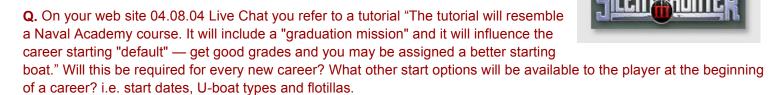Interview

Silent Hunter III

by **Teddy Bär**

SimHQ's Naval Combat Zone Editor asked the **Silent Hunter III** Development Team some questions about their eagerly awaited new simulation now in development.

Q. On your web site 04.08.04 Live Chat you refer to a tutorial "The tutorial will resemble a Naval Academy course. It will include a "graduation mission" and it will influence the career starting "default" — get good grades and you may be assigned a better starting boat." Will this be required for every new career? What other start options will be available to the player at the beginning of a career? i.e. start dates, U-boat types and flotillas.

A. Performing the tutorial before starting the campaign will be optional. It is our intention to stimulate the player to pass through it at least once and we wanted to reward them for that. Otherwise, the campaign will start with different flotillas and at different dates. The earliest campaign will start in 1939. The latest will start in 1943. The available U-boat types will vary depending on flotilla and year of starting the campaign.

Q. One way that games have in the past attempted to heighten the experience is by limiting the ability to save. However, this has normally been at the expense of the players that want to save anywhere at anytime. Will Silent Hunter III have any options available for the player to restrict their save options whilst allowing the normal save anywhere at anytime?

A. The in-game save is a mixed blessing. On one hand, it offers the player the guarantee that is not necessary to replay through too much of the game to pass a difficult encounter. On the other hand, the save is a great spoiler of performance, stimulating a more careless gaming approach. We want to satisfy both sides. Therefore, the game will offer the possibility to save in-game almost any time (although with one specific condition like "no enemies nearby"). Anyway, the in-game save will be an optional setting related to the difficulty of the game. So the hard-core gamers that

want to risk more may disable the in-game save or use the alternative of limited save slots per mission.

Q. The combat map (i.e. TDC map and the zoomed area of ocean 10 x 10 kilometers and below) in past U-boat / submarine simulations has shown everything within the area in real time as if it was being viewed via a satellite. Will Silent Hunter III break from this tradition and if so what can the player expect to see, or more importantly, not see at the various realism levels?

A. The map representation will operate based on the effectiveness of the sensors aboard the submarine. Depending on what sensor is used, the map will be updated at varying intervals and will include a variable degree of precision depending on the crew experience. Of course, this will be influenced by the realism setting to allow an easier approach for casual players.

Q. In past U-boat / submarine simulations a player has been instantly aware of any damage and the exact time it will take to repair even when it is the deck gun and the U-boat / submarine is at a depth of 100 meters. With regards to damage notification, will Silent Hunter III not show external until the player has surfaced and will the repair times possibly take more or less time than originally stated? At what time will the player know how long the repair will take?

A. The repair time of various damaged compartments and/or subsystems will be reported in vague terms — possibly in half hours and hours. Depending on the crew efficiency and skill, the estimation will be more or less precise. The external damage will not be reported while underwater.

Q. In past U-boat / submarine simulations a player has been instantly aware of when a ship has been sunk and what tonnage. This is in spite of the fact that the player is submerged and hit the wrong ship. Will Silent Hunter III implement a fog of war with regards to unseen sinking's?

A. A sinking will be confirmed only if the player has a visual confirmation of the sinking. If the player didn't visually confirmed the sinking, it will be recorded as possible sinking confirmed later (after a few weeks/months) during the campaign (simulating the confirmation of sinking from other sources of information).

Q. When taking on a new U-boat because of your successes will there be a lay over period of 6+ months to simulate the

run up of the new vessel? And will your crew be different?

A. There will be a period of delay (a few months) between patrols whenever the player takes on a new U-Boat. However, the player will have the option to preserve its old crew (U-Boat captains rarely gave up on veteran experienced crew members). Of course switching to a bigger sub will mean adding new members to the crew and reversely switching to a smaller sub will force the player to lay off some of the extra crew. Nevertheless, it will be his choice either way.

Q. Will the sea state effect the player's ability to attack a target and will it also have an adverse effect on the torpedo?

A. The weather will definitely affect the player's ability to engage a target. First, bad weather will influence the sensors, making targets harder to find. Second, the sailing performance of the U-boat will be affected, making it harder to reach a good attack position. Third, the crew will get tired faster sailing on surface during bad weather and thus perform poorly. Fourth, torpedoes will miss, detonate prematurely or fail to detonate more often.

Q. There have been many recorded instances of U-boats surviving a depth charge attack where upwards of a hundred or more depth charges have been dropped. Will the player experience such attacks and is the damage model and the AI such that he could survive?

A. This will be a common occurrence in the second half of the campaign when the ASW technology and the experience of the AI will test and challenge the player.

Q. Will the time compression drop to a lower speed when A. a vessel/aircraft is detected or B. a vessel/aircraft is near? Will the player have the ability to adjust what speed the compression drops to for these instances?

A. The time compression will drop to normal (1:1) whenever a vessel / aircraft is detected. There will be no option regarding adjustment of the time compression speed in these instances. A more limited time compression range will be available while under the restrictions like enemies nearby, if the player still wants to make things happen faster.

Q. Will the player have to go to the conning tower (except in the Type II) to use the attack scope or will it be configured as it has been in past simulations where by flicking a switch the 'same' scope changes from sky to attack and back?

A. Both options will be available in Silent Hunter III. A "quick access" is available through a shortcut.
A more realistic access will be available in 3D. In this mode, the player will access the periscope moving to its location and clicking with the mouse on periscope.

Q. Will there be a variance in the number of torpedoes required to sink a ship of the same tonnage? That is, if I attack a 5000 ton merchant ship will it always take 1 torpedo, or will there be times where it will take 3 or 4?

A. Our damage system is modeled so that it will take more ways to sink the same ship. The experienced players will be able to sink almost any ship with one hit. However, expect a 5,000 ton merchant may take anything between 1 to 3 torpedoes to sink.

Q. On your web site Q&A you stated "Crew morale will depend on how well or how bad you are performing in the patrol". Could you please detail examples of what specifically is considered "performing badly", and what immediate and ongoing effects on morale we would expect to see?

A. Taking damage, having casualties, being under prolonged depth charge attack, reaching the oxygen limit are considered "bad performance" from the player. In this case, expect to see the efficiency of the crew dropping dramatically — you'll need more people to do the same job. You can even reach a moment when everyone is too exhausted to perform anything but minimal U-boat sailing.

Q. What screen resolutions will be available for Silent Hunter III? Will there be dual monitor support?

A. Currently, the game works at a resolution of 1024 x 768. There will be no dual monitor support as far as I know.

Q. Will a player receive recognition for a damaged ship?

A. We considered this but we decided to follow the "U-boat Commander's Handbook" recommendation in this regard: "It is better to sink less than to damage a lot."

Q. If Silent Hunter III is a success do you have any plans to do Silent Hunter IV in the Pacific? If so what time frame?

A. If Silent Hunter III proves the success we hope for, there are a number of options we can pursue, including the Pacific theater as a theme for a next installment. We don't exclude other options like Destroyer Command II.

Q. In higher realism will the player receive no assistance when looking through the scopes?

A. The player will receive assistance only if he/she requests it. Anyway, for experienced players and hard-core fans we developed a specific interface to allow the player to collect data manually in high realism modes.

Q. On your web site SH3 Live Chat on August 4, 2004 you stated "In dynamic campaign the entire ocean is your battleground". Does this mean that as in Aces of the Deep, that if a player decides not to go to his patrol zone, or to leave it, that the world will be alive with shipping? Or will we have a situation where as in Silent Hunter II the world was only alive with shipping within the specified area?

A. Our campaign mode will resemble Aces of the Deep - freedom means not only more space to explore, it means more options to play! We want to allow the player to intercept shipping anywhere on the ocean theaters we intend to cover - Atlantic, Arctic, Mediterranean, Caribbean.

Q. Will there be a negative effect on your career if you do not obey orders regarding your patrol zone?

A. Doenitz has always held aggressive commanders in high regard. As your historical counterparts, you can choose to disregard orders from BDU, but you'd better have a good reason for it! Bring impressive results from your patrol, and

nobody will question your decisions.

Q. Will allied ASW technology be phased in? That is, if a new version of radar become available from January 1 1942 will we still encounter vessels with either no such device or an older model?

A. All instances of the same ship will bear the same equipment at any given moment. If Flower corvettes are upgraded in '43 with Hedgehogs, expect any Flower corvette encountered to engage you with Hedgehog! However, different ship classes will receive the upgrades at different same time.

Q. A major failing in past U-boat / submarine simulations was the ability to hover at periscope depth whilst at a stand still. Making attacks very "gamey". How will Silent Hunter III model a U-boat at periscope depth?

A. Most likely, you will be able to hover at periscope depth. However, this will not be as easy as it sounds, since low waves may reveal the conning tower, thus giving you away.

Q. All videos to date have been shown using the casual mode of game play. Will you be releasing a video of a lone merchant attack with the realism settings at maximum?

A. We cannot confirm this at the moment. However, we feel that recent previews of the game (such as this one: http://www.subsim.com/ssr/sh3/preview_sh3_oct04.htm at **Subsim Review**) have generally illustrated quite well the mechanics of a manual torpedo attack. We believe that our game will offer the best and most accurate "manual targeting" mode in any WW2 sub sim to date.

Q. How many beta testers are you expecting to take from the community and can I be a beta tester? LOL!

A. Again, this has not been decided yet!

Thank you all for taking the time to visit with the readers of SimHQ. We can hardly wait for **Silent Hunter III**.