

M.A.X.

(Interplay)

System: PC

This game has a 100-page manual. I say this because if you're the type of gamer who only needs to know where the "fire" button is before you can play a new game, I advise you not to bother with M.A.X. However, if the novella-sized manual accompanying this futuristic, wartime colony-building sim doesn't intimidate you, stick around--this might be right up your alley.

In M.A.X., which stands for Mechanized Assault & Exploration, you get to pick the planet you wish to colonize, build and direct tanks, planes and other military units (as well as construction equipment) and use them to drive the opposition off the planet so you can cultivate the land--uninterrupted. In between combat sequences, you'll use surveyors to scan the planet for raw materials (minerals, gold, etc.), erect structures like mining stations, shipyards and power stations and send out scouts to locate enemy forces. M.A.X. can be played against the computer, with a friend over a modem, or with two, three or four other players over a local network. It's all very futuristic and complicated--exactly what a hardcore sim/strategy fan could want.--Jeff Kitts