

y Bart G. Farkas

Terminal Velocity is finally going to make an appearance on the Mac platform. After years of wallowing in limbo, this PC game is at last almost ready to ship for the Mac. This game has had a couple incarnations as both Terminal Velocity and Fury 3 (the engine was used in this Microsoft product), but strangely didn't come over to Apple's platform. But the wait was worth it for a couple reasons. First, Macs are much faster than they were a year and a half ago, and game performance for most should be very good, even in high-resolution. Second, it's just plain old a good enough game to wait for.

Terminal Action

Terminal Velocity can best be described as a hybrid between Descent and a flight simulator. Much of the action takes place over the mist-shrouded hills, valleys and snow-capped mountains of an alien planet, however there are also 'descentesque' subterranean passages that you can guide your ship into for serious action in confined spaces. Above all, Terminal Velocity is a fast-paced rockem sockem action shoot-em-up game, with tons of heart pounding levels. Of course, there are the usual cinematic cut scenes, but the real meat of the matter is the action portion of the game.

Mist II

The visual effects in Terminal Velocity are really very impressive, especially the mist-covered mountainous terrain that you must fly through in the first missions. If you take on too much altitude you will climb above the cloud cover and lose perspective entirely, and if you stay close to the ground you risk running smack dab into the middle of a large chunk of rock. The effect of navigating a mountain range in limited visibility is really quite gripping, especially when running in high-detail mode.

Occasionally you will come across what can best be described as small circular access ports on the surface of the planet. These portals are your ticket to a trip inside the guts of the planet, but make sure your reflexes are sharp because the underworld is a network of tight-turning tunnels with many an obstacle with

which you can smuck your craft on. Fortunately, these tunnels are often worth the risk because of 'power-ups' that often sit just waiting for you to suck them up. Some tunnels offer shields, afterburners, and even power cores for you stock up on before your next mission on the surface. If you don't feel like going beneath the surface you certainly don't always have to. In fact, many of the missions are defeatable without venturing into the tunnels.

-

ontrol

The craft you control in Terminal Velocity can best be described as a futuristic spacecraft/aircraft. Managing your ship is not nearly as challenging as a flight simulator would be, and indeed running your craft into the ground produces a bounce and a slight reduction in your shields instead of a catastrophic event. I liken the gameplay to a cross between Descent and Chuck Yeager's Flight Simulator. Easy to learn, fairly forgiving, not particularly realistic. But hey, realism in flight is not what you're looking for when playing an action game like this.

You are given the choice of several joysticks, keyboard, or mouse to control your craft, and of course the keyboard controls are fully adjustable. It really doesn't take long to get a feel for the controls, and most will be piloting their craft with minimal problems. Your ship has a transparent radar in the upper right corner of your view screen which serves to direct you to your next objective, and identify enemy ships and powerups in relation to your ship's position.

Powerups, weapons and happiness

As you destroy the various structures and enemy ships, you will occasionally get powerup orbs or pills that will do everything from boosting your shield to equipping you a meaner uglier weapon. As mentioned before, sometimes you will descend into a subterranean tunnel only to be greeted with a long line of power-ups for shields or afterburners. It can be a real treat to come across a store like that when you've been getting pounded for a while.

Network Fun

Although I'm not sure what the nature of the network play in Terminal Velocity will be, the option does sit ready for use in the menu. Unfortunately I didn't have the opportunity to try it out, but the addition of network play for a game of this caliber only serves to solidify it as a heavyweight game. Whether play is head to head or cooperative I have little doubt that it would be a blast.

MacSoft Delivers

MacSoft has got a solid heavyweight title with Terminal Velocity. This game might even challenge Descent II for the 3D flight space sim audience. With cool effects, heart-stopping action, and smooth graphics and animation, TV is bound to be a great success. I must admit I'm surprised at the high quality of this port, and I can hardly wait to see the finished product.

-