

## review: **Jump Raven**

by Ross Scott Rubin

Type: CD-ROM Arcade Game

Publisher: Cyberflix, Inc. (615/546-1157)

Retail Price: \$69.95

Street Price: \$49.00

Requires: 256 colors, CD-ROM drive, 8 MB RAM (6 MB Free)

Protection: None

In 1993, Cyberflix released a paradigm-bending game called Lunicus in which you battled through the streets of Earth to fend off hostile aliens. This time, it's the Earthlings themselves who have wreaked our planet's destruction. Environmental deterioration has caused species extinction to grow at an astounding rate. Humans themselves haven't been living the good life, either, as we must endure advertisements for virtual meat and use LimeAway to lick that nasty acid rain problem. Cities like Vienna and London have sunk beneath the sea due to global warming. But be thankful you don't live in Canada, which has been targeted for nuclear invasion by the Republic of North Dakota.

You enter into this gloomy scenario as Jump Raven, the mercenary captain of a speedy, flying coupe with more fancy weapons than a James Bond film festival. You've been hired by the ESA (Environmental Security Agency) to recover pods containing the genetic codes to many of Earth's lost species. Fail in your mission and the pods will be lost forever to skinheads, Chinese gangsters, and cyberpunks. The baddies have taken over three boroughs of New York City—the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan—and it's up to you to retrieve the pods lest countless species be forever lost.

**Soup up, Tune In.** Of course, to accomplish your task, you'll have to have the appropriate tools. In addition to your ship, you will have both the moral and tactical support of a copilot, one of six personality-filled characters ranging from the surfer-dude Thrash, to mall-head Chablis, and from the moderate Lark, to hardened, battle-veteran Dogstar. To choose your copilot for a given mission (some of them may be on assignment), you can examine their historical, psychological, and combat profiles.

You can even get up close and personal for an interview. Interaction is limited to choosing from four buttons to ask questions, a la Lunicus and Monkey Island. Fortunately, Cyberflix has dispensed with the poorly modeled mannequins you saw before approaching someone in Lunicus. The cast is still cartoony and the lip syncing wouldn't fool any MTV addicts, but their words are witty and their attitudes and expressions distinctive.

ake some comfort in that, while the future may look pretty bleak, the music remains hot. Before you head out into the urban warfare zone, you can choose among four musical soundtracks—grunge, heavy metal, urban, and alternative. In general, the loops are long enough to add a sense of rhythm to the game without becoming annoying, although some of the sampled speech can distract you from the messages you receive throughout the game.

You'll also pay a visit to Arms Mart, where the \$1000 you're given to start will barely cover some low-end lasers, missiles, bombs, and rockets. That flare bomb you've had your heart set on may even be out of stock, but don't despair. You'll be seeing "the weapons lady" later in the game.

[Start Spreading the Shrapnel](#). Before you take the helm of the Raven, you can be treated to a guided tour of its controls from the online help robot that was obviously programmed by cappuccino-sipping Greenwich Villagers of the future. He'll wryly explain that how the video monitor, distance and direction monitor, radar, weapons, and hovering systems work. You'll note that you can delegate any or all of your combat responsibilities—navigating, hovering, and shooting—to your copilot. Delegate nothing and they'll complain they're bored; delegate everything and they'll complain they're overworked. In the future, good help is as hard to find as the Florida coastline.

Upon entering the war zone, you'll be greeted by a small army of modified jeeps, helicopters, and tanks. For the most part, you'll be on the defensive until your radar determines you're battling a nasty who has a pod, at which point you'll want to see one of the game's realistic enemy destruction scenes. Flying enemies twirl to the ground before exploding and other enemies launch shrapnel as they explode.

s in Lunicus, firing can be tricky in Jump Raven, and it's nearly impossible to aim at villains on the ground when you're not hovering. The situation could be improved by an alternate view that didn't show your vehicle. Perhaps the intention is to let you see the value of targeted weapons, but Jump Raven is challenging enough that some kind of enhancement would not compromise the difficulty. You must aim and switch weapons with the mouse, which can slow you down a little. While we didn't test it, QuicKeys would probably be a useful aid here. Don't let these little detractions worry you too much, though. Jump Raven is as fine a twitch game as you can buy for the Mac.

Killing bad guys also nets you cash. On occasion, your video screen and distance and direction indicator will let you know that the fuel truck, weapons helicopter, or repair bay is nearby. You'll need to visit all three to replenish your ammo and nitro fuel and repair all the navigational and communication aids in your ship.

After you've collected all the pods, you must face a level boss, which can be quite a challenge. And then, after successfully bringing back the pods, you get the honor of doing it all over again in another borough.

**A Speedy CD.** Once again, Cyberflix has laughed in the face of the limits of CD-ROM technology. On a Quadra 800 with extensions off and using the Large Install option, animation in Jump Raven was completely smooth. Noticing a pause was a rare event, and the wait never lasted more than a second. However, the tools you need today to make the most of this game are nearly as impressive as the argon lasers you can purchase in the game itself. If your hardware can't handle the large installation (a not-so-trivial 6 MB of RAM and 32 MB of hard disk space), you can choose medium or small installations. Of course, the less you install on the hard drive, the more the game will have to access your CD-ROM.

One final caveat regarding Jump Raven is the use of profanity, most of which is mild and all of which is spoken. Used sparingly, it enhances the realism of the characters with which you interact. Cyberflix calls itself the interactive movie company, and thus we would rate this work PG-13.

**Jump In.** The masters of the metropolitan death maze have hit another home run. Like no other game, Jump Raven can pull you into the heart of a futuristic urban assault. A thoroughly enjoyable mix of skill and luck, reflex and strategy, anyone who has a lust for blowing baddies to smithereens will be a prime candidate to become a Raven Lunatic.

#### Pros

- The fastest CD-ROM alive
- Good sense of humor in satire, ads, and online help
- Pulsing sound keeps you in the game
- Selective task delegation
- Good choice for implements of destruction

#### Cons

- Serious hardware requirements
- Language may be inappropriate for younger players
- Enemies are numerous but stupid
- No hot keys for switching among weapons