

KORONIS RIFT - Preview



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You're a down-and-out techno scavenger in the year 2049, exploring the Koronis Rift. When the Ancients abandoned this mountainous planet, they left behind priceless artifacts of their superior weapons technology. They also left behind a race of mean, trigger-happy saucer people. If you can collect enough weapon system artifacts-and figure out how to use them-you're a made man. If the saucers get you, you're a dead man.

You travel the fractal landscape of the planet in your surface rover. When you come upon an ancient hulk, you send your droid out to retrieve the weapon system inside. You may be able to put the system to immediate use against those pesky saucers which, even now, are attacking with multi-colored lasers. After filling your craft with weapon systems, return to your scout craft and run the collected systems by your science droid for instant analysis- assuming he can figure them out!

STRATEGIC SHOOT-UP

Noah Falstein is Project Leader and main designer of Koronis Rift, which he describes as a strategy game in an action format. "On a primary level, it's a standard shoot-em-up. Someone who likes that sort of thing can jump in there, blow up anything that moves and have a good time." But on another level, Koronis Rift is a multi-layered strategy game where colors and shapes are important clues to the function of the collected weapon systems. A red laser may work fine against a blue saucer, but may be worthless against a yellow one. Game documentation will contain descriptions of the various planetary cultures and the icons representing them. Since you can identify the race that developed a weapon system by the shape of the hulk, this may give you a clue to its function. Your science droid may be able to help you-or you might just have to try the system and see what it does. There are many different types of weapon systems with varying properties and power requirements. One may help you past a rough part of the landscape by blowing up a mountain-but will completely drain your shield power!

The landscape of Koronis looks similar to Fractalus, but with higher mountains. A new programming technique blends fractals and GTIA Mode 9 to create an illusion of misty depth much like classic Japanese paintings.

KORONIS TEAM

Project leader Noah Falstein began his computer gaming career when a college professor recommended him to the electronics division at Milton Bradley. After 2 1/2 years there- during which every project he worked on was cancelled-he moved on to



Koronis Rift programmers (from left) Ron Gilbert, Aric Wilmunder, Noah Falstein.

Photography Linda Tapscott

Williams Electronics in Chicago where he worked on arcade game design. He came to Lucasfilm when Ballblazer and Rescue on Fractalus were in their final stages of development.

Aric Wilmunder is called the "speed demon" of the Koronis team. Wilmunder is responsible for refining and speeding up the game's routines and designing the explosions and scaling routines for the saucers and droids. He spent 2 1/2 years at Automatic Simulations-now EPYX. Wilmunder also worked for one year with Doug Crockford at Atari Research and another year at Atari's Coin-Op division.

Ron Gilbert is converting the game to the Commodore 64. Prior to Lucasfilm, he was with Human Engineering Software. Additionally, he and Wilmunder have been working on speeding up the frame rates of Koronis to make it more lively for the action gamer..

Gary Winnick of the Eidolon team is also working on Koronis, designing the shapes of the saucers and the artifact hulks. Doug Crockford is designing sound for both games. When we saw Koronis Rift, a randomly generated snare drum gave the game a military feel. "Charlie needs a dragon that sounds like a walrus, and Noah needs a robot that sounds like a walrus. It saves a lot of time."

Jim St. Louis is an artist as well as a programmer. He's probably best known in the Atari community as the co-creator-with Russ Karas-of the Robot and Rocketship graphics demos released by Atari.

St. Louis also created a robot-the science droid-for Koronis Rift. And his incredibly detailed rocketship animates the title screen of Rescue on Fractalus. Prior to joining Lucasfilm, St. Louis worked on computer graphics at Datamost and Disney T.N.T