

## review: U-Boat

by Bart Farkas

Type: Submarine Simulator

Publisher: Deadly Games

Retail Price: \$49.95

Street Price: \$34.98

Requires: 640 X 480 color or Gray-scale. 4 MB ram. Recommends LC III or higher.

Protection: Game unplayable without maps in booklet.

[ommandosache](#). As your brow presses on the periscope the tension on the bridge becomes palpable. Slowly you turn the scope through the compass range hoping to see the quarry you have stalked for the last two days. The ship's batteries are nearly dead and surfacing to recharge them would be suicide. Your only hope is to creep up on the destroyer with the remaining battery power and hope to hell that you have calculated the torpedo's path accurately. You spot her only 1700 meters away, sitting ready for your load of lethal torpedoes. You calculated the torpedoes path and are about to give the order to fire when a riveting shock rocks your ship. "They're shelling us, we're too close!" is heard in the confusion. The intercom crackles to life as your engineer reports that the torpedo tubes have been damaged and the bow is flooding. The first officer reports that engines are out and the batteries are damaged beyond repair. Calmly you fill your lungs with the stale dank air of the U-BOAT, as if it was your last breath.....

[There's No Sub-stitute For The Real Thing](#). One of the best early games for the Mac was a submarine simulator/game called GATO. It simulated GATO class subs in the Pacific Theatre of operations during WWII and allowed users to get a feel for what it was like to have finite amounts of torpedoes, battery power, and fuel. As time went by and systems changed, the old GATO was no longer compatible with most Macs. It was at this time that Epyx came out with Sub Battle Simulator. This was also a good game and took the realism a step further than it's predecessors. However, archaic disk-based copy protection and incompatibility with newer hardware and software made Sub Battle Simulator obsolete in just a couple years.

What have we had since then? To be totally frank, nothing until now. Fortunately, the folks at Deadly Games have created U-BOAT (The Type VII) to fill the giant void in the submarine

gaming arena. U-BOAT follows its predecessors, Bomber and M4 Tank, in bringing us suspenseful and accurate WWII simulations.

**awol!** The object of U-Boat is to command your sub through a series of patrols early in WWII from the Baltic Sea, to the eastern Mediterranean. Each patrol is limited only by your fuel and armaments. Basically you are trying to accomplish what the real German U-Boat commanders were. To sink as many allied ships as possible (this is measured in tonnage of sunken vessels) without getting yourself blown out of the water. Keeping in touch with your base (by radioing your position) will inform you of a lot of allied shipping activity for everything from tankers to battleships (don't mess with these guys).

Game play is smooth and fortunately you don't have to spend hours searching for vessels to destroy. It may not be that realistic to come into contact with an allied ship every day at sea, but it makes for a better, playable game. You are supplied with a complete reference booklet that has pictures of the major ships so that you can identify what you are up against when peering through a periscope. The patrol areas are marked out in a grid/sector system that effectively provides some measure of copy protection but does not detract from the game play. This is a feature I would like to see more game companies implementing if they decide to use protection. Quitting the game at any time produces an automatic save at that spot so you can pick up right where you left off, and yes, this means that you can't save games to keep yourself from getting into a tight spot (like between two destroyers).

**Das Boot?** Your entire tour of duty as commander of the U-BOAT is served in five different areas aboard the ship. Of course, the bridge is going to become like a second home to you with only the conning tower and periscope views interrupting your view of the instruments.

The bridge itself contains all the major controls to operate the sub. There is everything from fuel and battery gauges to charts, depth meters, and a compass. The remaining controls are in a movable window so that you can have easy access to them at all times. The rudder, radio, speed, weapon firing, and depth controls reside in this window, as well as the attack tabulator and the report button. When the report button is pressed, you get a verbal report from the chiefs of the different areas of the ship. When an area has been damaged, it's kind of cool to get immediate verbal confirmation that one of your engines just failed!

The sub itself is pretty historically accurate and includes all the aspects that the real U-Boat commanders had to deal with. If you run on the surface you can use your diesel engines and double your speed, however you won't be particularly stealthy. So you can run submerged off of battery power, but when you are going full out, your batteries do not last long at all. The key is knowing when and where to submerge and keep an eye on where you are in relation to the bottom of the ocean! Bottoming out can be a quick way to get to Davey Jones's Locker. The manuals are well written and explain tactics and operations in detail with screen shot diagrams, and there is also a basic point and click help system "on board" for you to use.

he controls themselves are easy to use and generally respond quickly to your every whim, but when you get into a hairy situation, where there are lots of sonar sound and reports being shouted, the command buttons freeze up until all sounds finish playing. This can be extremely frustrating when you want to fire your torpedoes and pull your periscope down all in one full swoop instead of sitting there taking a beating from a cruiser. This becomes a plus/minus situation because the sound is slowing down the action, but the sound is an integral part of the game. Every time you issue a command, you get verbal confirmation

with digitized voices. Also, it is important to note that sound does not work for U-Boat on the new AV Macs. [Editor's Note: What a sin!] Unfortunately, sound is a critical aspect of this game and that bug will have to be fixed for AV users to enjoy U-Boat.

U-Boat is graphically similar to Bomber and M4 (that is to say that you would guess they were made by the same company), but it is much cleaner and makes better use of color and detail. For example, it is easy to identify a ship on the horizon and you will not have to spend hours searching for obscure little blips on the screen. The atmosphere of the game is excellent and you really find yourself "sweating it out" playing cat and mouse with the allied ships. The day/night realism and constant background sound also add greatly to the experience and you find yourself pulled right into every aspect of game. Finally, hunting down and sinking a ship without getting pounded into the sea bottom with depth charges is a very satisfying feeling.

[Ja, Bitte](#). For the Mac, U-Boat is just what the doctor ordered. It provides very compelling game play, good graphics, and excellent sound to make a truly exciting campaign style gaming experience. The makers of U-Boat recommend that the base machine for this game be an LC III. One would have to agree with that, as the game could be a tad slow in battle situations (and that was on an LC 475). For those that have been waiting for a good submarine simulation to succeed the "oldies," U-Boat will deliver many hours of silent running.

#### Pros

- Plenty of action
- Good graphics (easy to identify targets)
- Great sound
- Excellent ambience and atmosphere.
- Flexible patrol times are realistic
- Compelling game play

#### Cons

- Needs a lot of computing muscle to be fast enough. (min LC III)
- Controls can temporarily freeze when multiple sounds play
- No sound on AV Macs
- Unplayable without map manual