

elitism!

Are you ready to face the final frontier? Space is a dangerous place so stay at home if you're faint-hearted. But the rest of you should join Commander David Bishop as he battles his way through the infinite variety of Firebird's Elite.

It's taken an eternity but now the sitting around in space station departure lounges is almost over... fellow space travellers, you are grounded no longer. *Elite* has arrived to prove there's plenty of life left in Speccy software, not to mention the eight galaxies each with two hundred and fifty planets set in deep space.

Climb aboard your Cobra MkIII trading and combat craft, check your wallet for the 100 credits you start with (hardly enough for a GalacDonalds) and run through the list of weapons. There's the cheap and cheerful Front Pulse Laser, Zieman deflection shields, a Lance & Ferman 'seek and kill' missile system and the Holodirect & Grav-Distort communications system. Sounds impressive, huh? Well, it's interstellar peanuts compared what you'll need to become a member of the order of *Elite*.

But getting your hands on the hardware you'll need, requires ready cash. Your best bet is to start trading — buying cheap and selling on the other side of the galaxy at a premium. And if you're really out to make a fast buck, you can always try dealing in drugs — but don't be surprised when you find both pirates and police on your tail. In space there's no mercy, and justice is dispensed with the gun.

And as if that's not enough to contend with, you'll find yourself faced with special problems that can spell death if a solution isn't found — and fast! How will you react when your ship is infected with the plague, for example?

To win at *Elite*, you're gonna need the commercial acumen of a merchant banker, the strategic skills of a chess grand master and the combat reactions of a jet pilot from Earth back in the pre-dawn days of the 1980's and 90's. But then nobody said it was going to be easy!

LAUNCH PAD

At the start of your space mission, your Cobra MkIII isn't exactly the hottest hardware in the galaxy — you've only got three homing missiles and one forward firing laser. And a hundred credits ain't gonna go far — a bit like trying to turn a Renault 5 into a Rolls with only a tanner in your trousers. Your best bet is to stick to short hops at the start and only trade in safe commodities, building up your credits that way.

Lost in space? Well, there's no need to panic — just check here which planetary system you're in. Prepare for a warm welcome on this planet — a sort of Come Inside, Lave!

This is the stuff that makes the universe go round — the readies. Make sure you invest your initial hundred credits wisely as you're gonna need a small fortune before you get your hands on life's little luxuries — you know, docking computers and intergalactic hyperspace drives.

Here's a breakdown of the equipment you have on board — not bad going so far. Each time you splash out on something, the display is immediately updated.

COMMANDER BISHOP	
Present System	Lave
Hyperspace System	Diso
Distance: 7.0 Light Years	
Cash: 86745.0 Cr	
Legal Status: Clean	
Rating: Harmless	
EQUIPMENT:	
Large Cargo Bay	
Fuel Scoops	
P.D.M. System	
Front Beam Laser	

This tells you which planetary system your hyperspace drive's locked onto — use your short range scanner to make your choice. Looks like you've plumped for a trip to Diso.

Fuel is measured in light years of travel. Keep a close eye on your gas tank as the maximum you can pick up at a space station is seven light years' worth.

Keep an eagle eye on your legal status. No problems if you're clean but prepare for police harassment as soon as you acquire a criminal record or go on the run as a fugitive.

You start out with the measly skill level of 'harmless', but as your kills are registered by the Galcop Federation Law Centre your rating'll rocket through 'mostly harmless'; and 'deadly' until you eventually reach the dizzy heights of 'elite'.

Just to give you an idea of how much ready credit you'll need to equip your ship, take a look at the list of fancy gadgets on offer — and their equally fancy price tags. Mind you, without them you don't stand a chance of making it to the top.

EQUIP SHIP	
Large Cargo Bay	7000000000000000
Fuel Scoops	1000000000000000
P.D.M. System	1000000000000000
Front Beam Laser	1000000000000000
Large Cargo Bay	1000000000000000
Fuel Scoops	1000000000000000
P.D.M. System	1000000000000000
Front Beam Laser	1000000000000000
Large Cargo Bay	1000000000000000
Fuel Scoops	1000000000000000
P.D.M. System	1000000000000000
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Front Beam Laser	1000000000000000
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Fuel Scoops	1000000000000000
P.D.M. System	1000000000000000
Front Beam Laser	1000000000000000

Item? 4

CHART TOPPING

The one thing you've got to bear in mind about the unknown vastnesses of space, is that you don't know much about them! So, to help you plug some of the gaps in your knowledge, use the short range chart to have a quick shufti at your destination. Once you've selected a planet, have a look at its economic profile — with a bit of practice you'll soon know whether it's worth paying a visit.

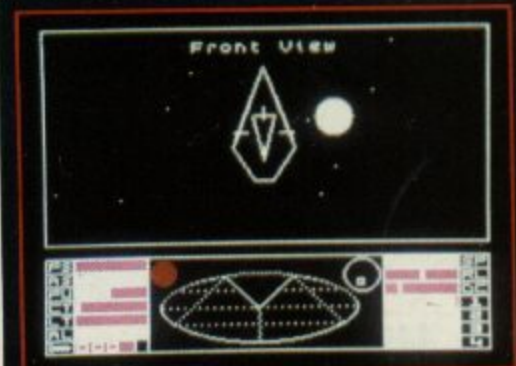
As the humanoids say, there's no space like home! Your home, or at least where you crashed out for the night, is marked by the large cross on the screen.

The short range chart shows all the registered planets in the galaxy and the radius of the circle indicates the range you can jump in hyperspace. So, the more fuel in your tanks, the larger the circle grows.

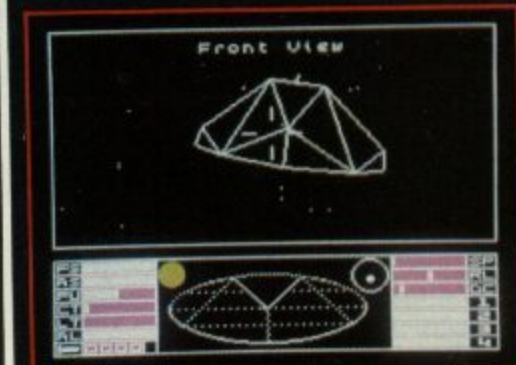


If you're travelling round the galaxy, you'll want to know if the natives are friendly. Move the cursor over the chosen planet and you'll be shown the basic info you need.

STAR WARS



This is a Fer-de-Lance and best avoided — as well as its own missiles it has an ECM system so don't waste your missiles — hightail it out of here unless you have an ECM of your own.



If you're wondering what your ship looks like — feast your eyes on this Cobra Mk III. Usually, you're in no danger from them but it's still an idea to arm a missile when one's around. The first rule of space is, trust no-one.

Some governments are more stable than others. Corporate states' shouldn't give you too much aggro. Riedquat is run along the same lines as YS, as an anarchy! Don't go zippin' off here, loaded to the bulkheads with contraband unless you're prepared for an interstellar scrap.

The economic profile of each planet lets you know what to expect when you get there — essential stuff for all budding traders. Since Riedquat has a poor agricultural economy you can expect to make a healthy profit with hi-tech goods to trade. Where d'you think Rabbit software came from?

DATA ON RIEDQUAT	
Distance:	6.8 Light Years
Economy:	Poor Agricultural
Government:	Anarchy
Tech. Level:	4
Population:	2.0 Billion
(Harmless Rodents)	
Gross Productivity:	1720 M CR
Average Radius:	6403 km
This planet is most notable for its fabulous cuisine, but beset by occasional civil war.	

The technical level of each planet is given a rating from one to twelve. It'll give you an idea of the sort of goodies you can lay your hands on there. Don't worry if your fuel's running low, though, 'cos it's readily available on all planets.

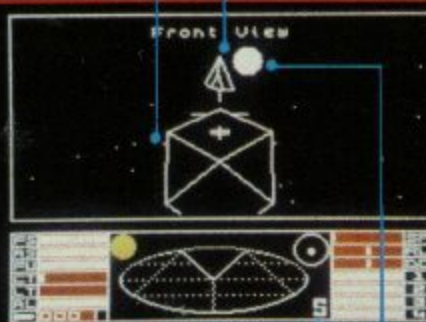
Riedquat is inhabited by harmless rodents so you shouldn't have too many problems here. (Oh, and aren't *The Rats* rodents? Ed). Not all the aliens are quite so hospitable, though.

TRADE UNION

Before you can start trading, you'll have to master the tricky process of docking with space stations. Practise on your home planet until you've got it right. Then plan your route through the galaxy so that you call in at different types of planet each time you dock.

This is the planet's space station, a sort of orbital airport where all trading and re-equipping takes place — a bit like stocking up on the old duty-frees at Gatwick. All the planets have several of these Coriolis space stations orbiting at different altitudes in neutral territory.

Docking with the space stations is a right pain in the reverse thrust region — unless, that is, you're rich enough to buy a docking computer. Without one, you'll have to manoeuvre manually into the access tunnel facing the planet. And if you thought three point turns were difficult you ain't tried nothing yet...



The S tells you that you're in neutral territory around a space station — and you'll be relieved to know that nothing can touch you here unless you're on the police wanted list.

In space the suns never set, of course. Don't steer too close or you could find your ship overheating — keep your eye on the cabin temperature chart.

Space is very much like a supermarket, only bigger! The range of goods covers everything from food to narcotics and slaves — and you don't see many of them in Sainsbury's.

As soon as you've docked, you'll be able to see how much the local produce will set you back. The more you shop around, the bigger the bargains you'll find — but you have to weigh up whether it's worth travelling half way across the galaxy to save yourself a few credits.

RIEDQUAT MARKET PRICES			
PRODUCT	UNIT	UNIT PRICE	QUANTITY FOR SALE
Food	kg	0.000000000000000000	1000000000000000000
Textiles	kg	0.000000000000000000	1000000000000000000
Alcohol	kg	0.000000000000000000	1000000000000000000
Drugs	kg	0.000000000000000000	1000000000000000000
Slaves	kg	0.000000000000000000	1000000000000000000
...

Psst, wanna make a quick killing in the markets? Find two planets within seven light years of one another that've got fairly stable governments. One must be industrial, the other agricultural. Now shuttle back and forth, between them trading computers with the peasants and furs with the techies.

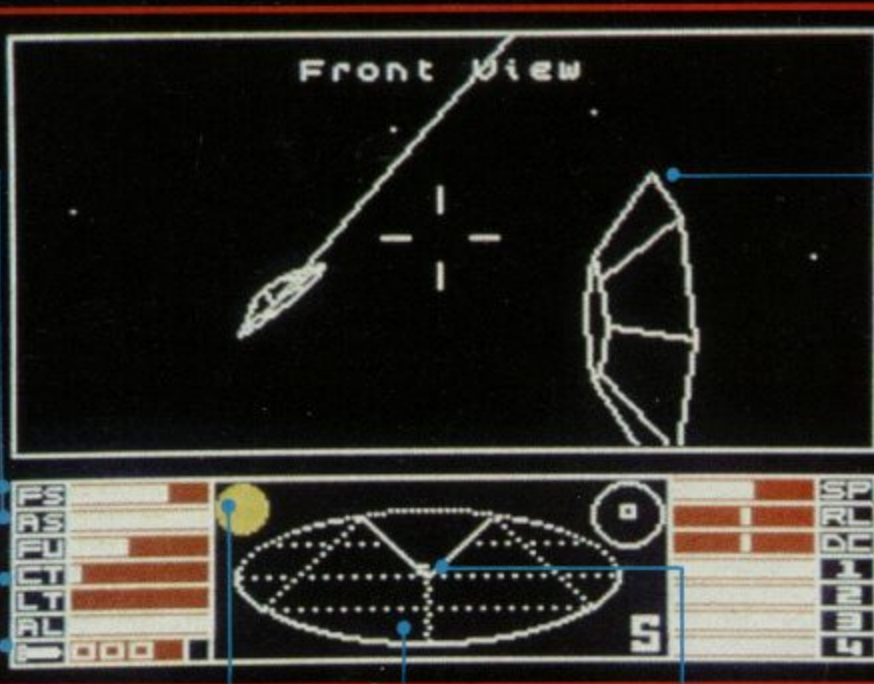
The big question is why bother trading at all, when it's only good ol' killing and maiming that increases your rating in the universe. Well, you're not gonna last long against the big boys unless you're all toggled up with the latest in offensive and defensive weapons — and they cost money. So, get out there and sell it to them before they lay one on you.

Out there, in space, only the fittest survive. No matter how sharp you are at selling or how quick you are at snapping up the bargains, you must be able to pack a punch to protect yourself. Like a medieval knight strapped into his armour, you must practise the skills of the quick kill in your Cobra Mk III spaceship. You must learn to tell instinctively when it's right to attack and when to retreat. There's no other way that you'll ever join the ranks of the Elite!

You've got both fore and aft shields to protect you from those minor inconveniences of space war, such as direct hits. Watch out though, 'cos your energy banks will take a real hammering in the face of persistent enemy fire. If your front shields go down, you'll find it prudent to run like billy-o and let the aft shields take the strain.

Avoid the temptation to get trigger happy. Non-stop laser firing will cause them to overheat and the automatic cut-out circuits will come into play. Then you could find yourself with your lasers down around your ankles just when you need them most.

At any one time, your Cobra Mk III can carry up to four homing missiles. But before you launch them they must be locked onto target. Once they're gone, there's no stopping 'em. If you're really ace, you can out manoeuvre them or you can use your ECM (Electronic Counter Measure) System to destroy them — if you've bought one.



You're on course for a smooth ride if your status display is green but as it changes through yellow to red then you'd better watch out — there's trouble ahead!

As a humanoid-type organism, you haven't got eyes at the back of your head! That's why your 3D scanner is so useful. You'll soon be able to judge just where the enemy is, how fast it's travelling and when you should start panicking.

As soon as you see the enemy on the scanner, spin the Cobra round until the target is in front of you, then climb or dive until he's bang in the middle of your sights. Now let 'im have it!

A sneaky trick if you don't have qualms about shooting people in the back is to perfect the art of taking ships out using the rear view of your Cobra.

Don't hang around here — Dive... These are Thargoids you're tangling with, some of the deadliest aliens in the universe. It's said that they've had their fear glands removed. Nasty for them and doubly nasty for you.

A good space pilot knows when to put his foot down and when to ease off. Watch your forward velocity level, speed to the uninitiated. Keep it on max when approaching a planet and take it right down to minimum when docking.

Keep a sharp eye on your energy banks — if you sustain a direct hit when they're at zero, they'll still be mopping up your molecules come doomsday. It's a wise idea to acquire an extra energy unit as quickly as possible as it'll replenish your banks at a much higher rate than normal.