

Airwolf

1985 Elite

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Most text of the present article comes from the review published in the first issue of the British C64 magazine ZZAP!64 (May 1985).



AIRWOLF

Elite, £7.95 cass, joystick only

Difficult, addictive helicopter rescue

36 screen area, great graphics, tricky traps

Based on the highly successful television series, this game puts you in the role of Stringfellow Hawke and you have to rescue five scientists from the underground complex of the evil General Zaranov.

You are flying the Airwolf helicopter, and it is equipped with forward flying missiles and nine shields that resist impact with objects. These shields are essential since the caves are a mass of traps and vicious enemies. You only see a small part at any one time, the picture scrolling in any of four directions as you move.

The scientists are located on small platforms and have to be reached one at a time, collected, and brought back to your starting position. These platforms are, as you would expect, in the most tortuous places to get to, and since you only have one life accurate flying is a must.

You should rapidly get to grips with the chopper's control, which unless moved upwards will fall through gravity (but when travelling left or right maintains its height). On screen the Airwolf has been made a large helicopter and consequently the whole game is of large size with lots of clear graphics and objects.

The game features many doors and walls, which have to be opened by shooting buttons or switches or just plain blasting through them. You can fire horizontally or downwards and you have auto fires when the button is held down. This is handy for ripping through two layer walls when in a tight spot.



Shoot this switch and the blue wall vanishes -- but it also sets the huge boulder (right) rolling towards you. You have to speed left down the corridor. And only one shield left!

Bumping into walls and small objects causes shield damage, but collision with a hefty rock splatters you immediately. However, if you manage to pick up a scientist and get him back to base you are rewarded with a completely new set of shields.

The theme tune from the TV series plays throughout the game but it is uninspiring, and the space bar will turn it off. The other sound effects are just blast and crash noises but are gratifying enough.

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The helicopter, viewed head-on and still with seven shields intact (see display bottom left), moves down carefully to pick up the first scientist.

Trap Trouble

The hazards that face you can be very complicated, even once you have worked out your route to rescue the scientists.

Near the base are three columns down which fall massive lethal rocks giving you very little time to get through them. Other tight spaces have pinball bumpers which bounce bullets around the room to knock off some of your shields.

Particularly nasty locations are those that hide a flying saucer and two monsters, since these sap your protection very rapidly. Other hazards are one-way force walls, a giant boulder Indiana Jones style, and a murderous lift.

Elite tell us the entire playing area is 36 screens big (9x4). That's far bigger (and more interesting) than the Spectrum version of the game. Bearing in mind the quality of the graphics and difficulty of the traps, it's about as big as you could reasonably expect.



Reviewed in this issue are two Fort Apocalypse variants. One is pretty grotty, and one, namely this one, is even better than the original. I found myself very addicted to this fast moving rescue shoot-em-up as I tried to find all the scientists. It's all too easy to make a mistake, so games can be numerous and over very quickly. I had to be forced away from my 64 with this one!



The idea of this game is a familiar one, but its execution is original and full of pleasant surprises. The deviousness of the caverns and sharply presented scenes make it a terrific game to look at as well as play. The hints that are dropped by the pointing arrows are needed and without them it would be a terribly confusing game. Be warned though, they don't give everything away. A great game.



Graphically it's very smart, even if the sound isn't (the tune is a bit tedious - but you can turn it off). Controlling your helicopter is very difficult to get used to, and even after several games, I'm still getting problems. So what if it appears to be a Fort Apocalypse derivative -- I don't care. What we have here is an extremely addictive shoot-and-pick-em-up.

Presentation 60%
Graphics 82%
Sound 58%
Hookability 88%
Lastability 86%
Originality 67%
Value For Money 88%

Short instructions but helpful in-game hints.
Mean caves and smooth movement of all characters.
Removable tune and bump and bang sound effects.
Control quickly established and each new discovery spurs you on.
Five scientists, each on a very difficult route.
Helicopter games aren't new, but lots of different touches to this.
Hours of frustration and jubilation guaranteed.