

# review: Zone Warrior

by Bill Gillette

Type: 3-D Space Combat CD  
Publisher: Casady & Greene (408/484-9228)  
Retail Price: \$49.95  
Street Price: \$35.00  
Requires: Power Macintosh  
Protection: None  
Power Mac Native: Yes

From the people who brought you highly acclaimed programs like Conflict Catcher and GliderPro, comes Zone Warrior, a sequel to Zone of Avoidance.

Well-known programmers Julian James and John Calhoun have pooled their considerable talents to extensively rework Zone of Avoidance into this all-new game entitled Zone Warrior. Major improvements include textured graphics, better screen resolution and Power PC capabilities. But that is only the beginning. Even though Zone Warrior is an off-spring of ZOA, no real comparison between the two can be made. There are similarities in plot, but in all other aspects Zone Warrior is eons ahead. In fact, the two are so dissimilar that someone familiar with ZOA might not recognize Zone Warrior as being related.

**Gameplay.** You start in the space station where the pilot receives the current status of that level. There are anywhere from five to 30 targets that have to be destroyed for the completion of the level. The targets include projectiles, raiders, cruisers, and marauders.

Departing the space station you travel through space seeking hostile intruders and protecting the station from projectile damage. When the last threat has been successfully eliminated you are instructed to return for docking. If the station is undamaged you are allowed to dock by way of a "power proximity tractor beam" that propels you directly into the station where you receive your score, bonuses, performance data and status of the next level.

Every fifth level, after all threats have been removed, an alien command ship appears. At

this point you must enter the rear of the command ship and maneuver into position to destroy its reactor core with one of your missiles. This will test your ability at first, but with practice it is usually accomplished on the first attempt. There are over 100 levels, so the gamer will find many hours of satisfying play. Here lies my main complaint with Zone Warrior. Once the game skills have been mastered many of the levels are too similar. As your score increases and higher levels are attained, the degree of difficulty, for the most part, does not advance. One would think that a few of the higher levels would be all but impossible, except for the quickest and most agile 12-year-old. But I must admit in spite of this drawback there was an addictive process, because I kept wanting to “do” the next level and achieve a higher and higher score.

**Interface.** One small criticism carried over from the previous version is that there is not much of a plot. However, on the plus side, there’s not a lot of time wasted on silly video clips depicting an even sillier story line, so you can jump right into action. ZW can be played on several different backgrounds; 400, 800, or thousands of stars, however the greater the number of stars the slower the frame rate. Also a large planet may be displayed or absent in your space environment. The pilot in the cockpit is surrounded by instruments and gauges needed to operate his ship: fuel supply, warp power, shield strength, velocity and radar that shows the enemies position relative to you. There are also missile supply, life (ships), level and number of enemy indicators.

**Controls.** The controls are operated in a normal or sensitive mode and can be manipulated with the keyboard, mouse or game pad. The mouse can be operated in the yoke mode where the control behaves like a flight simulator with mouse forward being pitch down and left/right being roll; or point mode where the control allows the craft to move in the direction

of the mouse cursor. I would recommend a game pad with joystick in the sensitive configuration. The use of a joystick in conjunction with ZOA's 3-D platform can make for a very intense experience. I found myself holding the joystick, with my arms extended in front of the monitor, twisting and turning my body with the motion of my ship as I chased down and destroyed an escaping marauder.

**Sound.** The audio is what you might expect for this type of game; There is pre-play background music followed by the sounds of your ships` engine noise, laser fire, rockets launching, explosions, collisions, etc.

**raphics.** Undoubtedly the best feature of this game and what sets it apart from other arcade games, the graphics are presented three-dimensionally and, even though not excessively complex or spectacular, play is extremely realistic. ZOA allows you to participate in, rather than merely observe, the action. You have no trouble believing yourself a pilot in charge of an attack craft winging through space, protecting your space station from the perils of alien intruders. After sighting a target, which looms larger and larger as you converge, you can fire your laser and see the beam all the way to contact and vaporization. The 3-D animation is so well done that when the warp mode is engaged you can actually "feel" the g-forces as you hurl past space objects. And so real is the graphic impression that you will duck and cringe when you realize that a collision with an attacking Raider is unavoidable and you are about to become the equivalent of space grease.

**Bottom Line.** It is comforting to know that there are still a few companies like Casady & Greene who will conscientiously put forth that extra effort to give consumers their moneys worth. This game may not appeal to everyone but those of you who like shoot-em-up action,

won't be disappointed in Zone Warrior and I highly recommend it.

#### Pros

- Good value
- Great 3-D graphics
- Loads of fun
- Lots of levels

#### Cons

- Lacks plot
- Higher levels could be a little more difficult