



alien³

"Who would we like to see stranded on a hostile world with nothing but bald prisoners and vicious monsters for company?" asked Jackie. Marcus Berkmann was the obvious choice...

Oh, to be mauled mightily on distant planets by slaying metal gnashers, drooling with acid and fury! Or possibly not. Still, if you don't fancy suffering the same fate as poor Ripley - and if you haven't seen the film, I wouldn't bother - there's always the Game Boy version of *Alien³* to keep you busy. It may not plant an alien seed in your abdomen, to consume your very vitals and burst through your chest halfway through breakfast, but it's probably the next best thing.

gastric problems

As you'd guess from the film series that inspired it, this game is action, action, action. Plus, if you're keen, a bit more action. Dumped on yet another alien planet, and even worse, shaved completely bald, you have to rid the base of all the aliens that you encounter, whether small, large or absolutely titanic. This is, needless to say, no easy feat.

And so you wander through a maze of breathtaking vastness, picking up weapons, solving puzzles, and trying to work out where the hell you are and what that nasty thing with the shiny head looming up behind you is. At the beginning, the base's corridors are relatively safe to travel through - but as time ticks by, aliens emerge in ever-increasing numbers, and need to be pumped with ever-larger quantities of ammunition before they'll turn their toes up. Soon there's no place to run, no place to hide - and that flame thrower is always on the other side of the door to which you don't have a key...

begin at the beginning

But let's start at the beginning, which, as ever, is my favourite place to start. First you'll need a weapon, any weapon, even that cattle prod on the floor there. All objects to be picked up are seen on the map as little blobs - nice and simple, these, and visible even when the batteries are running down. You can hold five weapons and five other objects - if, of course, you can actually find five weapons and five objects before you get killed. You'll need keys to open all the doors, you'll need the medikit for that tightest of all possible corners (you can only use it once), and, most important of all, you'll need the base map, to help you find your way around. So large and daunting are these mazes that you never really feel you know where

you are, even if you do. In that respect, as in many others, the game accurately reflects the film series' constant air of discomfort verging on blind panic.

way to go

Because what the game designers seem to have ensured is that you're never entirely sure what to do next. Where are the exits? Have I missed them? Are you sure this is the way to go? Which crate is the key in? How do you open the crate? Is this a dead end? Why haven't I got time to look at the map? Why isn't this gun shooting that alien? Who are all these little men running around at top speed like chickens with their heads cut off? Unless, of course, they actually have had their heads cut off...

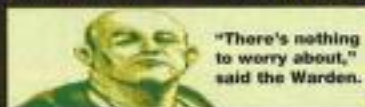
Of course, you've got to be careful, even when you're running around apparently aimlessly. Wander into the Ventilation System without your brain in manual, for instance, and it'll be tomato ketchup time, as you're sucked screaming into the giant fans. Bleuch. Could put you off fish fingers for life.

Fortunately, there are handily placed switches (ie they're generally difficult to find, and impossible to get to), which will enable you to switch one or two fans off, but are they the right ones? Like so much in this game, that's for you to find out.

what a weapon?

Tips? Well, use the map, as it may not show you exactly how to get out of your tight corner, but at least will show you where that tight corner is. Then, make sure you're careful with your inventory, which is probably the one part of the control system that needs delicate handling. At any one time you can have one weapon and one object ready for use, but if it's the wrong object - map instead of key, for instance - you're going to look pretty silly. And as this is such a fast-moving game, that's very easily done.

On the whole, though, this is not a hard game to start, although it might be months and months before you finish. The learning curve is neatly planned, and the general air of menace keeps you playing on. And the graphics, while necessarily limited, are as clear as can be. Watch those aliens wriggle, hear those aliens squeak - and run fast in the opposite direction. In short, then, what we have here is a rip-roaring film tie-in of rare spankiness, to be cherished and mullied over with loving care. If only the actual film were as good...



ventilation system

Watch those blades in the ventilation system, unless you don't mind being killed in appalling agony. Still, compared to being munched up by an alien, it's actually quite an attractive option after all...



Aaah, the wind in your hair... Ooops - no hair. Oh well.

base map

Here's the base map, with the controls on the right, and various numbers on the left which mean absolutely sweet FA. Pan in and out on the map, and switch back to the main action as soon as you hear anything squeak. (Oh... Aaaaaaargh!)



But where am I? Help! Mummy!



Cor! Take a look at the size of those choppers! (Hmm. Ed.)

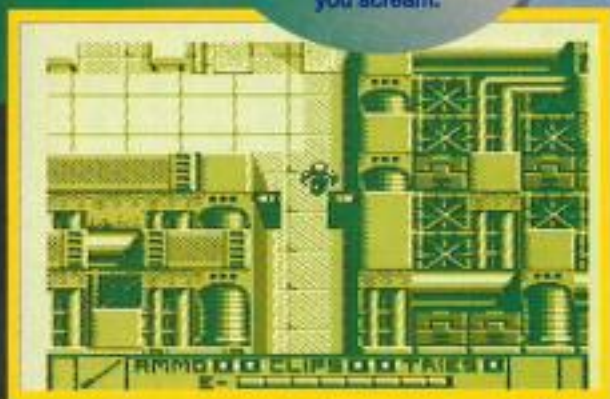
in the prison

Wander through the prison labyrinth, watching all the while for anyone who happens to have sulphuric acid for saliva. Remember, on the Game Boy, no-one can hear you scream.



verdict

Vast action-packed maze game, spookier than an eel down your trousers.



Lucky it wasn't locked, eh?

All alone. For now...



Anyone for an omelette?

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| END | ZONE |
| | Graphics |
| | Sound |
| | Addictiveness |
| | Playability |

OVERALL 84

Out: March Price: £24.99
Publisher: Acclaim

