BUCK ROGERS
COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY

Type: Science Fiction Role-Playing
Difficulty: Easy puzzles, advanced combat
Systems: C-64, MSDOS (640K and hard drive
or two floppy drives required; CGA, EGA,
Tandy-16 color, VGA/MCGA 256-color;
Ad Lib)
Company: SSI/Electronic Arts

After fine-tuning and enhancing the role-playing system and "engine" used in their *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* series, the SSI Special Projects team modified them further as a vehicle for their first science fiction RPG presented in the *AD&D* style. *Buck Rogers* also became their first to sport 256-color graphics and support the Ad Lib sound board.

The story, set in the year 2456, unfolds in a more substantial and satisfying way than in the *AD&D* games. Instead of playing the role of Buck Rogers, you meet him while blasting your way through space to destroy the Doomsday Laser. (Naturally, he joins your party.) Then you wheel through a series of mini-quests on Mars, Venus and other galactic hot spots.

Needle guns and grenades may replace swords and spells, but battles are still fought in familiar fashion. Yes, even though it's got more puzzles than the *AD&D* games, *Buck* still emphasizes the combat side of role-playing. Unlike *Starflight* and *Hard Nova*, you don't get to fly a ship, and the relatively few puzzles involve passwords, keycards and variations on these types. Full-screen graphics occasionally illustrate major events, and automapping is permitted in some areas. *Buck Rogers* is recommended for science fiction aficionados and combat fans, especially those who drool at the idea of possessing massive arsenals of exotic weaponry and armor.

General Tips

The numerous mini-quests and alternate scenarios that are not essential to winning the game are not discussed in this solution.

Character Creation

You need two Warriors and one each Rocket Jock, Medic, Rogue and Engineer. Strength is only important in melee combat. Place the Warriors and Rocket Jock in the front, followed by the Rogue, Engineer and Medic in the rear, except in the spy ship, where Warriors should be in positions one and six for moving through the air vents.

Combat

Spreading your Warriors out when up against explosive area weapons is a good tactic, but characters with little *maneuver in zero-G* skill may be unable to disperse. During combat, each character's turn begins with a *maneuver in zero-G* skill check. The characters that fail this check may be limited to two or three movement points for the turn, and explosive area weapons will be used by the enemy if your group is within the range of the area (2/3 radii).

Almost every enemy combat robot (combot) has a heavy explosive missile weapon that can damage your characters if they are in the same area as the combot. Where robots or characters with explosive grenades are in attacking formations, hit the space bar to disable auto mode, then use heavy explosive missile weapons to keep these powerful characters from using their devastating weapons.

Dazzle grenades can be rendered totally useless with protective goggles. Characters without goggles may be blinded. Stunning can last from two to seven rounds and is quite as effective as magical *Sleep* spells or *Stoning*, but can be counteracted by a Medic with high *treat stun/paralysis* skill. Magical *Stink Clouds* are replaced by gas grenades. There is no 100% effective defense during combat against the effects of the fast acting poison of the secondary ECGs found in the game.

The only set of battle armor with fields in the game is obtained in the later stages by clearing a mining outpost of ECGs just before the last battle on Mercury. The extra -2 points in AC will certainly help. *Cheat: Buck has a Lunarian smartsuit, a gun, a rocket pistol and other gear you may want. Save your game to an open game slot and duplicate these items using a simple technique in the training menu (also from c:\buck\save directory in DOS, you can use copy chrdatx7.stf chrdatx4.stf if Buck is in character slot 7 when you save, 4 is the character you want to equip with Buck's gear, and x equals the save letter to which you saved your game).*

Walkthrough

Chicagorg

Go S and deal with the random groups of RAM warriors with lasers, smart suits, dazzle bombs and glasses. Strip the warriors of equipment. The manual control room must be retaken from RAM and the controls turned on. Go S through the center doors, then E along the corridor and turn N at the first corridor. Go through the first door on the east. Charge the technician and jump on the grenade (10 points of damage) with your healthiest man. Do not be too anxious to win this one. Keep exploring and having random encounters while saving to different slots on the save disk. Stay away from the control room as long as you can in order to build up experience. You need to be strong for the next scenario. Train and go up levels in the HQ at the Sanctuary III base after the Chicagorg.

Spy Ship

Buy poison antidotes prior to this encounter. Save often, for you can die at any point. You will not be able to train or leave this ship once you have boarded, and you must complete this part of the game before you can get a ship of your own. There is a sick bay but no training facility here. This ship is inhabited by the most fearsome monsters in the game except the combots. The ECGs are deadly at the secondary stage level. They can render you unconscious with one lucky bite. First-level characters need good armor and high dexterity to survive.

Upon entering the complex, immediately go up the air shaft in the northwest corner of the level to Level 6. On Level 6, go S, then E and enter the north door at the end of the corridor. Get the datacomp recorder and the poison antidote. Go through the door on the east wall of the room where you found the datacomp recorder, into the sick bay. Use the autosurgeons on the characters until you find the

infected person (they itch and eventually turn mad and die) with the sigma code of a95151 or a22151. Get the salve. Take the air duct (NW map corner) up to Level 9.

On Level 9 go W and S through the door in the west wall. Walk to the east console, then the west console. Read what Scot.dos has to say. Go to the air shaft (NW map corner) and down to engineering (Level 1). On Level 1, go S and E. Take the eastern staircase of the two staircases on the south wall. Go down to Level 0. Walk W until the end of the corridor and get argon gas. Go back to the air shaft on Level 1, and go up to Level 3.

On Level 3, go E S E, through door in east wall, then N through north door. Turn W with corridor, go through west door, and attach the argon canisters to the life support system. Go back to the air shaft on Level 3, go down to Level 1, and go S to the engineering panel on the west wall. The characters must hold their ground, and the ECGs will be killed by the gas. Go back to the air shaft and go up to Level 9.

On Level 9, go E, then S, then through the south door, and up the staircase to Level 10 (Ship's Control). There go N to the wall and deactivate self-destruct, go W S W through the door in the west wall, and shoot the third-stage ECG. Go back to Salvation III, train, and you have a RAM cruiser of your very own to fly around the solar system.

RAM Asteroid Base near Ceres

You need a rope and demolitions equipment to rescue the trapped children. The asteroid base has two levels, four docking bays, and four elevators. There are medical labs (C) on Level 1 where the team can be healed. You can find information about the Mars base at (D) and (E).

Just south of Docking Bay 2 (A), you'll meet Milo Phillips. Do *not* attack Milo. Follow his directions W and S to Elevator 2 (B) and go down to Level 2. On Level 2, the children are at the bottom of the elevator shaft (H). Blast the door with demolitions. Information on the Mars RAM base is in either computer room (I) on the two north-south corridors. Very high *programming* skill and/or the password (8N1), plus Milo's key card are needed to access the information and reveal the password needed to get to Mariposa Three.

On Level 2, a key card (J) can be found either to the northwest or southeast of Elevator 2 (H). More information on the laser weapon is at (K). With the password and the key card, go back to any of the computer rooms (I). Use the password and key card to gain access to the computer and search with a Programmer.

To save the children and exit the base, go to the elevator shaft (H) and use the rope to climb back up. On Level 1, you can save the poisoned gennies (F), or go to Docking Bay 3 (G), exploring rooms as you go. Put the children on the rescue shuttle and go back to Docking Bay 2 (A), which is three bays to the west of Docking Bay 3 (G), and depart the base in your space ship.

Talon's Pirate Ship

You will be captured by Talon's pirate ship immediately after you leave the RAM asteroid base. You are imprisoned on Level 5, in the middle cell on the bottom row. You need to use *open locks* skill or *bypass security* skill several times to open the door, or Buck will rescue you. Allow Buck to join your group. *Cheat: Save the game, and duplicate Buck's weapons, armor and equipment.* (If you have a Rogue who has *hide in shadows* skill, you can hide and avoid the random encounters with pirate patrols.)

In a holding cell just west of the corridor outside your cell is a cache of useful equipment.

Use the connecting tunnel in the center of the ship to access the fifteen levels of the ship. Go to Level 10 and set a demolitions charge just inside the only door on the west wall that's a bit outside the connecting tunnel (it's the galley). This charge will disable the security communications systems wiring, which passes through the galley wall here.

Now go to the engineering level, which will be less heavily guarded due to the demolitions charge. Disable all seven engineering consoles located to the west, north and east of the connecting tunnel. Go back up to Level 11 and exit the boarding tube to the east back to your own ship. The armory on Level 12 (the only door on the south wall) contains ordinary weapons and requires *bypass security* or *open door* skills. The captain's quarters on Level 12 (the only door in the west wall of Level 12) can be opened by Buck; the terminal in the captain's cabin will give you deck plans for the ship. The terminal

will also suggest setting the demolitions charge in the galley on Level 10. Return to Sanctuary III and train at HQ.

Mars Wilderness

Your ship will land in the southwest corner of the Mars wilderness map. There are two important places to visit on this map. The Desert Runner village is in the circular valley surrounded by mountains in its far southeast corner. The Mars RAM base is found at the north-northeast edge of the wilderness map.

Desert Runner Village

Go immediately to the village and try to convince the chief of the raid by RAM on the village. Do not attack or retreat from chief Tuskon. Once one character challenges the chief twice, the chief will acknowledge a grudging respect for the team's courage. When RAM attacks, join up with bands of Warriors to more effectively fight off the invaders. Also search the buildings for people being attacked by RAM warriors and to help rescue people from being trapped in the burning buildings. Keep searching, fighting and rescuing until you have at least one damaged red passcard and one good green passcard.

You may leave at any time after the Runners howl. If you have impressed the Desert Runners, Tuskon will join your group in their attack on the RAM base. Before entering the base, you must rendezvous with Tuskon just southeast of the base and the large mountain ridge, near a large blue stone.

Mars Base Gradivus Mons

You must destroy the scale model of the Doomsday laser on Level 4. There are five levels to the base: levels 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4. While in the base you can monitor the computer consoles for information from the data base or about base security. You can turn off the alarms by filing a false security report.

If you are with Tuskon when you enter the base, you start on Level 0. Go N through the two doors and follow the passage around to the NE and S. Follow the corridor around to the second security door on the east wall (the door that is the furthest west) and use the green passcard to gain entry. You may be able to *bypass security* or use a demo charge

to gain entry, but the keycard is neater.

If you enter without Tuskon on Level 1, you will need a green key card, *bypass security* or a demolitions charge. All green units are eight-member squads, so when the computer asks, tell it you lost two men if you have six men. Red units are six-member squads.

Regardless of where you entered, find the hoist shaft in the southeast part of the central bank of rooms surrounded by corridors. Blow the hoist shaft door with a demo charge and climb up to Level 2. Exit the elevator. Go through the door in the north wall of the room, then go W through the door and to the intersection and get the white passcard just beyond the door.

Go back through the door you just came in and take the door to the south, then the door immediately to the east and open the vault with the **wh3t2 p199c178**. Take the **bl52 p199c178** from the open vault and return to the hoist shaft. Enter the hoist shaft and climb up to Level 3. Exit the hoist shaft, enter the hoist shaft and climb down. This should activate the lift, which will rise. Jump on the top of the lift and ride it to Level 4.

Fight the technicians on Level 4 for the laser. When the laser overheats, ride the lift in the hoist shaft back down to Level 0 and exit the base the same way you came in (or would have come in) with Tuskon, (see above). Return to your ship and leave Mars for Sanctuary III.

Venus Wilderness

Your ship will land in the southeast corner of the Venus wilderness map. There are four important locations here: the acid lake, the Lowlander village, the space elevator ruins and the RAM base. After the lowlanders help defeat some RAM soldiers, let their leader, Leander, join the party. Save the game. Go to the acid lake and use *befriend animal* skill on the acid frogs, and you'll have powerful allies in the wilderness encounters. If unsuccessful in befriending the acid frogs, reboot the previous save game and replay the sequence until you do. Go to the Lowlander Village.

Lowlander Village

Go to the village in the northwest corner of the wilderness map. Automapping should work here.

Upon entering the village, go through the door to the east of the entrance. Use *pickpocket* skill to relieve the sleeping guard of his keys. Waking the guard results in a battle with combots. Go to the door to the west of the entrance and release the acid frogs. Go to the room west of the acid frog stockade and get the bag of acid frog food. Exit the acid frog stockade, and enter the building directly to the north of the stockade. Give the frogs the acid frog food and you'll acquire powerful allies in your random encounters with RAM assassination teams in the village.

Go to the large building inside a fence in the northeast part of the village. Enter the hut and the room within. Search for a trap door to the basement and find the room in the basement. Take the Lowlander baby into your group. You can not leave the village or complete the Venus section of the game without the baby. He will not be harmed by any conflict, but it's a good idea to equip him and Leander with RAM arms and armor.

Go to the furthest northeast part of the village to meet with the wounded villagers climbing over the wall. Go to the large administration building in the far southwest portion of the town and go into the building as far as you can through five doors to find a medical supply kit. Trade the kit to the wounded in the northeast of town for a map. Leave the town the way you came in.

Venusian Space Elevator Ruins

The ruins are directly to the south of the Lowlander village and can be reached by following the sound of marching feet in the wilderness. Enter the elevator and work your way to the south until you find stairs down to the next level in the southeast portion of the ruins. On the next level, work your way to the south of the corridor you find yourself in. Enter the fourth door south along the east wall of the corridor. Interrogate the RAM technician for the key to the security door in the south wall of the corridor. Tie up or kill the RAM technician. Exit through the door you just entered, turn S and use the key to open the security door.

Go E and N and enter the first door to your west. Go directly W across the hangar to the western wall and go N through two doors. Go W, S then W until you find the glider self-destruct box. Take it. Go back out the doors through the hangar and back into the corridor to the east of the hangar. Go N to find the

detonator keycard. Destroy the gliders and work your way out of the ruins the way you entered. You will need to use *climb* skill to get out, due to the explosion. Go S and search the large peaks along the southern edge of the wilderness map for the RAM base.

Venus RAM Base

Use *hide in shadows* skill to attempt a sneak approach to the base without encountering RAM patrols. The base has four levels. Follow map to the elevator (L) in the northeast corner of the base. Go to Level 3, work your way around from the elevators in the northeast to the room in the far northwest corner of the level.

The scientists will direct you to Landon who is searching Level 4 for an escape tunnel. Return to the elevator and go to Level 4. From the elevator, go S four spaces and meet Landon. (If you do not have the baby, Landon will send you back for him.) Landon will tell you that the retinal lockpick is located on Level 1 (M). Get the retinal lockpick. Return to Landon on Level 4. Find the secret door by going three spaces N, three spaces W (through a door), and one space N (through a door), then fighting the acidium.

After the battle with the acidium, go W three spaces through the secret door and return to Landon. Return to the scientists on Level 3. Return to Landon on Level 4 for a reward. Exit the base the same way you came in. Return to your ship and return to Salvation III.

Mercury Mariposa III Merchant's Area

Go to Mercury and use the password from the asteroid (8N1) to bypass the blockade of ships around the colony. The first area you encounter is the merchant's area on Mercury. Once you enter the security doors you can not go back, so your party should build up their experience and levels as much as possible. (Try exploring the ports and space stations to gain extra levels or equipment.) Mariposa has a lot of combots, so each member of the team should have high-level Lunarian weapons and heavy weapons such as plasma throwers and rocket launchers. Armor should be at the minimum Lunarian smartsuits or heavy battle armor with fields.

Once inside the base, go through the Mercurian security door to the E (you need the **bl52 p199c178**). After talking with Wilma, go N to the wall, W to the wall, then N through the door to Marat's Bazaar. Immediately walk E. Feed the parrot and get the password **B19t3ll2**. Go one step E, one step N and talk to Scot.dos. Go S, get the rope and go through the door to the east. Follow the corridor around to the NE and join the crowd beyond the two doors. Use *disguise* skill on the party. Go along with the crowd until you reach the third door, which is facing south. Go through the door and go N through Holst Plaza. Go through the north door in Holst Plaza, and follow the corridor around through another door and on to a door in the east wall into the core.

Mariposa Base

There are several levels to the zero-gravity core, and you can use them to travel between the levels of the base. (You enter the core on Level 1.) On Level 1 (Copper Level), exit the western door in the north wall of the hallway surrounding the core. Go W to the wall, go S until you encounter a security robot doing maintenance. Save the game. Use the character with the highest *pickpocket* skill to get the copper coin. If unsuccessful, reboot and try again, or fight the robot for the coin.

Return to the core and climb up (never go down!) to Level 2, the Silver Level. Enter the door on the north wall of the corridor surrounding the core. Go E one step, go S four steps through the door, and go through the door in the west wall of the room. Go S one step, then go through the door to the east. Search the room until the silver coin surfaces.

Return to the core and go up to Level 3, the Gold Level, and exit the core. Save the game. Go through the eastern-most door in the south wall of the corridor surrounding the core. Use the character with the highest *bypass security* skill to remove the gold coin from the plaque. If he fails, either reboot from last save and try again, or battle the robots.

Return to the core and climb up to Level 4, the Sun King Level. Exit the room surrounding the core, go N, then move E through a door until you can go north again. Walk N through the next two doors. Tell the Sun King you speak French (**453**). Tell the Sun King you will help him take over the Doomsday Laser. The Sun King will deactivate the weapons in

the core and assist the team for now. Return to the core and climb up until you can climb no more, to the Security Level.

Mercurian Finale

Exit the core on the Security Level and go N to the far north wall around to the east. Go W down the corridor to the emergency doors and the emergency stairs. Use demolitions charge on the doors, setting off the alarms. Enter the stairs and go up two levels to the Weapons Control Level. Exit the stairs, and go E until you can go south and west down a corridor. Go S to the second door on the west side of the corridor. Enter this door to the station's power plant.

Use the character with the highest *repair electrical* skill to adjust the power boards and cut power to the laser. Exit the room and go E until you can go no more, then go S through the door to the south, using the retinal lockpick. Save the game. Go S and E and enter the first door to the south for the big final battle.

The battle is with a large number of combat gennies, combots and RAM technicians. If unsuccessful in the battle, reboot from the last save and try again.

After the battle, start the self-destruct sequence and return quickly to the emergency stairs. Go down one level on the stairs to the Escape Pod Control Level. Exit the stairs, follow the corridor around to the southwest and southeast. Enter the third room on the south side of the corridor, where Scot.dos will clear the security for your departure. Go back up the corridor one door to the west and go through the door, go down the short hall and enter the second door.

Asteroid Base: Level 1

Asteroid Base: Level 2

Venusian RAM Base: Level 1

Map Key

Asteroid Base: Level 1
- **A** Docking Bay 2
- **B** Elevator 3
- **C** Medical labs
- **D** Information about Mars base
- **E** Information about Mars base
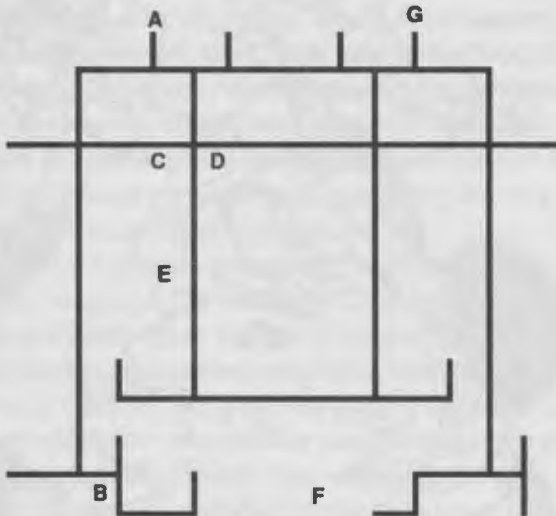- **F** Poisoned gennies
- **G** Docking Bay 3

Asteroid Base: Level 2
- **H** Children in shaft
- **I** Computer rooms
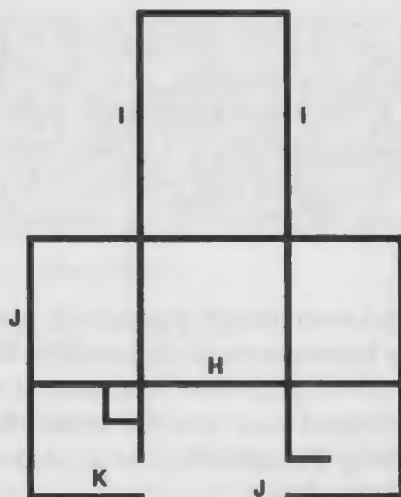- **J** Keycard
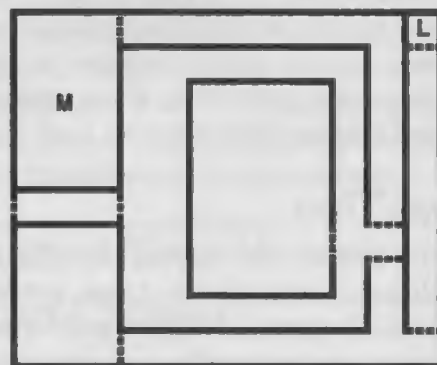- **K** Information on laser

Venusian RAM Base
- **L** Elevator
- **M** Retinal lockpick

Some boldface words appear to be gibberish. They are key words hidden in the QuestBusters code so that you can't read them just by glancing at them (and find out something you don't want to know). A new, easier code was devised for this book. Instead of having to decode every letter in a boldfaced word, you need only decode the vowels and several of the consonants by using the following code chart:

1	=	a	6	=	y
2	=	e	7	=	r
3	=	i	8	=	d
4	=	o	9	=	s
5	=	u			