

Black Hawk

Black Hawk is a Commodore 64 game developed by Dean M. Lock from Thorn EMI Company. Black Hawk, released in 1984, is a single player, shoot 'em up game where the player is controlling an aircraft which is as the name suggests coloured black. Unlike the modern term, "Black hawk" which refers to the helicopter; Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk, this time it is still a vehicle yet not a helicopter but a modern sweptwing jet coloured black.

The Goal:

The goal of the game is to score the highest amount of points and to pass as many missions as possible. Mission structure is based on a raid like operation where the player vehicle flies over ground and enemy base destroying enemy ground and air assets. As the mission and stages pass the enemy types and new buildings can be seen.

Player Vehicle and Capabilities:

Player vehicle is an aircraft named the Black Hawk; it is a swept wing, high technology, jet which I think of it as an F-111 Aardvark with closed wings. In the game the player vehicle can fire guided missiles in shoot 'em up mode where the player is invincible, it is most advantageous to stay in this mode as long as possible. Also player vehicle has access to a gun in vehicle mode and can revive upgrades as missions are completed these upgrades or boosts are: ECM Pod, XCannon, Blitvig and Wild Weasel.

- ECM Pod: In real-life ECM means Electronic Counter Measures and in game ECM pod allows player to see enemy ground buildings.
- XCannon: this improves the main gun of the vehicle.
- Blitvig: meaning smart bomb in german, is a guided bomb.
- Wild Weasel: in real-life refers to aircraft which are armed with Anti-Radar weapons and tasked to hunt enemy radar installations. Yet, in game wild weasel gives invulnerability.



Personal Opinion on Boosts: As per their real life references the names “ECM Pod” and “Wild Weasel” should be swapped as Wild Weasel aircraft squadrons hunt down enemy radar and buildings while ECM pods help the equipped plane not be hit by enemy weapons. Hence, ECM Pod should give invulnerability and Wild Weasel should allow player to spot enemy buildings.

Game Modes:

Shoot ‘em Up:

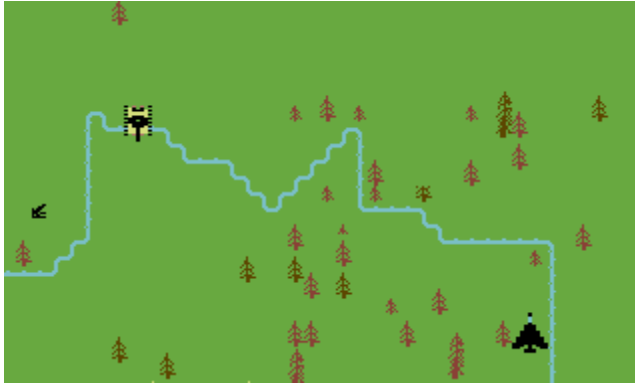
This mode allows player to aim and fire guided missiles at both ground and air targets during the raid. In this mode the player is immune to damage and can manage to keep it going by destroying enemies before they pass the lower screen boundary which results in the player to get in vehicle view. Player is able aim, lock on and decide where the missile will come from by moving the red Cursor left or right. Locking on is designated by the crosshair turning red and getting smaller but also with a sound cue. Player manages to stay in this advantageous mode by destroying and not allowing enemy vehicles pass the lower screen. I think this mode is a BVR (Beyond Visual Range) mode and when enemy passes the lower boundary the player has to take evasive action. Hence, game takes us to vehicle view where we directly control the aircraft.



Vehicle Mode:

In this mode player is viewing the player vehicle and is able to control it via making it move from left to right but also in this mode the player can fire its cannons. Aiming and flying direction is always upwards. In this mode the player is vulnerable to enemy attacks and fire. This

mode is changed when there are no more enemy vehicles on the screen left. Also an important note is, the player cannot target enemy ground assets when in this mode and hence one can conclude that cannons cannot hit ground targets.



Enemy Variation and Types:

The enemy ground and air asset variety is immense in this game; there are helicopters, tanks, AA guns, AA missiles and launch sites, enemy buildings, radar sites, hidden bunkers barbed wire, train tracks, power lines and various enemy aircraft. Player will be coming across these assets as raids are completed and missions passed through. As a result of this variation the game does not become stale quickly but with the complexity increase difficulty increases.

Score and Important Sounds:

The score in this game, as in music, is noticeable once the player launches the game and menu opens as the music playing is the very popular, Ride of the Valkyries composed by Richard Wagner. Not getting into the meaning for this composition the music carries themes of heroism which I think ultimately was aimed for the player to feel as the player is the pilot and the hero of this game.

Another sound to look into is the lock-on cue which allows for visually independent confirmation of locking onto an enemy or signifying of precise aiming for the guided missile. In my multiple runs I noticed when the game got harder one tends to use the sound as a cue and focus on the enemies instead of the crosshair directly.