

y Ron Hunt

light sims were at one time quite scarce on the Mac. With only a couple to choose from, it was probably THE one thing I coveted most from the IBM side of the road. They had many and we had two. Well, times have changed and I now have more megabytes of flight sim software than my original Mac hard drive would hold. However, there was still something missing among the A-10's, F/A -18's, Harriers, Hellcats and others. There was only one helicopter simulation game. That has recently changed with the release of Comanche Mac from Nova Logic.

The RAH-66 Comanche, built by Boeing-Sikorsky, is designed as a light-weight scout/attack helicopter utilizing stealth technology and crisp fighter like control response. Comanche was originally released on the IBM line of PC's and quickly became touted as the world's most popular helicopter simulation. Nova Logic has now brought the game to the Macintosh and Power Macintosh in an effort to fill the void in helicopter simulations. While it is more or less a port from it's IBM counterpart, Nova Logic has done a good job bringing the game to the Macintosh environment.

[The Unfriendly Skies](#)

Starting the game will bring up a list of available pilots. Ten positions are available and next to each name the number of completed missions for that pilot. Choosing a pilot will take you to the next briefing screen with options for starting your next mission, checking your pilots

statistics, choosing a different pilot, seeing an overview of the Comanche, or quitting the game. These choices are not accessible with your mouse cursor but are easily scrollable with the arrow keys. OK, so they left a little bit of their IBM showing! Normal Mac menus are available by hitting the "esc" key and offer a wide variety of detail and control options to best suite your machine. The game menu screens are well done and easy to understand with excellent artwork of the Comanche in the background.

Comanche Mac offers a new graphic technology never before seen on the Macintosh. Voxel Space graphic effects provide photo-realistic effects such as translucent smoke, snow, haze, reflective water, and dynamic 3D weather modeling. The effects are very impressive; however, they come at a cost - speed! There are two screen sizes available: 640 X 480 and 320 X 240.

In 640 X 480 mode, I found the graphics very life-like when looking in the distance but became chunky and blocky when viewing objects close up. This was disappointing compared to graphics we've seen from Parsoft, Graphic Simulations and others. The game runs somewhat jerky on a 100 megahertz PPC machine and is almost unplayable on a 68040 Mac with the details turned on. Turning the detail down did little to make the game run smoothly and the extra blockiness of the graphics took away much of the enjoyment. I bought my Mac for the graphics, right?! Added to that, jerky gameplay on a 100 megahertz PPC just didn't seem right!

ell, it seems the trick to really enjoying this game was to run it in 320 X 240 screen mode. I know, I know. That only provides a screen 4 3/4 inches wide by 2 1/2 inches high, but it will provide a night and day difference in gameplay! The graphics are realistic and the feel was

silky smooth! In my opinion, the only way to use this game on a 68040 Mac is in small screen mode. Power Macs benefit as well. The speed difference and fluid feel of the game will soon keep you from noticing the size of the game window!

Comanche Mac is really more of an arcade game than a simulator. It does provide fairly good feel and control but many missions are unrealistic with some weapons loads totaling in the hundreds. Weapons are automatically loaded for each mission and the user has no control over the type or quantity. In addition, the altitude is limited to about 500 ft so the die-hard sim fanatic may be disappointed. However, if you're too high to jump then your too high to be flying a combat chopper anyway! Nova Logic designed the game to have a very fast learning curve and to be easy to fly. The cockpit is simple, weapons easy to use, and controls simple to learn. The HUD (Heads Up Display) displays speed, altitude, heading, and rate of climb. Two tactical display monitors can be set to provide any two of the following: Moving Map, Target Acquisition, Threat Indicator, Mission Status, or Damage Display. A full time Threat Indicator is located in the lower right instrument panel area and a Weapons Display Indicator at the lower left. Chaff and Flares will dispense automatically when there is a threat inbound or manually if you like. Some missions provide wingmen or artillery backup, and targets can be designated by the pilot. For instance, choosing "wingman" as the weapon, designating a target and pulling the trigger will send your wingman gallantly on his way to destroy the target! Targets are plentiful and the terrain full of valleys and mountains for you, as well as the enemy, to hide behind. The simulation is extremely well done in this respect. This is strictly "what you see is what you get" flying! No radar here in that the terrain provides a wonderful 3D environment in which to fly and play hide and go seek! There are ten campaigns with ten missions each. That's 100 missions in a variety of landscape and weather including both day and night sorties.

Comanche Mac will support a full Thrustmaster setup, CH FlightStick, MouseStick II, Que Pad, Que Stick, or any other joystick compatible with your Macintosh. You can use only the keyboard or mouse if you so desire but I don't recommend it. The mouse is especially hard to control and will provide more frustration than favorable results.

Comanche Mac comes on CD-ROM and can be played directly from the CD with no use of your hard drive space. However, to improve mission loading times and playing speed, you may want to load some portion of it to your hard drive.

Bottom Line

In my opinion, Comanche Mac misses the mark as a true helicopter simulation and the small window necessary for smooth gameplay is a little hard to accept in these days of 100 plus megahertz machines. However, if you're looking for a great helicopter arcade game that's simple to learn, full of action, and has 100 different missions to fly, this should be at the top of your list!

Pros

- 100 Missions
- Easy and quick to learn
- Plays directly from CD-ROM

Cons

- Jerky play in 640 X 480 screen mode even on Power PC
- Objects have blocky PC look at close range in 640 X 480 mode
- 320 X 240 screen mode needed for smooth action

Publisher Info

Nova Logic
26010 Mureau Rd, Ste 200
Calabasas, CA 91302-9946

Tech Support: 818/878-0325
Internet: <http://www.novalogic.com>