

PIONEER PLAGUE

by Bill Williams

INSTRUCTION MANUAL
for the Amiga

TERRIFIC
SOFTWARE

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PIONEER PLAGUE— OUR STORY SO FAR...

Every second of every day, some genius is planning on making your life even more miserable than it already is. A case in point: Pioneer Probe Mark IV, the devil's own answer to overpopulation. It was going to be our friendly servant, advancing the cause of colonization throughout the galaxy. Colonization was a big issue back then, perceived to be the answer to humankind's most pressing plaint: the shrinking of our backyards. More and more of us were living vertically, unable to raise enough green to buy our own green, condemned to listen to each other's taste in music, forced to smell each other's air and foul each other's water -- listen, it was crowded.

The Pioneer was going to change all that. It was a self-replicating spaceship, a robot that would spread throughout the galaxy, terra-forming each planet it found into a paradise. When the slowboats of colonists arrived, they would find fresh air and potable water waiting for them, cities and suburbs, banks and fast-food restaurants.... It was so clever, it even put demographically correct curtains in every window.

When it was all done, it would build copies of itself and disperse, like dandelion seeds in a high wind. Sooner or later the entire galaxy would be one big campground for the human race. Instant space, instant wealth for everybody. We thought it was the hottest invention since indoor plumbing.

Now, several centuries of carefree living later, we know what was wrong with the idea. Like all self-replicating entities, mutation is a very real danger. One bad bit in the genetic code -- or the programming -- and you've got a new bug. That new bug, in replicating, propagates the mutation. Pretty soon you've got a whole swarm of new bugs with new ideas.

If you're lucky, the mutation is benign. If you're unlucky.....

The first aberrant strain we noticed was a family that had lost its variety. From coast to coast, it built massive, insufferable cities. Colonists landing on these planets spent a lot of time tearing up pavement and planting grass.

This newest mutation, however, is much worse. The piece of code that checks the planet for prior habitation has been lost. This strain no longer cares if you've got your planet the way you like it; it's going to terra-form it for you anyway!

And this strain is heading towards your home system.

Earth's Research and Development staff wants you to know that they are very, very sorry.

Getting Into The LifeStar

Kickstart™ your computer, if that's what you usually do, but don't go to the Workbench™. Turn right at the Sign of the White Hand and go directly to the Control Room: insert the Pioneer Plague Disk.

WARNING: If you have a 512K system with two disk drives, do not stick a disk in your external drive. It will eat vitally needed memory.

In a minute you'll be staring at the central console, wondering which button to push. Relax, nothing will happen to you while you're in the LifeStar; time flows slowly here. Look around.

Take a look at the four monitors in front of you:

- 1) The one on the left will take you to your AirShip, waiting in the hangar below. The LifeStar will take you from planet to planet, but the AirShip is your attack vehicle.
- 2) The second monitor from the left gets you to a map of your home system. It lets you move the LifeStar to another planet

- 3) The next monitor gets you into the Drone Programming Simulator. Your AirShip carries two drones; you can program them to carry out special missions while you're wreaking havoc.
- 4) The rightmost monitor is for saving and loading drone patterns.

You select the monitors with the mouse. Position the pointer and click the left mouse button over the monitor you want. But don't start just yet, we've got a little more to cover.

The Airship Control Panel

At the top of the screen, you'll find your AirShip controls. Right now, you just need to worry about three instruments:

- 1) The bar gauge in the upper left corner shows your shield strength. as long as your shield strength is up, you're invincible. When you hit zero, you can get damaged.
- 2) The gauge in the upper right corner shows how much fuel you have. When you hit zero your main engines shut off, and you have to get by on the Svenson Ironic Impulse Engines. (Svenson named them himself, because he thought it was ironic that such a fine example of high technology could be such a dog. If you feel your ship's handling get all mushy, you know the Svensons have kicked in.)
- 3) The green screen in the center is your threat display. It shows:
 - a) The sky hatches on the planet (in black).
 - b) The sky hatches currently launching a Pioneer Probe (in red.)
 - c) Your AirShip position (in white).
 - d) The LifeStar (flashing).

A Trial Run

The LifeStar is already positioned over a planet that's been invaded by the Pioneers. It's too late to save this world; every living creature has already been converted to raw materials for the city. Your job is to prevent the Probes from infecting any other planets in your system.

To do that, you must wipe out all the Sky Hatches, with particular attention to the ones that have emerging Probes.

You may control your AirShip from the keyboard, or from a joystick plugged into your second port. If you're using the keyboard, the arrow keys control your direction, (to get diagonals, press both at the same time). The spacebar is used for the "trigger button."

The trigger button has three functions, depending upon what you're flying over:

- 1) **TO FIRE PHOTON MISSILES:** Press the trigger.
- 2) **TO BLOW UP A SKY HATCH:** Position yourself over the hatch and press the trigger. The flight computer will sense that a hatch is below, and it will use the flame-thrower instead. If you see a photon missile fly, you weren't close enough to the Sky Hatch for the computer to notice it.
- 3) **TO PICK UP MORE FUEL:** Locate the fuel tanks which are miniature versions of the oil refinery tanks you see every day. Here the resemblance ends as these particular fuel tanks are ringed with flak emplacements. Position yourself over the fuel tanks and press the trigger. The computer will use the matter transporter to suck up fuel. You have to be very accurate about your positioning to pick up fuel.

"Why," you may ask yourself, "would I need to use photon missiles?" Well, there's something else about the Pioneer Probe that we've been meaning to tell you... Earth's exceedingly clever designers provided the Probe with A.M. (Artificial Malevolence), so that it could deal with unforeseeable circumstances that might frustrate its mission. One of those unforeseeable circumstances is the existence of your ship. The Probe's response to such irritants is to design and build a family of robot ships to remove the offending object -- with unfortunate consequences to your health.

Pilots from previous missions have described three (perhaps four) classes of robots:

- 1) **Star Shark Fighters:** Big nasty red things, always on the prowl, armed with Air-To-Air missiles. You can wipe them out with your photon missiles, or your drones. The Star Shark attack is coordinated by control towers. Be sure to read the paragraph on control towers located further in this section.

- 2) Homers: Various-shaped robots that home in on your ship in predictable patterns. If they collide with you, they pack quite a punch. They can also be destroyed with photon missiles or drones, but if they collide with your drone they will scramble its programming, forcing it to return to your ship.
- 3) Air Mines: We keep hoping we'll find a way to deal with these, but our experimenters never return. We do know that they come in two varieties, Single-Pinging Dumb Mines and Multi-Pinging Smart Mines. Their charge will take your shields down in a hurry if you run into one.
- 4) ??????: We have also recieved some garbled reports about a "Boxer," but we're not sure what the pilots are talking about. They always seem too preoccupied to give us much useful data, and the transcripts are often woefully short..

Control towers are not friendly installations. They are ringed by flak emplacements in a square formation. A square strip of the city surrounds the central flak emplacements but this strip is surrounded by even more flak emplacements. If you see a control tower on the screen, it definitely sees you and the Star Shark Fighters protecting it are apt to get a little nervous. Be forewarned.

To destroy the control tower, fly over it and press the trigger. If you blow up a control tower, the communications of the Star Shark Fighters will be disrupted for awhile and no new ones will appear but you still have to destroy the ones attacking you.

One other thing before you give it a try: to release your drones, press the keys A (F1), S (F2), D (F3), F (F4), or G (F5). (The keys in parentheses are alternates if you prefer not to use the keys in the middle of the keyboard. Do not try to save a pattern to F1 if you have already saved it to the A key. These are one and the same to the computer.) Each key will cause the drone to run a different pattern. Until you train them, they will have relatively simple patterns. For now, just use the default patterns A (F1) and S (F2) to protect yourself.

When you start to run out of shield strength, release a drone with the G (F5) key. It will suck the power from the city blocks beneath it, then return the power to you.

If both of your drones are already flying and you need strength fast, you can cause them to return by pressing the [Return] key. When the drones re-dock, you can then send them out with a different pattern.

If you get hit while your shields are down, you may get damaged. The green panel underneath your fuel gauge will show you what's damaged -- your trigger button, or your ability to fly in any of the four directions. The lights are arranged to represent the positioning on a joystick. A white light means that the corresponding function is damaged. (Your Threat Display may also be damaged, but won't need a light to tell you about it.) If you get damaged, fly back to LifeStar to get repaired.

If you are hit while your shields are down, your transit computer will probably be damaged. You will have to use your Emergency Manual Navigation Kit to move to a new planet. See instructions at the end of the manual.

To enter your AirShip and begin the mission, click the mouse over the leftmost monitor in the Control Room.

When you appear over the planet, fly your ship away from the LifeStar, then release your drones. When you've destroyed all the Sky Hatches, dock with the LifeStar again. (If you need to get back to the Control Room without finishing all of the Sky Hatches, dock with the LifeStar, then press the [Esc] key.)

To pause the action, press the [P] key. Press [P] again to un-pause it.

Programming The Drones

Your drones can protect you from attack, down your enemies, recharge your shields, and wipe out flak emplacements. If you program them effectively, they'll go a long way towards insuring your survival.

Click the mouse over the third monitor (counting from the left) on the central console to enter the Drone Programming Simulator. You'll soon see your AirShip hanging over the image of a circuit board.

To program a drone, you simply fly it in the pattern you want it to travel. The drone will remember all your moves and play them back. You can store 5 of these patterns, using the A, S, D, F, and G, keys on your keyboard. (You only have to program one drone. Either of the drones can use the patterns you program.)

Press the [L] key to put the drone into Learning mode. The drone will appear over your AirShip, and the "L" light on the left side of your control panel will light up. Using the joystick or the arrow keys, fly the drone around your ship for awhile, then press the [Return] key.

The drone will return to your ship, and you will see a row of five lights flash at the bottom of your control panel. The computer is asking you to decide which key to store the pattern in. Press one of the keys [A (F1), S (F2), D (F3), F (F4), G (F5)]. Now, each time you press that key, the drone will replay the moves you just recorded. Try it.

If you don't want to watch the whole pattern being replayed, you can press the [Return] key at any time, and the drone will come back to your ship.

The drone has a limited amount of memory, so if you try to record a very long pattern, it may suddenly return home on its own. That means it can record no more, but the pattern you recorded up until then is fine, if you want to store it.

HINT: You can get longer patterns. The drone remembers your patterns as a series of events. The more often you change directions, the quicker you will fill up its memory. You can record very long-lasting patterns by moving to a new position and waiting, for example.)

If you record a pattern and then decide that you don't want to store it, you don't have to. Just press the L key again to start recording a new pattern.

Saving Your Drone Patterns

To save your drone patterns to disk, you must have a formatted data disk. (There isn't much room on the game disk.) If you're new to the Amiga, please refer to your operating manuals for the formatting procedure -- you will have to restart the computer with a WorkBench disk to do this. (If you have a drone pattern that you just can't bear to lose, find a disk that you know isn't completely full and temporarily store the drone patterns on that. The patterns don't take up a lot of space.)

In the Control Room, click the mouse over the fourth monitor screen to get to the disk options. You should see a picture of a disk with three

labels on it: Load, Save, and Play Game. Click the mouse over the option you want, and a requester will appear asking you for the file name you want to load or save.

Remove the game disk and insert your data disk into the internal floppy disk drive (Drive 0), then click the mouse over the input box and type the file name. If you only have a 512K system, do not use the external drive.

When you're ready, click the mouse over OK. If you've changed your mind, click the mouse over CANCEL. It should only take a few seconds to load or save the drone patterns. When the computer is finished, it will ask you to replace the game disk in Drive 0. Remove the data disk, replace the game disk, and then press [Space] to return to the Disk Utilities menu. You can then select "Play Game" to return to the game.

NOTE: You should only remove the game disk during this procedure. If you remove the game disk while you're in another portion of the program, you may cause the computer to "hang up" when it tries to read something from the disk. If this happens, re-insert the game disk.

Drone Tracking Mode

Your drone actually has two sets of thrusters on it. One set takes care of replaying the patterns you just recorded. The other set is slaved to the thrusters on your AirShip, so that whenever you thrust to the right, the drone's Svenson Slave Thrusters also fire to the right.

The net effect of this is that if you move your AirShip, the drone will follow you, even as it plays out its patterns around your head. You become a moving centerpoint for the drone pattern. This is called Tracking Mode. Your drone always starts out in this mode.

If you press the T key, you will disable the Svenson Slave Thrusters, and the drone will then ignore your own movements. With Tracking Mode turned off, the drone can be left behind to carry out its own mission, then return to you when its pattern runs out. Don't worry if the drone disappears off the end of the screen: it will find you when it's time to come home.

Pressing the T key again will turn Tracking Mode back on. Each press of the T key flip-flops the Svenson Slave Thrusters on or off. These

keypresses are also recorded, so a single pattern can turn Tracking Mode on or off as often as it likes.

To tell whether or not your drone is currently in Tracking Mode, take a look at the drone's status lights. There is a set of status lights for each drone, labelled "TRCK HOM FLY RET". If the light is on, this tells you that the drone is (TRCK) in Tracking Mode, (HOM) Home, or docked with your ship, (FLY) Flying, or (RET) Returning Home.

These lights also operate while you're doing battle, so you can see what your drones are doing. It's easy to miss them when they return, for example, so you can check the "HOM" light to see if you have any drones to release.

Next to drone status lights, you will see two small power gauges. When the drones have their Tracking Mode turned off, the Svenson Engines are used to pull power from the city blocks below them (using a process popularized by UFOS). If you're in the Drone Simulator, you will see a chunk of the circuit board change color. If you're over a planet, you will see the city black out. The power is collected in the drone's batteries, until it can re-dock with your ship; the gauges show how much power the drone currently has in its batteries.

HINT: If you need Shield Strength desperately, you can let a drone collect just enough power to make it worthwhile, then recall it early with the RETURN key.

ANOTHER HINT: When Tracking Mode is off, the drones burn out the flak emplacements that protect the fuel tanks.

The ability to destroy incoming missiles, fighters, etc. is not affected by Tracking Mode.

To leave the Drone Programming Simulator, press the [Esc] key.

The Remaining Instruments

At the bottom of the instrument panel, under the drone status lights, you'll find five small lights that indicate which drone patterns are currently being run. The lights correspond to the position of the A (F1), S (F2), D (F3), F (F4), and G (F5) keys.

To the right of the Threat Display, you'll find a triangular arrangement of lights. These indicate the stage of the current Pioneer Probe launch wave. When the top light is lit, the Probes will start launching. When all the Sky Hatches have been destroyed, all the lights will flash in unison.

Next to it, you will see a small computer monitor. This will display, in green numbers, how many Sky Hatches you have left. It will also show how many Pioneer Probes have escaped in red numbers.

Moving To A New Planet

From the Control Room, click the mouse over the second monitor (counting from the left). This will bring you to your Home System Chart.

Planets that have numbers flashing next to them have already been infected with the Plague. The number indicates how many active Sky Hatches currently exist on that planet. If the number is zero, you have eradicated all the Hatches on the planet, but the planet is still spoiled. If all the planets become spoiled, you have failed in your mission.

The planet that is flashing indicates your current location. Clicking the mouse over this image (or pressing the ESC key) will get you back to the Control Room. If you click the mouse over another planet's image, you will select that planet as your destination for Sub-Euclidian Space Travel.

Sub-Euclidian Navigation

The titanic forces that formed our galaxy left giant fissures between planets. You must use these fissures, or Wormholes, to travel from planet to planet. If your computer is functioning properly, you will automatically enter Sub-Euclidian space and travel towards your chosen destination. If however, you were hit while your shields were down, it's likely that your transit computer was damaged. In this unfortunate case, you will have to use your Emergency Manual Navigation Kit. Please refer to the section at the back of your manual entitled Using Your Emergency Manual Navigation Kit.

Passing Through Sub-Euclidian Space

This is much faster than normal space travel, but it still takes an appreciable amount of time. The longer you are in Sub-Euclidian Space, the more Sky Hatches will be built on the planets.

To get out of Sub-Euclidian Space, you must spear a Gravity Well with your Prion Beam. The Gravity Well is represented on your screen by a green wire-image drawing of a planet. Aim the Prion Beam with your mouse; press the left mouse button to fire it. As soon as you've fired the beam you may move the mouse without disrupting your aim.

Unfortunately, the Pioneer Probes have mined the area with Tractor Missiles. If you let a Tractor Missile get by you, you will be pulled back towards your starting point. The Prion Beam, however will destroy the Tractor Missiles.

USING YOUR EMERGENCY MANUAL NAVIGATION KIT

Your Emergency Manual Navigation Kit can be found in the clearly marked envelope in your game box. It consists of Wormhole Charts of Dimensions 6 through 9 and transparencies of the four Sub-Euclidian Planes. The Lifestar's computer will search all the possible combinations of Sub-Euclidian Planes and Wormhole Dimensions and will display the combination that contains useful Wormholes for your destination. Now it is up to you to enter in the coordinates.

Open your envelope and pull out the Wormhole Chart and the Sub-Euclidian Plane transparency that your computer specified. Position the transparency over the chart so that the boxes line up. See if there is one Wormhole that travels between your current planet and the planet you want to reach. If not, rotate the transparency and look again. When you find a Wormhole between the two planets, look in the lower left-hand corner of the chart. You will see a number that indicates the angle of rotation: this number will be 0, 90, 180 or 270 degrees. Click the mouse over the input box on your computer screen until the number matches the rotation angle.

Now you are ready to begin the Collapsar Sequence. This sequence is timed so you may want to read the next section before you begin. Click on the "OK!" box when you're ready.

The Collapsar Sequence

The Sub-Euclidian Planes are made up of White Hole/Black Hole sequences. You need to align your ship with the correct sequence to reach your chosen destination. The Lifestar computer will display a row of five squares at the bottom of the screen. These squares are either empty (White Holes) or have a dot in them (Black Holes). Quickly

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memorize the 5 square pattern, then scan the chart from left to right to find an identical sequence. There may be more than one. Type in the letter that corresponds to the first (leftmost) box in the pattern. (If the sequence begins on a box lettered "f", for example, press the "f" key.) The computer will use that entry point to open a full-sized hole into the Sub-Euclidian Plane.

The act of opening a hole into the Sub-Euclidian Plane takes a prodigious amount of energy. The more quickly you can identify the pattern and type in the first letter, the more energy you will gain for your shields.

If you type an incorrect letter, you will still enter Sub-Euclidian space but will not be properly aligned and most likely, will not reach your chosen planet.

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