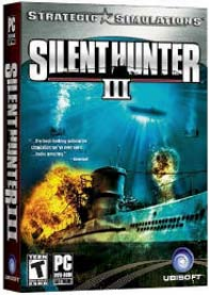


21 March 2005

By:

[Silent Hunter III - Review](#)

Run silent, Run deep



Promised for the end of 2004, delayed to the despair of gender fans to the first quarter of 2005, Silent Hunter III – the continuation of a game becoming some kind of a synonym for submarine simulators – became available to gamers this month. At the first glance the title seems interesting enough just to the gender fans, lacking any chance in the race against alert FPS-s, inspired in WWII. Ignoring the title will be your loss, since SH III is so much more than a submarine simulator. What could possibly happen to a submarine commander, leading his ship in patrolling missions and torpedoing enemy ships, more fascinating than the adventures of an OSS agent or trooper? If you start approaching this game with this in mind, (and assuming that you are not a fan of this gender) then SH III will only need several minutes to make you realize how wrong you are. A single look in the 3D command center, populated by all the characters required to drive a submarine (which characters are more than mere photos), will make you wish to try out this game. **Take control!** As a submarine commander you will be responsible for all onboard activities, for the success of all missions, for the crew morale, and for safely returning to the home-harbor. In order to achieve this you need to get familiar with all the complex systems at your disposal. Even though crewmen can handle some of these tasks, in order to taste the flavor of the game you need to get involved in all possible issues. Ubisoft being involved (just like in another title: Brothers in Arms), the crew does just what it has been ordered to; but if you think you might be dealing with a watery version of Quake, which is about who sinks mode ships faster, the you will face a huge surprise. The realism in SHIII has nothing to do with the movies about submarines watched so far. When things go wrong, none of the crewmen will play the hero and save everybody, since all crewmen wait for their commander to make decisions and save them. This is why the game starts with five tutorial missions. After completing them you will have to pass an examination, and subsequently be awarded as submarine commander; starting then will you be able to decide which of the two single player modes you prefer: Single Missions or Campaign. The 10 missions in the Single Missions version recreate historical battles like Operation Weserübung, Scapa Flow or the capturing of U-505. The missions are no longer linear as in Silent Hunter II, but very interesting. During these missions you will confront with more than 50 types of units, ships and planes. SH III truly unleashes its beauty in the Campaign Mode. **Life as U-boat commander** The Campaign Mode is responsible for the delays in releasing the game. The Ubisoft Romania team promised for the submarine commander a dynamic career; since they were unsure of their achievements in October 2004, they preferred to delay the release. The outcome however outruns the players' imagination. First of all, the commander's career is fully dynamic. At first Ubisoft Romania thought of releasing the game with a half-dynamic Campaign mode, but the outcome was different. Briefly said, no two missions are alike, which adds a lot of value to the game, since you may start a new career after the completion of the game under a new name; none of the new missions will bear any resemblance to previous ones. After becoming a commander, you will be able to chose the type of submarine, the fleet you will belong to and the historical period you live in. You can pick any year starting in 1939, when U-boats basically controlled the Atlantic and until 1943 when the life of U-boat commanders became strictly a matter of survival. This is why all campaigns end in 1945. The final goal is for you to survive. And if you ever thought that this is a piece of cake, then you should know that 75% of German submarine crew never made it to the end of the war. The game realism is so better achieved that, depending on the historical moment you live, the missions will be simpler or more complex. For instance

starting in 1944 you will get systematically hunted by an enemy aviation that you barely get a chance to meet in 1939. The submarine being picked, most of your time will be spent in the command center; unfortunately you can only walk to certain locations, like the radar room or on the submarine deck (whenever it surfaces). In order to make things easy, you may sometimes rely on characters like the chief engineer or navigator; however keep in mind that you bear full responsibility. Everything depends on your reputation. Are you in need of a better crew or of better weapons? Try to keep all your crewmen alive (they gain experience) and become famous (so that the mechanics provide you with the best spare parts available in harbors). As far as realism is concerned, SH III will become more real if you activate two options: No Map Contact Update and Manual Targeting System. The first option disables automatic signaling of enemy ships and/or planes on your map, so that their position needs to be flagged by the commander based on the information received. The second option disables automatic control of weaponry; thus the commander is directly in charge. One cannot get better realism than this! **An almost perfect game!** Starting at the first tutorial, you will notice game graphics – truly a masterpiece. The ocean looks like an ocean, and not like a blue texture; every detail of the submarines was drawn in such detail that the work reminds of art restoration; nothing scratches the eye. The game was developed by Ubisoft Romania; though at first many of the series fans doubted the team capability to handle such a project, the final result made all fans bow with admiration. All crewmen are fully animated and, as previously mentioned, so much care was paid to details, that during the missions you might catch your crewmen cleansing their glasses or blinking. The ship models are as real as possible and very carefully designed in detail. When destroyed, ships sink in different manners: some of them tear into pieces while others blast in wonderful explosions throwing away the remainders of the ship and survivors. At certain times, as for instance after launching torpedoes, the scenery is viewable from the outside of the submarine until the time of the blast. Actually all the details play a role in this game, and the screenshots will do a better descriptive job than any further comment about the quality of graphics. A game as complex as SH III can easily become a nightmare due to the many commands to be processed in order to handle missions. The gameplay is however well-designed and you will only need a couple of missions to get used to issuing orders and to setting the navigation course. Going through tutorials accompanied by cinematic sequences will help a lot in learning all the commands required for playing properly. During the game you will encounter various systems making your life easier. For instance, the waypoint system is flexible and, if you are not in the mood to navigate randomly, searching for prey, then you may set the course intended towards the patrolling area then engage in action when getting there. The enemy AI is great, showing significant progress as compared to Silent Hunter II. Do not bet your life that you might repeat the same mistake; by then you will most likely need to attempt a rescue. The multiplayer side of SH III consists of two separate designs. You may ally with eight other players at most, making the so-called wolf-packs in order to try to defeat the AI, or you may play against others in order to decide who the top-ace is. Both modes are interesting; be aware: do not adventure in the multiplayer mode before completing at least the 10 single-player missions. **Comments before immersing!** SH III is an excellent game, so well-designed that it may be played both by gender fans and novices in such simulators. For the veterans of submarine simulators, the game is a true delight, since so much attention was paid to details. The sound contributes to the gaming environment: nothing can beat diving below seas in a submarine and listening to the sound of silence. The Ubisoft Romania efforts to turn this game into a landmark managed to turn SH III into a title going far beyond the simulator condition. This is a game worth playing. You won't regret a single second! **Graphics: 10+ Soundtrack: 9 Gameplay: 9 Concept: 10 General Impression: 10 SOFTPEDIA RATING: 9.5 Official site: www.silent-hunteriii.com Minimal requirements: System: 1.5 GHz Pentium 4, AMD Athlon RAM: 512 MB RAM Video memory: 64 MB VRAM HDD: 2800 MB DVD-ROM: 8X DVD-ROM Others: Pixel Shader 1.1 graphics card**