

WARPTSTONE

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SHADOW OF THE HORNED RAT

by Games Workshop and Mindscape

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Format: Playstation, PC

"Shadow of the Horned Rat" is based on Games Workshop's Warhammer Fantasy Battle. The action takes place in the familiar realms of the Old World where you are the leader of a band of mercenaries (the sadly named "Grudgebringers").

The game is a campaign-style strategy simulation. The aim of the game is to build your army up from the pitiful two units you inherit, to an unstoppable force capable of foiling the scheming Skaven that you are pitted against.

You must therefore accept different missions which involve taking your army to battle against various Warhammer badies. As commander in chief you must deploy your forces to the 3D battlefield and then control up to ten units in real time action.

The action is slick with glorious graphics and satisfying sound effects which range from the clashing of arms to the Skaven war cry of "Die, Die". Game-play consists of reacting to enemy movements and threats. Each scenario (of which there are up to 50) can be replayed to perfection. This is often important so that your army stays at maximum strength, as only limited reinforcements are available. The action is punctuated by animated interludes which keep you abreast of the fairly feeble plot. However, this does not detract from the enjoyable atmosphere and addictiveness of the game.

Overall, this is a quality game. However, it's longevity could have been improved by adding a further feature. The game could have been extended to a two player format where each player has a choice of the units and 3D landscapes on offer. This would provide the ultimate challenge of taking on an experienced human opponent in split screen or network action, elevating the game to a classic!

I heartily enjoyed this challenging game and would recommend it to all but the most ardent critics of WFB. If you hate to lose, like being in control and are addicted to computer games SOTHR is right down your street. The playstation format retails at around £40 and is a sound investment given the weeks of game-play that will ensue.