

Frontier (Elite 2)

Initial comments and suggestions based on Amiga alpha version 0.06a.

I realise that this disk is a very early work in progress version, but I thought I would set out my stall from day one with a few comments. Feel free to completely ignore them!

(i) The H.U.D information (Planet names, distance to target etc.)  
Sometimes the information displayed in white text becomes obscured by the graphics behind it. MicroProse' F-117A Stealth Fighter v2.0 incorporated a key which would toggle the colour of the H.U.D between white or green for improved clarity. I think it would be a nice idea to include something along the same lines for this game. Colours could be white-green-red-black then back to white again.

(ii) Graphics  
I am assuming that the 3D model for inside the station docking bay and the graphics for the ship panel and the faces (when using comms) are only temporary? I would hope that they are, because they really aren't very good.

(iii) The cursor  
There is a small 'arrow head' style squiggle in the middle of the cross hairs. What is it? It changes when you move around.

(iv) Depressed buttons  
When selecting a function by either pressing a function key or by selecting an icon, it would be nice for the buttons to be seen to push in (i.e be pressed and then depressed). This gives a visual positive feedback that the function has been selected just before the function is actually accessed.

(v) Disembodied camera (f8)  
This option crashes the Amiga with a Software error and Guru. I assume it's not supposed to be there or it's looking for it and can't find it on the floppy disk.

Otherwise I've messed around a bit buying stuff and got a good close look at Saturn and the space station. I've jumped through hyperspace a few times but can't do much else when in space.

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The more I mess around with 'Elite 2' the more I like it. You were right about cities. It is very difficult to fly down to a city on a planet (e.g mars or earth). What are you supposed to be able to do when you are down there? A few additional preliminary comments follow:

(i) Faces  
The top half of a few of the 'ident-kit' face components don't quite match up with the cheek bones of the lower half of the face. (I still think the faces could do with much more colour. The chosen palette is terrible and I don't think much of the faces themselves either!)

(ii) Communications  
If you want to access another function within the communications screens, the only way to leave the function you are in is to select the phone icon again. This annoyingly puts you back to the root directory of the comms. That's fine if that's where you want to be, but it's a pain to have to go through the outer menus all over again to select 'new hulls' instead of 'reconditioned hulls' (for example). Can we have a button that takes you back to the root of the sub-directory you are in? (or just back to the previous screen?)

(iii) Ship hulls  
Shouldn't the lights on the buttons be lit when you are viewing a hull? There is no indication as to which craft you are viewing.

(iv) Different ships  
Just a question really: is there any advantage in terms of actual gameplay in exchanging your cobra mark III for a ship with much less cargo space capacity? I'm guessing that a smaller ship is a faster ship but otherwise is there any point in them being there?

(v) Your ship information screens  
Nowhere on any of the three screens available does it mention the model type of your ship.

(vi) Fitting lasers  
I bought two 20MW beam lasers to my newly bought Puma shuttle. I accessed the three info screens on my new craft. The spinning 3D model of my ship clips the edge of the 3D window with it's new lasers. This leaves behind small points of corruption on the border of the window.

(vii) 3D routines  
It's probably just a matter of not having set up the parameters yet for how close a ship can get to another before they collide, but if you don't quite dock properly the 3D station falls apart before your very eyes, i.e some of the sides

disappear and you can see beyond it etc.

(viii) Extras

Having bought a radar, 20MW beam lasers, ECM, Auto-pilot etc. for my ship, how do I access them? (I'm assuming this hasn't been programmed yet).

(ix) Save game

When I begin testing properly, I am assuming that a save game feature will be included by then?

(x) Text

Whenever text appears in place of the radar, it should always be positioned centrally else it looks sloppy.

You should try playing the game whilst listening to the soundtrack to 2001: A Space Odyssey! It enhances the atmosphere considerably! (I kid you not).

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Comments

(i) Text

The red text for "Docked", "Silent Running" etc. which is displayed in the right hand corner of the ships panel is not at all readable on a TV display via the RF or Video Out signal from the TV modulator. This is due to the light grey stripes on a dark grey background that the text is printed on.

(ii) Text again

The text used for the headings on the 'Cargo Inventory' and 'Passenger' info screens needs to have some colour added to the font. As it is, the text is not very readable against the red and pale green backdrops.

(iii) Docking area

This still looks very temporary and naff.

(iv) Map of Solar System

The map of the solar system that you can call up with function key f2 still look rather horrid. A scarlet background and green orbital path ellipses is a terrible colour combination! I think 'Warhead' (Activision) had a similar map but the orbital paths were dots that gave the impression of complete ellipses. This made it look a lot nicer. A black background and yellow paths would look better than the current palette.

(v) The 3D solar systems map

What are the collection of blue orbs on this map supposed to represent?

(vi) Solar system data

When looking at the data for our own solar system (showing all the planets lined up along with data on each and which commodities to deal in etc.), we have icon 2 and icon 10 performing the same function (the map of the solar system). Is this correct?

(vii) Outside view of ship

What are the light blue (cyan) jets coming out of the sides and top of my Cobra mark III supposed to be? (At a guess I'd say they are retro's for slowing the ship down?)

(viii) Controls

For some unknown reason, moving the mouse left now turns the ship right and vice versa. I can't play it this way at all. Version 0.06 was fine as it was in terms of controlling the ship.

(ix) Messages

I don't think that the messages appearing in the top right hand corner of the ships panel are in a prominent enough position. I don't notice them half the time (even on a monitor when I can read them despite the problems with the striped grey background colour).

(x) Landing in cities

There must be an easier way of landing! I haven't managed it yet. I would have thought the best way would be to get within a certain proximity and then tractor beams could pull you into position and lower you down. You would have to ensure that you lowered your landing gear of course.

(Admittedly this might already be planned for in the game, perhaps if you have some sort of docking computer?)

(xi) Stations

With time running at a normal speed, I was unable to dock with any space stations. They run away from you too quickly for you to catch up. Whilst I appreciate that in real life the station has to orbit (i.e move around) the planet in order to remain in the same position all the time, (geo-stationary orbit?) but the speed that the stations run away is surely taking that a little too far?

(xii) The H.U.D information  
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Shouldn't the lights on the buttons on the screen be lit when you are viewing a hull? There is no indication as to which craft you are viewing.

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Just a question really: is there any advantage in terms of actual gameplay in exchanging your Cobra mark III for a ship with much less cargo space capacity? I'm guessing that a smaller ship is a faster ship but otherwise is there any point in them being there?

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Nowhere on any of the three screens available does it mention the model type of your ship.

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Having bought a radar, 20MW beam lasers, ECM, Auto-pilot etc. for my ship, how do I access them? (I'm assuming this hasn't been programmed yet).

(xix) Save game  
I am assuming that a save game feature will be included soon?

(xx) Text  
Whenever text appears in place of the radar, it should always be positioned centrally else it looks sloppy.

(xxi) Neptune  
A few years ago 10 more moons were discovered around Neptune in addition to the five already there. I know 6 of them are very close to the planet but I don't have the names. Maybe David already knew about this but decided they weren't significant enough to include. I just thought I'd let you know anyway.

#### Bugs

(i) Different views  
The outside and rear views do not work when you are docked unless the docking bay doors are open. Is this correct?

(ii) Switching functions  
When switching between the front view and another function, e.g map of the solar system, for an instant you see an image of the front view but in the colours of the newly chosen function (e.g when in docking bay of station). This looks messy. The same does NOT happen when you go from the map back to the front view of the docking area.

(iii) Pluto

I can't find Pluto. I've looked everywhere. It doesn't seem to appear on the map of the solar system and its name doesn't appear in space when I have that function activated either. It IS on the information screen giving data on our solar system and its planets.

(iv) Video

I connected to the Stock Market and bought some air processors at J.F Kennedy station. The message "Connecting Video..." appeared in the left side window and the usual face did not appear. I then switched to buying some upgrades for my ship and the message remained there and still no faces appeared. This only happened once.

(v) Upgrading

The force field item in the list of upgrades in J.F Kennedy station doesn't work at all. You select FIT or REMOVE and nothing happens - no text messages telling you they are out of stock or that you don't have that item, nothing.

(vi) Space dust

This appears to be causing a problem. When switched 'on' I have begun experiencing all sorts of weird things. I requested launching clearance from J.F Kennedy. They confirmed clearance and then nothing happened! I accelerated time and the doors opened as usual. On advancing out of the bay (pressing numeric 9) the ship is not rotating as normal (due to the stations tractor beams or gravity or whatever it is!) but it is dead straight and still. On trying to move the ship via the right hand mouse button everything was painfully slow, like it was running through quick drying cement or thick treacle. The stars seemed to be wobbling in front of me. On turning space dust off, the fault was still present and I had to re-boot and try again. (Booting from Workbench or using the other files from version 0.06 made no difference to this particular problem)

(vii) Locking up

The game has locked up on me once so far. Having just left the station I switched to the outside view for a bit and then the game locked up. I had to re-boot.

NB: Bugs (iv) and (vi) might be connected with the game options screen that is accessed by selecting the 'stop' icon on the time advance options (top left hand side of ship control panel). If you select the same icon it toggles to a pause icon and you can get to the options screen (to change the control method, switch on space dust etc). When you switch back to the normal front view and continue the game, I had not appreciated that you had to press the PLAY icon to continue as normal. With play not selected, time is going very slowly and therefore everything runs like in quick drying cement etc...

(viii) Landing clearance

Is there a time limit once you get landing clearance before the clearance is revoked/forgotten? I got clearance to land at a city once but by the time I was in a nearish position to do it I got a message telling me I hadn't got clearance.

(ix) Fitting lasers

I bought two 20MW beam lasers to my newly bought Puma shuttle. I accessed the three info screens on my new craft. The spinning 3D model of my ship clips the edge of the 3D window with it's new lasers. This leaves behind small points of corruption on the border of the window.

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(Tested on: Amiga A500 (1.3) expanded to 1 meg. The machine has a switch for 1/2 fast mem and 1/2 chip mem, or a whole 1 meg of chip mem. The software has been booted using the Alpha version 0.06 files (except for EL2 itself) or from Workbench 1.3.2)

Available configurations of hardware:

- Config A: 1 meg chip mem + ext.drive + self-booting vers (using 0.06 files except for EL2)
- Config B: 1 meg chip mem + ext.drive + Workbench
- Config C: 1 meg chip mem + ext.drive + Workbench+STACK 70000

Stating the Config only confirms the hardware setup when the bug was found. It does not signify that the bug only occurs in this setup. Infact it signifies that it has ONLY been tested under these conditions, unless stated otherwise (e.g ALL Configs means it happens no matter what the set up was)

Comments

(xxii) 3D Solar System map

Is there a way of finding the system you are in quickly (a HOME key?) if you have scrolled the map far away from your present system. Also, is there a way of locating a particular system by name without having to hunt around the map looking for it?

(xxiii) 3D shapes

Some ships have what appear to be wafer thin areas (e.g. wings or landing feet). When viewed via the external view, some of these features have been known to vanish altogether when viewed 'flat' due to the thin appendages!

Bugs

(x) Solar system map

I selected f10 to bring up the solar system map and the game crashed. I wasn't doing anything out of the ordinary. It only did it once. (Config A)

(xi) Icons

I think you are already aware of this problem. Icons 7-10 do a vanishing act once in a while. Sometimes you seem to be able to select them and other times you can't. (Config A)

(xii) Pause

Pause the game then try moving the mouse. Unpause the game and the view leaps. It seems to store your movements in a buffer whilst the game is paused. Obviously it shouldn't do this! (All Config's)

(xiii) City launch requests

I am assuming that the 3D sequence for launching from a city is not in yet. At the moment, one minute you are in a normal docking bay and the next moment you are in the air above the pad you landed on before entering the dock. You are dropping down to the ground again and can be warned away for not having landing permission and subsequently destroyed before you know what has happened. (Config A)

(xiv) 3D solar system map

I was scrolling around looking at the systems on offer with the cursor keys. Suddenly the screen went totally black. Only the white arrow mouse pointer was visible. Nothing else could be accessed. The function keys did nowt yet the game didn't appear to have crashed. (Config A)

(xv) 3D solar system map

The map crashed whilst I was scrolling around, but this time the colours went crazy and I had a vertical bar of corruption near the right hand edge of the screen. (Config B)

(xvi) Space clouds

The blue strips of cloud (?) in space sometimes appear as black instead of blue when you are rotating around the external view of your own spacecraft in space. They toggle between blue and black depending on the angle they are viewed from. (Config C)

(xvii) Detail

If you put detail down to the lowest level then look at the external view of your ship from space near a planet, the high detail of the planet re-appears on the surface as it is positioned on the far right hand side of the screen (one cursor key press away from disappearing altogether). If you move it back to the left then the detail vanishes again. (Config A)

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Comments

(xxiv) Ultimate objective

When it comes to actually testing the game it would be useful to know what the overall objective of Frontier is. Seeing that there doesn't appear to be any rating system I assume that it won't be to reach a particular status like in the original?

Bugs

(xviii) Planets rings

Some of the planets or the planet data have been defined wrongly. E.g, Epsilon Eradini 9 has rings when according to the data for that planet it shouldn't! Also, Lacaille 9352 7 has no rings when it should, and its close neighbour Lacaille 9352 6 does when it shouldn't!

(xix) Missing persons

Franz Biggs (related to Ronny no doubt) is mentioned three times on one BBS system as a missing person. Each time his last known whereabouts are different. Two of the three mentions appear on the same screen!

(xx) Puma shuttle

When I've bought a fair amount of equipment for the shuttle and have launched from the station, I get two vertical lines either side of the forward view. I assume these are supposed to represent my 20 mw beam lasers that I had fitted to front and rear? They look naff if that is what they are, as all they are are horizontal lines.

(xxi) Imperial Attack Ship

This odd looking ship has an orb of some sort at the front. This partially obscures the forward view by appearing in the centre of the screen as a dark grey circle.

I've just about done all the messing around I can in this present Amiga version. If you want me to look at the ST or PC then send those along with the next Amiga version.

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Frontier - Elite 2 (Amiga Alpha vers 0.07)

New Comments:

(xxiv) Planet temperatures

I am assuming that the planets in any solar system should get colder the further away they are from the star? (All of those I have examined in any detail seem to have followed this rule of thumb).

Ackaywa is a yellow 'G' type star and the first planet (Ackaywa 1) has a surface temperature of 213 degrees, the second has 587 and the third 2. Surely this isn't correct? (There is only one star/sun in the system). Could it be volcanic activity that causes the second planet to be so hot?

(xxv) System types

I understand Binary systems to have two stars. It seems that Ternary have three, Quaternary - four, Quinternary - five, and Sextuple - six. However, if these assumptions are correct then a lot of the system data types are wrong. Even if you count Brown Dwarf's as stars the definitions (Binary, Ternary etc) are wrong for many of the systems.

(xxvi) Solar system map

When you switch back to the solar system map (showing the orbital paths of the planets within the system), the zoom in/out is reset each time. Is this correct? The 3D galaxy map does not behave in the same way. If you zoom in/out then leave the screen and return to it later, it is still on the same magnification as when you left it. The latter is better, but which one is correct?

(xxvii) 3D Galaxy Map

How many light years across is this map? I gave up after 4,000 odd light years. There are also a hell of a lot of unexplored systems with no settlements or space stations/trading posts. A few I could understand but why so many? Why have them there if you can't do anything within them? (It would be nice to have a star or planet named after me somewhere in the game if that's possible. It would make my day!)

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Test report - Amiga Alpha version 0.08a

Machines: Amiga A500 1.3 (expanded to a full 1mb of chip memory) with an external drive, and Amiga A500 1.3 (expanded to 1mb) with external drive.

Other: Game booted with Workbench 3.1 (v34.28), (Kick Start v34.5). Run through Shell with STACK 70000 run first.

If any fatal crashes occur, the equipment is turned off for a minimum of five minutes before re-booting.

Points marked with a C are comments. Points marked with a B are bugs.

Tuesday October 27th 1992

1. Abraham Lincoln shipyard (C)

There are two Cobra Mk III's available and four Cobra Mk I's! Is this correct? (The number and type of craft available changes each time the game is booted).

2. Viewing ship hulls (Abraham Lincoln) (B)

A number of craft are too large when being displayed via the 'view' option in the shipyard. They rotate and leave images outside of their window, e.g Mamba, Transporter, Cobra Mk I.

3. Force Shields (Abraham Lincoln) (B)

When you try and 'fit' force shields, you don't get them fitted. You get the appropriate sound effect when selecting the 'fit' button, but nothing happens - no text confirmation, nothing.

4. BBS Adverts (Abraham Lincoln) (C)

Numerous advert categories do not function yet, e.g ESCORTS REQUIRED, FEDERAL MILITARY, INSURANCE, MISSING PERSON.

5. Music (C)

It is a very good rendition, but you can't turn the music off yet.

6. Landing gear (C)

The sound effect used when landing gear retracts goes on for too long (way beyond after the landing gear has retracted).

7. Puma Shuttle missiles (C)

Unlike the standard Cobra Mk III, the missiles don't appear on the outer hull of a Puma shuttle as far as I can see. Is this correct?

8. Unnamed (B)

My Puma Shuttle had the words Unnamed on both sides. The lettering wasn't wrapped around the hull properly so the top of the lettering was cut off at an angle. Also, if you rotated in the external view, the lettering appears to become detached from the side of the hull at certain angles.

9. Other ships (C)

It's good to see other space craft flying around but they zoom about far too fast. Is this how all other ships will behave in space? How are you ever supposed to chase them, shoot at them etc?

10. Auto-pilot (Luyten 789-6) (B)

Under what circumstances do you get the 'target lost' message? I was using the auto-pilot at the time. Moments later I was getting very colourful flashes in the black borders. Some yellow text had appeared over the time acceleration icons (left hand side) but I could not read what it said. A lot of noisey sound effects were playing at the time as well.

11. Uressce (24.17 ly from the Sun solar system) (B)

According to the system data shown on the 3D map of the galaxy this system has a faint 'M' red star and has extensive mining and industrial development. According to the solar system info the system has 2 'M' red stars (binary) and no planets. How can there be extensive mining and industrial development? (i.e the data does not match up).

12. Clearance Withdrawn message (B)

I hyper-spaced from the SUN solar system to ARCTURUS. As I was hyper-spacing I received a message from Nesbitt telling me that Clearance was withdrawn. I hadn't requested clearance for anything! (Nesbitt is located in the Arcturus system but at the time I was only in transit). I have also had this message from certain planets in certain systems that don't actually have any bases at all in the entire system!

13. Auto-pilot (C)

It is possible to select your own ship as the destination for the auto-pilot when on the solar system map (red and green). Surely you shouldn't be allowed to do this?

14. Solar system map (B)

If you zoom in and out on the red/green solar system map, the green orbital path ellipses and names of planets disappear frequently, return and then disappear again. This happens all the time regardless of the system you are in. They also seem to change their orientation when you zoom or out, flipping to a different angle at will.

15. General controls (C)

It has to be said that the control system used in space and used for landing is not very easy. I cannot imagine how combat will be playable with the present system!

16. Space Dust (C)

Is this working as it is supposed to? I still get no feeling of real movement when travelling through space. I know it isn't realistic to see points of light flying past you, but it would make the journeys between planets visually more exciting, especially if they sped up the faster you went.

17. Stuck text (B)

The registration number (?) of a ship (AD-744-X9) got stuck on the screen as if it had become part of my H.U.D. I had just launched from the Bushport space station in the Altair system. It has happened a couple of times in different systems with different ship numbers. Each time the text stays in the same position on screen as the ship moves about, even when in an external view.

18. Station Docking bays (C)

The interior design of the docking bay found in stations, cities and trading posts is very poor - especially with the crude signs on the walls and the play school style doors.

19. Sector numbers (C)

Can missions to particular systems include the sector number? It's a pain having to search the map for a system that you can't find. Having the sector number would at least point you in the right direction when ferrying passengers etc.

20. Guru Meditation (B)

I had taken on board a group of 5 people wanting to go to the Groombridge 34 system. I had half of the money (907) up front and the remaining half on arrival. I launched from the Colin Fudge space station in orbit around the earths moon in the SUN solar system. I switched to rear view and watched the station disappearing behind me. I then selected hyperspace to jump to the Groombridge 34 system (I had previously set up the 3D map to jump to this system). The game locked up. The screen colours went wacky and the screen went into a venetian blinds effect. About ten seconds later the game crashed to a Guru meditation number #00000003.2F012F3C, (an address error?).

21. 2042 L1 (B)

This moon around Lagrange has craters and other surface features in orbit as well as on the surface when zoomed in on in the solar system map. (I think it's not placing them in the correct position on the moon). It seems to look okay when you fly there for real though.

22. Pause (B)

If you unpause in space, the game suddenly 'leaps' to the point in time that you would have been at if you hadn't paused. Also, if you move the mouse when paused, when you unpause it, the game has stored these moves and the screen lurches in the relevant direction. (i.e the game pauses the screen but the game is actually continuing on in the background).

23. Missiles (B)

When you launch a missile it launches from under your Cobra Mk III and then vanishes! You don't see it streaking off towards its target. It seems to disappear from view immediately after launching.

24. Landing (B)

You can land on suns. F7 shows that you have landed on rough ground, but the planet surface itself is invisible!

Wednesday 28th October 1992

25. Speed (C)

Increasing speed to leave a station's docking bay via the [ and ] keys is a little too slow.

26. 3D Galaxy Map (B)

If you rotate the solar system map (red/green) then the 3D galaxy map is rotated too by default. However, one slight movement on the mouse suddenly flips it back to the correct orientation. This is similar to (and probably the same problem as) point (14).

27. Gilmour Orbiter station (B)

This can be found in orbit at Taylor's Planet in the Tau Ceti system. This station is as flat as a pancake! It looks as if it's been made out of cardboard. There are no rims/edges to it, either in space or when viewed on the solar system map! It flips suddenly from side orientation (where it is so thin it almost goes invisible) to front or slight angle where you can see it is flat!

28. Target behind (B)

When you engage the auto-pilot a message flashes on screen telling you that the "target is behind" when it clearly isn't because the ship is heading directly for it (although quite a distance away admittedly).

29. Docking on auto-pilot (B)

I had set up the auto-pilot to dock at the Gilmour Orbiter. It seemed to have trouble locating the station when it was very near to Taylor's planet so I put it in the 3rd time warp speed (three arrows). Suddenly I was getting a view from inside a stations docking bay so I immediately switched back to normal time. The angle was nowhere near being straight. It was as if I was in one of the bottom right hand corners of the bay looking up into the ceiling in the opposite top left hand corner region. The wall you normally face when docked was slightly visible in the corner to the top right hand corner of the 3D window. Anyway, the game then proceeded to dock me whilst at this crazy angle! I could access the BBS and do everything normally. The only problem came when I got clearance to launch. The doors opened and the ship seemed to get stuck in the corner shaking the main display as if it was vibrating. A few seconds later the view suddenly switched to the normal angle facing the bay doors as they opened into space. After this everything was back to normal.

30. Ship Hull prices (C)

New and reconditioned ships at a station seem to be exactly the same, i.e same type and number of ships, same exchange prices



etc. I assume that there will eventually be differences. What will the disadvantage be of buying a reconditioned hull? (I assume the price will be cheaper but will it be less reliable somehow?)

31. Guru Meditation (again) (B)  
I was in the Epsilon Eradini system. I had set the auto-pilot to go to Fortress Cousens (in orbit at New California). I was in the standard ship (Cobra Mark III, no cargo, no passengers, no additional equipment other than the standard that comes with it at the start of the game). I set the auto-pilot, put time warp into maximum (five arrows). A few seconds later the game hung. Corruption flashed on and off all over the screen and then about ten seconds later the game crashed with a Guru #00000003.00032075 (address error?).

Further details are available as to the journeys I made prior to this crash. I had NOT taken on any missions of any kind or had bought any equipment for trading or upgrading since starting the game. The journeys were as follows:

System	Destination	Distance	Details
Sun	UV Ceti	8.78 ly	None
UV Ceti	Tau Ceti	1.66 ly	Odd docking with Gilmours Orbiter (see point (29))
Tau Ceti	Epsilon Eradini	6.86 ly	Auto-pilot crash en route to Fortress Cousens (see point (31))

32. Locking up (B)  
In attempting to replicate the above bug, I re-booted the game from cold. I then launched from Abraham Lincoln and hyperspaced to UV Ceti immediately. On arrival I then immediately hyperspaced to Tau Ceti. As soon as I had pressed F8 to do this, the game locked up (no guru, no crash). The palette on the panel was screwed but the palette in the 3D space window was fine. I tried replicating this bug under the same circumstances from a cold boot five mins later and it did not happen.

33. Data (again) (B)  
What is included when the total number of major bodies is calculated? e.g, Omicron Eradini has 23 but there are only 22 unless you include the orbital trading post. Wolf 359 has 11 and they are all there, but there are also two orbital trading posts that don't come into the calculation. Another case of the data given on a system not matching up?

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#### Frontier - Elite 2 Test Report

Amiga Alpha version 0.08a.

Machine: Expanded (1mb) 1.3 A500 Amiga with external drive.  
Booted through Workbench v1.3. Stack 70000 run prior to loading.

(B) - Bugs, (C) - Comments/Questions

Thursday 29th October 1992

34. Auto-pilot (C)  
I'm assuming that when you use auto-pilot to dock you with a station, trading post or city -it automatically asks and gets clearance to dock/land every time?

35. Target (C)  
It would look neater if the target box and text that is displayed when you select a star or station to travel too is removed as you enter a docking/landing bay area. At present the text is still just about visible when you face the docking bay doors etc.

36. Auto-pilot landings (B)  
I am experiencing problems landing at cities when using the auto-pilot function. Quite often it ends up landing you in the rough nowhere near the city you chose. You have to take off and manually get the ship above the city before re-engaging the auto-pilot and landing safely.

37. Manual Landing (B)  
I also experience problems with landing manually. I can be a few thousand feet above the target and suddenly find my ship has landed in the rough. It takes ages to fly down to a city at the correct orientation. It is very awkward and clumsy to control under these circumstances.

Friday 30th October 1992

38. Passenger (B)

I took on board a passenger who wanted to go to the Luyten 145-41 system from the Abraham Lincoln station in orbit around the Earth. When I got there I realised that there are no stations, trading posts or starports to drop him off at - I was stuck with him! The system also had major/minor imports, exports and illegal goods. How can it when there are no places to trade?

39. Interplanetary drive (C)

From the name I would imagine this drive is only for use within a star system. At the moment you can quite happily hyperspace to other systems with it.

40. Auto-pilot docking at starports (C)

This behaves very oddly. If you leave it completely on its own once in close proximity with the planet it never seems to land! I watched it for fifteen minutes, constantly manoeuvring in orbit without ever getting anywhere near ready to try landing. Also see point (36).

41. Proximity mines - Guru (B)

I bought one of each of the following: XB13 Dummy Proximity Mine, XB74 Proximity Mine, KL760 Homing Missile, LV111 Smart Missile. To test them out I targetted the M. Gorbachev space station. (I had just launched from there). I fired the first missile (I don't know whether it was the KL760 or LV111). I then fired the first proximity mine (it was either the XB13 or XB74). I then fired the second proximity mine and the game screwed up and crashed a few seconds later with a Guru #00000004.00000000 (illegal instruction?).

42. Facts (C)

I know that there will always be discrepancies between sources of information regarding the stars and planets, but I did notice that Sirius B is (according to the game data) 327966.89 earth masses. However, I've read (in last months Astronomy mag) that it is only just larger than the earth! Are the masses referred to in the game data relevant to the planets weight or its size? If it is weight, then the discrepancy is explained. Other info that conflicted was the distance of Wolf 359 (6.2 ly in the game compared to 7.7 ly).

43. Finding home (C)

I still believe that the game needs a home key that allows you to re-center the 3D galaxy map on your current solar system if you scroll too far away from it. (e.g space bar).

44. H.U.D (C)

I also still think that the ability to change the colour of the H.U.D is a small but worthwhile addition. Often the white text gets lost against other colours. Is there a spare colour available that could be used (green?).

45. Starport launching (C)

The game still doesn't have a sequence for launching from a starport. One minute your in a docking bay area then it suddenly jumps to you crawling upwards in take off mode.

46. Identi-kit faces (C)

A few of the faces are still obviously made up of identi-kit style parts. There is also a black block around the helmet of the traffic control officer.

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Frontier - Elite 2 Test Report

Amiga Alpha version 0.09.

Machine: Expanded (Full 1mb of chip memory) 1.3 A500 Amiga with external drive.

Installed a blank disk with just STACK and EL2 files (excl. trash can and icon). v0.09 doesn't have enough memory to run if you load up Workbench anymore.

(B) - Bugs, (C) - Comments/Questions

Tuesday November 3rd 1992 - Wednesday November 4th 1992

(1) Message (B)

I accepted a request to ferry a parcel to the Wolf 154 system. I landed at Scirocco Station (on Merlin). The final word of the message conveyed upon successful delivery was displayed in the wrong position at the top of the screen:

"Message from Margaret Strauss:

I have collected the parcel as arranged. Payment has been made in"

The last word "full" appeared at the top of the screen.

(2) Disk drive (C)

Is there any way to disable the disk drive from whirring continually once the software has loaded? I know it annoys a lot of Amiga owners! (Me included).

(3) Front laser (C)

It seems like a good idea being able to see the laser at the front of the ship from the Cobra Mk III cockpit view, but the graphic for the 5mw laser looks erm...well, phallic to say the least!

(4) Locking up (Scirocco Station) (B)

I took on board two passengers who wanted to go to the Barnard's Star system. We took off and a few moments later landed again in the rough. I switched to the option screen. At the time the following was set up:

All music tunes were on.

The 'Music when appropriate' was on.

All 'Other options' were on (including the last one without any text next to it)

I turned off all of the tunes except Holst - Jupiter. I then switched to continuous music. I disabled 'Lock exterior view to ship', 'Show continents on planets' and the final nameless option.

When I went to return to the game the 'play' normal time icon lit up after I had selected the pause icon but the options screen remained in view. The music played but I couldn't leave the screen. None of the options were selectable anymore. I could move the mouse and the music played until the end but nothing else operated. It had effectively locked up on me.

(5) Space clouds (B)

The darker blue clouds(?) in space sometimes still switch to black when viewed at certain angles.

(6) Wrong data (B)

Arcturus 1 is supposed to be a ringed planet but when you get there it hasn't got any!

(7) Screeching (B)

Every so often I get a noisy burst of screeching for a few seconds when flying in maximum time warp speed. The sound effects option is ON but Engine noise is OFF. Music is set to continuous (HOLST) at the time this happened.

(8) Continuous music (B)

It isn't. As soon as the music has played once it stops.

(9) Landing (B)

Auto-pilot on landings is still next to useless. It will manoeuvre for ages and do zilch. I switched to time warp speed x2 and I went from 4,500 km above to landed in rough instantly!

(10) Spectacular crash (B)

I left the game alone for five minutes on the first screen (of 3) giving details of my ship. The craft was landed in rough on Merlin at the time. I came back five mins later and the screen had corrupted so badly that I had two thirds of the screen to the right completely black. The left hand third was full of corruption, as if the screen had somehow compressed itself into a third of the size it should have been and then corrupted all the graphics. The mouse pointer moved quite happily within this area of corruption, but disappeared if it went beyond the boundaries. It was still there but invisible in the black area. I had to guide it back blind into the corrupted area to make it appear again. I could see the game was still trying to run as white lines of corruption with red were moving (the craft rotating in the 3D window as seen in the ship info screens on the right hand side). I couldn't select anything though.

(11) 61 Cygni A,B (B)

This is the name given for the binary stars of the system. However, it was also the name given to a space ship that was flying in the system at the time I was there. I zoomed in on the solar system map and there was a green fighter airplane type space craft named Cygni A,B!

(12) Options (B)

I turned off all of the options except for continuous music (on

HOLST) and 512 colours instead of 4096. It locked up my Amiga as soon as I tried going back into the game. At a guess I would say a few of the options (or one in particular) are causing this!

(13) Mamba laser (B)

If you buy a 5 mw laser for a Mamba it automatically goes on the front. When viewed from the cockpit, the laser is not attached to the ship but is floating in front of it. The laser still looks a bit...dodgy (see point 3).

(14) Mamba docking

No matter where I went my Mamba ship would not dock. It would be gliding nice and straight into the docking area of a station or trading post, then at the last moment it would 'bump' into something and not be quite straight anymore. From here on the game does not let it finish docking. This happens all the time no matter which station I visit after failing to dock at another for this reason (e.g at Li Quing Jao or Titan City).

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Test Report

Product: Frontier - Elite 2 (Amiga)

Date: 15/03/93 - 19/03/93 (5 days inclusive)

Tested on: Amiga A1200 with external drive.

Other relevant details: Version 0.11 tested

Apart from a general 'bug hunt', I have been asked to evaluate how hard or easy the early stages of the game are in this version. My comments on this can be found in the conclusion to this report.

I have included comments on anything and everything that I've seen in this version.

(1) Taking off (Question)

What is the correct procedure for taking off/launching from a starport? I assume that you should only make a move (other than directly up!) until you have reached a predetermined altitude? If I make the move earlier then I get a "Vacate this area immediately. You do not have clearance" message.

(2) Pause (Question)

I assume that only the stop icon pauses the game? Pressing 'P' does pause the graphics but it doesn't actually pause the game!

(3) Target Behind (OLD)

I've commented on this before. When I have chosen a destination for the auto-pilot and engaged it, why does it always tell me that the target is "behind" when I am clearly moving towards it in auto-pilot?

(4) Combat (NEW)

When I'm firing at an unfriendly ship how do I know if I'm causing it any damage or not? You can see (and hear) an explosion but there is no indication as to how badly hit it is. My first battle lasted ages as I had to hit a ship probably twenty times before it exploded. (It would be handy to see some sort of glow around the ship to indicate if it is protected by a shield of some sort).

(5) Target lost (NEW)

If I have selected an unfriendly ship and am steering towards it using auto-pilot, once the ship is destroyed shouldn't the auto-pilot disengage? In this version it stays on and seems to try looking for the ship even though it no longer exists! Also, the message 'target lost' isn't really appropriate when you've destroyed it is it?

(6) Protection (NEW)

The number protection procedure doesn't seem to allow me to use the - key. Sometimes it asks for a reference number which contains a negative code and I can't get it to recognise the - key at all.

(7) Maximum speed (NEW)

How do I know what my ships maximum speed is when I am in the normal view? I have to admit that I always assumed that the numbers for speed were only temporary. A bar graph style representation (just as in the original Elite) would make this clearer.

(8) Under Attack (Question)

The fast time options disengage whenever another ship comes within a certain proximity of mine. I always seem to get the message "Warning! Ship under attack" when this happens. Do all ships within a certain range attack me? I assumed only those that appear as red on the radar are dangerous.

(9) Selecting a destination (NEW)

On a few occasions I have been unable to select a planet on the solar system map (red with green orbit paths) as a destination, e.g Denver's Legacy in the 70 Ophiuchi system. On leaving the map then returning to it later I was able to select it.

(10) Time (NEW)

I had left the M. Gorbachev orbital city and decided to select the Li Qing Jao city as my new destination. Once in auto-pilot my ship flew straight away from it. It got up to 280,000 approx. away when I decided that enough was enough. On selecting the fastest fast time mode (fifth) it was suddenly right next to the city. I disengaged fast time and docked in auto-pilot as I should. Why does the auto-pilot fly away from where it's supposed to be going? (is it a matter of flying in at the optimum position and so it has to fly away and wait for that position to be in the right area before it can make its approach??)

(11) Orbital Cities (Comment)

These look very very good. I really like the elaborate design. (How much do they slow a bog standard A500 down when it fills most of the screen? It's just tolerable on the A1200).

(12) Starports (NEW)

I had my ship in auto-pilot flying down to Schneider starport in normal time. I left the machine running for a minute whilst I jotted down some notes and the next thing I saw on the monitor was an explosion and 'Game Over'. Don't ask me what happened, I wasn't watching at the time! (also see point (29))

(13) Exterior/outside view (Comment)

I believe that the outside view needs to be disabled earlier (replaced by the normal interior view) when the ship is drifting into dock, because the 3D begins to fall apart at this point from the outside view, i.e the rest of the station disappears and all you are left with is an open topped shoe box floating in space which is the docking bay area of the station. Obviously the same needs to be said of enabling the outside view later when the ship disembarks. Alternatively, just improve the 3D so it doesn't fall apart!

(14) Docking bay interiors (Comment)

I still feel that the interior of the docking bays look very poor (Play School style doors, boring box shaped interior, naff wall posters etc).

(15) Fuel (NEW)

I've been paying attention to how fuel is used up. On the default ship at the start, whether you go just 4 light years or the full 8 it will use up the whole 1t of hydrogen fuel in one go. Is this correct?

(16) Ship type (OLD)

Nowhere on any of the 3 ship info screens does it state what type of ship it is that you currently own. I know there is a spinning 3D picture of it on the right but that still doesn't tell you what it is.

(17) Viewing a ship (NEW)

If you view a ship you now get a screen full of info. However, the BUY and VIEW icons still remain at the top of the screen. If you choose VIEW then you get a very quick flash of one of the faces on the left and then it reverts to the 3D ship again.

(18) Repairs (NEW)

If you choose to get the ship repaired in the ship yard but it doesn't need to be repaired, I would have expected to see a GO BACK option to return to the previous screen, but there isn't one.

(19) Cash (NEW)

I had just 100.4 credits and bought 2t of hydrogen fuel. The next time I was in the stockmarket I noticed that I had got -14910.4 credits! I could now buy whatever I wanted and it would just make the negative value larger, e.g -15080.8 etc.

(20) Pluto (OLD)

I've noticed this in previous versions. Pluto is missing from the Sol solar system map. There is a green elliptical orbit path shown and there is even a gap in it where the planet should be, but it isn't there and it never has been in any of the versions

I've seen (or rather, because there is nothing to select I cannot zoom into that area to see if it's there or not for sure).

(21) Border bug (NEW)

I was flying towards Earth in auto-pilot when there was a sudden flash on screen. The normal black background from the level of the control panel downwards had turned bright cyan. On selecting the options screen then going back to the game and pressing F1 to change the view, this effect disappeared and the border and control panel background colour went back to being black again. This has occurred more than once. (It once turned red instead of cyan).

(22) Auto-pilot (NEW)

I was quite close to the Earth and decided to fly towards M. Gorbachev (orbital city) instead, so I selected the small dot in the distance which was the relevant orbital city and then selected auto-pilot. The game did nothing. It stayed facing the Earth. Only when I went from auto to manual and back to auto did the auto-pilot kick in and swing the ship toward the orbital city. (This also happens on a semi-regular basis where a new destination has been chosen the auto-pilot must be turned off then on again to engage it properly).

(23) Ship registration (OLD)

The registration number of a passing ship became stuck on screen as I was docking. I had been looking out of the rear view when the front view was forced on me once we were far enough into the docking bay. The reg number was stuck on my h.u.d, just over lapping my target crosshairs. It didn't go until I had switched to the bulletin board etc. then back to the normal ship view.

(24) Fuel trade (NEW)

Something odd seems to be happening to fuel when you trade one ship for another. I traded my old ship for a new hull. The old ship had 1t of hydrogen fuel on board. I assumed that the new ship had none because it was only giving me two of the three ship info screens, (ie. Cargo screen wasn't shown which suggests that there is none). However, the stock market still thought I had 1t on board and when I bought some military fuel I was shown the newly bought military fuel plus the 1t of hydrogen fuel it hadn't shown me before.

(25) Explosions (NEW)

I had just arrived in the Cemiess system and I kept hearing explosions but there were no visual confirmations anywhere. At first I thought that they might be emanating from the tunnel I had just created in hyper-spacing, but I flew far away from it and I still heard explosions minutes later.

(26) Auto-hull repair system (NEW)

This feature doesn't seem to do anything. My ships hull was at 25% (don't know why as I hadn't been in a fight) but the repairers in the ship yard don't think I have anything that needs repairing and despite the auto-repairing hull system the % remained at 25.

(27) Exit (NEW)

The F10 (Exit) option next to the DISK options doesn't seem to do anything yet.

(28) Loading/Saving (Comment)

The loading and saving system seems to be very flexible in terms of where you can save your game to. Visually it could do with something to make it look less like a programmers load/save screen.

(29) Landing on auto-pilot (NEW)

You still have to engage the landing gear manually when the ship is landing on auto-pilot at a starport on the surface of a planet. If you don't, it tries to land with out them and explodes (Game Over!).

(30) Cargo (NEW)

Usually I'm not shown the cargo screen if my cargo is empty. However, if it has only just become empty at a space station (because I sold the contents) then I am able to see the cargo screen even though it contains nothing.

(31) Cargo (NEW)

There is another problem with cargo. I had sold all my cargo, yet the info screens still thought I was using 2 out of the available 4t of space inside! I could only fit in 2t of stuff into the cargo hold even though there was nothing else there!

(32) Game Over (Comment)

The present GAME OVER is visually very very poor. It needs to be

much more interesting and flash.

(33) Starport take off (OLD)

The take off procedure from a starport is still very messy. One minute you're in a docking bay and the next moment you're outside.

(34) Dead (NEW)

I was in combat and a ship fired at me just twice and was destroyed. However, this time I didn't get the usual GAME OVER. I had the mouse pointer but a blank black screen. Pressing spacebar brought up the manual protection as usual.

(35) Docking (NEW)

Sometimes when I am docking there is what looks like another ship floating inside the docking bay area. It looks mainly black and always seems to be hovering close to the ceiling of the docking bay area. It usually disappears in an instant as I approach. On one occasion I crashed into it and it was Game Over. I had been given clearance to dock yet there was a ship in the entrance already which got in my way! (Z5-967)

(36) Lalande 21185 (NEW)

This system has major imports, exports etc. yet it has no starports, no trading posts, no stations and no cities. Where do they trade from?

(37) Hyperspace (NEW)

If I watch from the rear view when I select hyperspace the tunnel and space is shown in red instead of the usual blue. However, once I've arrived in normal space it is blue again. (Is the red and blue colours deliberately chosen to illustrate the red and blue shifts in light that would theoretically be seen if someone was travelling at (or beyond??) the speed of light going either towards an object (red shift?) or away from it (blue?))

(38) Galileo launch (NEW)

I was docked at the Galileo space station in orbit around the Earth's moon. I was granted launch clearance and I was placed in the docking bay as usual. However, the doors did not open! I had to send a message asking for docking clearance and then the doors opened and I was able to leave.

(39) Docking bay doors (NEW)

I've noticed that when I leave a station, city or trading post the docking bay doors aren't seen to open (to reveal space beyond) - they just suddenly vanish!

(40) Wolf 359 (NEW)

I hyperspaced from the Sol system to Wolf 359. On arrival I immediately noticed that space was crammed with many more stars and/or space dust than usual. I had 0 velocity (speed) on arrival. I accelerated then slowed down and the density of stars etc. was back to normal. It was a shame because it had looked rather good! (It might have been in the time stopped mode).

(41) Auto-pilot (NEW)

Every so often when travelling at x10,000 time on auto-pilot towards a distant station or planet, the auto-pilot has a hiccup and pulls away from the destination for a second and then swings back round to face it again. When this does happen it happens more than once during the journey. What's it doing?

(42) Altitude (NEW)

On approach to the starport on the planet Lucifer (Sirius system) I saw 'Alt.0m' flash up for an instant on screen. About a minute later it was at 49999 and decreasing as normal.

(43) Software crash (NEW)

I was on auto-pilot landing at the Factory Central Starport on Lucifer. I had manually lowered the landing gear to avoid crashing the ship. I watched the ship lower into the landing area (I had clearance) and it continued going lower than the floor level and a second later it exploded. Then game then immediately locked up and crashed. The power light flashed for a bit and then I got a Software failure/error and an error number and a task number. Error number (8000 0003) - Task number (00011DC0). It then crashed back to CLI. Fortunately I had saved just as the landing approach was made so I have been able to repeat this problem over and over again. The reason why it crashed is that the docking bay I was allocated (4) was already occupied by another ship (FC-787) and I was landing straight on top of it and therefore exploding!

(44) Space clouds (OLD)

I can remember discussing this problem with David months ago but I cannot remember what was said. Every so often the space clouds

seen in the background flash and change colour (usually they go black but they have been seen to flash gently between their normal blue and pale grey).

(45) Software Crash again (NEW)

I got it to crash again with an error number 8000 0006 and a task number 00011DC0. I had the music playing and I had just saved my game. I selected the play button to return me to the game and to normal (unpaused) time and it instantly locked up and crashed, showed the error numbers then went back to the CLI.

(46) Laser fire (NEW)

This is probably similar to point (). In the Sol system I keep hearing lots of laser fire yet I see none and there are no ships on my radar.

(47) Radar (NEW)

I decided to take on board rubbish as cargo seeing that I am paid to take it off their hands (same with radioactives). I then flew out and ejected it into space (I assume that when the police are working they will try and have me for a violation of some kind?). Anyway, I then decided to destroy the floating rubbish I had ejected by shooting at it (manual target practice). One piece of rubbish was flying over my head as I tried to track it. The stalk indicating it's height on the radar went above the radar and intruded into the 3D window (although the base of the stalk was still attached to the radar).

### Conclusions

How difficult is it to play?

(i) Combat

On my first play on this version I bought 3 tons of water with the intention of going to the CD-44 11909 system and selling it at the Donalds Spaceport on Camp Jeffries. On entering the system I selected Camp Jeffries as my destination and kicked in the auto-pilot and put the fast time up to the maximum (x10,000) setting. A few seconds later it disengaged and I had my first fight with a ship. I decided that the best way of tracking the ship (as opposed to manually following it around all the time) was to select it as a destination with the auto-pilot. I then followed it about and fired a few shots at it then launched a missile which finished it off. The second time I tried this, the unfriendly ship slowed down so much that the auto-pilot slung my ship straight into the back of it and it was then 'Game Over'! On starting again from scratch my first battle in the same system was over about ten seconds after it had started! I was shot down far too easily.

The unfriendly ships seem to want to get as far away from my ship as possible, yet they also still want to attack me. It would be a little more exciting and a lot better visually if unfriendly ships came a lot closer and hung around in view longer. Also, it would be nice to have maybe a pair (leader and wingman?) instead of always facing ships in isolation. Obviously we can't have lots on screen in close up at once but maybe some kind of attack patterns can be devised where 3 pairs of ships fly around together but only one pair comes in close to attack at a time? (This wouldn't crowd the screen or slow the game down too much as a result).

Is using the auto-pilot the recommended method of tracking ships to fight? I cannot get to grips with the mouse manual control in a battle. They are back to front as far as I am concerned! If only the way auto-pilot works could be altered when it is locked onto a moving ship so that it doesn't sling the ship straight into the back of the target if it stops moving or slows down too much.

(ii) Ship protection/vulnerability

I would say that a shield generator is an item that a ship could do with very early on in the game, especially if the best way of tracking an unfriendly is to latch onto it with the auto-pilot. If a ship hits you then you die at present, no questions asked. At least with a shield you could survive it once or twice! At present a generator costs 10,000 credits to buy - yet I'm only making a few credits profit on every trading trip. It will take me forever to be able to afford anything that will make a real difference to my (or rather my ship's) capabilities.

I would say that prices are much too high considering that even the easiest of missions (ferry one person to another system) requires e.g 2500 to get the extra cabin space!

(iii) Ease of use



Elite veterans are going to feel right at home with this game. It shouldn't take them any time at all to start playing. As long as the Beginners Guide in the manual can take people through their first bit of trading and travelling I don't expect beginners will find it too difficult either.

A beginners mission which is always the same each time the game is started is probably a good idea. Giving a player a satisfying reward early on will make him (or her) want to go on and do more. I can imagine it will take some time for the game to become more than just a 'quick trade, fly and a quick blast' in its present format. How about a cheap and cheerful shield generator as a reward for a introductory mission completed? Making the price of extra cabins a little cheaper would be good too as the player can be ferrying passengers a little sooner.

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#### Test Report

Product: Frontier - Elite 2 (Amiga)

Date: Wednesday 26th May - Thursday 27th May 1993

Tested on: Amiga A1200 with external drive. Amiga A500 1.3 (1 meg in 1/2 fast+1/2 chip mode, or full 1 meg chip mode).

Other relevant details: Version 0.12a tested. Stack 70000.

#### (1) Memory problems - A500 (New)

I have had the game crash on me in two instances on my 1 meg A500 (in 1 meg chip mode). On both occasions the error was the same:

Guru Meditation #00000003.00c05128

This can happen if I eject radioactives into empty space, or if I try to save my game position.

All other bugs etc. are from testing on the A1200.

#### (2) Space dust (Old)

If you have Space dust ON and you pause the game (using the pause icon) the dust continues to collect on the screen, filling space with a dense white area. If you then return to normal time, the accumulated dust suddenly shoots off after a few seconds.

#### (3) Exit icon (Old)

Next to the save/load/dir disk icons is an exit icon (f10) which doesn't do anything.

#### (4) Radioactives (New)

When I refuel with military fuel I get left with radioactives in my hold, 1t for each 1t of fuel used. Is this correct?

#### (5) Auto-landing (New)

I was on auto-pilot, gently coming in to land at Griffin Base in the Barnards Star system. A moment later the ship exploded and it was Game Over. I didn't see any ships already on the landing pad I was settling on to, so why did I die?

#### (6) Legal status (New)

If I do something illegal, like drop my radioactives where I shouldn't, and if I then die and start again, my Legal Status remains as an Offender (i.e it hasn't reset to Clean). Is it supposed to? Also, I dumped 3t of fuel in space and was fined 3,000 each time by the police. I paid the fine by remote yet the police still sent out what looked like about 1 dozen police ships to attack me. What is the reason for paying the fine if they a) attack you after, b) my status remains as Criminal!

#### (7) Shields (New)

On first boot up, I see a shields % figure in the top left hand corner of the screen (looking out onto planet). This starts at 50 and crawls up to 100 where the number then turns off. This doesn't happen on every first boot-up.

#### (8) Target boxes (Old)

The green target boxes remain as part of a h.u.d even when you are inside a station in the process of docking. It looks messy. Can't they be turned off the moment you are forced to the first person view?

#### (9) Station interiors (Old)

The interior design of space stations still look very poor, especially the signs on the walls.

(10) Faces (Old)

I thought the faces were graphically very very poor in the earlier versions, but now they look even worse with the introduction of the female faces. They look like men in drag! The photokit style doesn't work either, i.e hair doesn't fit on heads properly, lower face doesn't fit properly to upper face (eyes, cheek bones). Square boxes visible around the head etc.

(11) Hyperspace tunnel (New)

Outside Brennan Depot is an orange hyperspace tunnel which doesn't seem to want to dissipate. I can't use my analyzer on it to see where the ship had come from/gone to either. This also has been known to be found near other stations.

(12) Corruption (New)

I was just about to dock on auto-pilot at Brennan Depot when the entire screen suddenly corrupted and became a colourful mess. The game continued running though. I could move the mouse pointer, select icons, go to other screens and load in save game etc. but the screen remained corrupted. I have also had this happen during space combat. It isn't repeatable. I have a save just before the corruption whilst docking and I can't duplicate it.

(13) Dashboard text (Old)

The orange and red text displayed on the panel dashboard on the left and right of the panel cannot be read at all if the game is viewed on a TV screen (there are many Amiga owners who still use TV's as opposed to purpose bought monitors!)

(14) Ship info (Old)

There is no mention of the type of craft you own on any of the ship info screens (F3). Also, if I access the ship info screen as the very first thing I do once the game has loaded, I am shown a blank Duty Roster screen. Once I have gone through the other screens with F3, the Roster screen disappears.

(15) Game Over (Old)

The Game Over sequence is still rather poor and unimpressive.

(16) Game crash (New)

I had died in combat, so the game went back to the 'enter number' screen. I entered the number (-26) for 644 and the game locked up on me! (Palette went screwy then it crashed with an error).

(17) Crew (New)

How do you know how many crew are needed for a particular ship, and what do they actually do? (Apart from cost me 15 credits each per week - nobody accepts less than a high wage!)

(18) Target behind (Old)

I've yet to learn the logic of this, so I'll ask again. When I select a target which is far away then engage the auto-pilot, why do I get the message 'Target behind' when I am in fact travelling towards it!

(19) Starting ship (New)

The ship you start with isn't the best one to begin with. There is only 1t of space available (once you've ejected or sold the radioactive material) and that will be taken up by fuel which won't be enough to get you anywhere else after your first journey!

(20) Pluto (Old)

I've zoomed very far out and I cannot see Pluto anywhere in the Sol star system. As I've mentioned before, there is an orbital path (green) for the planet, and there is even a gap but Pluto isn't in it anywhere!

(21) Combat (Old)

I have to admit that I haven't noticed that much difference in combat between the last version (11) and this one. Without using auto-pilot I find it very hard to follow an enemy ship. Couldn't we have some sort of combat mode which will swing the ship around to face the nearest attacking ship without necessarily accelerating towards it? (If more than one ship attacks at once, why not have a key that would designate/nominate another near target as the new main target to follow?). This way you can concentrate on firing and not worry about having to line up and aim and avoid crashing into the ship. Whilst this would simplify the combat to a mere mouse button pushing exercise you would still have to time the shot. Also, because the combat would be very simplistic, more ships could attack at once and it wouldn't become an impossible situation to survive. It would look and feel a little more exciting too. Because combat is very much an incidental event in this game, it should be simple but frenetic rather than awkward and laborious as it is at the moment.

(22) New features (New)

The Federal mini-missions work rather well. I've earned a few credits ferrying documents and things to Barnards Star so far. I assume that some really important ones will be offered later on when I'm considered worthy enough? I didn't get very far in hiring people, as I had gained a bad 'reputation' from somewhere! Fuel management at present is a bit of a pain. Is it working the way it's supposed to? I've noticed the internal fuel gage (green line) and the shields (red line when below 25%). What is the third line for? I've noticed fitted equipment of mine can now get damaged when being attacked.

(23) Viewing a ship (Old)

If you view a ship the BUY and VIEW icons remain at the top. If you select VIEW again, you get a sudden flash of a face on the left hand side for a moment then it reverts back to the normal 3D spinning ship.

(24) Launching (Old)

The doors that open to let you out into space from a station just suddenly disappear. You don't see them open at all.

(25) Load/Save (New)

Will saved games created on my A1200 be able to be loaded into my A500 and vice versa? It would be handy from a testing point of view if they can.

Conclusion

It is a little frustrating that I would like to be able to actually make some progress in playing the game, but all I am able to do is effectively a systems test and a quick jump between a couple of (close by) star systems. I can see that this game has dozens and dozens of features. I can see the need for an official check list of ALL the game features and equipment so that when it comes to testing the Beta test version we can ensure we don't miss anything out.

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Product: Frontier (Elite 2)

Date: 12 - 13/8/93, 17/8/93 (3 days)

Tested on: Amiga A1200 with external drive.

Other relevant details: Versions 0.14a & 0.15 tested.

A - Crash, B - Corruption or others, C - Comments

Items 1 - 17 are based on starting the game from Merlin. Items 18 - 25 are based on starting the game at Mars. 26 onwards are based starting from Merlin in v0.15.

(1) Intro (NEW - C)

The intro is very good, but on the first few viewings it looks as if the bigger ship has been destroyed by the two smaller ships, when it has in fact hyperspaced to a new destination. It thus becomes a little confusing when you see the ship intact a few moments later. All becomes clear after the next few repeat viewings.

(2) Old Money (Old - B)

If you earn some credits then die (e.g flying smack into a large asteroid like I did!), the money you had is still present when you start again (by selecting the Ross 154 starting position from the menu). I believe that other information, (Criminal records etc) are also retained when obviously they shouldn't be!

(3) Select Position from disc (New - C)

If you choose the 'Select Position from disc' option from the menu then the game thinks it has landed on Merlin. Status is shown as 'Landed' and you hear the crappy Merlin wind sound effect whilst you go through your save game file directory.

(4) Last Saved Game (New - B)

If you have just saved a game, and die then select 'Last Saved Position' option from the menu, you always get a 'Disc error - Code: 205' and you have to physically choose the file from the directory. However, if you have already loaded this file in once before then the option, it works fine and loads it in without any problems.

(5) Space Dust (Old - C)

If you pause the game, space dust still accumulates on screen until you continue with normal time, then it clears away a second or two later.

(6) Options (New - B)

I selected the Pause icon twice and entered the options screen. To return to the game, I selected the third time icon (I don't know what time scale it is) and I returned to the game as normal. However, the game was running in normal time even though it was the third time icon that was highlighted (white).

(7) CD-44 degrees 11909 (New - B)

I have survived an onslaught of some 12 different enemy ships attacking me (starting from Merlin and going straight to the CD -44 degrees 11909 system where I encountered them). 8 of them awarded me bounties varying from 150 credits up to 2000! Isn't this a little excessive for a beginner in a small relatively puny ship? I only survived by saving after every battle.

(8) Planetary landings (Old - B)

I have had similar problems with landing on planets before. I had finally got through the dozen or so ships enroute to the only planet with a starport on it in the CD -44 degrees 11909 system, yet it ALWAYS crashed me into the planet on auto-pilot! I had landing clearance yet I tried for well over an hour and I could not land! Because I had no other fuel and it was the only place to trade in the system I had to start all over again, which was a pain because I had amassed nearly 3000 credits from the bounty I'd earned during battle on my way across the system!

(9) Game Over (New - C)

The tombstone is better than the old Game Over, but I'm not so sure that the name of the Commander should be the name of the save game file. I name my save games after the location or situation I'm in (e.g attack1 or bounty7) and this looks plain stupid to call me 'Commander attack1' on the tombstone! Can't we have the name of the Commander and the save game file names as two separate things? The names of the Commanders aren't centred on the tombstone either.

On the subject of Game Over, I've noticed on occasions that the text is too long to fit on the tombstone, e.g 26 Jan 3200. Also, it would be nice for the Elite rating to be the players epitaph on the tombstone, e.g Commander Hewison 'Died - Mostly Harmless' etc. (although 'Died - Poor' would be more relevant!).

(10) Blue Danube (New - C)

I know that after all the hassle of getting the music changed your not going to like this suggestion, but I preferred the old Blue Danube music. The David Lowe version sounds like it's being played by a small local Scandinavian Folk Dance Band! The choice of instrument samples isn't what I would have chosen. It takes away any possibility of invoking memories of 2001 when it starts playing!

(11) Fort Harrison (New - C)

The Bulletin Board at Fort Harrison has the following entry: GOODS BOUGHT AND SOLD AT DONALDS'S. Obviously one of the S characters isn't needed.

(12) Missile launched (New - C)

You are only given one warning that a missile has been launched by another ship, and then it seems to be forgotten about. Shouldn't there be a constant klaxon or a flashing red light somewhere, until the missile destructs? (Okay - I know you can look at the radar but it doesn't give you any sense or feeling of danger to prompt you to make evasive manoeuvres etc).

(13) Zoom in/zoom out (New - C)

It would be nice if you could do a maximum zoom out or maximum zoom in with one click of the mouse, rather than go through the tedium of zooming slowly in (especially when you are zooming in on a very small planet, ship or asteroid as it takes ages).

(14) Rubbish (New - C)

I don't know how, but my cargo contained 7 tons of Rubbish. I don't remember it being there before! How did it get there?

(15) Refuelling (Old - B)

I've had this problem before in older versions. I have some fuel on board, and I select Refuel. It of the fuel disappears from my cargo hold yet when I look at the ship info I still have 0 light years possible travelling distance. I then discovered that this was because I had somehow changed from a Class 1 Hyperdrive to a lowly interplanetary drive! (I think the drive might have been damaged during a battle. Would this have resulted in a downgrade?). Anyway, the point is it shouldn't really allow you to refuel if the drive you have isn't capable of using it, or does the drive systems work differently?

(16) Ship type (Old - C)

I still think it would be a good idea to actually mention what type of ship the player owns when they view the ship info screens.

Nowhere that I've noticed does it say what ship you've got. It tells you all the equipment it has, but not whether it's a cobra, panther etc.

(17) Game credits (New - C)

It would be nice if I could get a mention as a tester or Q.A support person in the game credits. It all potentially helps get me other freelance work if I get a mention somewhere.

(18) Long messages (Old - B)

I decided to take on a military mission that would earn me a massive 20,000 credits. I had to blow up an interrogation centre on Luyten 97-12 7a. Whilst going through the options, learning about the mission I asked for the mission description again. The text at the bottom was too long to fit in the window, so the date that I had to return by was shoved at the top of the screen instead and was displayed in scarlet red. I've had similar problems in earlier versions with text that has been too long.

(19) Military Mission (New - B)

I agreed to do the mission described in item (18) and hyperspaced twice to reach Luyten 97-12. I then flew to the planet 7a. However, once there I couldn't see any interrogation centre on the surface. There was a small dot on the planet but it remained unnamed and I can't fly close enough to check it out without crashing into the planet! I assume I must be very close before launching a Nuclear Missile as I tried to launch it at this dot when I was still 3,500 away from it and whilst the missile had gone from my ship, I didn't see or hear it launch away. I returned to Mars anyway just in case it had blown it up but nothing was acknowledged when I returned so I assume it hadn't.

(20) Rewards (New - C)

The rewards for the missions are obviously based on the impact that success will have on that solar system, as opposed to the actual difficulty of the mission itself. For example, whilst I haven't yet actually blown up the centre (see item (19) for why), I assume that it is more straightforward than trying to rendezvous with a particular ship at a particular time and destroying it?  
(assassination payments are a lot lower in comparison to sabotage!)

(21) Hyperspace clouds (Old - C)

I tend to hyperspace as soon as my ship has taken off from its pad on Mars (should you be allowed to hyperspace whilst still in the atmosphere?). I flew off to do the military mission at Luyten 97-12 and I returned 26 days later. My orange hyperspace cloud was still where I left it when I returned! (floating very near to the landing pad on Mars). In previous versions, I have seen Hyperspace clouds loiter outside space stations for ages without disappearing (sometimes months).

(22) Landing Gear (New - C)

I can raise and lower my landing gear whilst parked on the landing pad at Mars. Surely I shouldn't be either allowed to do it or it shouldn't be physically possible for them to retract when I am using them?

(23) Galactic Map (New - C)

I selected the Galactic Map and then F10 (the spiral galaxy icon). On this screen is an F9 option which looks like it should give you text or information. However, on selecting it, it just takes you back to the 3D galaxy map (which is what the f10 function next to this f9 function does also).

(24) Pluto (Old - C)

Okay, I have now actually seen Pluto, but to do it I had to zoom in on Neptune then swing the map around. Pluto appears on the map in only one pixel exact position where I can actually zoom in on it close enough to be able to choose it as a possible destination. I assume the problem is that it is too small to appear until you are very close to it? It is currently far too fiddly to choose it the way I have to.

(25) Mars position (New - C)

Am I supposed to have a bad reputation if I start playing from the Mars position? A lot of people don't trust me. Maybe they know I've just hijacked the ship and assumed the identity of some other player who played for ages to get that far!?

ALL bugs from (26) onwards are based on V0.15.

(26) Intro (New - C)

I've only seen it happen once, but the very first time I loaded version 0.15, the ring on the Frontier logo flipped back at the last moment before moving back to its correct and final position.

(27) Loading save position (New - A)

The game crashed and gave a Guru when I chose to select a previous position from DF1. It has only ever happened once, and I can't see what I was doing any different to cause it.

(28) Directory (New - B)

If I boot up with my save game disk in DF1, when I go to load in a previously saved position and I chose DF1, it doesn't always look at the drive. I have to take the disk out and re-insert it before the disk is catalogued. Is this an Amiga problem or a programming bug?

(29) Sound effects (New - B)

When you pause the game to go to the options menu, some of the sound effects either go wacky or speed up (e.g during combat). Should they be playing when the game is paused?

(30) Autopilot time drop out (New - B)

I was flying towards Eden station in Alpha Centauri on 10,000 time. I don't know why, but the ship dropped back into normal time. I didn't see any enemy ships or any other messages. Why did it drop out?

(31) Docking at Eden station (New - B)

I continued flying to Eden station and when I was close enough to get docking clearance on auto-pilot, the game dropped into normal time and lined me up with the station. Unfortunately, as 409km range it stopped moving forward on auto-pilot. I was matching the rotation of the station perfectly but I was no longer accelerating towards it. If I went to manual and tried accelerating (pressing Enter) the actual speed remained at 0! I switched back to auto-pilot and re-selected the station on the orbital map. This made no difference. I then selected the third time setting and suddenly I was docked!

(32) Permits (New - B)

I accessed the Eden BBS and chose Federal Military. I could choose from two missions and both were to deliver things to Ross 128, and they were both within an easily obtainable time limit. I took on both. However, I had noticed that Ross 128 needs permits but I saw no mention of permits in the list of questions I could ask before taking on the missions and no permits were found on my own status screen once both missions had been accepted.

(33) Launching from Eden station (New - B)

Having taken on the 2 missions, I requested launching and this was granted. However, once the docking bay doors were open I did not move forward automatically. I went to manual and tried normal acceleration (Enter key) and again I was not moving. My actual speed remained at 0! I could not leave! I could move the ship around on the spot within the bay as the game thought I was now in space. I couldn't ask for launch clearance again and if I asked for docking clearance again I was re-docked (another 3 credits). When I went to manual in the bay, the doors in front slid closed slowly. As they did so, I could see the diagonally striped yellow pattern appear over the ceiling pattern, until it slid down with the rest of the docking bay doors.

(34) Combat (Old - C)

I think that the way auto-pilot behaves during combat has been altered as I don't seem to be hitting the back of ships that I have targeted in auto-pilot anymore. However, combat is still not that easy. The only trouble is - what to do to improve it? The control system just seems to be over finicky for quick precise control during a fight.

(35) Docking bay interiors (Old - C)

I still believe that docking bay interiors need to be more dynamic in design than a plain old shoe box shape. I don't know what could be easily implemented but surely something better looking can be done?

(36) Faces (Old - C)

I haven't seen the suggested ideas that Gary had for improving the look of the faces, but surely anything would be better than to leave them as they are?

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Product: Frontier (Elite 2)

Date: Wednesday 18th August '93

Tested on: Amiga A1200 with external drive.

Other relevant details: Version 0.15 tested.

A - Crash, B - Corruption or others, C - Comments

(continued from previous report EL2AM\_C.DOC...)

(37) Music (New - B)

Thanks to the accelerated time options, the music can get easily confused when an event happens suddenly and unexpectedly. The music can sound odd or play the wrong tune (e.g Blue Danube for arriving at a new system when it normally only plays it when you receive docking clearance).

(38) BD +20 degrees 2465 (New - B)

Despite information for trading etc. this system doesn't actually have anywhere to trade (no stations, trading posts or starports).

(39) Fuel confusion (New - B)

I believe that items (30) and (31) on the previous report are related to this problem. Because I have no recent documentation, I don't know how the internal fuel tank works. I have found what has been happening regarding fuel to be very confusing at times, so excuse me if I can't be as accurate as I would like. The problem is this - On more than one occasion I have been flying towards a station or trading post at 10,000 time and enroute the ship has dropped out of 10,000 time. I think I have discovered why, as a message appears for a short while mentioning that the internal fuel tank is empty. However, this hasn't stopped me from reaching my destination. On other occasions I have flown 10,000 time and reached the station and immediately stopped at a distance of 409km after receiving docking clearance. The ship then refuses to accelerate into the docking bay. If I look at the ship info it tells me I have 8 lyrs worth of travel available, yet it won't move me 409km?! If I then refuel I am told that I have 0 lyrs of travel available, but the ship will now quite happily dock with the station! I have jumped to a number of different systems in this version and each time when I arrive, the 3D map shows me the usual purple circle indicating how far out I can travel, even when I have jumped nearly 8 lyrs and in theory I shouldn't have enough fuel left to make the jump again! Something very weird is happening to fuel consumption, just like it did in versions about a year ago.

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Product: Frontier - Elite 2 (Amiga)

Date: 26th- 27th August 1993

Tested on: Amiga A1200 with external drive.

Other relevant details: V0.17 tested.

(1) Save to RAM (New - B)

I got a Disk error: 0 message when I tried loading in my last saved game position, which was in RAM: instead of DF0: or DF1: (The save game file had been loaded in from DF1: then saved to RAM: When the game came to load in the last saved file, it looked at DF1: and the game then gave me the 'Disk error: 0' message.

(2) Hyperspace Guru (New - A)

I'm beginning to get a little impatient when launching from a station, so I stick the second time speed on to hurry things up. As soon as the ship was free from the tractor beam of the station I was at, I engaged Hyperspace and the game crashed. The error number was 8000 0004 and the Guru was 000186D0.

(3) Station Docking (New - B)

If you fly to a station in auto-pilot and 10,000 time and reach the station uninterrupted, the ship drops back to normal time and the 'docking clearance' message appears. The auto-pilot squares seem to be centred on the planet rather than the station, (which is nowhere in sight!) and the distance from the planet is always round about the 17,187km mark. You get the docking music and suddenly the station appears just 1.5km or so directly in front of you and you're docking!

(4) External docking view (New - B)

I was docking at a station and switched to the external view and messed about with the viewing angle. As the ship disappeared inside the station, the view suddenly switched to being completely blue - no stars, no ship, no station nothing. This stayed for maybe 5 - 10 seconds and then suddenly I was back in the first person view inside the ship in the docking bay area facing the doors.

(5) Missing icons (New - B)

I don't quite know why, but on a few occasions when I've returned to the 3D galaxy map and I go to zoom in or out, the icons from F7 - F10 aren't there! If you select the box where the icon should be they all come back.

(6) Multiple missions (New - C)

I went to the BBS at Dobson Terminal (Fomalhaut) and there were no less than 4 available Military missions and they all had the same destination (Tau Ceti). Unfortunately, two of them were only 5 days away and the other two were only 9 days away and I couldn't do either in time. I had saved my game at this station, so I re-loaded and decided to wait until after the date for the first two had gone by. I did this and when I went to the BBS the Federal Military option had vanished. Is this correct?

(7) Elite rating (New - C)

I know you get a little tune when your Federal rank improves, but why don't you get a little tune when your Elite rating goes up?

(8) Shooting accidentally (New - C)

If you're not actually viewing the outside world (i.e you're on the galactic map instead of forward view) can the lasers be disabled? I accidentally pressed both mouse buttons whilst viewing the map and I was fined 600 credits for illegally discharging a weapon.

(9) Back to CLI (New - A)

I assume this is a programmers abort key at present, but if you press the top left hand corner key on the A1200 (-) the game instantly drops back to the CLI.

(10) Intro black clouds (New - C)

There are quite a few instances in the latter half of the intro where the blue space 'clouds' switch to black. Is there no way around this as it looks like a bug?

(11) Save game file compatibility (Closed - C)

A save game file saved on my A1200 now seems to load in fine on my expanded A500 (1mb).

(12) Space dust (Closed - C)

Space dust doesn't accumulate whilst the game is paused anymore.

(13) Mouse movements (Old - C)

If you move the mouse with the right hand button pressed whilst the game is paused, when you un-pause, the game lurches in response to the mouse movements. Surely these movements don't need to be buffered?

(14) Viewing new ships (New - C)

When you view a new ship, there is a line displayed at the bottom of the 3D window which looks like some sort of scale diagram. It has no text or numbers near to explain it. What is it?

(15) Selecting auto-pilot destinations (Old - B)

I still get problems even selecting destinations that are large enough on the map to see and have it's name appear, e.g space station Mayflower High (Wolf 630 system). It just wouldn't allow me to select it as a destination. I had to choose the planet behind it and fly a bit closer.

(16) Late delivery and wrong customers (New - B)

May Jennings flashed up as a message after I'd docked with Thompson High (36 Opuchi system) saying that I shouldn't even ask for payment and that she was to report me to the authorities. Why? I delivered the package (there was no time restraint mentioned and I had to use another system as a stepping stone en route. I did some trading at a station before hyperspacing to the correct system to make the delivery). Anyway, the mission was originally for Felicia Greenhill, not May Jennings!

(17) Starports (Old - B)

Certain planets (e.g Lloyds Rock in the -11 degrees 3759 system) have starports (e.g Macmillantown) that don't show up on either the map when zoomed in on the planet, or when you are actually there! If they don't appear how am I supposed to land there?

(18) Gold (New - C)

There are two planets named Gold in systems very close to each other. One is in the -40 degrees 9712 system (-1,-2) and the other is in CD -46 degrees 11540 (-1,-1).

(19) Biographical (New - B)

I was docked at the Irvin Orbiter (-40 degrees 9712 system) in orbit around the planet Gold. There was a 'Biographical' entry for an assassination mission on the BBS. I accessed it, read a bit of info then decided to look at the 3D map to see where the system was (Luyten 97-12) that the assassination was to take place. When I switched back to the BBS and accessed the 'Biographical' entry to accept the mission, they decided I didn't have a high enough elite rating (I was Poor) when a minute before they had allowed me to talk to them without any problems!



(20) Under attack (New - C)

I thought it was a good suggestion by Gary to have the ship drop out of auto-pilot automatically when the ship falls under attack. At present I have to disengage auto-pilot myself and switch to manual manually.

(21) Federal Military missions (New - C)

I've discovered that in this version I've only ever been able to complete one military mission and that was the very first one on offer on the Merlin (Ross 154) starting position! All the others I have been offered have ALL been impossible to complete in time (They have all been very tight on time, usually I need another 2 days just to arrive on the day of delivery, let alone take into account the time it takes to cross the system and reach a station or starport!).

(22) You are here (New - C)

I believe that we need a 'You are here' on the solar system orbital map so that you can visually work out which station, starport etc. is nearest to your current position. At present, you don't have a clue exactly where you are within the system when you have just arrived from hyperspace travel. This would really help!

Conclusion: I have deliberately concentrated on starting from Merlin and trying to work my way up to buying a better ship. However, I am currently on June 20 3200, with ratings of Private, Outsider and Below Average. I only have 2269.1 credits in the bank! Progress is slow. I reckon I'd be better off just fighting and taking packages and assassination missions, then I don't have to worry about large cargo holds etc.