



STARTRIP

Stars don't usually have a habit of collapsing every five minutes, but that's exactly what's happening. The authorities of the planet Arth look on with slight bewilderment as the universe is slowly rid of countless civilisations. And then the Arth's sun begins to collapse, and Arth itself faces devastation because of deadly solar flares. Being a scientific genius, shooting ace, mining authority and best pilot in the cosmos, you're one of many who've been drafted in to find a solution to the problem, or failing that, find some new planets to colonise.

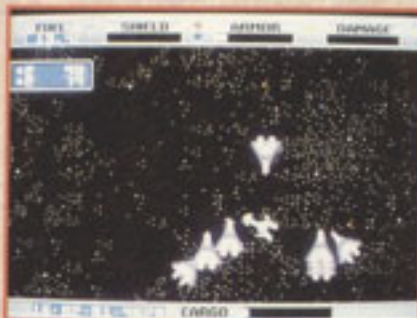
Unfortunately, the Arth authorities aren't making things easy for you. You have to earn a living in order to upgrade your ship to face the challenges ahead, and the only way to do that is to mine some of the planets and sell the goods to the economic community. Understandably, some civilisations don't particularly fancy the idea of a colossal ship landing on their planet and robbing them of all the valuable minerals...

Just to make sure that you're aware of how dire the situation is becoming, the Arth authorities have added a sensor to your ship that tells you how many days are remaining until Arth becomes a distant memory!

So it's down to you and your galaxy-class star ship to seek out strange new worlds and civilisations, and as the saying goes: "to boldly go where no man has gone before!"



- ▲ Arming up the ol' ship!
- ◀ An Earth-like planet..
- ▼ An enemy squadron causes hassle.



This strange being provides the first clues...



THAT'S MINE!

Mining is the central part of the game. The Arth authorities pay big bucks for any Endurium you may find - this is the raw fuel for starship engines. Just about any mineral can be sold. Your ship has a TV (Terrain Vehicle) which scours the landscape digging up valuables. Mineral scans are needed in order to find the buried treasure. The TV can be upgraded to search deeper for minerals.





STARLIGHT

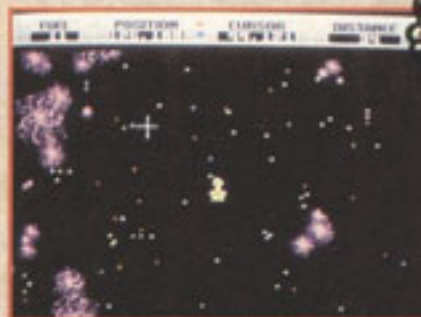


STRUTTING AROUND STARBASE

The game starts at the Starbase where you choose your crew, name your ship, get your orders and blast off into the blank inky yonder. You must return here to sell your minerals or get new messages.

▲ The Terrain Vehicle goes a-digging.

STARS IN YOUR EYES



This navigation chart gives you some idea of the vast nature of the game. However, should you leave the map, the universe does not wrap around, so you really would be going "where no man has gone before!"

COMMENT



RICH

Starflight looked exceptionally dull before I took it home one Saturday to review. Needless to say, once I'd got into it, I spent the whole weekend playing the game (even though EA didn't bother putting a battery in the cart, so all my saved efforts were erased when the power went off - arrgghhh!). It's just like having your own Starship Enterprise. You can open all the hailing frequencies you want, fire off God knows how many photon torpedoes and even train up your crew! Every planet can be visited and mined, and there are many different alien cultures to interact with in order to get to the bottom of what's happening. The graphics are pretty dull, but it doesn't really matter when you have a game that I rate as better than as the classic Elite! The vast nature of the game means you'll be at it for months. Another Megadrive classic from Electronic Arts!





This mineral scan shows up all buried metal! ▶



▲ The TV confronts some alien life forms.



STRANGE NEW CIVILISATIONS



Any deep space exploration usually means a confrontation with the system's inhabitants. Deep space protocol can either be obsequious (that's exceptionally fawning and grovelling), friendly or hostile. For the biggest laughs try hostile communications, where you can verbally accost your contact with gems like "Our patience wears thin. We shall give you three minutes in which to co-operate. If you do not... ha ha ha!" or "We have heard enough of your inane ranting. You will tell us what we wish to know or we will destroy you. You have little time left!"



COMMENT



JULIAN

Normally, I wouldn't touch space trading games like this with a specially disinfected ten-foot long barge pole - they're always very slow, boring and tedious and never, ever have enough things to blow up. But Starflight isn't a normal space trading game. It's got loads in it, with alien races to meet, a zillion planets to explore and loads of hostiles to blow up. A common fault of games like this is that because they're so huge, there's a lot of aimless exploration and interplanetary time-wasting. But not in Starflight! There's constant action and variety and no hanging about - you're always wondering what to do or where to go next! Actually completing the game objective takes ages - there's hundreds of hours of play in this - and even then the game can go on! Starflight mightn't be blessed with the greatest graphics and sound ever seen, but then it comes to sheer playability, depth, variety and lasting appeal, I can't think of many Megadrive games better than this.



BY: EA
 PRICE: £TBA
 RELEASE DATE: TBA
 GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
 LIVES: 1
 CONTINUES: 0
 SKILL LEVELS: 1
 RESPONSIVENESS: SMOOTH



PRESENTATION 88%

Good use of menus, and the in-game presentation is great.

GRAPHICS 77%

Loads of well-drawn aliens on the comms screens, some nice planetary effects, but a pretty dull space sequence.

SOUND 87%

Computer speech like HAL in 2001 and excellent Star Trek-like effects which add to the atmosphere.

PLAYABILITY 92%

Once you set the game up, you're into a mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new galaxies and civilizations...

LASTABILITY 95%

...to boldly go where no man has gone before! And it's a mission which will keep you playing for weeks!

OVERALL 94%

A completely and utterly brilliant space quest that even beats the classic computer game Elite in the playability and depth stakes!