

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

Stylishly doomed

Quietly slipping through the dark halls of the space station, the player sights one of the aliens. It hasn't sensed the danger, so it's easy to slip up beside it for the kill. But down the hall, a Space Marine gets in a lucky shot before he's killed. That makes 10 Marines and countless Aliens destroyed. The hunt has been good.

Killing Aliens is not as easy as it looks. They're very alert, and they move quickly. Worst of all, they don't just quietly fall down when shot. Their bodies splutter in a splash of bright green acid, leaving dangerous puddles behind. While Space Marines don't bleed acid, approaching them requires extreme caution as they tend to shoot anything that moves. A really fast Alien may dodge their bullets, but that's not so easily accomplished in tight halls or air shafts.

Now, Predators have a real advantage—invisibility. But even being invisible has its limits.

In *Alien vs. Predator* (AVP), players can assume the identity of a gutsy Space Marine with an arm load of weapons and a motion sensor, a Predator (not much to look at, but invisibility has its benefits), or a lightning-fast Alien.

Whichever role they choose, players enter an arena where survival is unlikely and victory is nearly out of the question. Though Rebellion Software created an original engine for AVP, gamers familiar with *Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3-D* will feel right at home with this first-person perspective, find-'em and kill-'em game.

Taking place in a fairly generic space station, AVP starts out slowly. Space

Marines begin the game by exploring a partially secured level of the station in search of weapons and ammunition. A few Aliens pop up early on as players make their way through the halls. By the time they get near the first elevator, more Aliens, and a few nasty Predators line the halls and wait behind each doorway. Space Marines should avoid first level air shafts at all costs. The aliens own those shafts, and there's no room to maneuver.

The Aliens and the Predators have secured areas too. The Predators control a spaceship attached to a station airlock. Inside the ship is a maze of tight hallways that look as if they're made of wicker.

The Aliens' domain is right out of the movies. Covered with hardened, cocooning slime, the walls look melted and foreboding. For halls, this realm has odd-shaped tunnels, perfect for the Aliens' loping gait. There are Marines in this domain, but they've been cocooned and pose no threat.

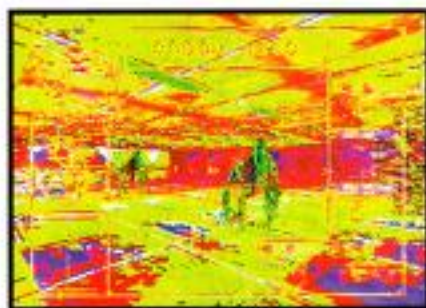
No matter which character players choose, the battle begins as they try to secure more territory. The space station is



immense. Fortunately, there's a mapping feature that charts the rooms as players explore them.

Each character in this fight has strengths and weaknesses. The Predator can turn invisible and attack unsuspecting Aliens and Marines. Invisible or not, the Predator's enemies spot him when he opens doors or gets too close. Though Predator players can easily kill enemies while invisible, they do not get any points for such an unsporting deed. The Predator is also unable to collect weapons while invisible. Like any big game hunter, the Predator wants a fine trophy to take home. In this case, his ultimate goal is to collect the Alien Queen's skull.

Fast but unarmed except for their hands, tails, mouths, and wits, the agile Aliens want the station for themselves. Though they cannot dodge bullets, their rapid lateral movements make them hard



to shoot. Because all of their weapons kill from close range, players need to master those lateral movements. Aliens need to cocoon Space Marines, since that is how they regenerate. Cocooned Marines act like game saves. When people play as Aliens, they restart the game by bursting out of the last cocooned Marine.

The Marines have the most advantages. Not only do they have long-range weapons, they also have motion sensors that are capable of detecting distant Aliens and invisible Predators. Unfortunately, Space Marines can dish punishment out better than they can take it. It doesn't take much damage to kill them. More than anything else, the Marines just want to leave the space station. Unfortunately, they'll have to enter the Alien lair to accomplish that.

Jaguar, with its high-speed processor and enormous color palette, was made for games like AVP. Not only are the Aliens large and realistically rendered, they move with cat-like grace. Back away from one and it will charge after you with the most realistic movements ever seen in a cartridge game. Details like this give AVP incredible impact.

Not every aspect of AVP is quite so glorious. When controlled by the CPU, the Space Marines are fairly lame creatures that stand around waiting to be killed. Another problem is that AVP's graphics are meant to be seen from a distance. Approached too closely, the resolution of objects and characters breaks down until they are undistinguishable. It is sometimes hard to tell an Alien from a wall.

The biggest problem with this game is the number of combination commands needed to play. Jaguar's game pads have 17 buttons, and players still need to memorize button combinations to play this game. In the thick of a battle, it's hard to remember that button number four controls the gatling gun and that the option button fires the grenades.

Overall, AVP is a brilliant demonstration of what Jaguar does best—fast and attractive game play. This game has characters that are larger than life, grizzly graphics, high-speed play, and an immense labyrinth in which one can get lost for days. **B-** (Steven L. Kent)

TECH SPECS

PUBLISHER: Atari
SYSTEM: Jaguar
THEME: Sci-Fi Action
MEGABITS: 64
PLAYERS: 1
LEVELS: 5