



The game can run at resolutions of up to 1024x768. Detailed, innit?

WORMS ARMAGEDDON

★ £TBC • MicroProse • Out now

Nobody likes him. Everybody hates him. He's lurking in the darkness playing Worms. Pink and spineless: Charlie Brooker

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P100 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P150, 32Mb RAM, and the better your graphics card, the higher the resolution you can play in

PCZONE CLASSIC

Like the majority of her infuriatingly sensible sex, my girlfriend isn't into games. Nevertheless, every now and again she stumbles across one she likes... then plays it *so much* I start to detest the sight and sound of it.

For some inexplicable reason, she once became helplessly enchanted with *ToeJam And Earl* on the Megadrive, and would force me to play it with her, from start to finish, for days on end, wailing like a wounded dog whenever I tried to get up and go for a piss or something. *Mario Kart* on the SNES and *GoldenEye* on the N64 became similar obsessions – but she's *never* grown to love a PC game.

Until *Worms Armageddon*

turned up, that is. Getting this review written has proven difficult because she just won't stop playing the damn thing. I've had to wait till she's asleep, and if I type too loud she'll probably get up and demand another go. It's like living with a drug addict or something.

OH MAGGOT, THEY KILLED KENNY

If you're not familiar with the *Worms* phenomenon, it's a deceptively simple game in which two or more teams of cute cartoon maggots fire weapons at each other in an attempt to wipe out the opposing team. It's turn-based; that is, first you take a shot at one of your girlfriend's worms, then one of hers takes a shot at one of yours. You can't move or shoot back during the other player's go, and this is one of the things that makes the game so tense and compelling.

The other is the unpredictable

nature of the armoury you're given: bazooka shells which get buffeted by the wind, grenades which ricochet in unforeseen ways, and downright ridiculous weapons such as exploding old ladies and flying sheep. Murphy's Law comes to the fore time and time again during a round of *Worms*, with a fair proportion of the fatalities occurring by accident (hey – just like a real war).

To a snuffy ponce it might look like a 'little game', but it's a damn

just don't want to stop, and if they aren't around there's always single-player missions, CPU opponents or the Internet. You can say goodbye to your social life, basically.

GRUB A DUB DUB

What else? Well, if you've already got *Worms 2* (PCZ #58, 82%) you might want to 'try before you buy'. The addition of *WormNet* (the online play system) is a big plus, but otherwise many of the changes in *Worms Armageddon*

their own TV cartoon series. Team 17's graphics department deserve a gigantic sack of awards. Actually, make that two sacks. Each one twice the size of Mount Kilimanjaro. [A+]

ALSO CONSIDER

WORMS: THE FULL WORMAGE (MicroProse, £29.99) Retro budget *Worms* compilation, featuring the original game and subsequent mission packs. Okay, but nowhere near as polished as...

PCZ #33, 84%

WORMS 2 (MicroProse, £29.99) Looking back, it seems we undermarked poor old *Worms 2*. Well, we're redressing the balance now, so quit whining, okay.

PCZ #58, 82%

“It's a damn sight more impressive than most of the blockbusters out there. In fact it's hard to convey just how intrinsically satisfying it is to play – it's as moreish as popping your way through a huge sheet of bubble wrap”

sight more impressive than most of the blockbusters out there. In fact it's hard to convey just how intrinsically *satisfying* it is to play – it's as moreish as popping your way through a huge sheet of bubble wrap. Successfully scoring a direct hit at long range delivers a short jolt of pleasure on a par with that which accompanies a really good punchline. Playing against an eager companion, you'll find you

are cosmetic (it does look a lot nicer, mind). If you've never played a *Worms* game before, or you've only tried the first one, you don't have anything to lose.

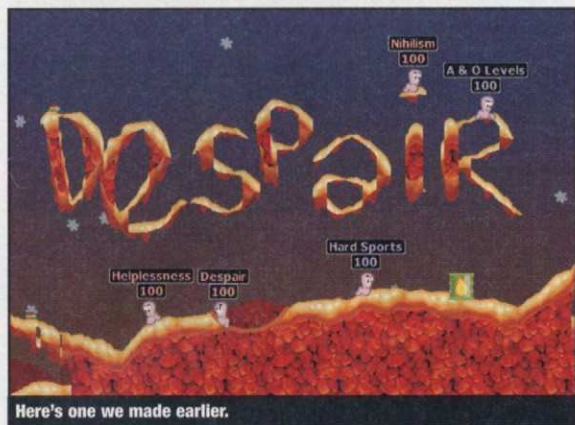
And before we go, a quick note about *Worms Armageddon*'s superb visuals: this is one of the coolest looking games ever. The design is ingenious, the animation dazzling. The worms are fantastic – full of character and humour – and should really be starring in

PCZ VERDICT

↑ **UPPERS** Fearsomely addictive • Inherently satisfying action • Superb cartoon visuals
 ↓ **DOWNERS** Occasional snatches of cheery racism

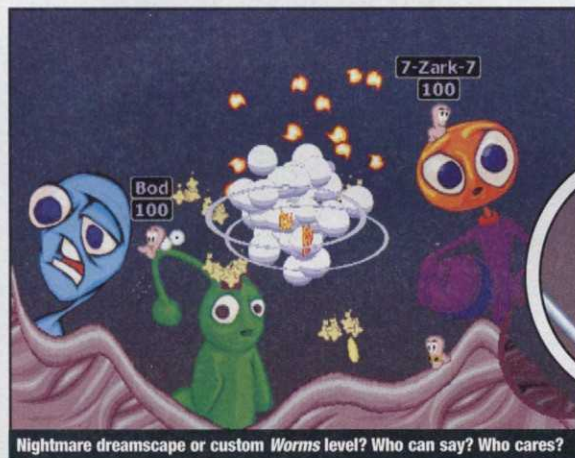
90 Full Metal Jacket meets Tom And Jerry

HUGE TRACTS OF LAND



Here's one we made earlier.

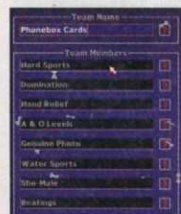
One of the many things the game enables you to tinker with is the landscape itself – you can ask the computer to randomly generate one to your specifications, or pick up your mouse and design it yourself. If you're poncy enough to have a graphics tablet, so much the better; you can draw a forest of great big penises and then laugh yourself ill as the worms hop all over them. If you're that childish, that is.



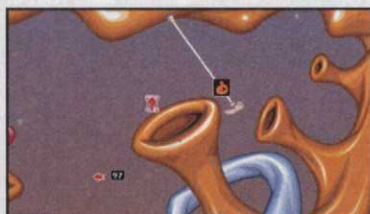
Nightmare dreamscape or custom Worms level? Who can say? Who cares?



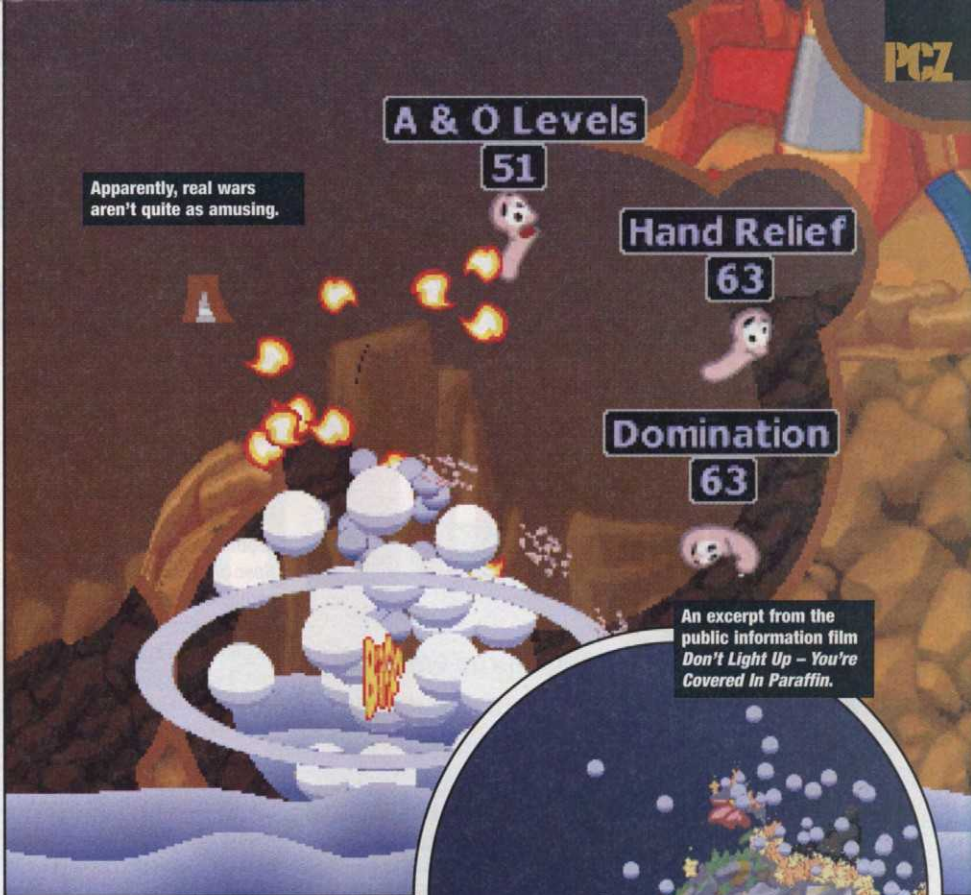
Saving Private Ryan, anyone?



Look, you can input funny names... Cool!



There are loads of action-gadgets to play with... like this ninja rope.



Apparently, real wars aren't quite as amusing.

A & O Levels

51

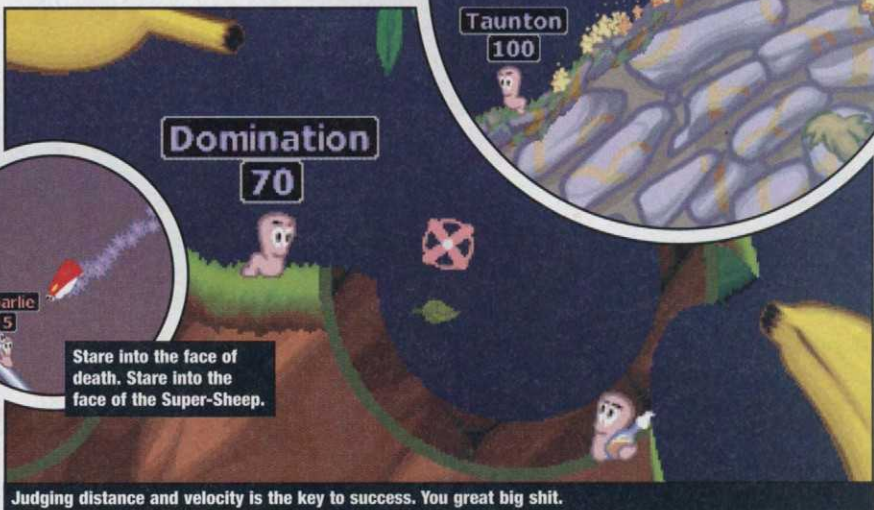
Hand Relief

63

Domination

63

An excerpt from the public information film *Don't Light Up – You're Covered In Paraffin.*



Taunton

100

Domination

70



Charlie

Stare into the face of death. Stare into the face of the Super-Sheep.

Judging distance and velocity is the key to success. You great big shit.

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Worms Armageddon enables you to customise your team in all kinds of inconsequential but amusing ways. You can choose a name for each worm, for example, leading to endless hilarity as Posh Spice lobs a grenade at Dale Winton and Big Balls unloads a shotgun into Wet Arse's face.

The worms natter continually throughout each round, and their standard chirpy English voices can be replaced by different languages and dialects. There are cockney wide boys, grim Yorkshiremen, US sports commentators, worms who speak in German, Dutch, French, and so on.

Fair enough. But a few of the speech banks on offer left us feeling a *little* uncomfortable. There's a Rasta who wails "Big mama!", "Where dat watermelon?" and "Lordy!" like a pop-eyed comedy negro from some nonchalantly racist '30s Hollywood comedy.

There's a Japanese worm who screams "Glenade!", a homosexual worm who simpers about handbags and mascara, and an Indian who speaks in fractured grammar, burbling "Goodness gracious me" and "Poppadom!" like a closing-time drunk haranguing the waiter in a small-town curry house.

Close your eyes and whoosh: it's 1974, and you're listening to one of those jaw-dropping sitcoms which dealt with the sensitive issue of racial intolerance by placing a white man in the leading role and reducing everyone else to the level of gurning half-wit stereotype.

Still, in the knowing '90s, can't we just look on this as a bit of cheeky non-politically correct fun? Maybe. But since the game is also designed to be played across the Internet, against people of all nations, it'd be interesting to see just how rib-tickling or otherwise the rest of the world finds it.