Aliens

Category:	Graphic Adventure
Developer:	Cryo
Publisher:	Mindscape, 88 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945 (415) 897-9900

Despite its wonderfully dreary graphics and intense subject matter, *Aliens* is brought to a halt by bad dialog and frustrating puzzles.

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; SmartDrive

There's no denying that we were pretty excited when we got our first look at *Aliens: A Comic Book Adventure* nearly a year ago. This dark and sinister adventure game seemed to have all of the right ingredients for a sure-fire hit. *Aliens* combines the talents of the *Dragon Lore* and *Lost Eden* creators at Cryo, the art and characters of the Dark Horse Comics *Aliens* series, and those despicable xenomorphs from three (ok ... two) of the most popular science fiction films in recent history. But after just a few minutes of playing through this adventure game, it's painfully obvious that the end product didn't come together nearly as well as it should have.

And it's a shame, too, because the problems in *Aliens* seem to be the result of careless oversights and a lack of consideration for the gamer. Shoddy dialog, poor character interaction, lousy voice-overs and crummy sound effects are just a few of the things that keep this title from being a winner.

The game does present an immediate appeal, boasting some of the most impressive 3D-rendered graphics you'll see in a PC adventure. The otherworldly environments of spaceships and isolated outposts are appropriately menacing, and deliver just the right mood for a creepy sci-fi tale. But once you get past the graphics and start puzzling through the game, the flawed elements start creeping to the surface, leaving the adventure flat and unappealing.

The story starts with you in command of a small expeditionary force sent to investigate a distress call on Outpost 54-C. Your mission is to determine whether aliens are involved, and — if you find them — take appropriate action

The game does deliver some much-needed intensity once you've landed on Outpost 54-C, but the timed puzzles and vague information about mission goals prove far too frustrating.

The character interaction in *Aliens* leaves a lot to be desired, with question-and-answer sessions that will leave you scratching your head.

to wipe them out. Three other characters are under your command, and from here it's supposed to be adventure gaming as usual. You'll need to talk to your crew, gather information about the mission, and deal with puzzles both great and small. But as you try to uncover important clues, the often baffling and obscure information you get from your team members makes even the simplest of puzzles a chore.

For example, when your character needs a green passcard from another team member, you won't be able to simply ask her, "Do you know where I can find the green passcard?" Instead, you'll need to start your conversation with "You're a good person, Lora." Then you'll listen to an abusive tirade, trading incoherent remarks that have nothing to do with the passcard until finally, (and quite unexpectedly) she gives it to you.

While few adventure games are known for their memorable dialog, this one features some of the worst I've ever seen. That could be dismissed if it weren't a key element of the game, but it is. And as you progress through the game, the dialog seems to get even more bizarre.

As for the puzzles themselves, most present a good challenge for experienced gamers. But here, too, you'll find they're made unnecessarily frustrating by the inclusion of time limits. While these could add an extra level of tension to the proceedings, you're never given enough information about what you're supposed to do or where you're supposed to go, so you're left playing a given section over and over, trying every possible solution ad nauseum.

Despite the efforts taken to bring the dark and twisted visions of the Dark Horse comics to life as a computer game, the flaws and frustrations in actually playing *Aliens* are simply too severe to recommend it to all but the most dedicated adventurer.

—Todd Vaughn