

The Annelid Menace (The Worms Attack)

“You had it coming!” This high-pitched admonishment manages to tell the computer game industry what it got hit by when the juggernaut that is Worms 2 burst onto the gaming scene in 1997. Worms 2 is a very simple but extremely addictive computer game that proves that fun doesn’t necessarily require the latest in graphics technology or complicated gameplay. In the process it manages to give you a totally new perspective on life, the universe and – well, no, actually, it just sucks you in and engages you for hours on end.



Worms 2 was developed by Team17 Software, a small software company based in Ossett, England (the wacky British humor connection is thus made clear) and published in late 1997 by MicroProse Software. The creator of the Worms series is Andy Davidson, now a cult legend for his work on the series and his general nuttiness. An interview with Andy on the Team17 website reveals this unforgettable quote: “As a child I was convinced that the stone donkey in the garden was a real donkey that my parents had covered in concrete. I therefore spent quite a bit of time chipping away at its tail to see if there was fur under there. This probably explains the state I’m in today!”¹ The game was produced by Martyn Brown, with artists Rico Holmes and Danny Cartwright (creating the rich landscapes and the animation of the worms in the game, which according to the website is composed of over 14,000 animations²), and main programmers Karl Morton, Phil Carlisle, and Colin Surridge, with Chris Blyth creating the game’s full motion video scenes.

So what is the game? The idea is simply that you are in control of a team of worms, fighting against other teams of worms, either controlled by a human or the computer. You take turns moving your worms around the map and employing all manner of wacky devices to maim, blast, and otherwise destroy the landscape and the worms on the other teams (or, for the incompetents, your own team). There are over 30 different weapons and tools that your worms can use to wreak havoc, and hidden within the seemingly simple gameplay is a challenging strategy game. Different weapons have different abilities and uses, and knowing when to use the bazooka as opposed to the grenade, or the banana bomb as opposed to the super sheep, is an essential part of winning. Weapons are controlled by aiming the weapon at a certain angle and depressing the spacebar while the power bar builds up, until you judge that the weapon has enough power at that angle to reach the place you want it to. Thus thinking about simple physics and mental judgment of angle vs. power are a very important aspect. The game in fact is in part an expansion of the classic



¹ http://worms.team17.com/worms2/?interviews_andy, 4th question from the top, Copyright 2000 Team17 Software

² <http://worms.team17.com/worms2/?interviews>, 2nd paragraph, Copyright 2000 Team17 Software

artillery games like Tank Wars and Scorched Earth, in which you chose the angle and power of fixed tanks firing upon other fixed tanks. The difference in Worms is that between one turn and the next the worm you were firing upon previously might have teleported to a different place on the map, or moved into an unreachable crevice, or simply died. By these simple alterations to the Tank Wars idea, the game is thus made much more difficult and engaging to play.

Judging between the banana bomb and the super sheep is a matter of discerning whether a (very) wide-ranging explosion would be good (for taking out multiple worms at once), or a pinpoint-accuracy explosion would be good (for taking out one). If a worm is perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking the water, a simple prod (pushing him over the edge) will do just fine: there is no need to try to land a grenade right next to him to blow him into the water. The weapons range from the normal – bazooka,

grenade, shotgun – to the bizarre – banana bomb (big banana that bounces when it hits the ground and explodes into five separate bananas, which then fall and explode on contact), super sheep (a sheep that is steerable and flies around until you guide it into the ground or theoretically another worm) – to the sublimely insane – an old woman that marches along the ground muttering about tea and then blows up, and the famous Concrete Donkey, of which I shall not give away the details except to say that



it's hilarious. My favorite weapon is probably the Monty-Python-induced Holy Hand Grenade. You launch it, it hits somewhere, and just before it blows up the chorus joins in with "Hal-le-lu-jah" followed by a tremendous explosion. The worms have access to a ninja rope, which enables them to swing around the map, and girders to build a bridge to somewhere, a pneumatic drill, blowtorch, a teleportation device, and various other tools. The concept is simple, the gameplay is complex. Really the only way to classify the game is as a strategy game, but the wonderful thing about the game is that it hides the strategy extremely well. Only after playing for a long time do you realize that you're unconsciously choosing the weapons that would best suit the current situation, or calculating how to dispose of the computer's remaining four worms with just the two you have left. The game disguises all of the strategy with just the sheer fun of playing it.



As you can see from the screenshots, the game is very lighthearted and in general quite wacky. It is drawn like a cartoon, with colorful animations and backgrounds. The sound effects are completely off-the-wall, with high-pitched voices telling you what's going on, rebuking you when your shot misses, and taunting the other team with "Chew on this" when you fire. The interface is very simple, using the arrow keys to move around and aim your weapon, enter to jump, and space to fire your weapon. You use the mouse to move the view of the screen around (as the

whole landscape does not fit on the screen at once) and to bring up the weapons menu. That's

it. The game as whole is structured so that you can just jump into the game and start playing easily. However, there are unbelievable amounts of options to set as well. You can edit the weapons, graphics and audio, and other game settings to your heart's content. For each weapon, you can choose how often it is available to you, the destructive power, the timing, the first aid crates (which drop in periodically and if you pick them up give your worm a specified number of health points) and weapon crates (which give your team certain special weapons, like the Concrete Donkey or Priceless Ming Vase). You can create teams of worms with whatever names you please, and choose from a variety of sound schemes to change what the worms say in the game, including "Double-Oh-Seven" (James Bond type sayings), nationalities (Greek, Russian, Italian, Polish, Norwegian), "Smooth Operator", "Stiffflip", "Wacky", "Soulman", "Rednecks", and more. You can edit the terrain (which is generated on the fly) to your heart's content, change the number of landmines that are present on the map, and change the specifics of how the game works as much as you want, whether you want to start off with infinite numbers of special weapons or challenge yourself by trying to beat the other team with just the fire punch. The computer AI is relatively decent, although it is sometimes obviously the computer in action: one minute the computer will miss by a screen width, the next it will deliver a bazooka right on the dot to where your worm is. With the AI set to harder difficulties, the computer basically hits your worm every single time with whatever weapons it is using: very computer-ish behavior, if not very interesting to play against. However, that is a small detail, and for the most part playing against the computer is pretty enjoyable. The real fun, though, lies in playing against other humans, which is what the game was designed for. Worms 2 is a marvelously social game: there's nothing like inviting some friends over and going at it exploding-sheep style. As well, there's a wealth of multiplayer options: Team17 has set up



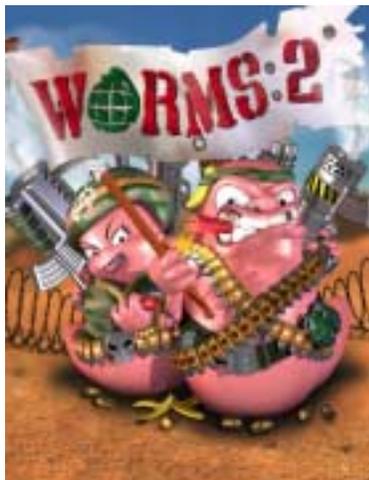
their own servers so that you can find people to play against from around the world, and you will find many dedicated fans playing. Since the game is turn-based, it doesn't need to send large amounts of data constantly and doesn't rely on immediate communication between computers: thus playing over the Internet is just as enjoyable as playing at home, with no worries about lag time or slowness. The graphics are beautifully drawn and wonderfully animated: if your worms fall from too high, they'll stick in the ground and wiggle for a bit (with the sound effect of "Ow"), marvelous to watch. The death animations are very amusing, and the general movement animation of a worm inching along is just funny in itself.

Worms 2 is not a very deep game. It is designed to be as simple as possible, and it does that. There is a mission mode, but it is basically consists of playing the computer at harder and harder levels, and is not very interesting. The game basically consists of the concept of shooting at each other with different weapons. Your worms do not gain experience or collect points. However, the replay value is very high, because the game is not designed to be played against the computer. It is designed to be played with another human being (or five), and it

does that very well. When it was released for the Playstation it took off, as it is perfect for the console environment of inviting friends over to play. One can play endlessly because one can find many people to play with, and when you've played all your friends, you can go on the Net and find more people to play against. Thus even with its simplicity and lack of depth, it is an engaging and retaining game. It is not designed to be a hugely complicated game, and it is not about figuring out how to play the game. It is about playing the game and having a blast doing so. I find myself always wanting to play just one more game. Even with just myself against the computer, it is fun to call up another randomly generated landscape and try some new things. Does the Uzi enable you to shoot people off a cliff into the water? Can I successfully use the Baseball Bat (one of the most useful weapons in the game) to hit this worm over that cliff into the water (accompanied by an announcer shouting "Home Run!")? The game is diabolically addictive.



Judging Worms 2 by how much it accomplished for the computer game industry is missing the point. You could say it started a genre, except that it really cannot be classified into a genre. More to the point, it showed that it was possible and is possible to make a small and easy-to-play game that has enormous replay value. The combination of wacky humor and seemingly simple yet still challenging gameplay keeps gamers coming back for more. Why is Worms 2 important? There was Worms, after all, and this is the sequel. Well, Worms never quite got it right. With Worms 2 the designers cleaned up the gameplay, added more weapons,



and basically made the game into the hit that it is. (There was another version released in 1999 called Worms Armageddon, which is basically the same game with more weapons). Worms 2 really showed what the potential of a dedicated and focused design could be. Worms 2 doesn't do role-playing well, or adventure well. There is no storyline. But there doesn't need to be, because it stands on its own as a social pleasure and a good game in its own right, with its own brand of gameplay. It achieves the goal of a great game, which is to just not realize anything about the game except that it's a hell of a lot of fun. You PLAY Worms 2, you don't look at the graphics or talk excitedly about the AI. You just play it. And that's why it's a great game.

References

1. Team17's Worms Website: <http://worms.team17.com/worms2>
2. Hotgames' Worms 2 Review and Screenshots: <http://pc.hotgames.com/games/worms2/>
3. Game Revolution Worms 2 Review - <http://www.game-evolution.com/games/pc/puzzle/worms.htm>

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News: straight from the Donkey's mouth!



News

19-02-01 WWP website goes live!



Info

Hi!

The big news is that it's finally here...



Screenshots

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have seen the slight re-design to this site, especially [the new front-end](#) which links to the new WORMS WORLD PARTY WEBSITE! Yeah, its here and it's going online today!



Demo

update 15.15, 19-02-01, [WWP website has gone live](#) **update**



Patch

The press release for the launch follows.



Reviews

Still loads of e-mails still arriving in my mailbox! It's nice to be popular!



Interviews

99% contain details of cool new weapons that you would like to see Worms using in the future... The plan is to list all these on the new official Worms website which is coming later this year.



Tips

However, what I would really like to see in the e-mails are ideas for the new website. Whatever you would like to see [then let me know!!](#)



Weapons

APJ



Controls



Cheats

18-02-01 Worms invade the Web!



Gallery

Team17 launches official Worms World Party site...



Goodies

As the world readies itself for the release of Worms World Party, the latest installment in the best-selling franchise, developers Team17 have launched a dedicated web site for the fully online title.



Servers

Worms World Party, released for Dreamcast and PC through Virgin Interactive in March, marks the best-selling series' debut as an online title. Retaining the series' famed gameplay - wherein teams of worms are sent into battle with a wealth of weapons in order to wipe out opposing factions - Worms World Party now allows users to compete with Worms fans all over the globe on-line. Also included is stunning new single-player modes & missions and new training areas - as well as a host of new Multi-player modes, missions and features which can all be experienced whilst sat around one PC or Dreamcast.



Links



Chat Notice



Support

The dedicated site (<http://wwp.team17.com>) will act as a central point for



Feedback



Worms World Party

Worms World Party fans, providing a host of features to aid enjoyment of the game. The site contains screen shots, game information, interviews with the Wakefield-based developers and news updates. It also provides valuable resources to allow Worms World Party-goers to set up tribute sites using licensed images from the game.

"Worms World Party is set to become a legend within gaming circles," offered Team17's Debbie Bestwick. "With our previous Worms-related sites generating over 1.5 Million hits a month, it was only logical that we launch a version of the game that finally lets the series' ardent fans loose on each other via the Internet - it's going to be some battle!"

Press Release

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