

y Greg Kramer

arning the “where-in-the-hell-did-they-get-this-idea” award this month is “ShatterBat” from the nutbars at Antennahead Industries. Kinda like...no. It’s a cross between...nope. I got it, it’s...no that’s not it either. Let’s do this another way.

Not quite like anything you have seen before, you must (and try to contain your shock here) shatter bats (the animals not wooden sticks) as they fly around in front of you. Standing in your way is the self-appointed guardian of the helpless glass-jawed flying rodents, Mister Bob, a bulletproof, giant, menacing clown head who dogs you and disrupts your otherwise carefree bat shattering. Your other, and more persistent, foe is the clock which provides you precious little time to do your dirty work. The object: shoot the required number of bats on each level before time runs out. If the clock or Mister Bob beats you three times, game over man!

I know what you’re saying, “been there, done that”. In case you hadn’t figured it out though, this is one weird game! You play in what is essentially a box with invisible walls with floating polished-stone geometric solids littering the room. The game makes no attempt to explain who you are, what you are flying around in, or why you are compelled to shoot bats but that is part of the appeal. At its heart, ShatterBat is an arcade-style cockpit-view shoot-’em up but with some very odd interior decorating.

xtra!

There are power-ups a-plenty, including a variety of weapons and the ability to stop time. These bonuses pop up randomly throughout the game, so you have to be on the look out for them. Actually, you just need to keep an ear open; the game's very effective directional sound comes in handy if one of these glowing pink oil barrels somehow escapes your view.

Losing your bearings is an all too common occurrence in ShatterBat, and is, in fact, the primary challenge of the game. You have to use sound, sight, and instinct to move around the playing field and still shatter the required number of bats. Aiding you is the Mister Bob Radar which beeps faster as your floating nemesis draws near. There is a lot to pay attention to but it is just enough to keep your heart racing and to assure that you will come back for more.

The gameplay is fast and furious and very easy to learn. The controls are simple and the action is basic point-and-shoot with some flying to avoid the persistent, if plodding, Mister Bob. The music is solid and mood-enhancing, and the visuals are first rate.

he only real shortcoming in ShatterBat is that the playing field is a bit too confined. Many levels consisted of sitting in one corner shooting as many bats as possible before Mister Bob got too close, racing to the other side of the field and doing the same thing. Since you are racing against the clock, this method does seem to be the point of the game, but it can get a bit dull. Higher levels are fortunately a bit larger, but they never achieve sufficient wide open space to make this a truly rollicking ride.

Batty!

ShatterBat is certainly one of the most original shareware titles I have seen this year. It is fast, nimble, and addictive. Did I mention it is also very weird? ShatterBat's few flaws do not negate its bargain shareware fee. With their first commercial title ("Sanctity") right around the corner, Antennahead has the makings of one delightfully odd and original game maker, and one that certainly is worthy of your support.

Pros

- Very original, faced-paced game
- Good 3-D graphics and very effective directional sound

Cons

- Play area feels a bit cramped.

Publisher Info

Antennahead Industries, Inc.

<http://www.antennahead.com>

