Worms 3D

Posted by Pat Miller on 06/22 at 12:16 PM
•Reviews •Games •Comments •Tell-a-Friend

Genre: Turn-Based Strategy

Format: CD

Developer: Team 17

Mac Publisher: Feral Interactive

Minimum System Requirements: 600MHz G3, Mac OS X v10.2, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D graphics acceleration, 1.3GB free hard disk space

Review Computer: 1GHz Powerbook G4 12" 768MB RAM, 32MB GeForce FX Go 5200, and Mac OS X v10.3.3
Network Feature: Yes

3D Support: Required

Price: $45.00

ESRB Rating: T for Teen

Availability: Now

Official Website: www.worms3d.com

Worms is...

Worms is....uh, is...

Worms just *is*.

There is no truly suitable introduction to a review for Worms 3D. Nothing that could do it justice, anyway. Certainly nothing that wouldn't come off as pithy and generic; anecdotes from previous Worms experiences would belittle Worms 3D, and to treat it like any other game would be like reviewing *A Beautiful Mind* in a special-effects industry mag. Rather, the only thing I can come up with is an apology: Sorry, dear Reader, for subjecting you to a review of Worms 3D with a woefully inadequate introduction. At least I'm honest.

Worms 3D is a game in the most basic sense of the word. Despite the fancy 3D graphics and multimedia mamma-jamma, it's got more in common with Chess than it does with Elite Force 2. For those of you unfamiliar with the original Worms, the premise is simple; you must lead a squad of worms over other unfriendly worm squads. The gameplay itself is borrowed from classics like Dome Wars, Artillery, heck, even that old IBM PC game with the two King Kongs throwing bananas at each other on a city's skyline. Not only must you defeat your enemy worms, you must do so by aiming all sorts of precision artillery carefully, taking into account wind, positioning, fuse timing and all sorts of other variables.

Frankly, I miss this kind of game. Be forewarned; you may be drawn to Worms 3D by its cartoony graphics, by the cute cinematics, by the wacky weapons. You might be compelled by the various challenges and single player missions and the map-generating engine. You won't, however, play the game for any other reason than because you *want to play the game*. At the core of Worms 3D lies a venerable game paradigm that forces successful worm commanders to think very strategically, economically, even *mechanically* about how to win the game—like Chess—but takes advantage of the medium of the computer game to add an element of timing and coordination to deepen the game in ways that the medium of a board game cannot.

The Worms 3D experience begins with learning how to execute the moves needed to play the game. A series of tutorial levels are included to pick up the basics, like different kinds of jumps, familiarization with terrain, tools, weapons, and game engine functions. It's like boot camp for leading worms into battle. From a competitive viewpoint, this is very often where the game is won or lost; anyone can be taught how to win a game on paper via basic cost-benefit analyses, but the better one is able to execute the moves of the game, the more options that player will have. In this respect, Worms 3D presents an absolutely magnificent tutorial; it's meant to teach you how to play the game so you can win, but it also provides you with extra training missions like a shooting range that just lets you test and practice with different weapons. Team 17 did a fantastic job developing their tutorial like the game's supposed to be *played*. The flip side of all this, though, is that anyone willing to invest time in Worms 3D would do well to spend some sufficient time getting the basic execution down.

Once you've graduated from the tutorial mode, you should be well-versed in the basic Worms 3D gameplay. Basically, you're given a level (either randomly generated, selected from an unlocked campaign mission, or generated with certain defined parameters (you get control over how much land you want exposed, the degree of height difference throughout the map, water levels, and other stuff like that) and all the worms are scattered around the map. One worm starts out the game with its turn; it's given usually around 10 seconds (this is also definable by the user) to plan its turn, then around 45 seconds to execute its turn. During its turn, it can walk and jump wherever it pleases, gather items that happen to be lying around, use items to

move them around, and, of course, wreak havoc with whatever weapons it may be armed. Team 17 knew a good thing when they saw it in the original Worms, it seems, because they opted to preserve the gameplay from Worms and just add more to it.

Incidentally, fans of the original 2D Worms titles will most likely appreciate Worms 3D; the gameplay survived the transition admirably. Both central game elements like deformable terrain, jump momentum, mobility tools like the ninja rope, weapon and wind physics, and all the little things, like the little tombstones dead worms leave behind, team flags, wacky worm voices and unusual map elements feel like the original, except a little bit newer. However, this lends itself to some rather bizarre and unforgiving idiosyncrasies that newbies to the Worms series will find inconvenient—chief among these is the engine quirk that bounces you backwards when you don't quite make a jump, which can be absolutely miserable when stuck on precarious ledges. However, after a few hours, most gamers should be able to get the hang of it.

The weapons are clearly the outstanding highlight of any Worms title; as usual, they range from the normal (bazooka, grenade, dynamite, shotgun, uzi, etc.; the enhanced petrol bomb, cluster bomb, homing missile, gas grenade, and baseball bat) to the exotic (as fearsome as a worm packing an uzi might sound, a worm packing a banana bomb, an air strike, an old lady or a sheep is *much* more dangerous). Each weapon has its own instructions; you'll have to use the overhead camera mode to call in an air strike, but the first-person camera is ideal for most of the standard projectile weapons. Some weapons explode on impact, others allow you to set a fuse, still others, like the sheep, just explode when you want them to. Clearly, this allows for some impressive tactical depth; of course air strikes can clear out a whole squad of worms, but the shotgun lets you fire twice during one turn (which can be equally devastating if placed correctly) while the uzi lets you spray as much as you can through one clip. Likewise, as sexy as high-explosive dynamite might be, a fire punch or baseball bat might be more efficient if it can knock your target into the water (and thus out of the fight; worms drown easily, I guess).

Worms 3D is a multiplayer game, first and foremost; however, for those who lack the time, inclination, or simple ability to find a multiplayer game, Worms 3D includes several single player options. The main attraction of the single player game is the campaign mode, which offers varied missions based around objectives that mix it up a little bit from standard Worms gameplay. These are mixed bags; some of these genuinely add to the experience, some of them, like a certain graveyard mission, don't test your skill so much as your patience. Don't expect a plot; these levels are included to play for the sake of playing the game. If that doesn't quite do it for you, you can also unlock extra levels while playing through the campaign mode that present extra challenges, like different shotgun ranges, for example, that maintain a scoreboard so you can compete against

your friends or just try and top your personal records. Finally, you can play multiplayer-style standard Worms games against computer opponents to hone your skills for the real battlefield.

The multiplayer, of course, is where all the action is. Multiplayer works the same way as custom games against the computer; all the same options—ranging from maps, worm placement, health, weapons, etc.—are still available. Since Worms 3D, like most games, is at its best with human opponents (it's not like the main appeal is the compelling plot), Team 17 designed it with several connectivity options to ensure you won't be left behind. LAN support is included for those of you lucky enough to have easy access to a LAN and some competition; Internet play is offered via GameRanger, meaning you won't be able to play against PC Worms. However, thanks to the turn-based nature of Worms 3D, you can play a multiplayer game with only one computer via the Hot Seat game option. In a Hot Seat game, you switch off with a friend (or enemy, as the case may be) taking turns controlling your respective teams using the same computer, making it an easy hit if you've got friends over to play with but don't have an extra computer lying around. Another perk about the turn-based gameplay is the relative lack of lag; while the game may lag a little bit for Internet games while watching other players' turns, your turn is virtually lag-free, ensuring a solid, quality multiplayer experience.

Team 17 knows that Worms is simultaneously an elegant game and a unique experience—this much is clear. Toward this end, Worms 3D provides the gamer with a sense of humor that makes the initially rather morbid experience of blowing up a bunch of military worms with heavy weaponry quite an entertaining experience. The sound isn't just limited to basic explosions and pain grunts; worms will taunt you if you miss a shot, curse you if you make it, encourage their teammates and provide their own cute commentary on the game. The graphics don't just depict a few worms on a battered landscape; level design is cartoony and vibrant, and worms will change their physical appearance based on the weapons they're using (fire punching worms wear a red headband a la Ryu from Street Fighter II, and occasionally yell "Shoryuken!" in obvious homage). However, Team 17 went one step further and offered an experience that matches itself to the gamer. Through the team creation options, you too can change the voices of your team from Classic Worms (with that adorably quaint accent) to Confucius, Gangsta, and several other awesome sets. You can also toggle options for your tombstones, team flags, and, of course, worm names.

Probably the only somewhat major qualm I have with Worms 3D is involved with the transition to 3D. It's hard. Mario 64 waited forever to capture the essence of Mario in three dimensions, and even then many people have had issues with the road the design team took. Sonic the Hedgehog's design team had to undergo a few revisions (not counting the god-awful Sonic CD) before they even got on a road, period. In this context, Worms 3D didn't do too poorly; the main camera is a little hard to control, and for some reason it defaults to inverted control even though a) I hate inverted control, and b) I have to check the "invert camera" to *un-invert* it. Once it's not inverted, it's a little better, but it's still wildly sensitive. Thankfully, Worms 3D gives you two more camera angles—an overhead "Orbit" camera and a first person camera, complete with crosshairs—to aim weapons, meaning that the wacky camera action only comes into play while moving your worm around. It's not bad, it just could have been *so* much better.

Ultimately, Worms 3D brings a classic game to the third dimension fairly successfully. There are a few bugs and quirks in place, ranging from the annoying (like camera weirdness) to merely inconvenient (like a random bug that leaves you TYPING IN ALL CAPS). If you can forgive a few inconveniences here and there, Worms 3D is a honed, elegant game wrapped up in graphics, sound, movies, and detail that just make it ooze personality. Anyone who feels like he could use a nice blend of turn-based strategy with a bit of the original squad-based combat, or just wants to watch cute 3D worms blow the 3D crap out of each other, ought to pick up Worms 3D ASAP.

Applelinks Rating

Order Worms 3D

•Reviews •Games •Comments •Tell-a-Friend