

“Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator” Analysis

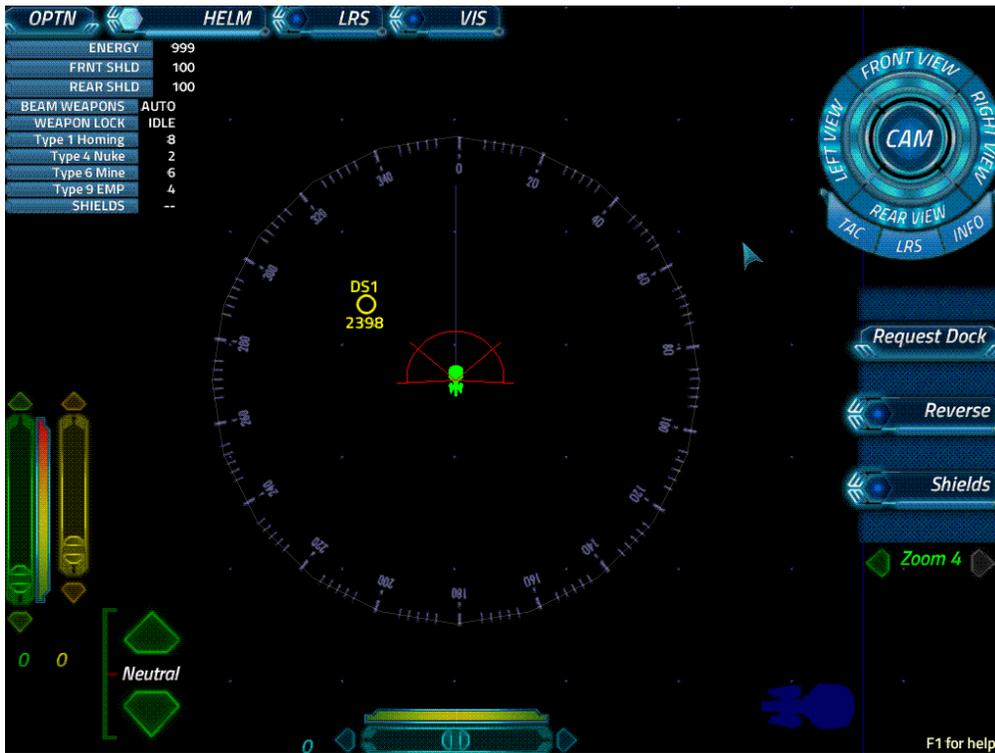
Artemis Spaceship Bridge Simulator is, as the name would suggest, a spaceship bridge simulator involving multiple players (ideally all in the same room). Each player uses his/her own computer, serving a unique role in the crew of the ship. The game’s primary aesthetics are fellowship and fantasy.

At the start of the game, each player must choose a position in the crew. Positions include Captain, Weapons, Helm, Engineering, Communications, and Science. Once everyone is assigned a role, the main game begins. You are all in a spaceship, working together to travel around a map, explore, destroy enemies, and accomplish various odd jobs. Each crew position on the bridge comes with a unique set of responsibilities and tasks, and the entire team must combine efforts to avoid destruction.

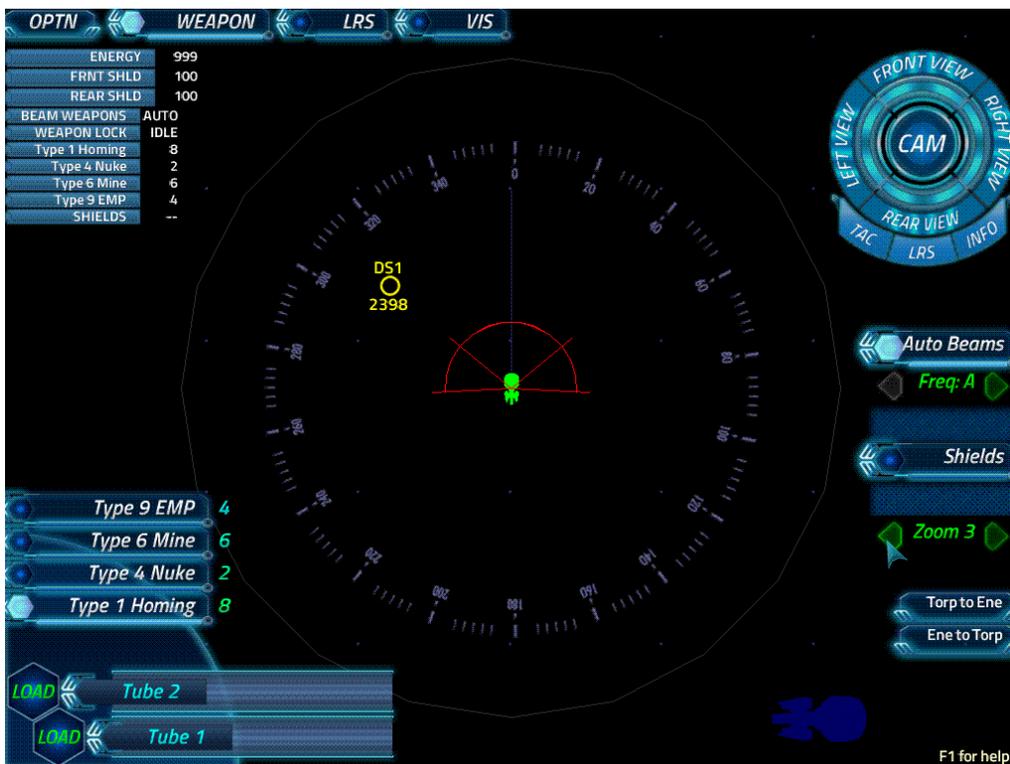
The objectives of the game are fairly straightforward. There are space stations to protect, enemies to destroy, and missions to complete. Space stations are vital for restoring a ship’s energy and supplies. Enemies spawn in clusters and fly around the map, often trying to attack those space stations. Players must kill the enemies in order to stop the stations from being destroyed. Missions vary, and can consist of tasks like transferring supplies or responding to help requests. Sometimes they lead players into unexpected situations, like being robbed by a ship they thought was friendly. Eventually, after all enemies are defeated, the game reaches an end state, at which point the play is stopped and a number of statistics are displayed on screen. These statistics provide an opportunity for players to create their own objectives. Players may want to play a session wherein they maximize the number of enemy surrenders, or perhaps launch fewer than 20 torpedoes, etc. The statistics provide a fun platform for creating your own objectives and goals outside of the ones explicitly created by the game.

Each position in the crew comes with its own unique set of tasks, and the game’s procedures vary accordingly. The captain, who must command his crew, has no direct control over the state of the ship; there are no procedures for him/her inside the actual computer game – instead, he must resort to issuing commands to the crew in real life (i.e. “Engineering, more power to forward shields!”). For other positions, most tasks are performable through a point and click interface, though WASD and the arrow keys are sometimes helpful. While these interfaces differ from position to position, they share common elements, making it easier for players to switch crew positions between rounds. Take, for example, the helm, weapons, and engineering interfaces:

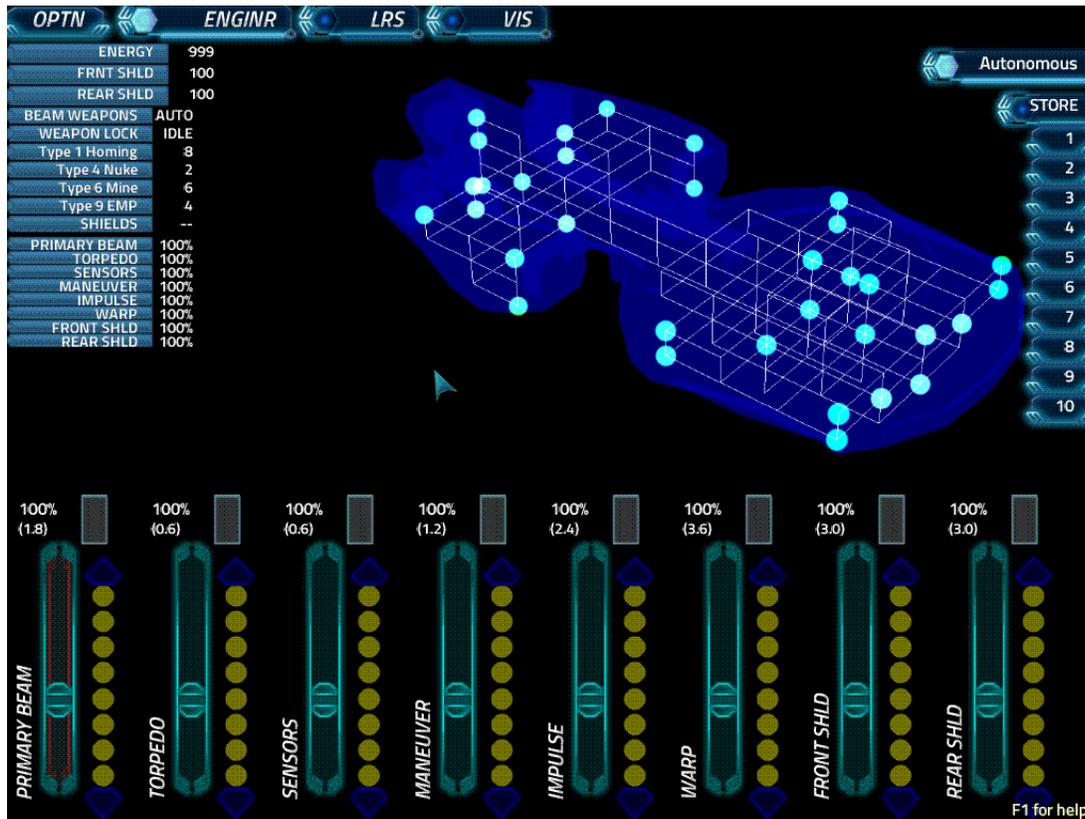
Helm Interface



Weapons Interface



Engineering Interface:



As can be seen, helm and weapons are *very* similar to one another. The radar view, the red laser-range arc displayed in front of the ship, the view orb in the upper right, and the toggle-shields button are all the same. The engineering interface stands slightly more apart, but the ship's stats in the upper left corner are still situated as they were in the other two stations. Some interfaces are more unique than others, but if multiple stations have to display the same information, they usually display it in a consistent manner.

The mechanics of the game do a lot to create dynamics in support of both the fellowship and fantasy aesthetics of the game. When playing, a large screen is displayed in front of the whole crew, visible to everyone. While this can act as the captain's interface, its primary purpose is simply to imitate a key feature seen on the bridge of many sci-fi spaceships, like the Starship Enterprise's Main View Screen in Star Trek. The screen itself has very little impact on the player actions within the gameplay – it looks nice, and can be handy in one or two situations, but its main purpose is directly linked to strengthening the fantasy aesthetic.

The distribution of tasks and information is crucial in creating the fellowship aesthetic. Most tasks are full-time positions. If a player is good, they may be able to manage two roles, but no more. You need friends to play with, and you rely on them for necessary information. Alone, one person could not manage all the systems. The captain, who is given a lot of high level information, must help his team coordinate, but he doesn't have the time or information needed to handle all the specifics of each

station; he relies on his crew. The helmsman can steer the ship, but relies on the captain or science crew members to say where to go. Engineering has the most control over the ship's systems, but knows the least about the actual outside world; instead, various crew members must constantly update him on the ship's current situation and he must adapt accordingly. The communications officer is the only crew member that can taunt ships and receive missions, but he must be told which ships to taunt, and he needs to speak with the captain in order to bring attention to missions. Meanwhile, the weapons officer can load and fire a number of ammunitions, but he relies on the science officer to specify the frequency on which to fire. The captain must say which ships to attack. All of the roles are intertwined, forcing a strong dynamic of communication between players, really emphasizing the fellowship aesthetic. The constant tech-babble back and forth also calls back to many familiar sci-fi stories and helps the player feel like they're a part of a spaceship's crew – the fantasy aesthetic.

The mechanical individuality of each role in the spaceship creates a dynamic wherein each player, over the course of the game, becomes highly responsible for a specific aspect of the ship's system. And, if they stick with that role for a few rounds, they begin to feel like an expert. This gradual mastery dynamic lends itself to the fantasy aesthetic. You really do feel like the helmsman of a spaceship when the crew completely relies on you to perform your job effectively and you've mastered the role well enough to do so. You're there because the crew needed a helmsman, not because your friends just needed another player. The same, of course, applies to the other positions in the ship. Feeling that you're a necessary part of the team, with a clear role to play, powerfully reinforces the fantasy aesthetic while adding to the fellowship aesthetic as well.

Next, let's look at some mechanics more akin to typical game genres. When flying around space, you have a number of limited resources. Among them: energy, which you use for just about everything, and various ammunitions used for attacking ships. Energy will slowly replenish over time, but docking at a space station is, by far, the best way to restore it. While docked, you also collect other supplies, like ammunition. This space station mechanic, in addition to creating a dependence upon space stations, forms a dynamic of balancing immediate progress with resource usage. These dynamics primarily enforce an aesthetic of challenge, which is not one of the primary aesthetics of the game, but it is still important. The fantasy aesthetic requires that players be challenged in some way. Rarely do people consume sci-fi media that does not involve the characters overcoming some kind of obstacle. Thus, to fulfill the fantasy, the players, as characters in the game, must also face some level of challenge. The resource management adds an interesting, reasonable layer to that challenge without overshadowing the core aspects of the game.

Finally, the game utilizes a screen glitch mechanic. It is used in a few places, like when the ship performs a warp jump, but we will focus on the distortion that occurs when an enemy fires upon the players' ship. All screens will jitter and blur, making it hard to see what exactly is happening. This creates a neat dynamic: when the ship is under fire, the screen distortions add a suitable layer of confusion and panic to the experience. It creates a dynamic wherein bad situations often result in hastily made, impulsive decisions. This kind of uncalculated, quick thinking adds to the fantasy aesthetic. If getting fired upon didn't cause a rushed panic, the game would feel less engaging and players wouldn't identify

as much with their character. With the added worry, however, players get pulled further into the action as they do whatever they can to try and resolve the situation using their damaged tools.

In the end, Artemis creates a very unique player experience through its creative application of information hiding and task distribution. The dependence between crewmembers – the constant need to talk, ask questions, and communicate with each other in various situations – creates a uniquely strong sense of fellowship, and serves to fulfill the players' fantasies – making them feel like they really are crew members on the bridge of a spaceship.

Images obtained from Unofficial Artemis Wiki

<http://artemiswiki.pbworks.com/w/page/39352315/FrontPage>