DRAFT VERSION
NOTE: Some parts of this document are out of date.

Marc Goodman
http://www.continuumsi.com/~marc/bilestoad.html
mailto:marc@continuumsi.com
Introduction

Life was pretty bleak by the end of the twenty-fifth century. The cities had
long since grown together from over-population. The one city-state was
suffering from widespread poverty. Bored, frustrated people filled the
walkways. Housing was limited and filthy. No one starved, thanks to total
automation, but not many people lived fulfilled lives. Tension was at a peak.

Mobs of people with nowhere to go roamed the city, wreaking havoc on property and on their fellows. They had no jobs, no money, and nothing useful to offer a world that treated them like excess baggage.

The city controller computers were worried. If trends continued on their present course, the city would be engulfed in holocaust. The mobs were at the breaking point between frustrated apathy and psychotic violence. It was plain that drastic change was needed. Temporary measures were put into effect. Priority was given to the manufacture of luxury items, in the hope that a higher standard of living would lull the masses. Even by the latter half of the twenty-fifth century, computers were still fairly ignorant of human psychology. Those few people who felt that the masses were useless burdens were aggravated by the attempt to coddle them, and those that felt bitterness toward society were appalled at the blatant attempt to treat the symptom while ignoring the disease.

The computers analyzed their mistake. They concluded that the cause of human misery must be eliminated... Extermination was considered, but quickly rejected as being too expensive. They began to study human history in an attempt to understand the root causes of mob revolt.

The results were helpful. They realized that man's ego demands a sense of recognition. They discovered that man's aggressions, when suppressed, blaze forth in an orgy of destruction. They found pieces of the answer throughout history. From the Japanese Samurai tradition, from the Dark Ages, from the armies and religions of the world, they culled the symbols of humanity. They gave the world a stage where man could compete against himself, a place where man could succeed or fail on his own merit. They gave man the Bilestoad.

Everyone knew that the Bilestoad didn't really exist... Not in the reality of man, anyway. But, reality is a product of perception. For the average young street-thug, tucked away in a warrior's booth like a fetus in the womb, "reality" was not a valid concern. Reality became running for shelter, the yayger hot on his heels... Blood oozing from his wounded shoulder... The sweet perfume of roses mixed with the smell of fear... The salty taste of his own blood... It made no difference that a computer was taking orders from his brain and feeding perception back to him. Few people minded that there was no physical world on which to fight, and the few that did mind were usually too intellectual to be a threat to the city controller computers, anyway.

Most never got beyond the battle. For them, it was enough to hack away at an

opponent. An opportunity to release their anger and cleanse their souls was all they wanted. They could wash themselves in blood. The mobs were quelled and quieted.

For those with a more intellectual turn of mind, the Bilestoad offered a chance to compete and explore. They could rise through the ranks and become masters. They passed through the crowds like priests, the captains of the new world. They'd attained the respect they felt they needed.

Welcome to the Bilestoad, a world of half reality and half nightmare.

Elements of the Bilestoad

The Bilestoad is a malevolent sort of amusement park where frustration can be vented without risking personal damage. Players control computer simulated proxies, called "meatlings." Meatlings have ranks, earned through victory, which are used to determine a meatling's objectives. "Yaygers" must try to kill their opponent. "Forshers" must find and use a goal disk, called the "zonenstrall."

Meatlings battle on a number of different islands on the world of the Bilestoad. The ocean which surrounds each island serves as a natural boundary. Each island is a rectangular meadow, featureless except for a strain of weedy flowers and irregularly spaced grid lines that mark off the island.

The final elements of the battleground are the "shyben." There are four types of shyben: "springers," "loyfers," "mondstralls," and the "zonenstrall." Each type of shyben serves a different purpose.

Registration

The first step in entering the Bilestoad is registration. Registration tells the Bilestoad who you are, and how you want to control your meatling. The Bilestoad maintains a registry of players where ranks and promotions are recorded. Registration is performed through the following dialog:

Please register for The Bilestoad.

Player 1 name: City Control

Player 2 name: City Control

[Quit The Bilestoad]   [OK]

Just enter the names for player 1 and player 2 in the dialog and hit the "OK" button. If player 1 or player 2 are new players, the following dialog will appear:
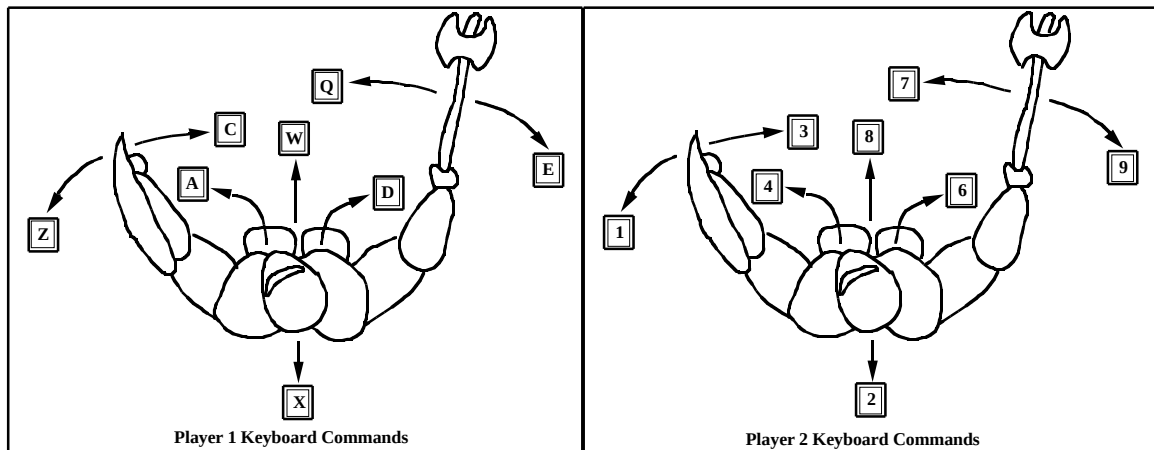

Create New Player

Player name: Mangrove
● Computer ○ Keyboard   ☐ Cyborg   [Cancel]   [OK]

First, select the type of meatling for the new player by clicking on its picture. The red box will surround this picture to indicate which type of meatling is selected. Then, indicate how you wish to control the meatling. If you want the computer to control the meatling, click on the "Computer" radio button. If you want to control the meatling yourself, click on the "Keyboard" radio button. If you want to control the meatling's steering and walking, but you want the computer to control the meatling's arms for you, click on the "Keyboard" radio button and also check the "Cyborg" checkbox. When you have finished selecting the type of meatling and how you want the meatling to be controlled, click on the "OK" button.

Controlling Your Meatling

Players can make their meatlings walk forward or backward, turn clockwise or counterclockwise, swing their axe arms clockwise or counterclockwise and swing their shield arm clockwise or counterclockwise. If a player has registered as "Cyborg," that player controls his or her meatling's forward and backward motion and the direction the meatling is facing, and the computer controls the meatling's axe and shield arms.

Player 1 uses keys from the left-hand-side of the keyboard, while player 2 uses the numeric keypad. The following keys are used to control the meatlings in "Keyboard" mode:

| Player 1 Keyboard Commands | Player 2 Keyboard Commands |

For example, to turn meatling 1 clockwise, press the "D" key once and allow the meatling to turn until it is facing in the desired direction. To stop the meatling, press the "A" key once. To turn meatling 1 counterclockwise, press the "A" key once and allow the meatling to turn until it is facing in the desired direction. To stop the meatling, press the "D" key once. In "Cyborg" mode, only the keys which control walking and turning the torso are active (which makes life a lot easier when learning to play).

Bilestoad Menus

During play, a new game may be started by selecting "New Game" from the File menu. Selecting "Quit" from the File menu will abandon the game in progress and exit from the Bilestoad. Sound effects and music may be disabled by selecting the appropriate menu item from the Game menu. Selecting the "Faster" item from the Game menu will reduce the size of the display and will help The Bilestoad to run at the intended speed. Finally, the game may be paused by hiding the Bilestoad or sending it to the background, or by selecting "About The Bilestoad" from the apple menu.

To change the key commands for controlling meatling 1 and meatling 2, use

the "Set Controls" menu item under the Game menu. Selecting either "Player 1 Keyboard Controls," "Player 1 Mouse Controls," "Player 2 Keyboard Controls," or "Player 2 Mouse Controls" from under this menu will bring the appropriate player control dialog to the screen [NOTE: mouse controls are unavailable in the pre-release demo]. The dialog will display the current keys used to control the meatling as illustrated in the section on controlling your meatling. To change any of these key commands, simply click on the displayed letter with the mouse. The letter will become highlighted. Typing any key on the keyboard will cause this letter to change. To use these changes, click on the "OK" button with the mouse. To cancel these changes, click on the "Cancel" button.
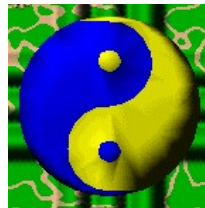
Appearance and Function of Elements

Each island in the Bilestoad is stocked with four types of shyben. Each type of shyben serves a different tactical purpose. The four types of shyben are **[NOTE: this section is obsolete. There are additional types of shyben and their distribution varies from island to island]**:

| **Springer** | **Loyfer** | **Mondstrall** | **Zonenstrall** |

- **Springer:** There are eight springers on each island, organized into four pairs. When a meatling steps onto a springer, the meatling is teleported to the corresponding springer, elsewhere on the island. After arriving at its destination, the meatling must step off the springer if it wishes to re-use the springer to return to its original position.

- **Loyfer:** There are four loyfers on each island, two colored to match meatling 1's armor, and two colored to match meatling 2's armor. While a meatling stands on a loyfer, the loyfer will skim along the island carrying the meatling with it. The rate of travel is greatest if the colors match. The direction of motion is controlled by the orientation of the meatling's torso. To use a loyfer, the meatling must come to a complete stop on the loyfer. To step off of a loyfer, simply cause the meatling to walk forward. The player can cause a loyfer to move backward by holding down the "Walk Backward" key. To step off a meatling while moving backward, hold down both the "Walk Backward" key and the "Walk Forward" key (in "Keyboard" mode), or hold down both the "Walk Backward" key and the mouse button (in "Mouse" mode).

- **Mondstrall:** There are three mondstralls on each island. The mondstrall is the symbol of man's darker nature. Yaygers are beamed in on monstralls at the start of each round. Stepping on a mondstrall is an automatic forfeit, and the opponent is awarded points for a major objective.

- **Zonenstrall:** There is one zonenstrall on each island. The zonenstrall is the symbol of man's lighter nature. Forshers are beamed in on zonenstralls at the start of each round. Forshers score a major objective for finding and stepping onto the zonenstrall. Yaygers score a minor objective for stepping onto the zonenstrall.

Objectives

Meatlings are classified as "forshers" or "yaygers," according to their rank, at the beginning of each round. Yaygers are the representatives of man's darker nature. A yayger's major objective is to find and kill its opponent. If unable to do so, a yayger may score a minor objective by stepping onto the zonenstrall.

Forshers are the representatives of man's lighter nature. A forsher's major objective is to find and step onto the zonenstrall. A forsher will also score a minor objective if it kills its opponent.

A meatling's body armor is vulnerable to damage at the joints. A meatling can damage another meatling by bringing its axe in contact with the other meatling's joint. Damage shows as spots of blood on the affected joints; the greater the damage the larger the spot of blood. When a joint has taken enough damage, it will be severed. Players lose points for each hit they take, and for each severed limb they receive. A meatling kills another meatling when it causes that meatling to take 17 hits of damage. A meatling may also kill another meatling by decapitating it.

A round is over when either a major or minor objective is scored. At the end of each round, a score card is displayed, and the meatlings are transported to the next island. At the end of the fifth round, the player with the higher score is promoted 1 rank, plus 1 rank for each 5000 points of the difference between the two scores.

Scoring is as follows:

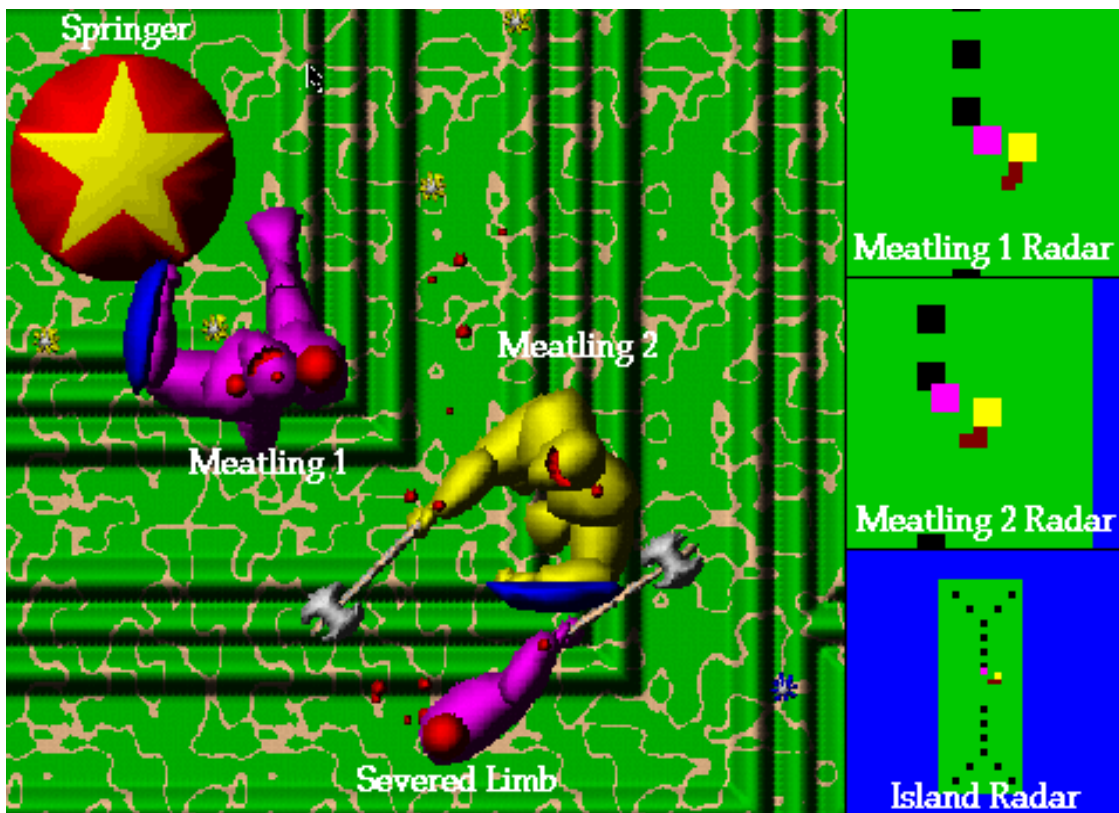|	
Major Objective.........	5570
Minor Objective.........	1130
Taking a hit.................	-70
Losing any limb..........	-430

Wizard Bonuses

The Bilestoad will award you a wizard bonus for doing something clever. There are different types of wizard bonus, with different values. Unfortunately, City Control has been unwilling to disclose what these bonuses are, so you'll have to figure them out for yourself [NOTE: Wizard bonuses are not available in the pre-release demo].

The Screen

A picture of a game in progress is shown below. On a color monitor, meatling 1 is purple and meatling 2 is yellow. On a black and white monitor, meatling 1 is dark gray and meatling 2 is light gray. The radar views on the right side of the screen show zoomed-out views of the island. Meatling 1's radar centers around meatling 1, Meatling 2's radar centers around meatling 2, and the Island Radar shows a view of the entire island. Shyben appear as black boxes on all three radars.

When the two meatlings are close to each other, the main view focuses on the point half-way between the two meatlings. When they are out of range, the main view splits into two panels. The left panel focuses on meatling 1, and the right panel focuses on meatling 2. In a one player game, the main view always focuses on the human.

The Forsher/Yayger Relationship

A forsher's major objective is to kill its opponent. A yayger's major objective is to use the zonenstrall. At the beginning of each round, both players are assigned one of these roles. If a player's rank is much higher than the her opponent's rank, then that player will be a yayger. If a player's rank is much lower than her opponent's rank, then that player will be a forsher. If the two ranks are about the same, then sometimes the player will be a forsher and sometimes the player will be a yayger.

Unless one player is master level, the set of islands selected for the game is determined by the rank of the more highly ranked player. Since the more highly ranked player will usually be the yayger, this means that the yayger will have more knowledge of the island than the forsher, which helps the yayger to force a battle. Additionally, the lower ranked player will be less familiar with the island and will have to explore in order to find the zonenstrall. When one player is master level, the set of islands is determined by the rank of her opponent. Since the opponent should already be somewhat familiar with the island, this will give the opponent more of a chance of getting to the zonenstrall. When both players are master level, the islands will be randomly generated so that both players can compete on even footing.

When playing against the computer, the computer's rank is based on the player's rank. As several games are played, the player's rank compared to the computer's rank will vary. Therefore, the player will have to be able to beat the computer as both the forsher and the yayger to continue advancing.