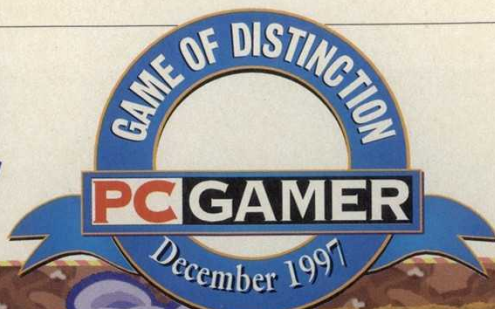


# Worms 2



Friends of the gardener and the fisherman they may be, but you wouldn't try to stick a hook through Team 17's little fellas.



Each of the levels has a recognisable graphical theme. Above you have the cheese and construction yard levels.



# Hooked

IT'S TIME TO SET THE RECORD straight. When the original *Worms* – a highly original, turn-based combat game starring Annelids – was reviewed in PCG 25, angry young man Stuart Campbell awarded what many thought to be one of the most refreshing and addictive games of the year, a paltry 40%.

Let's face it, Team 17's original effort would undoubtedly struggle in today's games market, with its minuscule sprites, awkward control system and glitchy game engine, but it was sufficiently different and as compulsive a multi-player game as you could hope for at the time.

So, has the period spent updating, overhauling and generally tweaking its tweakable bits been well spent?

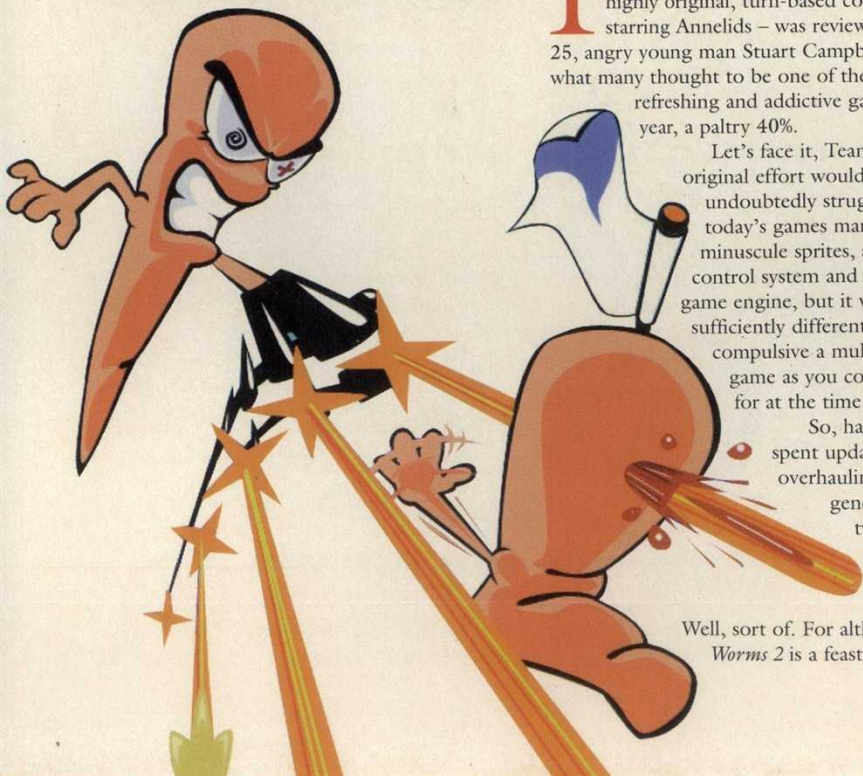
Well, sort of. For although *Worms 2* is a feast for the eyes

and a number of changes have been made to the control system, and weaponry, the sequel remains fundamentally a glitzed-up version of the original, which I enjoyed immensely.

Most importantly, the turn-based method of play is still present; many assumed that a real-time mode would have been implemented, or at least a mixture of the two systems. The developers have, however, opted to stick with the turn-based method, and while *Worms 2* is an obvious improvement over its predecessor in many ways, one can't help but wish that the modifications had been more sweeping.

Cosmetically, the game is as far removed from the original as Michael Jackson is now from his ABC days. A completely new engine has been written, which manipulates the play area superbly smoothly, while the graphics are far more stylised, cartoony, and generally more clear than the minute, almost *Lemmings*-like sprites of the original. Animations are also key to the game's character. Worms now grin mischievously, sigh with resignation, and turn blue with rigor mortis – all in a nicely comical fashion that fits the outlandish premise behind it perfectly.

The arsenal of weapons at your disposal is also far greater, providing a plethora of ways with which to blow up, ignite, flatten, shoot,





Teleports are still vital to the game; hiding a worm in a safe, high cave space can be the key to victory as the water level gradually rises after a certain amount of time.

or punch your opponents into defeat. They are all accessed via a far more simplified, less intrusive (and much easier to negotiate) menu, which appears on the screen with the click of your right mouse button – in it you'll find all manner of hostile equipment, as well as those devices designed for escape purposes.

Many, of course, remain the same – and the bazooka, grenades (both cluster and standard), and the dynamite are still the most oft-used early on, but now you'll also discover the Holy Hand Grenade, The Concrete Donkey, and The Old Woman – all nonsensical weapons with suitably bizarre accompanying graphics, that, when collected from crates, cause mass destruction.

The most novel new addition to the combat concerns the simultaneous use of weapons and equipment. The Ninja rope, for instance, can be used to swing huge distances across levels (scenery permitting), and mines, dynamite, or even sheep can be dropped onto enemy worms' heads mid-swing.

A very welcome addition is the brilliantly simple game editor, allowing you to create your own levels, manipulate the look and power of weapons, and even meddle with computer and crate AI; the latter meaning that

health crates, when they fall, land close to worms in dire need of them.

For all these great changes, though, there are weaker additions, and some niggling problems that remain present from the original. The scenery can still be problematic at

*“One can't help but wish that the modifications had been more sweeping.”*

times, meaning a bazooka, fired in what seems to be a safe trajectory, often hits a pixel-sized piece of landscape next to you, blowing you sky-high in the process. Very frustrating. The power and wind bars have also been changed unnecessarily – wind is now represented by detritus blowing

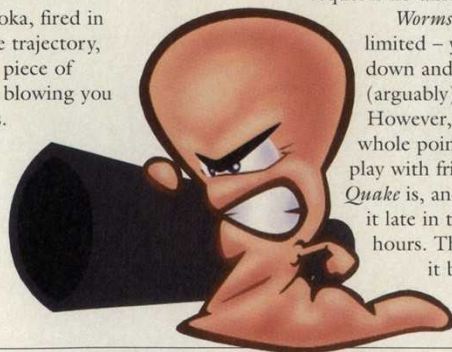
around the screen – a superfluous and confusing graphical effect, the downside of which the programmers must have recognised, as a separate wind bar is still in evidence.

The relative power of your shots has also been altered from a strength bar to a trajectory indicator next to your worm – it's nowhere near as clear as the original's far simpler method, though, and means that gauging the same amount of strength for subsequent shots is more of a skilful process than before.

As far as computer AI goes, single-player games still appear to be either frustratingly difficult or absurdly simple, but *Worms* always worked best as a multi-player game, and its sequel is no different in that respect.

*Worms* is, of course, massively limited – you'd be foolish to sit down and play it by yourself or (arguably) when you're sober. However, that would defeat the whole point of it. This is a game to play with friends more than even *Quake* is, and it's preferable to play it late in the evening for hours and hours. Then, and only then, does it become a great game.

NATHAN JONES



Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	Team 17
Price	£40
Minimum System	P100, 16Mb RAM, Win95
Recommended	P100

Graphics Accelerator	None
Sound Support	All major cards
Multi-Player	Serial, modem, network
Web Address	<a href="http://www.worms2.com">http://www.worms2.com</a>
Release Date	Out now

**PC GAMER**  
Some may find it hateful, but the simplicity of the two-player mode ultimately wins me over.

**90%**