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[Gene Troopers](#)

To play or not to play

How is it possible to make a game good and bad at the same time? Until now I have never encountered a sum of extremes like this one. When you start to think "Hey, this is quite interesting" the producers hit you in the head with another foul up and right when you start saying, "I can't take this any longer, I'm uninstalling" the opposite is happening. The producer I'm talking about is Cauldron, a company which isn't exactly young and inexperienced and is certainly not at their first game. Probably their most successful game (and one of the most unappreciated) is Chaser. A Sci-Fi FPS with an interesting story and one heck of a gameplay. The engine was simple and beautiful and had a certain specific flavor, which we can find in Gene Troopers too. **Story:**The story is very rich in characters and locations and ... I didn't understand it for quite some time. Many questions remain unanswered and all the pieces of the puzzle seem to be stitched together in a hurry. The main plot is this: In the year 4008 (yeah sure) Johansson Bridger and his daughter were traveling on the starship Earthliner on their way to Eidon, at the far reaches of known universe. The ship is attacked and transported with all its personnel to a distant planet. Johansson is slowly being transformed in a super soldier, a Gene Trooper, a hybrid built to replace the old units from a distant empire, unknown to mankind. Anyway, the process is interrupted by some mercenaries and you find yourself forced to join them so you can someday find your lost daughter. The story is so corny and badly introduced that you won't even notice it, and every time you are given the opportunity of a dialog (like in an RPG) you have the tendency to skip it. This one is not going to the Oscars. **Video:**This is the strong point of the game. The engine is as far as I can see is a much upgraded version of the Cloak Engine, which was used in Chaser. It retains only the atmosphere and the general feeling. Gene Troopers looks like a technology demo, with some dazzling effects and the latest innovations in graphics. The first impression is "wow" and "how come I never heard of it". All the surfaces, or at least the metallic ones, use bump mapping at a level I have only seen in Doom 3. Some surfaces move and are made of liquid. They aren't just pretty textures applied because they appear to be three dimensional and they move at the same time. In any case, they are beautiful. Havok is involved in the action and you can see it from time to time, but usually after killing some creature or moving some boxes that are in your way. I think now, in retrospective, that this is the main reason I played Gene Troopers, for its beautiful graphics, just to see what Cauldron will throw in my direction. **Gameplay:**Except for the shooting, which is quite straight forward, other elements have been introduced. One of them is The Hand of the Grip Glove. This is basically a means to show off the Havok Engine. Even if the effect is quite interesting, holding boxes in mid air and throwing them around wears thin after a while. Another fun use of The Hand is pulling your enemies in air but unfortunately you don't get to hold them alive, they are already dead. The second exception from a standard FPS is the Geenpool. With the exception of robots, every enemy leaves a trace of its DNA behind after it's killed. You are able to collect these samples, which are transformed in points, later used to enhance your body in many different ways, such as Regeneration, Grip (which is practically a greater power for The Glove), Night Vision, Health and some other upgrades that will eventually make you virtually impossible to defeat toward the end of the game; not that I mind some help from the producers but this was too easy. One of the most appealing features I have encountered is the great variety of weapons. You'll find one for every taste. We got our beginner's pistol, which is not so bad after all; I find, in fact, that it's way too powerful and the zoom-like function is relatively useless. Now keep in mind the action is some 2000 years from now. You would expect

much more evolved weapons, but we got our version of a machine gun, greasy green shooter with acid (this is the closest name I could think of), some high tech version of a rocket launcher and the never ending grenades. I bet that Nils Waltersen Aasen (the one accredited to have created the first functioning hand grenade) never imagined they will be used for thousands of years in the same form. And if we are talking about weapons we have to mention the possibility to use mounted turrets and some vehicles (which have a more than decent control) but look like bigger models from "Re-volt".

Concept: You would expect much from this FPS and you'd probably be right. There isn't a problem with the concept itself because it doesn't really have a concept and it has nothing unique. Almost everything is borrowed from different other titles with one exception and this fits to Chaser also: the atmosphere. There is something I can't really put my finger on it that makes you want to go on, in spite of the numerous setbacks and bugs, and get to the ending. Even now, while I write this, the Gene Troopers feeling stays with me. It's good to see they've had done something right.

Sound: This is one part I don't really want to write about. If I were the producer I wouldn't be too proud of it. I simply can't imagine a bunch of executives and sound experts gathering at the end of a work day (I don't think they worked more than a day) and saying: "Yes, this is perfect... exactly what we want to hear". I really don't want to believe that, but I've no other choice. The voice acting is made by second rate actors and the emotional detachment is perfect. They're like Vulcans, no feelings and no emotions.

Multiplayer: Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag are the only three modes available but they come with a lot of maps and, if you can believe it, they provide with much more fun than the single-player campaign. I don't know if that's good or bad but I don't think that's right. There are a few classes available like doctor, soldier and so on but they don't make much of a difference.

Conclusion: Whatever the conclusion, it doesn't make it justice. If I were to say it's not a successful game I would be right and wrong at the same time. I'm not sure how can you manage to realize a good-worst game. I can only say this: I have finished the game in spite of the sudden urges to shut it down. Something kept me going and that's got to count for something.