

y Robert C. Lewis

ong ago, in a galaxy far away, a small rag-tag army of rebels launched a major offensive strike against an evil empire. Against all odds, these rebels were able to overcome and destroy the Empire's most diabolical weapon: the lethal Death Star. With its destruction, the rebels believed the biggest threat to the alliance was put to rest and that the fall of the empire was now something tangible.

[Bermuda Triangle?](#)

After the destruction of the Death Star, the Rebels began to scout out different quadrants in search of any new Imperial activities. Then rumors began to surface that Rebel spaceships near the Dreighton Nebula were disappearing without any indication of Imperial intervention. To further add fuel to this mystery is the fact that the Dreighton Nebula is known as the galactic equivalence to our Bermuda Triangle. Stories about this area of space go back to a time when early hyperspace travelers would lose their way through the endless tribulations of the nebula. During the Clone Wars, it was told that the nebula wound up the victor when two opposing forces at the height of battle just suddenly vanished.

In hope of determining the why behind these strange occurrences, the Rebel forces decide to send in some of their top pilots to patrol the outer area of the nebula. Of the pilots included in the patrol group, is one that proved his worth in a previous Rebel assault. Yet ironically this outstanding Rebel pilot still carries the nickname Rookie One.

One day, on a routine patrol, Rookie One gets a distress call from a ship within the nebula. It seems that the ship is under attack although there is no sign on his scanners of any enemy ships. The ship is forced down on a nearby planet. Rookie One and his squad lay in a course to the planet to assist the pilot of the downed craft. Just before reaching the planet, Rookie One and his group come under attack by an unseen enemy and all but Rookie One are destroyed.

Hidden Base?

Although Rookie One managed to survive the attack, his ship is crippled and he is forced to do an emergency eject over the planet. Once down, Rookie One is able to use a transponder to track down the attacked ship. As Rookie One nears the location of the ship, he discovers to his amazement that the ship is being held at an Imperial outpost. Why would the Empire build an outpost in a region of space that has no strategic value? Could there be a connection between this base and the mysterious disappearances of rebel ships? Can Rookie One once more take on the Empire by himself and survive? Tune in as we follow the exploits of Rookie One in Rebel Assault II: The Hidden Empire.

Anticipation

Rebel Assault II has to be one of the most anticipated sequels next to maybe Marathon II. I played the original Rebel Assault and I have to admit that the sequel is something to be seen. It is an arcade action game set within a movie. Basically, Rebel Assault follows the story line of the Star Wars Trilogy by taking place shortly after the destruction of the first Death Star.

New Story and Footage

This is the first time since the original trilogy that George Lucas has allowed anyone to film a live action Star Wars adventure. In Rebel Assault I, all the characters were computer generated portrayals while the characters in Rebel Assault II are played by professional actors. Filming the story was just like what they would do for a theatrical production. The actors would do their scenes in actual Star Wars costumes while using props from the original films in front of a blue screen. Then, in post-production, the blue screen would be replaced with background settings that utilized computer generated 3-D models and related special effects.

ew Engine

To help make all this work, Lucas Arts completely revamped their classic Rebel Assault engine. By doing this Lucas Arts was able to combine technology that gives Rebel Assault II game play a feel that is hard to beat. This combined with full screen cinematic action, ten channel stereo sound, and sharp special effects and music gives you a theatrical experience that to this point I have never seen in a computer game. This also explains why it takes up two CDs.

Old Friends Unite

As in the first Rebel Assault, you once again get to play and guide Rookie One through 15 chapters of game play. With the discovery of the secret Imperial outpost, Rookie One begins to believe the rumors that the Empire may have created a new weapon to smash the rebel army. Along the way in his quest, Rookie One will meet up with Ru Murleen: a friend he made in his first assault who will help him in his second assault against the Empire.

Diversified Game Play

Game play is really great because there is so much variety built into the game. Over all, the game play can be broken down into four different perspectives. The first mode is called Ground Combat where you get into shoot outs from an over the shoulder vantage. Point of View Combat is shoot outs from a first person perspective. This is similar to point of view you get in Dark Forces. The third view is called Cockpit Flight/Combat. In this mode, you are sitting in the cockpit of some type of ship looking out the flight window as you maneuver around different obstacles and fight off enemy ships. The last perspective is call the Behind-Ship Flight. This is like the Ground Combat Mode where you are flying your ship from the rear as you maneuver through different types of mazes (i.e., mine tunnels, asteroids, etc.).

To add to the diversity of the game are the number of different ships you get to pilot. Besides the standard starships (i.e., X-Wing, B-Wing, etc.), you also get to fly/pilot Tie Fighters, speeder bikes, and even the Millennium Falcon. To add to the diversity is the inclusion of four levels of difficulty and two more levels that you can customize with the built in Difficulty Editor. I really have to take my hat off to Lucas Arts for creating a game with so much variety that if you should yawn, it probably will be from lack of sleep.

Control is the Key

Control of Rookie One's actions can be done by the keyboard or any programmable joystick. I found the Gravis MouseStick II and the ChoiceStick linked to a Sega remote gamepad to be the ideal controllers for the game. Since Rebel Assault II is very demanding on your CPU, all variable was worked into the program to allow you to tailor it to the power of your Mac. Just bear in mind that bottom end Mac it will run on is one with an 040/25 MHz CPU.

Other Changes

Another change made to Rebel Assault II is the modified use of passwords to move from one chapter to the next. One thing I hated about Rebel Assault I was how you had to write the passwords down if you wanted to play levels you had mastered. If you lost your list of

passwords, all you could do was go back to square one and start anew. Now when you complete a chapter, the next chapter stays accessible without the need of entering a password. In addition to this method, you can also gain access to the other chapters by use of the password. These passwords are revealed each time you complete a given chapter. This can be useful if you go over to a friend's house and they have not gotten as far as you. Just bear in mind that there is a different set of passwords for each level of difficulty.

Minor Flaw

Even with all the fantastic sounds, music, beautiful graphics and animation, I still managed to find one minor flaw in this gem of a game. It occurs when you are in the Ground and Point of View Combat mode. The targeting cursor can be very hard to see at times. Sometimes it can get lost in the background. With all the customization that was built into the game, I was surprised that you could not make any adjustments to the targeting cursor. I just wish that the cursor stood out more so that you would not lose track of it.

Last Words

Overall, I found Rebel Assault II to be an excellent sequel to the original game. It does what a sequel should do by going further in scope and breaking new ground in what the game can do. So strap yourself in and get ready for an adventure that is sure to satisfy that Star Wars thirst in you. If I am wrong then just wait. X-Wing should also be out by the time you read this article. I guess the force is definitely with us... enjoy.

Pros

- Great story line
- Original Rebel Assault Engine Completely reworked
- First live action footage shot since the original theatrical trilogy
- Very diversified game play
- Fantastic graphics, music, and special effects
- Goes beyond the original Rebel Assault in every way
- Characters are portrayed by professional actors
- Built in difficulty editor allows you to tailor the difficulty of the game to your personal taste

Cons

- Targeting cursor can be hard to see
- Can only be ran on Macs that have a 040/25Mhz CPU or better

Publisher Info

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