

# Aliens

**Computer:** Commodore 64  
**Publisher:** Activision  
 2350 Bayshore Parkway  
 Mountain View, CA 94043  
**Medium:** Disk  
**Price:** \$34.95

**A**liens, developed and marketed by Activision, is a special collection of six mini-games in which the player participates in events from the movie of the same name. The characters of Newt and Ripley are both included, and you must control the actions of Ripley in many phases of the game.

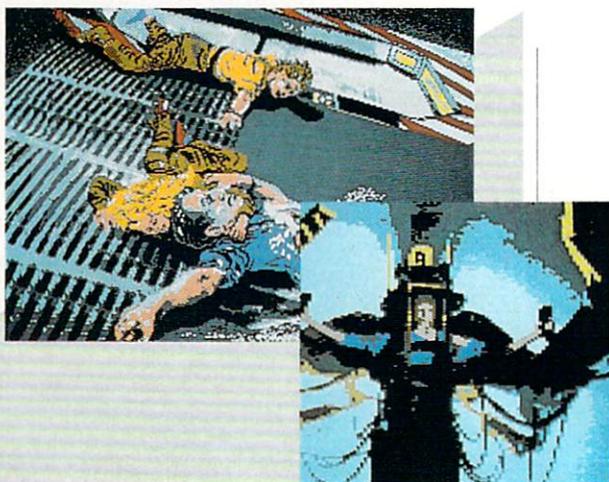
The first phase of the operation challenges you to pilot the drop-ship as it descends through the planet's atmosphere. This sequence isn't a true flight simulator, with complicated controls to master, but it delivers an easy-to-understand flight simulation which everyone should enjoy.

Once the troops have landed, four marines are sent out to search the interior of the Atmosphere Processor Building. Unfortunately, the aliens quickly become aware of their presence, and the second game has you directing a systematic retreat of your men to the APC (Armored Personnel Carrier). This exercise can become complicated, considering that a large enemy force is closing in on the marines' position.

When your people have been extracted from the area, they are driven to a new location in the complex. The Operations Room Rampage takes place when the squad becomes hopelessly surrounded. You must defend your position until one of your men can cut an escape route through a heavy steel door. This particular game forces the player to quickly analyze the situation and deal with each alien as an individual, even though you have to worry about eight lanes of invading creatures simultaneously.

As the group leaves the Operations Room behind them, Newt suggests it might be safer to travel through the air ducts. A fourth game, the Air Duct Maze Scramble, has Newt, Ripley, and the surviving marines desperately trying to find a route out of the building. If the team is captured, it means a slow death for everyone. Each marine knows the score and has volunteered to sacrifice his own life to save the others, by detonating his grenades when the safety of the group is

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threatened. Once again the user becomes an armchair general. During this evacuation maneuver, an accident places Newt in the hands of the enemy.

Even though the nuclear reactor of the complex will explode in 17 minutes, Ripley disregards her own safety and sets off to rescue her young friend in the Newt Rescue Race. There are a number of things to worry about during a relatively short period of time. For one thing, you are using the range locator to find Newt. Secondly, Ripley must leave a trail of flares to show her how to get back to the elevator. As you search for the child, blast aliens that pose an immediate threat, but try to conserve your ammunition for the encounter with the queen in the alien nest. Smart players become clock watchers and gauge their activities to the remaining time.

The final challenge is a brutal One-On-One Confrontation with the alien queen. Ripley commands a power loader during this epic battle taking place on the military transport ship. These loaders are heavy duty second bodies for their operators, and powerful enough to deliver a mean jab to a big bad alien spoiling for a fight. Weaken her as quickly as possible, grab the creature at the right moment, and drop her through the air lock to complete the final task of the mission.

Alien's graphics are well done and accurately depict their big screen counterparts. I was very pleased with the way the alien creatures looked in the games. Steve Cartwright must have had a difficult time analyzing those distinctive mugs and making them look presentable on the 64. Even though the Aliens are basically

black figures, with some white detailing added, their appearance is more than just acceptable.

It's interesting to note that your foes move differently than the human beings in the program. Some aliens are faster than others, and it seems that certain "bugs" are more aggressive when you encounter them in a game. The Operations Room scene really looks sharp, while the graphics display of the flame thrower in action is equally impressive. It would have been nice if the digitized transitional screens could have contained more details, but they still look good, and their movie dialogue is very entertaining.

You may recognize something familiar about the "Drop-Ship Maneuvers" game. It made its debut in Activision's *Master of the Lamps* program and challenged the user to guide a flying carpet through a series of mystic colored rings. This whole sequence was re-vamped for *Aliens*. Now the software pilot of your group has the opportunity to fly the drop-ship to the landing field, by maneuvering the craft through a computer graphic pipeline. As you enter the planet's atmosphere, you feel as if you're actually flying the craft. The image on the screen shakes, a low roar is heard in the background, and the ship's hull begins to glow, as the outer skin of the vessel makes contact with the atmosphere.

*Aliens* also contains original theme music and a nice collection of realistic sound effects. As you progress through the story line of the movie, you'll hear automatic gun fire, the unmistakable sound of feet walking across catwalks, a noise emitted by the creatures themselves, and the hy-

*Continued on pg. 52*

Continued from pg. 50

My friend said, "No problem, we'll put in a switch."

5) Take ends of the wires that you have already soldered to the switch and gently solder each end to the scraped and tinned trace. It is not critical which wire is soldered to which side, but be very careful not to apply too much heat. Just a little should do the trick. (Photo 4.)



Photo 5

6) After you have soldered the wires from the switch to the trace, you must cut a small notch on the rib of the top section of the cartridge. Use your knife to cut away just enough so that the wires will not be crimped when the cartridge is back together. Now insert the switch in the hole and then screw in and tighten the retaining nut on top of the cartridge.

7) Re-assemble the cartridge by gently squeezing it back together and replace the phillips screw. (Photo 5.) Now install it in the slot in your 128 or 64 (Make sure it is turned off!) Turn on the computer. If nothing happened, the switch is in the OFF position. Turn off the computer, switch the switch, and turn on the computer again. You should now see the familiar Fastload message on your screen. If you didn't get these results, it will be necessary for you to go back and re-check each step of the instructions to find where you made a mistake. Check for shorted wires and bad (cold) solder joints. If all worked well, it will not be necessary to remove this cartridge again unless you need to install a different cartridge. Changing the switch while you are in either the 64 or 128 mode will have no effect at all. To use the switch you must turn the computer off (or use the reset button) and choose one of your options: Fastload on—(or off) in 64 mode by holding the COMMODORE key; or Fastload off to access the 128 mode. If you like, you can affix a label on your 128 to indicate which direction the switch should be for a specific function. C

Continued from pg. 30

draulic whine of loader arms doing battle with the alien queen. Every game has its own group of sounds, each noise supporting the action on the screen effectively.

In conclusion, *Aliens* is a unique program for several reasons. First, it recreates key scenes from the movie of the same title and dares you to walk a mile in the shoes of a Colonial Marine. Six tough assignments will test your powers of observation, while putting you on the spot to

I had the chance to talk briefly with Steve Cartwright, the leader of the *Aliens* design team. Here are some of his thoughts and some tips for playing the game.

**Jermaine:** What led to the development of *Aliens*?

**Cartwright:** Believe it or not, Activision owned the software rights to *Aliens* a year before the movie appeared in theaters.

However, the in-house programmers, artists and game designers knew nothing about that arrangement. After seeing *Aliens* one afternoon, we all left the theater with the same idea: *Aliens* would be the perfect subject for a computer game. The next day I brought up the idea and found out that Activision already owned the rights to that particular property.

**Jermaine:** Can you tell me more about the early days of the project?

**Cartwright:** We planned out the entire program in fifteen minutes. It was just a matter of analyzing the movie, breaking it down into key scenes, and coming up with a game concept which recreates each particular situation.

The games were designed to share a common quality. When you participate in an *Aliens* challenge, your fate is truly in your own hands. Each game is a tough little assignment where experience is the best teacher. You can play to win or experiment with different ideas, but you can't blame the failure on random events or bad luck. These factors simply don't exist.

**Jermaine:** Did 20th Century Fox ask you to make many changes in the finished program?

**Cartwright:** There were some minor problems alright, but nothing we couldn't take care of right away. Twentieth Century Fox was very concerned about the fact that our transitional scenes contained direct quotes from the shooting script. I was led to believe that Activision might have to pay for the privilege of using that material in the program. Thank goodness our legal people investigated the situation and

make quick decisions at a moment's notice. Good graphics, special music, and a number of interesting sounds were also added to the scheme of things. The final result is a superior product which simultaneously challenges and entertains the person behind the joystick. If you have the guts to pilot a drop-ship, call the shots for a marine unit and wage a private war against an intelligent creature from another world, *Aliens* is definitely your cup of tea.

said everything was fine.

Another problem concerned the fact that you couldn't say the aliens were killing people. They were actually capturing human beings for later use (which would be the cause of their death). We also had to use the correct terminology for everything. You couldn't talk about a small alien creature crawling around on the floor. These little devils are called "Face Huggers." In short, the owners of the license were concerned about legal technicalities, correct terminology, and "good taste" at this time. We had kept in close contact with 20th Century Fox throughout the making of the program, so they knew all about the games and really liked the finished product.

**Jermaine:** Would you share some tips for playing *Aliens*?

**Cartwright:** The Armored Personnel Carrier is always located in the same corner of the building. Learn to move the marines in that direction and you'll eventually find it.

There are two basic rules to follow when you use the flame thrower: (1) destroy the fast-moving aliens by shooting blasts of fire in their direction and (2) use the flame of the weapon to back off slow-moving creatures.

The Newt Rescue Race is a race against time, where Ripley must conserve her ammunition in order to survive. When you confront the alien queen in the nest area, shoot at the nest, and the queen will move over to protect the eggs. Now is your chance to slip by her in the confusion and proceed to the elevator.

The best strategy in the One-On-One Confrontation is to keep hitting the queen with the power loader claws until she weakens substantially. While this boxing match is going on, the claws should also be used to keep the alien at bay. At the proper moment, grab the creature from below and eject it from the ship. One more thing—don't make your move on the alien queen too early in the battle. C