

For quite some time now, it seems that the PC gaming market has been flooded with an incredible number of hex style strategy games. So what does a company do to their new hex based war simulation to keep it from becoming part of the masses? If you're QQP, you take everything you know about making a good hex game and produce *The Perfect General II*. *TPG2* does a good job something that I particularly like – the basics. *TPG2*'s strength is not in its innovation, but in its execution of the fundamentals of hex wargames. There's nothing in *TPG2* that's groundbreaking but what is in it is a collection of all the stuff you like about hex games. It looks good, it's easy to learn, has lots of options, and the basic game play is nearly flawless. Notice, however, the word "nearly."

*TPG2* is the basic hex game giving you a variety of tanks, artillery and ground troops to move around the pre-set maps causing death and destruction. You begin with "buy points" which you use to buy your units. You then array your forces on the battlefield in the areas that you own. I really love the fact that if I want to buy a medium sized tank, I buy what is called a "medium tank," and if I want to use an airplane I choose "airplane." What a great concept this is! I don't have to memorized the entire line of actual military weaponry to know what I'm using! This game has been made very playable through small things like that.

The battlefield includes standard features like railroads, roads, cities, hills, bridges and rivers and they all have a certain terrain value that determines how much fuel it takes for your units to cross over them. Each scenario lasts a set number of turns. Each turn, you move your units, fire artillery, set targets for your airplanes, and fire your other weapons, all of which is fairly easy to do through simple pointing and clicking with the mouse. The simplicity of this system of "move-and-shoot" makes more for a chess-like game than one which is bogged down in statistics and logistics, as many war games are prone to be. The cities have victory point values assigned to them and at the end of every turn you add to your score the victory point total of the cities that you own and the winner is the person who has the most points when all of the turns are over.

Despite the simplicity of *TPG2*, the game's only flaws were in the interface. In fact, the one thing that probably bothers me the most about hex-style games in general bothered me here – that is, there are no range finders available. When you choose the unit that you want to move, the screen doesn't light up or black out the areas that you can or can't move to in that turn. That means you're reduced to putting your nose against the monitor and counting hexes to determine where you can and can't go. The same is true when firing your weapons. When you select a unit to fire, you are not shown which units you can or can't fire at so you go around clicking on a bunch of enemy units just to see if you can shoot at them. When you have a lot of units to move and shoot, having to count hexes and click on a whole bunch of units gets old and bogs down the game. What's really strange is that when it comes time for the artillery to fire, they did include a rangefinder. Any area that you cannot fire at is "whited-out" so I know that the designers knew about and were even thinking about rangefinding features. So why wasn't this included in the rest of the game or at least added as an option? This is the game's only real fault, but darn it, that single flaw really affects the quality of game play and it seems like it would have been a simple thing to fix.

*TPG2* is a really fun game to play and I had a great time playing it. It's simple enough but has enough complexity to it to make it addictive and interesting. It's like chess on a battlefield whereas you have basic pieces that are moved in combinations to defeat the enemy. The emphasis has been taken off detailed historical accuracy and in-depth unit statistics, thus freeing the player to enjoy the game without relying on the manual for things like the barrel velocity of the T-80 tank. *TPG2* plays more like a game instead of a war simulation. It's not the greatest but it is darned good. You'll not be disappointed.