



SILENT HUNTER: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC

In the night of the deep

PUBLISHER: **Ubisoft** DEVELOPER: **Ubisoft** GENRE: **Simulation** AVAILABILITY: **Retail, E-tail (www.ubisoft.com)** ESRB RATING: **Teen**
 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: **2GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 6GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard** MULTIPLAYER: **2-8 players** VERSION REVIEWED: **Retail v1.1**

REVIEW

Y Hardcore simulation fanatics are their own worst enemy: They bemoan the lack of simulations available, and then—when a publisher invests the money to develop one—declare the game unworthy of the two cents of polycarbonate on the disc due to its lack of realism. “How could the developers call this a ‘simulation’ when the altimeter dial is clearly 0.2 centimeters larger than the real thing? It’s unplayable!” The publisher sighs, fires the development team, and makes sure its next game is another first-person shooter. Those irate fans should bite their tongues, though: *Wolves of the Pacific* (fourth in the *Silent Hunter* submarine sim franchise) will make all but the most jaded undersea warfare enthusiasts happy.

KILL OR BE KILLED

A good sub sim is all about the hunt—the cat-and-mouse game of a hidden assassin skulking unseen under the water like a shark sniffing out its next dinner. You never know whether that weak sonar contact will turn out to be a juicy freighter or a deadly destroyer. *Wolves* succeeds at immersing you in that role as an American submarine commander in World War II’s Pacific theater. At the heart of the game lies a superb career mode, in which no two patrols are the same. You’re assigned any one of a variety of missions, such as area patrol, recon, and agent insertion; a mission may be uneventful, with few contacts...or you might stumble upon a Japanese carrier task force. Radio updates informing you of historical events occurring during your patrols—such as the Japanese invasion of Wake Island or the Battle of Midway—provide a feeling of participating in a dynamic, living WWII.

Wolves presents you with the difficult decisions U.S. WWII submarine commanders were

forced to make, e.g., whether to travel at higher speeds on the surface and risk detection or slow speeds and limited submersion time, or whether to continue an attack on a high-value convoy while under pursuit by destroyers. As you advance in experience and rank, you’ll get to helm some of the more advanced subs (the game features six submarine classes) with their better guns and larger torpedo loadouts...but you’ll never feel safe when you run up against more powerful warships and aircraft.

UNDERWATER TURBULENCE

While the game does a great job of providing the drama and suspense of WWII submarine operations, some exasperating bugs exist, such as the “autolevel” hotkey crashing the game, undocumented sonar directional controls (use the Home and End keys for this), and a radar that doesn’t function properly. Antialiasing is disabled altogether, and changing the resolution to anything higher than 1024 by 768 only upsizes—and pixelates—the lower-resolution 3D models rather than actually increasing the true resolution. None of it’s game-killing, unless your requirement for “realism” is absolute. But these technical faults mean some inevitable irritation.

Really good simulations have the ability to make you sweat, and while *Wolves of the Pacific* is still a patch or two away from realizing its full potential, the thrill of the hunt and the constant risk of instantly switching from hunter to hunted provide an abundance of nail-biting tension and drama. **• Jeff Lackey**



• Gray seas—and skies—in the waters off of Japan.

VERDICT

Dynamic campaign; options to make it as easy or as realistic as you like.

Numerous bugs; deceptive resolution options that don't function as expected.

7/10

GOOD



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