

27 December 2006

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[Genesis Rising: The Universal Crusade](#)

Time to play the brilliant genetic strategist

Real time strategies were always among the favorite games to be played. These usually offer a great replay value and 99 percent of the time, come with a multiplayer option so no matter how uninteresting the computer challenge is, a human opponent could just make it the most fun game there ever was. Another extremely addictive subject was space and space exploration along with battles over the supremacy in the Solar System, galaxy or even the entire universe. With these in mind, a space RTS should easily attract quite a few people. Well, when space meets the highest technological advancements (organic engineering) in the vast tri-dimensional universe, many interested faces show up. They raise a suspicious (yet extremely curious) eyebrow and keep on listening to "the big plan". Metamorf Studios adds in the strategy element and mankind's ever going ideal of proclaiming themselves rulers of the world and out comes Genesis Rising: The Universal Crusade. **Story & History** You have probably never heard of the developer - Metamorf Studios - as it is a newcomer on the market, but you may have heard of a surprisingly good horror FPS called Painkiller. If you did, that's also where you heard of DreamCatcher Games - the game's publisher. It seems like they've switched genres now and turned to the beautiful lands of strategy. Well, at least they never abandoned the fantasy world. So here they are introducing a new vision of the bloody path that mankind builds through the universe three thousand years after what was believed to be the arrival of "The Savior" (I'm not exactly sure if that means it's the year 3000 or they're talking about another savior, I'll have to get back on you with details once the game is released). By this time, the humans got to think of themselves as a divine race and considered all alien races to be inferior. They simply destroyed any civilization that had the nerve to refuse to acknowledge their superiority. There is only a tiny portion of the great universe that they were unable, until now, to add to their vast list of conquests. It is believed that an enigmatic entity that spawned all life and matter into the universe is hidden somewhere in a galaxy. This would be the galaxy of the Universal Heart. Your job as fleet commander and (brilliant) genetic designer is to uncover the location of this mysterious entity as well as discover its purpose. The Chair of Three is the governing body of the elaborate humankind plan of subjugating the universe and also the ones that give you the noble mission. It's composed of representatives of the three human factions: the Military, the Church and the Judicature. You, Captain Iconah, are to suppress the alien insurgences and outsmart the pirate cohorts in order to find out all there is about the Heart and the secrets that this unknown galaxy holds. Seems like once again the fate of mankind rests on the path you choose. **Concept & Gameplay** The dominion over all life forms was possible only through the creation and exploit of "organids". In combination with the genetically designed organic technology (special genes) these could morph to adapt themselves to any strategy needed. So basically, you'll be the wizard behind gigantic (well, actually, you imagine them to be huge, but are smaller or bigger) living machines. These are constructed with a blank genetic makeup that can be inserted with a certain number of seeds, providing different properties. The resource for your crusade will be Blood Air. This will allow the creation of more faithful ships as well as develop new genes in the laboratory. As space was never a very quiet place, you'll meet up with a series of alien races as well as trading caravans, pirates and patrols. Blood Air will be the universal currency enabling you to trade (genes as well as ships and even secret weapons) and make alliances. Your fleet will be able to harvest the blood out of lifeless carcasses and stations using the resource collectors. The laboratory is where you research genes and also store a few of the blood reserves. Motherships have

the ability of creating the different organids needed on the battlefield. Aside from the utility ships, it can also give birth to light and medium fighters. Heavy fighters can be created in the stations. The differences, aside from costs, are in terms of armor and available slots for new genes (visual aspect too, but I pretty much doubt you'll construct a fleet of less performing ships just because you like their design). The Military enforces the Empire's will with the help of their superior organic vessels. These can even regenerate without any other help if there is a big enough Blood Air supply. The Omni Cruiser is one of the strongest ships in the fleet. It serves as the mothership of this faction but can also be mutated into a deadly threat to all enemies. It has the unique ability of resurrecting the tissue of dead vessels into fully functional living units. The Inquisition is the Church's paramilitary faction. Their ships rely on the design of impounded military vessels, tailored to best suit their dark leaders' aspirations. Their ability consists of consuming genetic material (spoil the hard researched genes) to repair the damage taken during combat. The Cathedral serves as their mothership and has the capacity of generating an energy shield that renders it immune to all damage over a short period of time. The Defiance is an amalgamation of armies. All the alien races that had to suffer from the humankind crusade gathered their forces (what's left of them) and using stolen military blueprints, raised their own fleet to fight for their existence. They lack a firm understanding of the technology they use, hence their fleet is cheap and they consider it expendable to facilitate guerilla attacks. Medula, the mothership class unit, has the ability of consuming smaller ships in order to sustain itself in combat. The player will be able to combine the different ship models with about 50 different weapons and ability genes (you surely notice here some RPG elements resembling the much adored skill tree). It is also possible to supply the vessel with several genes of the same type. This will give a boost to the selected skill - sometimes in terms of power, other times to obtain a more lasting effect. The developers promise a non-linear SP campaign that will take into consideration our every decision and action. They also estimate over 30 branching missions (we'll have to see if it's allowed to play them all or just a portion that applies to our personality). The promises don't stop here. A rich back story that draws the player into an epic crusade is also to be expected. The Beta version proved an intuitive control and easy to maneuver fleet options. From the research and insertion of new genetic materials to battling enemy forces, it all seems to go smooth. The only problem was that adding a new gene takes time to morph (and time to get a close look at what ability it unlocks) and while I was all concentrated on this, the universe kept going without me noticing. So I found myself face to face with the enemy (luckily the laboratory interface also includes a smaller view of the real time events). The ever going search for the ultimate strategy went down to pieces in an instant and I had to settle for the most appropriate approach for the time being. That was quite impressive actually (a little confusing at first because you have all the time in the world to make a decision in a RPG on the chosen ability), but I just felt like giving you a small hint in case you go to battle unprepared. Of course it got a lot easier after a few hours to decide quickly on what and when to build. Also, keep your eyes on the trading caravans that pass by for more "exotic" genes. **Videol** was a little intrigued about the 3D space strategies as I was concerned about how I was to select a certain destination point. The first glimpse at Genesis Rising was even more confusing as I saw the huge space at my disposal: planets and meteorites all over; stars above and stars beneath; stations and alien ships everywhere. It quickly turns out that the movement is restricted to a bi-dimensional plane ("~" turns on and off the grid lines). I guess we'll have to avoid incoming missiles the old fashion way - by going left or right - or purchase the gene that enables a ship to switch places with an enemy one. Impressive dynamic lighting and bump mapping effects please the eyes along with the uncommon ship design. It reminded me a little of Alien (the movie), but everything is much more complex, detailed and more colorful as different sources of light cast various shades over the organids. We'll be able to enjoy different vessel designs for each faction. Although all fleets were inspired from the military design, each of them applied a tuning session so the ships would be more of an expression of the diverse

ambitions. Hence the Inquisition turned to a sinister, frightening dark look while the Defiance mixed everything and only outlined their ideals through a grotesque alien head mutated on their stations that serve as monuments as well as a fear inspiring symbol for their enemies.

SoundRemember all the movies about space adventure? Well, Genesis Rising follows the same great pattern of engaging instrumental background music. The two short tutorials also give away a quick glimpse of promising voice acting with dialogs (monologs actually) that are able to keep you interested. The girl's voice (there is also a small animated portrait of her in the upper left corner, but the acting has absolutely nothing to do with the text) seemed fluid and realistic. It didn't knock me off my feet, but I can't complain about the sound either.

MultiplayerThe game offers the possibility of challenging up to 11 (eleven, yes) other players. If you don't have the time to wait around for other opponents, the game can quickly be turned into a war against computer opponents or even close all other slots and play sort of a sandbox mode. Choose one of the three available factions and claim your superiority. Form alliances or destroy all enemies by yourself - the choice is yours.

ConclusionGenesis Rising definitely has the potential to be a captivating RTS, especially since there is not much competition in space. As far as strategic possibilities go, we can't complain either as there are plenty of genes out there to never find two ships with the same abilities (unless you made them that way, obviously). Some ships are slower, while others are extremely agile but they might lack the heavy body armor so need to avoid most of the enemy firing. Let's hope Metamorf Studios has a blasting debut and provides us with an unforgettable game in March 2007. Fingers crossed for Genesis Rising: The Universal Crusade.