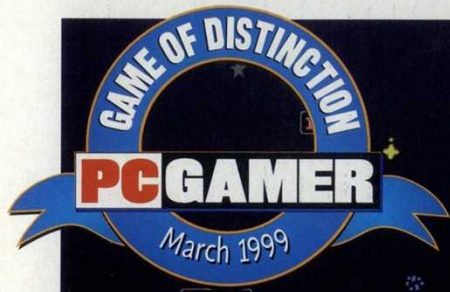


# WORMS ARMAGEDDON



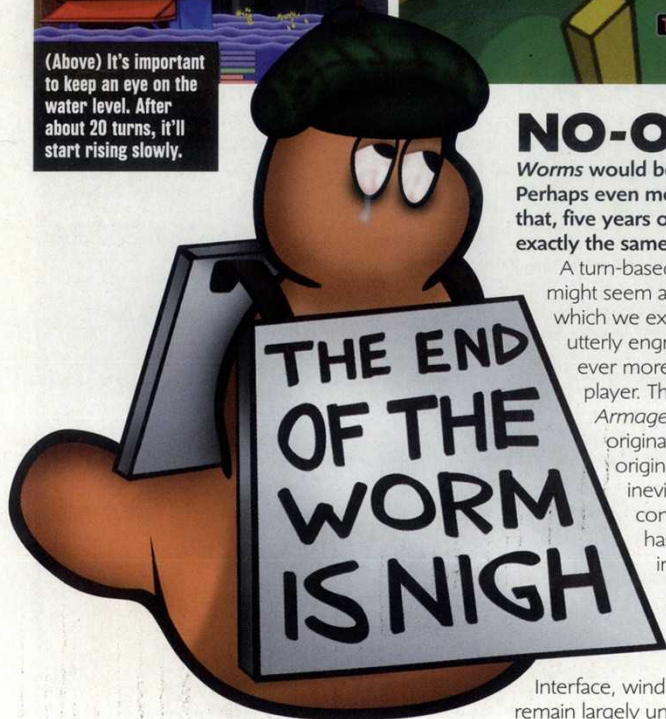
It is, they promise, the final time. No-one's prepared to bet on it though.



The French Sheep Strike isn't a subtle weapon...



(Above) It's important to keep an eye on the water level. After about 20 turns, it'll start rising slowly.



**NO-ONE** could have predicted, way back in '94, that *Worms* would be the overnight success it was. Perhaps even more difficult to believe is the fact that, five years on, the formula remains almost exactly the same.

A turn-based game of such intrinsic simplicity might seem anachronistic for '99 – a year in which we expect games to build on *Half-Life*'s utterly engrossing cinematic feel by inventing ever more novel ways to engross the player. The truth, however, is that *Worms Armageddon* feels as fresh now as the original ever did. Comparisons with the original two games are therefore inevitable, especially when you consider that – visually at least – little has been changed for this third instalment. Garish, cartoony landscapes? Check. Cuter-than-thou worms with thousands of frames of animation, and Joe Pasquale voices? Check.

Interface, wind effects and weapon graphics that remain largely unchanged? You guessed it.

In fact, a critical review of *Worms Armageddon* is almost redundant: if you've played either of the two originals you'll know exactly what to expect. Yourself, along with either a friend, the computer, (or both), select a team of worms with which to do battle in turn-based fashion. Once a map's selected, your worms are positioned in a random fashion, then it's a simple case of

**"The single-player game breathes new life into the formula."**

exchanging comically offensive blows until only one team is left standing. (Or crawling.)

You're either going to love or hate *Worms Armageddon*, but for those who share my own inexplicable desire to discover all that's new about it, the main differences can be summed up pretty easily: the single-player game, the weapons (see 'The Full Wormery') and the new set-up options.

## THE FULL WORMERY

There are far too many new weapons and useful objects to list, so here are our current favourites. As well as these, utilities and special powers can also be found in crates, lending qualities such as invisibility (while playing on the Net), low gravity, and double speed to your worms.

Occasionally, crates will descend from the skies bringing all manner of joyous bonuses to the party. Remembering what all the weapons do is as difficult as aiming them. And remember, the wind pushes any projectile weapon according to the direction it's blowing...



### NAPALM AIR STRIKE

A devastating twist on the airstrike, that releases napalm from a great height. Perfect for finishing off individual worms stuck in tiny crevices, but bear in mind the direction of the flames is affected by the wind. Made available to you in the standard game after around five turns.



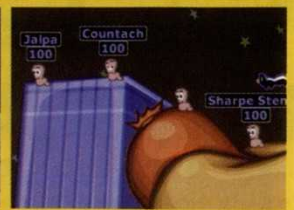
### FRENCH SHEEP STRIKE

A typically amusing weapon that sees five flaming sheep tumble from the sky. Probably the single most destructive weapon available to you, unleashing the Sheep Strike is a bit of a gamble that can see the majority of the terrain, along with all worms, flattened in one blow.



### LONG BOW

Perfect for finishing off seriously wounded worms, the Long Bow is a precision weapon that requires serious skill to wield. Aside from its use as an offensive weapon, the arrows can be employed as stepping stones in order to gain access to higher ground. Useful for rising water.



### SKUNK

A novel item that causes limited amounts of damage to any worms downwind of the point of release. Like the atomic weapons which release toxins, each worm on the screen will lose a couple of hit points every time a turn is completed. Pretty hard to use without hurting your own worms.



The older weapons, such as Grenades and Dynamite, remain the best, although the Sheep and Mad Cows are great additions.

# Annellidical

The first two games have always been criticised for their lack of a decent single-player game. Two factors conspired to mean it was never a viable choice for the solitary gamer – the format that the levels took, and the AI. The latter was mediocre at best, with worms turning from crack shots to suicidal fools in the same game, and the five-worm play-off situations soon became tiresome.

Team 17 have made it their priority to tackle these single-player issues, and the result (the missions, and the much improved AI) breathes new life into the formula. In order to tackle the missions, a series of training objectives have to be completed; pixel-perfect target practice, mastery of the new jumping techniques and use of the non-offensive tools such as the ninja rope, teleport and girders are all skills necessary for advancement, and once you begin on the tasks in question, you'll be hooked. The main levels themselves are imaginative in their objectives (assassinating worms, collecting specific crates, avoiding



earthquakes, etc); be warned though – the learning curve is almost off-puttingly steep, and as early as the third mission you'll be running into problems.

It's sure to be a big pull for those who've previously avoided the games for their predominantly multi-player focus. Yet it's the console-like aspect of *Armageddon* that's ultimately so likeable. From editing the individual worm names, to randomising your terrain, picking your special weapon, and selecting one of too-many-to-list game types, there's plenty to tweak. Add the fact that you can play on the same screen – which is far preferable to using the more impersonal network or WormNet – and *Armageddon* becomes one of the most sociable PC games you could hope to find.

Criticisms are few, although the fact that the 'invisible terrain' problem hasn't been sorted out is unforgivable. Minuscule pixels of landscape float in mid-air after their surroundings have been destroyed, and bazooka or mortar

The Concrete Donkey returns. Unfortunately.



shots sometimes blow up in your face. It's something that's blighted the series, and really should have been cleared up here.

That aside, *Worms Armageddon* feels like a natural progression. Many people will moan that it's not 3D or real-time, but that's missing the point. *Worms Armageddon* is hugely enjoyable as it is, and although it's taken a while to get the formula exactly right, that's what Team 17 have finally achieved here.

MATTHEW PIERCE

■ Publisher **Hasbro** ■ Developer **Team 17** ■ Price **£35** ■ Minimum System **P200, 32Mb RAM, Win95/98** ■ Recommended **P200, 32Mb RAM, Win95/98**  
 ■ Graphics Accelerator **None** ■ Multi-Player **Simultaneous, network, Internet, IPX**  
 ■ Web Address **http://www.team17.com** ■ Release Date **Out now**

**PCGAMER**  
 Always challenging,  
 often amusing, and only  
 a little bit frustrating.

**90%**