

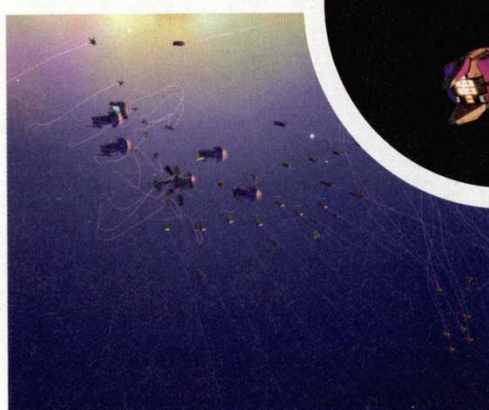


Homeworld

Homeworld was looking like it was going to be a great strategy game... and **Dan Toose** is happy to report that it is.



WELCOME TO THE MOTHERSHIP "BANANA"



Real time strategy games have traditionally been a bit better looking than turn based strategy games, yet have still been far from the prettiest PC games around, but Homeworld from Sierra seems to pay little attention to adhering to this tradition. However, Homeworld does use some basic principles from the entourage of RTS (real time strategy) titles we've seen in recent years, such as resource gathering, developing advances in technology, and building a variety of units.

On the planet Kharak, the people had their suspicions that they were not native to their planet, and after a low orbit satellite scanned the surface of the planet and found an alien spacecraft buried out in the harsh uninhabitable desert, the people found hyperdrive technology and a map that implied where their true homeworld is. Due to the dwindling resources and lifespan of the planet, the people spend countless years developing a huge self sufficient space craft to carry their people to the homeworld, but it's not going to be easy.

When Myth came out, it seemed that 3D RTS games would be quite pretty, and now with Homeworld there is now no excuse for a strategy game to have poor visuals, because this game is not just "very pretty for a strategy game", but one of the best

looking games available on PC today. If you think the screenshots look nice, they do not look half as impressive as when the game is running, because of the ability to pan around and view the ships from any angle and have the view follow a ship, or a group of ships. For example, you may send some ships to attack some enemy ships, and then select to view all of them. Now when you rotate the viewpoint around, you'll be rotating around the point of the middle of the battle, which is a great way to ensure you can see what is going on overall.

Of course it's not just the viewpoints that make this game pretty. The exhaust trails, the nebula, the lighting, the ion lasers and the superb explosions all help to add enough visual flair to set jaws dropping. The ships themselves have outstanding



MEET THE KUSHAN FLEET



Scout



Interceptor



Defender



Attack Bomber

Homeworld presents you with two fleets to choose from, the Kushan and the Taliidan. Differences between the two fleets are purely cosmetic, except for two ships that are unique to either fleet.

SCOUT

Lightweight, highly manoeuvrable, and extremely fast, the scout is most effective as a reconnaissance craft, however, when in large numbers their collective firepower becomes far more serious a threat.

INTERCEPTOR

A little less manoeuvrable than the scout, and a little more powerful in terms of firepower and armour. A great unit for combating enemy fighters, but only a threat to capital ships if used in huge numbers.

DEFENDER

Not quite so fast as the other fighter types, but with high coverage and decent firepower, this fighter is the most effective at guarding an area or a ship. Once attacked itself though, the defender is not very durable.

ATTACK BOMBER

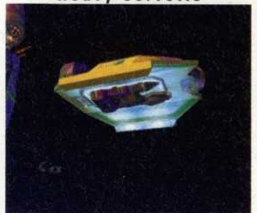
The most effective fighter to use against capital ships. Not as fast or agile as an Interceptor, the attack



Light Corvette



Heavy Corvette



Repair Corvette



Salvage Corvette

bomber makes up for it with raw firepower. A group of bombers can deliver punishment just as well as a capital ship.

LIGHT CORVETTE

While not as fast nor manoeuvrable as the fighter class ships, the light corvette has much more armour and firepower. Using a turreted gun, the light corvette is able to take out fighters at full speed.

HEAVY CORVETTE

Having twice the armour of the light corvette, and an extra turret, the heavy corvette is much more powerful than its lighter cousin. In numbers, heavy corvettes can take down capital ships, and they are always good against fighters.

REPAIR CORVETTE

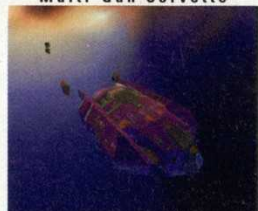
Fighter class ships can refuel and be repaired several ways, and repair corvettes are the smallest ships that can do this for them. In the event you're careless enough to run your fighters out of fuel, these corvettes are the way to get them operative again.

SALVAGE CORVETTE

Essentially these are the "tugs" of the fleet. Once an enemy capital ship has taken a beating, you can capture



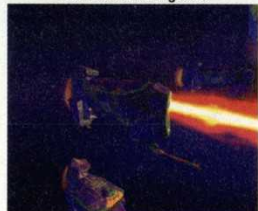
Multi-Gun Corvette



Minelayer Corvette



Assault Frigate



Low Cannon Frigate

them with salvage corvettes. Considering they approach capital ships, and their lack of firepower, they need escorting.

MULTI-GUN CORVETTE

The multi-gun corvette doesn't quite have the same brute firepower as a heavy corvette, but with six articulating turrets that can track fast targets, these ships are the ultimate weapon against swarming fighters.

MINELAYER CORVETTE

Minelayers can either "float" their mines at an opponent, or lay mine fields. Careful placement of minefields can help create less angles of attack for the enemy, which can help simplify defending your mother ship.

ASSAULT FRIGATE

The four powerful turrets on an assault frigate are useful against both capital ships, and corvettes that aren't nimble enough to avoid their fire. Twin plasma bomb launchers help make it that extra bit useful against other capital ships.

ION CANNON FRIGATE

Basically this is a big laser cannon with an engine attached. While having no ability to fend off attacks from the side, if this ship can wheel around



Support Frigate



Destroyer



Missile Destroyer



Carrier

to face its target, then it can cause tremendous damage.

SUPPORT FRIGATE

With ten docking bays for fighters and four for corvettes, this is the basic means of repairing and refuelling groups of smaller ships away from the mother ship. Its firepower is minimal, and thus needs to travel with other capital ships.

DESTROYER

With twin ion cannons, heavy armour, and two modified large turrets, the destroyer is a major step up from a combat frigate. Not only can the destroyer take it and dish it out, but it is also as agile as a frigate, making it a very mobile threat.

MISSILE DESTROYER

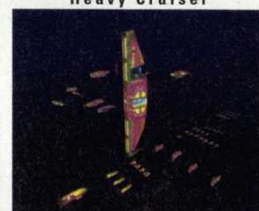
This heavy missile platform may not have the same raw punch that a standard destroyer does, but its missile capabilities make it far more effective against strike ships. Perfect for taking out fighters and corvettes in a big battle.

CARRIER

Not only can this ship take huge punishment, and also carry 50 fighters and 25 corvettes, but it can manufacture up to frigate class ships, making



Heavy Cruiser



Mothership



Cloak Fighter



Drone Frigate

it extremely valuable out away from the mother ship.

HEAVY CRUISER

Four ion cannons, and six heavy turrets make this the most devastating ship in the game. Only a strong lineup of capital ships stands a chance against a heavy cruiser.

MOTHERSHIP

The home for your people, capable of producing any sized craft. The mothership must survive at all costs, thus you'll need to defend it very heavily. Especially due to its lack of ability to evade enemy fire.

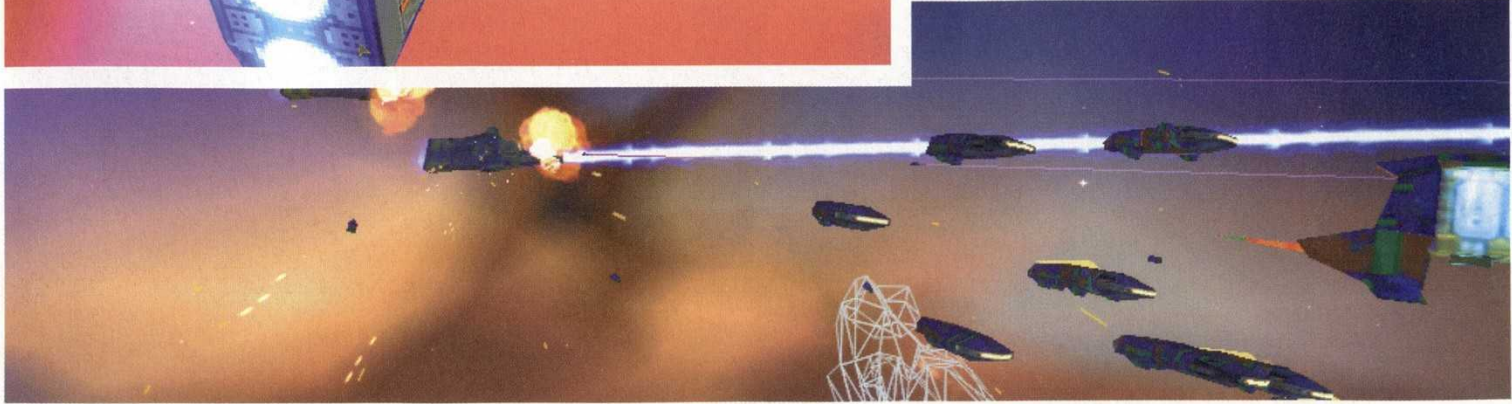
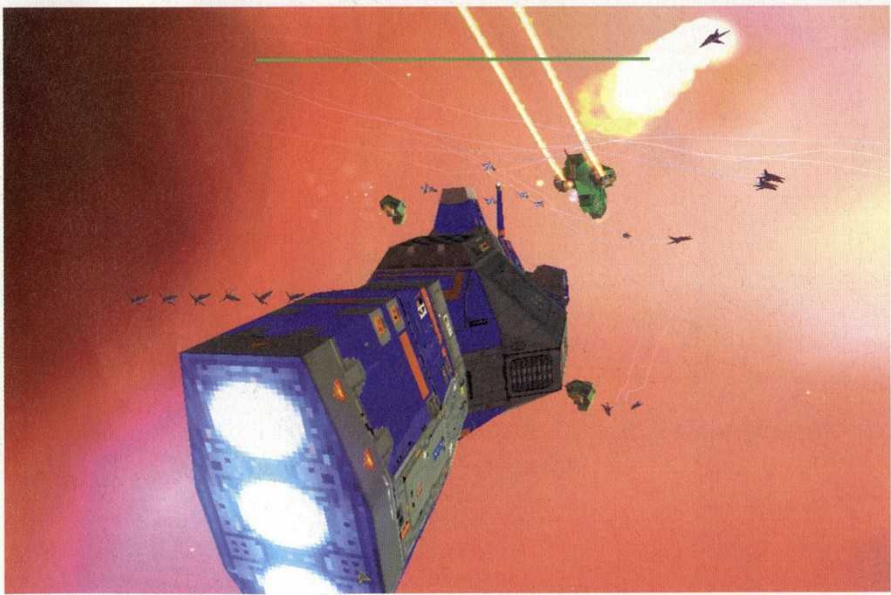
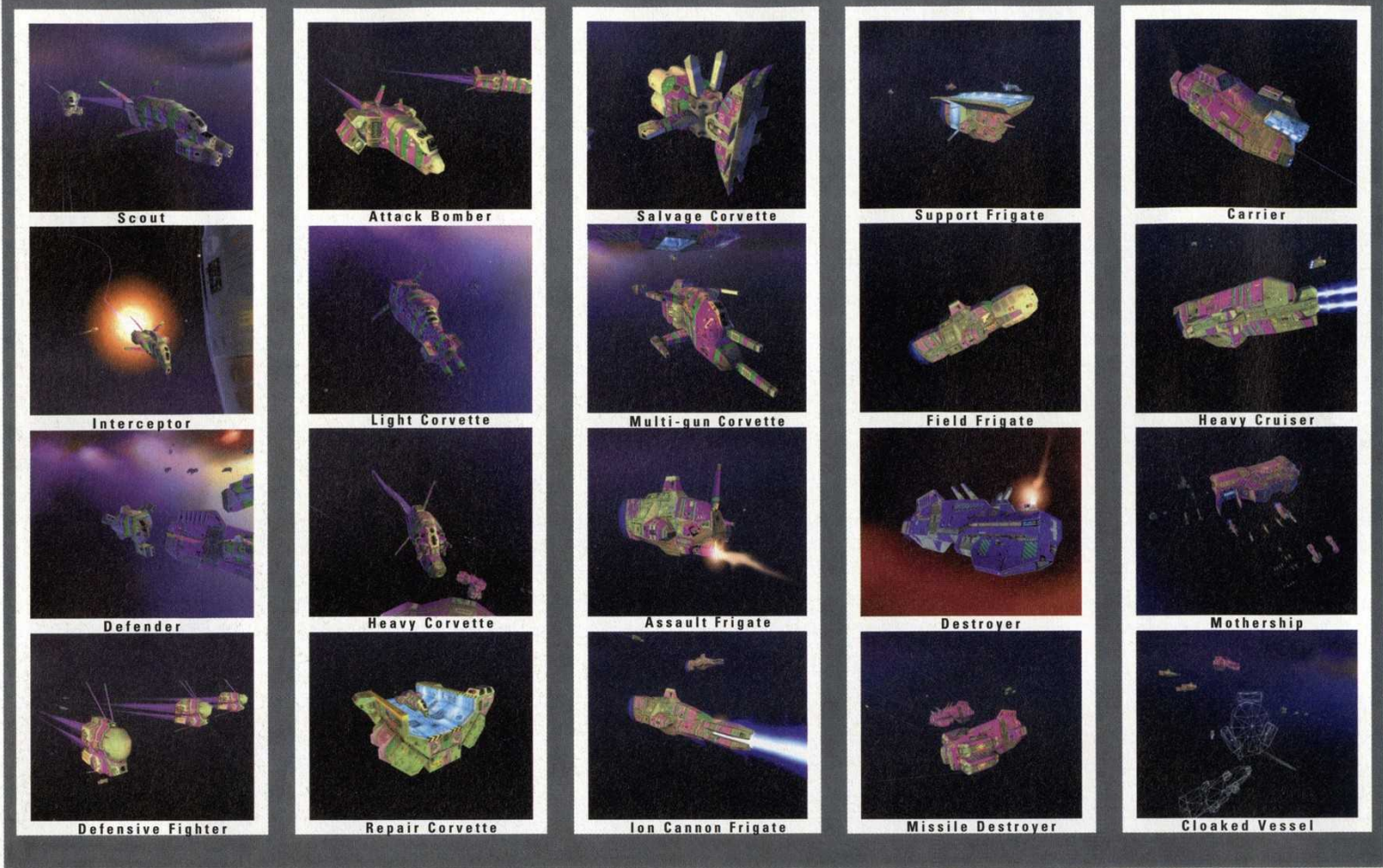
KUSHAN CLOAK FIGHTER

While not being a particular beefy ship, this fighter's personal cloaking ability can make it quite deadly. Perfect for adding confusion in big battles or taking out weaker enemy ships out in deep space, like resource collectors.

KUSHAN DRONE FRIGATE

This defensive frigate is home to a large group of drone guns that form a sphere around the main ship, and fire at any nearby enemies. The angle coverage of this ship makes it the best weapon available against swarms of fighters.

MEET THE TAIIDAN FLEET



texture detail, and the modeling is fantastic, with ships having animated turrets that track their targets.

The sound effects vary from "the usual" through to excellent. Engines make wonderful ambient hums, and those of you with sub woofers will be shuddering with delight at all the bass thrown in. Weapon noises are unspectacular, but this is really a good thing, because combat can involve so many ships firing so many guns, that garish weapon noises would frustrate rather than satisfy. Radio chatter helps add to the atmosphere, but it's not like it has the character or charm like Warcraft or Myth.

CLASSIC MUSIC

Even the music for Homeworld is good. Think back to the scene where Elias is getting gunned down in "Platoon" (That piece is called "Agnus Dei" for the classical fans), well that music is in Homeworld. There are other suitably ambient tracks included too. Some may think the idea of music that ambient is a bit pissy, but when you're looking at gorgeous nebula clouds and getting that real "vast emptiness of space" effect, it fits perfectly.

What makes Homeworld work is the interface. It looks confusing to control at first, but because there is a distinct sense of up and down, it helps keep the controls easy to come to grips with. To get a good overall view of the area, simply pulling out the zoom and looking down from above works wonders. It must be said that having a wheel mouse rocks here, all PC gamers should think about buying one as more games are utilising the wheel when present.

The basics that have worked in other strategy games have been applied here and will help keep the RTS fans feeling at home. Formations, adjustable aggression levels, hotkey assignments, guard/escort command, it's all there.

Another thing that helps Homeworld is that it has been set up in such a way that when played multiplayer, you can choose to eliminate the need to go mining resources, so in the event that some clever gamers exploit something in there that forces the game into some dull routine, then it will be a simple case of altering the options. There are also variable victory conditions so you don't have

to give up on the game once you've mastered one set of strategies.

Researching new technologies is really just something to allow new ships, like a basic tech-tree you'd get in any RTS game. It's worth the expense of building research ships at the start so you can be building the better capital ships ASAP.

NOT JUST BUILD AND BLAST...

Finally, the main thing that makes Homeworld work is that the single player missions really vary in objective and style. You don't just kill enemies... There's stuff like using your fleet to protect the mother ship from an oncoming asteroid field. Even when you are just killing stuff, there's mystery and puzzle solving involved in some situations. When you come across new enemy ships for the first time, you'll tend to find yourself getting slaughtered by a new technology that counters your current "top line" attack force very well, and by going back a step and using "weaker" ships, you can overcome the problem. This really encourages using weaker ships to "test the waters" so to speak.

Homeworld is hard to fault, perhaps the only gripe one could have is that the game is punishingly hard after the first few missions, which is good if you're after a real challenge (and most strategy fans are), and also because there are only sixteen missions. That may not sound like many, but they're that tough, and with a skirmish mode available to allow for unlimited quick fix battles, Homeworld should keep any strategy fan happy for many months to come. It will be interesting to see how Black and White, Tiberian Sun, and Dark Reign II (if it can make it this year) will compare to this great game.



THE NON-COMBAT SHIPS

You can't just chum out instruments of destruction and expect to win. Resource management and clever use of sensors and advanced technologies can save your bacon.

RESEARCH SHIP

You can build up to six of these to help develop your fleet's construction capabilities. They link together to form a larger ship. They are totally unarmed, and need careful protection.

RESOURCE COLLECTOR

Scavenger ships that take valuable resources from asteroids and gas clouds in space to fuel your production lines.

RESOURCE CONTROLLER

Essentially a remote docking station for your collectors, these help cut resource collection times, and thus speed up production.

CLOAK GENERATOR

This wonderful device makes your nearby ships invisible, thus giving you the chance to launch surprise attacks, or to make your defense seem much thinner than it really is.

PROBE

A deployable sensor that helps investigate far off areas without great risk.

GRAVWELL GENERATOR

If you want to shut down all fighter and corvette class ships in the area, simply turn one of these things on, and watch the smaller craft spin helplessly in space. This does effect your ships as well, so best used in a planned move.

PROXIMITY SENSOR

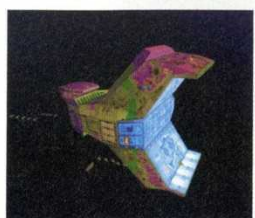
The simple way to counter the effects of cloaking. A must have when launching strikes, and as something to keep by the mother ship.

SENSORS ARRAY

This simply improves your sensor capabilities, allowing you to detect resources and ships from a greater distance.



Research Ship



Resource Controller



Probe



Proximity Sensor



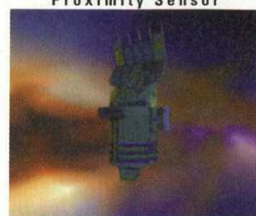
Resource Collector



Cloak Generator



Gravwell Generator



Sensors Array

AVAILABLE:	September
CATEGORY:	Real Time Strategy
PLAYERS:	1-multi
PUBLISHER:	Sierra
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	TBA
REQUIRED:	P200, 32MB RAM
DESIRED:	P11 266, 64MB RAM
SUPPORTS:	Glide, Direct 3D, surround sound

PLUS
Best visuals in a strategy game ever! Challenging single player missions. Great interface and music.

MINUS
A bit too challenging a bit too soon into the game, which may scare some novice gamers.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
95	88	92

OVERALL
94
At this stage, Homeworld looks like it is the strategy game of the year.