eview: PegLeg

by Eileen Mullin

Type: Arcade
Publisher: Changeling Software, (800/769-2768)
Retail Price: $39.95
Street Price: $20.00 plus shipping for green version (disk only, no box or manual)
Requires: System 6.0.7 or later, 12-inch or larger monitor with 256 colors or grays, 1.9 MB free RAM. Native to Power Macintoshes.
Protection: Serial number required

eing in the Galactic Navy has its ups and downs, as the introduction to the action arcade game Pegleg acknowledges. You've just been "volunteered" for a life-or-death mission: the Earth is at war with an alien species, and it's your job to blast all intruders to kingdom come.

As reluctant as your character may be to participate, once you start to play Pegleg, you'll find it highly addictive. Cool sounds and high-quality, 3-D graphics contribute to the Space-Invaders-on-steroids experience. Your ship can fly in all directions across the screen but your shooting is directed upwards, towards the top of the screen. You gain points for each alien you destroy, as well as points for leftover bonus time once each sector, or level of play, is secured. You increase your firepower by picking up supply containers that let you mow down more alien critters faster. You can also increase your bonus time by picking up magic coins that bounce across the screen. It's a major challenge to hold your fire long enough to pick up supplies and coins before returning to the battle.

Stop the Galaxy I Want to Get Off. You can choose between three speeds of play — slow, normal, and double speed. Warning to contact lens wearers: you'd better put in those eye drops, because the double speed setting is so fast you'll forget about blinking for awhile. The difference between the speed settings was especially noticeable while playing Pegleg on a Power Macintosh. You also have the ability to resize the game to play full-screen on any monitor, which makes for easier gameplay on larger monitors.   You can also control the mouse sensitivity, or how quickly your ship responds to the way you move the mouse.

The game offers a lot of positive reinforcement for novice players. The more powerful

weapons you get from supply containers are so much more efficient than the stock bullet that players are encouraged to interrupt splatterplay to increase their firepower whenever possible. For those last-minute bailouts, you have a certain   number of self-directing bombs called Goomers at your disposal. By default, Goomers are dispatched by hitting the Shift key, but you can customize the keyboard commands for this and other onscreen actions. Instructions can be viewed onscreen, and the top 10 scores can be shown and cleared.

ou start each game with four player lives, and earn a new life with each 19,999 points. Play is controlled by either a mouse/trackball or through keyboard commands. Since split-second timing is so key to mastering Pegleg, a trackball is really the best way to go. The speed of play is satisfactory even on slower Macs. There are seven levels of sound control, plus the sound can be turned off altogether.

What Goes Up Must Come Down. Pegleg reinforces my personal theory of the usefulness of arcade games in high school physics classes. Namely, your mastery of this game depends in large part on your ability to judge how each class of alien responds to meeting an equal and opposite force. Depending on your level of firepower, you may have to shoot each baddie more than once in order to obliterate it. Your opponents include Drones (which mainly take up space, but which may rain fallout on you after you blow them up) and a variety of Bad Dudes (which fire back at you). In the earlier levels, aliens always appear from either the top or the sides of the screen; in the higher levels, bad guys may suddenly metamorphose in the middle of the action and start firing at you.

You can start the game at any of the 20 different levels of play. This excuses experienced players from boredom at the easier levels, and lets beginning players take a sneak peek at

what's in store for them at the highest levels of the game. You can pause the game as necessary, but you can't save games midstream. The occasional meteor storm showers you every few levels—a good opportunity to pick up extra points, but it's extra humiliating to die by blundering into these aimlessly flying rocks.

[nterface the Nation.]{.blue} The intro screen, dialog boxes, and enter-your-name-here screen for top scorers all remind you that you're playing this game to have fun. For example, the high score screen recognizes that "You're dead now, so you won't be able to fully appreciate all the kudos that go along with such success; the money, the book signings, appearances on talk shows, cheap affairs with no emotional meaning." Makes you think twice before typing in your name, doesn't it?

You can check your progress as you wreak galactic havoc by checking the status bar on the bottom of your screen for the number of ships you have remaining, Goomers remaining, your sector level, your score, bonus time, and gun status.

[Summary.]{.blue} Pegleg's sound and graphic capabilities are truly impressive, and your ability to set speed levels and the mouse sensitivity make the controls very responsive. The increasing difficulty of the game requires players to spend a significant amount of time navigating the higher levels of the game.

Pegleg is so much fun it's a shame there's no two-player mode. The game is so addictive it's easy to spend hours trying to beat your personal best or reach a new level for the first time. Whether you're new to shoot-'em-up space fun or a trigger-happy old pro, Pegleg will have you on the edge of your seat as you wipe out wave after wave of pesky alien hordes.

Pros

- Very impressive sound; unique and colorful graphics
- Game can be easily customized, including level of play, speed, and mouse sensitivity
- Difficulty level easily modified for broad appeal to all levels of players.

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Humorous user interface
-
Easy learning curve

Cons
-
Play can be repetitive
-
Single-player mode only
-
Double-speed play may not work properly on 030-based Macs
-
PowerTalk and file sharing can slow things down; Changeling suggests you turn them off while playing