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When was the last time you heard the word.....Perestroika? It's a Russian term coined by Mikhail Gorbachev meaning restructuring or rebuilding. If my memory serves me correctly, most Americans heard that word for the first time in 1987. Since then many changes have taken place in the American-Russian relationship and we've come to find out that the Russians were not really any different than us and that they loved a good computer game as much as the next guy. If by now you're wondering why I'm writing about "Perestroika" in an IMG review article, it's because of Vladimir Pokhiko and Alexey Pajitnov. Who are they? They are the creators of probably the most popular video/computer game on the face of the planet..... Tetris.

Ice & Fire is a 3D action and adventure game and is the second venture into computer gaming for Vladimir and Alexey. As a joint Russian-American project, it brings to us the best in technical sophistication and exciting gameplay.

Ice & Fire takes you far into the future. A scientific expedition named IF-1 is set on an asteroid near a binary star system and black hole. While engaged in an extended study of the unusual physics related to the near-by system, the station is invaded by aggressive alien life-forms known as Spherids. How the Spherids arrived and the purpose of their invasion is a mystery. Since the station is at risk of being destroyed and lost, the commander of IF-1 placed the entire station in cryogenic suspension. Your mission in this game is to rescue the

IF-1 personnel and to unlock the secrets as to why this mysterious invasion took place.

Ice & Fire is comprised of two games with eight mazes within a maze. Rather than having various levels to aspire to with Ice & Fire, you must navigate the asteroid and its eight stations to uncover various clues and gain access to the next station and finish the game.

he first level places you in a cruiser flying over the surface of the asteroid and through many breathtaking passes and tunnels. While in the cruiser, you are locked to a traffic network system of green tracks which weave their way above the asteroid surface. Your speed is set and you cannot break free of the tracks; however, you can use the control keys to determine which track to take as you whisk along the surface of the asteroid. Pay attention! The traffic system is not finished and a wrong turn will send you spinning off into space or careening into the face of the asteroid. As you fly along, you will be attacked by the security robot ships and aerial bombs. The cruiser is equipped with missiles and a force shield for protection; however, careful navigation will help to avoid these ships. Also you must always be on the look-out for the many items that can be useful to your mission. Wind and weave your way across the asteroid on a traffic system that would bring tears to the eyes of the freeway interchange guys to find the eight stations. When you reach a station that you have gained clearance to, the second part of the game comes into play.

Within each station you will find many halls, rooms and levels to explore. You are equipped with an ice blaster which freezes anything it hits, and a fire blaster which, as you might expect, incinerates anything it hits. Oddly shaped chunks of ice are scattered about the stations within which are frozen IF-1 station personnel, equipment, energy, ammo, and of course, angry aliens! To clear a station, all of its personnel must be rescued by having you

thaw them out. Choosing which chunk of ice to melt is not as easy as it sounds; melt the wrong one, and you will unleash one of the many aliens who will attack you immediately!

Gameplay is simple with few controls to learn, and there is a great help menu located under the Apple of your menu bar. Games can be saved at anytime giving you an opportunity to get some refreshments, or heaven forbid, go to work! The beginning video and cut scenes between game levels are cinematic quality scenes which will be sure to draw you into the feeling of the game. The action is fast and the graphics, at times, breathtaking. All of the graphics are texture-mapped, and the lighting effects are done superbly. This, combined with an intriguing sound track, immerses you into the game giving you an eerie feeling of being there!

Ice and Fire, like most games today, will use all the memory you can spare. The minimum RAM required is 8MB; however, you must turn on virtual memory. 16MB is highly recommended. It will also need 10MB of hard drive space even though it plays from the CD-ROM.

Ice & Fire was created to take advantage of Virtual i-0's i-glasses. This head mounted display is fully compatible with Macintosh computers and offers the possibility of enhancing your gaming experience. I did not have this available for this review and can offer no other thoughts at this time. For more information, contact Virtual i-o at 1/800-666-3759 or info@vio.com. The game is easily controlled with the keyboard but also supports the use of your mouse or joystick.

Overall, the game is exciting, intriguing, and yes, like Tetris, addicting. It ran very well with only minor slow downs in frame rates in highly detailed areas. However, this did little to take away from the total enjoyment of the game. If you enjoy a good mystery/maze/adventure, this one's for you, from Russia with love I'm sure!

Pros

- Incredible graphics
- Easy gameplay
- Good musical score

Cons

- Needs lots of RAM memory
- Slow frame rates in high detailed areas

Publisher Info

<http://www.gtinteractive.com>