

review: **Tubular Worlds**

by Robert C. Lewis

Type: Arcade

Publisher: Dongleware Publishing (617/497-1130)

Retail Price: \$35.00

Street Price: \$35.00

Requires: Any Mac (recommend 68030/25mhz or better) with a 256-color monitor

Protection: None

You have been at the academy for many years studying how to be one of the best combat fighters so you can defend the planet Titanos from the evil Grog's. Now all the sweat and late nights learning how to master the Federation FLS Fighter are about to come together in one final exam. This exam will determine whether you will go on to become a defender of your world or if you will "exit stage left" and spend the rest of your pitiful life in the interstellar accounting office.

The war between the Grog's and the Federation has taken its toll upon the fleet. Due to this loss, the final exam had to be altered to preserve the number of precious fighters left to the fleet. The final has now been converted into a virtual reality gauntlet of firepower consisting of four very different cyber worlds. Each world is also broken down into three different combat zones with a very hostile warlord waiting for you at the end of zone three of each world. Your choice is simple; either you make it through all 16 levels and go on to help defeat the Grog's or become a mighty pencil pusher upon failure. So you enter the virtual battle zone room and boot-up your VR Final, coded Tubular Worlds.

Dongleware is Back. Tubular Worlds by Dongleware is their second entry into the Mac game market. Their first game Oxyd was voted as Best Brain Game for 1993 in the MacWorld Game Hall of Fame and from what I can see, Tubular Worlds may very well be one of the better commercial shoot-em-ups arcade style games for 1995. When I first started playing Tubular Worlds it initially reminded me of a classic video game called River Raid.

iver Raid was a vertical scrolling game where you flew a plane up river against a never ending enemy of increasing firepower. At first that held true for Tubular Worlds except in this game you move horizontally. As I began to move through the different combat zones I discovered elements of other games interwoven into the gauntlet. After a point, I began to realize that what I thought I could expect was going to become the unexpected. Besides having to battle enemy warships and cannons, you will need to knock out walls blocking your path like in break-out, maneuver mazes and much, much more. Just when you think you have mastered one portion of the game a new element rears its ugly head and you are back to square one. I have been playing Tubular Worlds over the last few weeks and I have yet to make it through the first planet let alone the warlord at the end of that level.

Tubular Worlds also adds a unique feature that can change the whole complexion of how you can play the game. It allows you the ability to add a wingman (or woman) to your virtual battle. One person can fly their ship via the mouse while the other commando makes use of the keyboard. This feature has the ability to change the entire strategy of the game. The only weak spot here is that you cannot do this over a network or modem. It would be great if Dongleware could add this particular feature in a possible upgrade somewhere down the road.

To help you through this gauntlet of doom are all sorts of Easter Gelt to help you succeed. As you destroy enemy crafts different colored objects will appear that will change your fire power as you fly over them. Other objects can speed your ship up, add additional ships, reinforce your shields, and more as you fight your way through each world. Even with all these pluses, Tubular Worlds still suffers from yet another weak spot. There is no way to save the game as you move up in levels. It would be nice if as you completed a given section of the game some type of code word could be issued so you could pick up where you left off. As far as I can see, this is not a game you are more than likely going to complete in one sitting unless there is nothing else for you to do with your life.

It is ironic that even with the two weaknesses I have mentioned above, all other parameters were well thought out. For Macs running below 25 MHz there is an adjustment to change the size of your game screen so that the game will run at maximum speed. The only problem with this feature is that your game window shrinks a bit too small, making the trade off a bit severe. The adjustments for the digital sound effects and music can be done separately so that neither overwhelms your speakers and ears. Unlike other games I have played, this is one game where I enjoy leaving the music on as I play. It has a very good score and does not get on my nerves as with other games that will go unmentioned.

Overall. The animation and graphics are good but they lack a certain crispness normally found on games written strictly for the Mac. Even with that minor weakness, the action is fast and furious. All control of your fighter is very responsive whether you use a mouse (or joystick) or the keyboard. Over all I give this game 3 joysticks. It could have been easily 4 joysticks, but with it lacking some type of save routine, 3 is the most it deserves. If you like are looking for a good shoot-em-up with a lot of action, then Tubular Worlds may be right for you.

Pros

- Great shoot-em-up
- 16 levels of excitement
- Three levels of difficulty
- Cooperative two-player option
- Great sounds and music
- Animation is very fluid
- Very responsive to keyboard or mouse

Cons

- No way to save position
- Two-player option cannot be done over modem or network
- Ported graphics

