

Koronis Rift

1986 Lucasfilm Games

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KORONIS RIFT

Activision/Epyx/Lucasfilm Games, £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk, joystick only

You've been travelling the spaceways in your Scoutcraft for three days now with only Psytek, a 7500 Series Science Droid System Analyser, for company. Boring really, you'd expect to see more action, being a technoscavenger, someone making a living searching for abandoned technical systems.

Yawning as you slouch back into your chair, you ponder on your current situation. Having found nothing over the last month, funds are getting alarmingly low. Suddenly Psytek, who has been busily monitoring the instruments, sends you an urgent message: POWERFUL RADIATION FLUX DETECTED: CO-ORDINATES 45:90 RELATIVE AZIMUTH AND ELEVATION. You instantly snap from your thoughts, lean forward and access the navigation computer so you can identify the source -- could this be at last an abandoned technological stockpile?

The computer tells you that the source reading is from a medium sized planet. With your heart in your mouth you mutter a short prayer and start to check through the computer systems in an attempt to identify this mysterious heavenly body. The computer's reply puzzles you: NEGATIVE. CHARTS INDICATE EMPTY SPACE FROM HERE TO STAR SYSTEM 583. After persistent manual checking and rechecking of the planetary charts, you find no trace of any planet within light years of those co-ordinates. Very strange indeed, but visual confirmation from the Scoutcraft's optical sensors and an instrument reading of over 10,000 rads proves that there IS a planet out there . . . but why no chart reference?

THE LEGEND

Intrigued, you set the computer co-ordinates and head for the barren and scarred planet. As your craft approaches the planet, you sit back and think. All of a sudden a wild thought strikes you -- a massive radiation flux from a planet scarred with deep rifts? Could this possibly be the legendary planet of Koronis Rift? If it is then you have stumbled upon a technoscavenger's dream.

You think back to the conversation you had with a fellow technoscavenger. 'Over 700,000 years ago, when an incredibly advanced race, the Ancients, ruled the stars, Koronis Rift had been the testing ground for their most powerful weapons. They abandoned it when the radiation count became too high for any life form to survive, but left their unsurpassed technological achievements behind.'



System Analyser, Psytek, about to dismantle a piece of ancient alien technology in the comfort of your ship.

You had dismissed the conversation as the ramblings of one who had spent too long travelling alone in space, but if it were true then what now lies before you could possibly be the biggest and richest technological stockpile ever discovered!

The navigation computer tells you that the Scoutcraft has entered orbit, so you hasten down to the Surface Rover bay in readiness for transportation to the planet's surface. As you settle back into the Rover's comfortable control seat, you quickly scan the instruments. The Repo-Tech Droid is equipped and on board, and you're ready to go. Psytek acknowledges and you begin the short countdown before being blasted down to the surface.

A DREAM INDEED!

Koronis looks worse on the ground than it did from above the atmosphere. The landscape is grey and barren, the only noticeable features are the towering mountains, cut with deep rifts and canyons. Locating the hulks is going to be the easy bit -- it's getting to them that's going to be the problem.

Glancing at the radar you see an unblinking spot of light -- there is a hulk in the immediate vicinity! You swiftly turn the Rover so that the light on the radar points to 12 o'clock. You might not be able to see the relic, but you know you're heading directly for it.



The barren plains of Koronis as viewed from your Scoutcraft. A lifeless alien hulk rusts silently in the foreground, ready for scavenging. But first you have to dispose of the not-so-lifeless Guardian saucer in the distance.

As the rover climbs over the peak of a hill, you catch a quick glimpse of the huge machine before plunging into the next valley. Climbing the next ridge you reach the ancient ruin. Even though it's been sitting on the planet for hundreds of thousands of years, there is no sign of any decay: the Ancients certainly knew how to make their machines last. Your admiration is paramount for a few moments, but

you quickly come to and order the Repo-Tech Droid to search the hulk -- venturing out yourself would be fatal, with the rad count at over 10,000 you would be fried in a split second.

The RTD emerges from its portal, approaches the giant machine and disappears into it. They're very good at what they do, and you're lucky that you've got one of the best. You wait expectantly, and within a few moments the droid returns with the hulk's module. As you slot into one of the free spaces on the Rover's module area the hulk self-destructs, leaving nothing for other technoscavengers. A smile creeps over your face . . . that one module must be worth at least 100 kilocredits. There are a lot more hulks on this rift alone, and there are twenty rifts to explore! The legend was correct, a technoscavenger's dream indeed!

FIRST ENCOUNTER

The radar picks up another hulk, so you set your course accordingly. As you're doing that, an unnerving message is printed out: DANGER, GUARDIAN SAUCERS APPROACHING. Damn! you had forgotten reference OpSec JEC 4208 of the Encyclopedia Galactica:

Guardians. A race of genetically engineered warriors created by the Ancients to guard their stockpiles of technology. Little is known about them since they are programmed to self destruct on capture and all attempts to negotiate with them has failed. However, they are known to be still carrying out their task to the full.

As you fumble for your laser control, a saucer appears from behind a mountain and fires a volley of firebombs. Sweating, you aim your crosshair and fire. At least two shots are on target -- why doesn't it explode? As the saucer looses another set of bombs, you hit it again; this time it explodes into a cloud of debris. A quick flick at the far right VDU tells you that the Rover's defence shields are still in good order. Some action this is turning out to be!

As you head towards the next hulk, you wonder whether it would be safer to beam up to the orbiting ship and drop off the module; after all, it's impossible to contact the ship when engaged in combat. Greed drives you on, and you decide to fill all the module areas before returning to the ship, rather than beaming up as you collect them.



Another view of the scenic delights that Koronis has to offer. A nasty Guardian saucer at no extra charge...

Before reaching the second hulk another saucer attacks, but again it's disposed of. This second attack swiftly makes you decide to scavenge some better-designed defence modules so you can update the Rover's standard systems. After all, if things are going to be like this then a more powerful modular system could well be your only chance of survival.

Another two hulks are successfully scavenged before a third saucer is encountered. If this is a sparsely guarded rift, what must the others be like? Another hulk is looted without trouble and the module area is filled, so you send a message to Psytek who promptly beams you up to the orbiting ship.

Now comes the satisfying part of being a technoscavenger -- analysing the booty. You remove the modules from the Surface Rover and take them into Psytek's operations room so he can analyse and dismantle them for future sale.

As you load the modules onto the conveyor storage area Psytek swivels in his chair, waiting for you to put a module onto the belt. You do just that and it slides along to its place in front of the silver droid, who within a few seconds strips it down to its component parts, turns, enters a set of figures on the computer and finally gives you its evaluation. Most of the modules are useful only for resale, but one catches your eye -- a module with a laser insignia which is far more powerful than your current one. Within a moment the old module is withdrawn and the new one installed. That should improve your survival chances a little.

As you make preparations for a second trip to the planet surface you pause for thought. Psytek said that he had located the Guardians' saucer base on rift twenty. If it can be found and destroyed then Koronis and its trove of technology would be yours for the taking. Otherwise, trip after hazardous trip would have to be made to allow you to gradually bring up the stockpile of modules. But then, even if the saucer base is to be destroyed, really advanced modules would still have to be sought, found, and fitted to the Rover to improve your chances of survival.

The nausea of transportation snaps you from your thoughts and as you approach the planet's surface, you are still in two minds what to do . .

*ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA,
OpSec TCH 9087*

SCAVENGER MK IV MODULAR PLANETARY SURFACE ROVER:

The Surface rover is one of the most advanced forms of planetary travel. Equipped with lasers, shields, a backup power unit and standard Repo-Tech Robot, the craft is capable of travelling over almost any kind of terrain. The Rover is also designed to accept up to six modular systems, as long as they have the design standards of the New Federation. This is the sort of technology you would expect to find whilst scavenging, and with the Rover's features you can customise the craft with any modules you may discover, or just place them in the systems for transportation back to the orbiting craft.

Controlling the Rover is very simple since it only has one forward gear. Turning is done whilst either stationary or moving, giving the Rover a very small turning circle.

The Mark IV has a standard laser defence system which is aimed by using an on-screen crosshair. It acts independently to the steering, allowing you to travel forward automatically whilst firing.

To help you monitor its systems, the Rover has five VDUs. Three of these are operational when you first blast down to the surface of Koronis; the other two are designed to come into use when relevant extra modules are added. The three standard displays show the Rover's shield situation, engine power/direction and a radar readout of the surrounding area, to make the location of hulks easier. All systems are automatically updated when a newer, more powerful module is added.

Presentation 93%	Informative instructions and excellent on screen appearance.
Graphics 96%	Fabulous fractal 3D complemented by unbelievable robot animation.
Sound 72%	Good title tune and appropriate spot effects.
Hookability 90%	An initially confusing but easy game to get into.
Lastability 96%	Sufficiently complex, action packed and enthralling.
Value For Money 94%	A very meaty game for the price.
Overall 96%	One of THE games of the year.



Lucasfilm Games seem destined to set the standards of future software production. If they continue to design and market such superb products as *Rescue on Fractalus* (don't forget, it's at least two years old), the innovative *Ballblazer* and now *Koronis Rift*, they can't fail to become one of the world leaders in quality software development. In a way *Rift* could be called *Fractalus II*, since the graphics are calculated using a similar program, although the process of producing the 3D has been improved, smoothed and sped up.

These graphics work incredibly well and give an immense feeling of exhilaration and involvement as you travel in your *Surface Rover* over the planet *Koronis*.

One of the really impressive qualities of *Koronis Rift* is the actual depth of the game. What with actually trying to find the old hulks, fighting off the guardian saucers AND picking up the modules, you have to work out which of them are best suited to customize your *Rover* so you have a better chance of survival on the hazardous high levels.

One of the surprising aspects of *Rift* is that you can actually map the twenty levels using mountains and rifts as landmarks -- on later levels a map becomes almost a necessity; so torturous are the mazes of canyons.

The *Psytek* robot in the *Scoutcraft* has some of the best animation I've ever seen, especially when it analyses and disassembles modules. Watching it at work is a joy to behold. The game does take a little getting used to and it's annoying to score zero for your first few games, but once you really get going (with perhaps a decent saved game) it's difficult to stop playing it. *Koronis Rift* is absolutely superb, definitely one of the all time classics -- miss it at your peril.



Though initially showing some graphic similarities to Lucasfilm's other epic, *Rescue on Fractalus*, *Koronis Rift* is a totally different game digressing from *Fractalus*' pure blasting and leaning more towards the strategy side of things. The scenario is certainly well thought out, a lot of time and effort having gone into it. Technically it's nearly flawless, the fractal graphics run at a truly awesome speed. It really puts *Fractalus*' update time to shame. The game itself is great, though sometimes things get a little repetitive. The idea of having a dynamic craft that you can customize by your own efforts is a nice twist. Really this has to rate us one of the releases of the year, and I eagerly took forward to Lucasfilm's other potential blockbuster, *The Eidolon*.



Rescue on Fractalus was a very good shoot em up, but one that became a mite tiresome in time due to little variation. *Koronis Rift* strikes me as being something of an improved version of the aforementioned game, with similar, but better, use of fractal graphics. However, any similarities stop there. The gameplay is certainly superior to that of *Fractalus* and although *Koronis* doesn't have that much more variety, it is far more playable. The overall presentation is of a very high quality and the joystick is used effectively. In fact, the whole product oozes with professionalism. But then, that's Lucasfilm for you . . .