2-128 players VERSION REVIEWED: Gold Master

## REVIEW



### Call it a videogame if you dare:

Oleg Maddox's *IL-2* series may be the most scrupulous survey of World War II planes in the history of the genre. If it's aeronautical fidelity you're after, *IL-2*'s the armchair aviator's Cadillac. Rip one of these puppies open and you can almost smell the burnt varnish off a hobbled German Focke-Wulf or catch the acrid tang of cordite bleeding through the dash of a bullet-spent P-51 Mustang. Think of *1946* as the mother lode. It wrestles everything from the original *IL-2 Sturmovik* through 2004's *Pacific Fighters* and 2006's *Pe-2* into one installation on a single DVD, then adds two brand-new expansions...all for an obscenely bargain-basement price of \$30.

### HYPOTHETICAL RUMBLE

The *1946* expansion asks: "What if the Allies botched Normandy, and the Soviets and Germans fought on?" Answer: a proper successor to LucasArts' 1990 game *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*. With *1946*, you basically get jets—and not just those that actually flew trivial endgame sorties. In addition to your German Me-262s, Arado Ar-234s (the world's first jet bomber), and He-162s, or Russian MiG-9s, MiG-13s, and Yak-15s, developer RRG pulled a few exotic "wonder weapons" off the table. Take the Heinkel Lerche II, a vertical takeoff and landing fighter/interceptor that looks like a finned rocket stuck through a giant fan. Or try the Horten Ho-IX, a batwing jet-glider that eerily resembles the U.S. B-2 stealth bomber and could tag speeds just shy of Mach 1. Oh yeah, ever wanted to strap wire-guided X-4 rockets on a 596-mph German Ta-183? Here's your chance.

The new campaigns force you to slog through a few too many traditional planes before graduating to the palm-rubbing speed demons, but

the missions extrapolate from history logically and only stutter a bit in the Soviet VVS 46 campaign with a few noncombat A-to-Z yawners. Jets aren't prop planes, and turn-turn-turn aces will have to adjust to *1946*'s aerial jousting, but having these fascinating planes shoehorned in with 1C's trademark photo-real finishes cinches *1946*'s price, anthology or no.

### OPERATION "AUGUST STORM"

*Sturmoviks Over Manchuria*, the other debut add-in, trots out the 1945 Russian IL-10, a bomb-toting, 2,000-horsepower beast of a ground-puncher that topped out 87 mph faster than the original IL-2 warhorse. After assisting in the final assault on Berlin—running recon dogfights and bombing artillery dugouts—you'll slingshot east to test this powerful Soviet hybrid against Japan's best in a harrowing campaign over northern China.

You also get a host of new Japanese planes like the speedy short-range Mitsubishi J2M5 "Raiden," four Nakajima Ki-series variants, and the Kawanishi N1K2-J "George" fighter-bomber with its automatic force-triggered flaps. The Japanese campaign leads off battling Hellcats over Iwo Jima and culminates in hair-raising defense runs scuppering U.S. B-29 raids over Japan.

*1946* might as well be the holy grail of WWII flight sims, a platinum anthology of everything good about no-frills airborne scrimmaging. The new material's a deal, whether you own the earlier games or not. And if you don't, 30 bucks nets you something that—six years on—still outclasses everything else. **—Matt Peckham**



• Words can't describe the Heinkel Lerche II, but it's certainly wild pitching a couple squadrons of these VTOLs bristling with X-4s at just about anything.

### VERDICT

• The entire *IL-2* saga on one DVD (plus two brand-new expansions)—dirt cheap.

• No cons at all.

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