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By: Ioan Sambeteanu, Editor, Game Reviews



Starship Troopers

When one's poor taste ruins the potential of a game

It pains me greatly to admit a game is a total failure especially when it shows - beyond doubt - that much effort and sleepless nights were invested for it to happen. However, aimless work is nowhere near to something that deserves admiration. It is a pity to see so much work go down the drain. **Concept**It is clear that the head behind the game missed the whole point of the movie. I wonder what he was on, because I want some, too. Verhoeven's alleged intentions were to parody the society imagined by Robert Heinlein. The first thing that pops-out are those propagandistic TV news that stated how glorious and efficient are the M.I. against the alien bugs while the facts told an entirely different story. Although the majority of bugs needed to get extremely close to their target to pose any threat, the M.I. troopers invariably acted the same way: struggled to come as near as possible to the bugs although their equipment consisted of ranged weapons. Moreover, the troopers' equipment was a mess: even the medieval knights can be considered better armored against the bugs, and where are the tanks, flame throwers, anti-personnel mines, and chain guns? Even the sights on their weapons are conspicuously missing. Furthermore, there was no evidence of military discipline and battlefield tactics. They resembled to a barbaric mob that broke the lines and routed with the first cry of defeat. Memorable is the scene where the disorganized platoon lead by lieutenant Colonel Dubois (Michael Ironside), is attacked by locusts while passing through a canyon. Although the platoon had a sniper, he has not been sent to higher grounds. One of the M.I.'s will find his death because of this error. Tactical errors like this fill the entire movie. Add to this the fact the Federation Starfleet was powerful enough to single-handedly raze any bug planet without sending a single trooper on the ground. Thus, Strangelite's choice for a serious, dramatic approach of a declared satire is nothing more but plain idiocy. It is no wonder the game ended up to be so lousy. Assuming that a tactical shooter based on Heinlein's SSTG universe and a storyline centered on Juan Rico's moral dilemmas is out of the question, even a Serious Sam approach would have had a greater chance to make this to actually look like a game. And it would have matched Verhoeven's satire, too: dumb teenagers fighting off evil bugs with joy, "die evil-crunching-green-blooded-yucky-spider-looking bugs!" **Story**You will play the role of a one-man-tank, a Marauder. Your role will be to spearhead the attack against the arachnid bugs. The story itself, besides being plain and unappealing, has far too many loose ends. It feels like told by someone who is in a hurry to catch a flight. For instance, you will have to save a lost Marauder. After fighting off some brainless, annoying bugs, you eventually find the torn-up power suit of the Marauder and, next to it, a man holding a nuclear charge. With his last breath, he advises you not to trust the psi-ops and arms the bomb. Later on, you are asked to keep an eye on a psi-ops high-ranking officer that created an X-specimen meant to draw the bulk of the bug army into an ambush. The bug is eventually freed, while that psi-ops becomes a hero of the Federation. Does this make any sense? I guess not... Moreover, the game is filled with gross scenes from both Verhoeven's SST and its awful sequel "Hero of the Federation". To make things even worse, these movie footages are accompanied by a bored voice of a seemingly underpaid, tired actor (Casper Van Dien). **Gameplay**The game is reduced to a series of clichés that will certainly kill the central nervous system of anyone brave enough to play it. There is a common law, which states that the only way a piece of junk will express its gratitude towards the one who is giving it a chance to redeem itself will be by frying his brains. In Starship Troopers, the player will have the unique chance to fry his brains, not once, but up to twelve times. The procedure is extremely simple. The player is given the chance to - in order of appearance - push buttons,

prevent some suicidal AI-s from charging unarmed the enemy lines, and prime explosive charges. In the mean time, he will be swarmed by spawned packs of stupid bugs. I say stupid, because you attract them like a magnet. It doesn't matter for them that you have at least a squad of want to-be troopers in your support. This probably happens because your troopers usually kill themselves with grenades before the bugs actually have any chance to get to them. Occasionally you will have to fight some kind of "boss bugs" which usually refuse to die. In their absence, the game could have been resolved in no time. However, because of the way the weapons were designed, the whole mess will drag on and on until you decide to uninstall the game. Of course, the tough guy will also be accompanied by spawned packs of bugs. Bear in mind: nothing happens in the game without bug presence (around thirty pieces, no more than fifty, and nowhere close to one hundred). This never-ending bug story did not amuse me at all. I guess the beta-testers were too drunk to notice this. Although you have an arsenal consisting of a portable nuclear warhead launcher and a sci-fi, mean-looking anti-matter rail gun, you will have to rely on your - usually dried out of ammo - Morita MK, a carbine that should better apply to the "King of the Water Pistols" contest. The programmers behind SSTG did not bother too much to set clear damage patterns. There is no place for splash damage and piercing projectiles in their views. I understand some bugs have impervious exoskeletons. What I do not understand is why they refuse so badly to die even by weapons of mass destruction? I believed that providing a game with specialized weapons is best way to make it appealing: one for unarmored menaces, one for really nasty ones, and one for those desperate situations when all above fail. This would have sufficed. But no! They wanted to bring us the real thing, the feeling of the "Starship Troopers" movie. What real thing? The movie was a satire. The special effects solely purpose was to sell the movie. And the fans? Yes, the fans... regardless of their passions, a game must by first of all playable. In SSTG there is literally no place left for you to play. And maybe it would have been fine if you actually died asphyxiated. Gamers expect intense gaming experience and a smart game concept. For movie-like experiences, people built theaters, and for garbage, trashcans. **Video** The graphic engine (SWARM) was developed in-house by Strangelite. It surely shows some virtues (fire heat, gigantic bugs, some of them ten meters high, two or three day-light spectacular level designs like the bug hive). However, all these fade out thanks to the excess of alpha-blending, the poorly implemented bump-mapping, the hilarious movement physics of the bugs, the frame-rate drop, and the mono-colored night missions that are, in fact, a grope in the dark, three(!) trooper skins, close to inexistent flash light. To sum it up, SSTG is a collection of what a developer should avoid in a game. **Sound** Aside the fact bugs have vocal cords and their growl can get on one's nerves, the overall sound quality is all right. Well, there is one more thing. The bugs' footsteps do not differentiate from human footsteps; moreover, the sound is not dynamic (regardless of the terrain they produce the same sounds). While the soundtrack from the original movie will sweeten a bit the overall frustration the game successfully provides, the "original" voice of Casper Van Dien is a total disappointment. Funny thing, he was one of the favorite Hollywood actors of my childhood. I guess he is no longer. **Multiplayer** The multiplayer option consists in three modes: cooperative (up to eight players), death match, and team death match (up to 32 players online). **Conclusion** This game ruined my day. There are no words to express my sorrow about Starship Troopers' failure to be a game. I bet the creators and developers of this project kept their fingers crossed and waited to conquer the hearts of all SST fans. In their rush, in their great expectations, they forgot the essential. Imitating something in every aspect does not grant anything. People always enjoyed originality. Some boobs and a chain gun would have been enough. **RELATED LINKS** [Christopher Weuve Thoughts on Starship Troopers](#)