

= Jane 's Attack Squadron =

Jane 's Attack Squadron is a 2002 combat flight simulator developed by Looking Glass Studios and Mad Doc Software and published by Xicat Interactive . Based on World War II , the game allows players to pilot fifteen reproductions of that era 's military aircraft and to carry out missions for the Axis or Allies . Although it contains dogfights , the game focuses largely on air @-@ to @-@ ground combat .

Jane 's Attack Squadron was first conceived by Looking Glass employee Seamus Blackley as Flight Combat , a combat @-@ based sequel to Flight Unlimited . The company continued designing the game after Blackley was fired in 1995 , and it entered production under Electronic Arts in 1998 . The team experienced problems with deadlines and funding during development , with the game eventually being heavily redesigned and renamed Jane 's Attack Squadron at the request of the publisher . These issues contributed to Looking Glass 's bankruptcy and closure in 2000 . In 2001 and 2002 , the game was acquired and finished by Mad Doc Software , a company in part composed of former Looking Glass employees .

The game received mixed to poor reviews . Critics found its physics modelling unrealistic , and many believed that the game 's graphics and gameplay were outdated , particularly in light of contemporary simulators like IL @-@ 2 Sturmovik . The limited number of missions and large number of glitches were widely panned . Certain critics enjoyed Jane 's Attack Squadron 's air @-@ to @-@ ground combat and several hoped that fans would improve the game with the included physics and mission editors .

= = Gameplay = =

As a combat flight simulator , Jane 's Attack Squadron allows players to pilot military aircraft in a three @-@ dimensional (3D) graphical environment . The game is set in Western Europe during World War II ; and players may control fifteen German and Allied planes from the era , including the Focke @-@ Wulf Fw 190 , Supermarine Spitfire , Junkers Ju 88 , Avro Lancaster and Consolidated B @-@ 24 Liberator . Although dogfights are possible , the game places a heavy focus on air @-@ to @-@ ground combat . Objectives range from bombing and torpedo runs to defense and escort missions . The player may engage in tutorials , " quick missions " , " single missions " and a campaign . Quick missions allow the player to select variables such as the objective and the number of friendly and enemy aircraft , while single missions , of which there are five , are scripted , " pre @-@ made " levels . Two campaigns are available : one each for the Allies and Germans . Both campaigns feature ten missions that branch depending on the outcome achieved by the player . An online multiplayer component allows players to engage in dogfights .

Each plane in Jane 's Attack Squadron is composed of forty @-@ five parts that may be removed or otherwise damaged in combat . Damage to these parts affects performance ; for example , a broken fuel line will leak , quickly decreasing the fuel gauge . Various adjustments may be made to the game 's realism , including an " arcade physics " option that drastically reduces flight difficulty . The game is packaged with the mission and physics editors that were used to develop it .

= = Development = =

= = = At Looking Glass = = =

In September 1994 , Looking Glass Technologies employee Seamus Blackley told Computer Gaming World that he wanted to create a combat @-@ based sequel to Flight Unlimited , whose development he was directing at the time . The magazine 's Johnny L. Wilson wrote , " If Flight Unlimited can pass the civilian tests , the military version should be right behind it . " In March of the next year , Blackley told PC Gamer US that the sequel " should feel so real that pilots will be afraid . They 'll feel the gun hits . " He dismissed the flight dynamics in other flight simulators , such as

Falcon 3 @.@ 0 , in favor of the real @-@ time computational fluid dynamics (CFDs) model he created for Flight Unlimited . When PC Gamer 's Bernie Yee asked why the team had waited to make a combat flight simulator , Blackley responded that they wanted to " retrain " players first . In September , Computer Gaming World reported that Blackley was designing a combat @-@ based sequel to Flight Unlimited under the working title Flight Combat . Blackley told them that it would " make you into a fighter pilot " , and the magazine commented that it would teach the same material as the Air Force . The team planned to allow players to practice an element and then execute it on a mission , and Blackley said that the game would feature competitive online play . However , a new manager at Looking Glass Technologies , instated by venture capital investors , demanded that Blackley work on Flight Unlimited II instead of Flight Combat . Blackley refused and was fired , leaving the company in late 1995 .

In March 1996 , PC Gamer US reported that Flight Combat was " still taxiing across the design board " , and that the team planned to focus " on how the aerial manoeuvres are performed as you fight " . Looking Glass designer Constantine Hantzopoulos told the magazine that a modified version of the Flight Unlimited engine was being used to develop Flight Combat and Flight Unlimited II . Hantzopoulos commented that Flight Combat was " the project everybody at Looking Glass wants to work on " . The team expected to be finished with the game in roughly one year . By June 1997 , GameSpot reported that Flight Unlimited II was running on the new ZOAR engine , coded from scratch by programmer James Fleming . In addition , the real @-@ time CFDs model from Flight Unlimited had been discarded , as its programming was " all black box spaghetti code from Seamus " . GameSpot 's T. Liam MacDonald noted that the Flight Unlimited II team expected soon to use the same engine for a combat flight simulator set in World War II . Computer Gaming World similarly reported that the company was " definitely hot " to develop Flight Combat , and that it might be created after Flight Unlimited II . Following that game 's completion , the team could not decide between developing Flight Unlimited III or Flight Combat . As a result , they decided to develop them simultaneously , and Flight Combat began production in early 1998 . Unlike all of the studio 's other games , development of Flight Combat was funded through an insured bond , in an attempt to guarantee that the game would be finished . The company 's Tim Stellmach later said that this setup was " a real pain for [the team] in some ways " .

Looking Glass signed a multi @-@ game publishing deal with Electronic Arts in May 1998 , and that company became the publisher of Flight Combat . The team " undersold " the game to Electronic Arts , and James Sterrett of the fansite Through the Looking Glass believed that the team " gambled that it could get the game out the door faster than the budget actually called for " . In March 1999 , the game was announced as the World War II @-@ themed Flight Combat : Thunder Over Europe , directed by Hantzopoulos and scheduled for release in fall of that year . That May , the game was shown at the Electronic Arts booth at E3 . Computer Games Magazine 's Steve Udell wrote that the game would feature a new iteration of the Flight Unlimited terrain renderer , and IGN reported that one million square miles of terrain based on European landscapes would be available . Weather conditions such as snow and rain were planned . Udell wrote that Flight Combat 's flight physics were an updated version of those from recent Flight Unlimited games , with new material taken from operations manuals and flight tests . Plane models and textures were based on photographs , and many of the moving parts and flight control surfaces were modeled individually . Players were given the option to customize planes . Udell described a physics @-@ based damage system that , according to the company , made it impossible to " see the exact same kind of damage twice " . Two campaigns ? the Battle of Britain and the Defence of the Reich ? were announced , with missions based on dogfights , air @-@ to @-@ ground combat and bombing runs . Looking Glass claimed that the game would feature " moving tanks and ships duk [ing] it out on a dynamic battlefield " as the player carried out missions . Aesthetically , IGN 's Tal Blevins noted that the game had " a very distinct 40s charm " , which was present " from the briefings to the options screens " .

= = = Bankruptcy and cancellation = = =

Electronic Arts rebranded Flight Combat as Jane 's Attack Squadron , to fit with the Jane 's

Information Group license that the publisher had used for its Jane 's Combat Simulations line . According to Stellmach , the publisher demanded that the game be heavily redesigned " partway through " development , which exacerbated the team 's existing problems with meeting deadlines . Sterrett believed that the game 's schedule and funding did not receive the necessary adjustments to allow for this redesign . Together with Flight Unlimited III 's commercial failure , the expenses of Jane 's Attack Squadron 's long development used up revenue from Thief : The Dark Project , which had helped the company recover from the failure of Terra Nova : Strike Force Centauri and British Open Championship Golf . Compounding these problems , business deals with Microsoft , Irrational Games and Eidos Interactive were unsuccessful . As a result , Looking Glass Studios went bankrupt in May 2000 . At the time , Jane 's Attack Squadron was roughly three months from completion . Thief II Gold and Thief III were cancelled as a result of the company 's closure , but Jane 's Attack Squadron , because it was near completion and funded through an insured bond , had a chance of being finished .

According to Gordon Berg of Computer Gaming World , the legal and logistical problems of keeping " a portion of Looking Glass [...] intact " to finish the game had been " hurdled " . Further , because of the game 's type of funding , the continued development of Jane 's Attack Squadron would have been at little cost to Electronic Arts . Fans petitioned the publisher to let development continue , and Looking Glass employee Rich Carlson said that Hantzopoulos and others from the Flight series , roughly twenty in all , were prepared to work on the game again . The petition reached 2 @, @ 000 signatures by May 30 and 5 @, @ 000 by June 1 . However , Electronic Arts dropped the game . The publisher 's Jeff Brown said that the decision " was based on our deep uncertainty that the project could meet any schedule given the changes in senior management and a history of missing deadlines . " Brown told the website Combatsim that Electronic Arts had " worked diligently " with Looking Glass for more than two years , and that , although the game had missed its planned October 1999 release , they had been willing to delay the project into 2000 . He blamed the developer 's closure for the decision to cancel the game . Rumors circulated that the decision was part of the publisher 's larger plan to abandon the flight simulator genre , and Computer Gaming World 's Denny Atkin later summarized that the company " ran screaming from the simulation market " after Looking Glass 's bankruptcy . Electronic Arts soon dropped the Jane 's Information Group license .

= = = At Mad Doc = = =

After the closure of Looking Glass , certain employees of that company moved to developer Mad Doc Software , and they hoped to complete Jane 's Attack Squadron . The game 's original lead designer and lead programmer were among those hired by Mad Doc . Dotted Line Entertainment , Mad Doc 's agent company , secured the rights to the game 's code for the team in 2001 . Development commenced shortly afterward . In August of that year , it was reported that the Jane 's Information Group license had been obtained by Xicat Interactive , and that the company planned to publish Mad Doc 's revival of Jane 's Attack Squadron . The full details of the agreement were announced at that year 's European Computer Trade Show , where it was revealed that Jane 's Attack Squadron would focus heavily on air @-@ to @-@ ground combat . According to Mad Doc 's Tim Farrar , " Our goal wasn 't to create a completely new game , it was to complete the game that was started at LG . " Farrar noted that , although the company " trimmed some of the more ambitious features " , Jane 's Attack Squadron was effectively " the same game " created by Looking Glass . As with Flight Combat , the game features one million square miles of terrain , planes with individually modelled moving parts and a physics @-@ based damage system .

In October 2001 , the game was officially announced in a press release by Mad Doc . Steve Nadeau , the lead designer of the game at both development studios , said that he looked forward to polishing Jane 's Attack Squadron and " giv [ing] it a new life " . He believed that the team was " very excited " to finish the game , a sentiment later echoed by the game 's producer , David Halpern . According to Nadeau , the presence of members of the Looking Glass team ensured that it would " closely reflect our original vision of the game : an action @-@ packed World War II air combat

simulation accessible to users of all skill levels " . Farrar announced that the team 's mission and physics editors would be released alongside the game , which he hoped would generate interest among players . Farrar later commented that , because of the game 's physics @-@ based damage system and individually modelled components , wings could be shot off and fuel tanks detonated . He also explained that coolant tanks could be hit , giving the pilot a limited amount of time before the plane engine overheated . He wrote that losing a wing tip meant " a bumpy ride " , but the loss of the tail caused the plane to " spin into the ground " . Jane 's Attack Squadron went gold in March 2002 , and was released that month .

= = Reception = =

Denny Atkin of Computer Gaming World wrote that Jane 's Attack Squadron " had the potential to be sim of the year in 2000 " , but that it had been rendered largely irrelevant by delays and " unrealized design goals . " He believed that its graphics would have been " state of the art in 2000 " , but he found them middling in 2002 ; and he noted the presence of numerous glitches . He considered the game 's most serious flaw to be its low number of missions . Although Atkin found the air @-@ to @-@ air combat " generally fun " , citing " good pilot AI " and " decent " flight physics , he believed that the game 's bombing runs were its most outstanding element . He hoped that fans would use the mission and physics editors to improve the game , and he concluded , " It 's buggy , but when it works it 's worth flying . " Andy Mahood of PC Gamer US wrote that Jane 's Attack Squadron is " unquestionably an entertaining and unique WWII prop sim " , but he believed that it was clearly inferior to games such as IL @-@ 2 Sturmovik . He found the game 's graphics to be outdated and its design to be " simplistic " , and he wrote that its " somewhat basic flight model " prevents advanced maneuvers . He praised the game 's sound effects and music , as well as its " intricate damage modeling " , as its best features . He finished by saying that , because the genre was " starving for fresh titles " , Jane 's Attack Squadron could be recommended despite its flaws .

IGN 's Tom Chick found it " unrealistic , erratic , and limited " , writing that it " looks bad , plays poorly , and is unstable . " He disliked its " canned and rigidly scripted missions " , although he found its bombing runs " interesting " and its air @-@ to @-@ air combat features acceptable . However , he believed that ease of shooting down aircraft made the damage system 's " powerful amount of flexibility " worthless . Chick believed that the multiplayer component was one of the game 's worst features , and he derided the game 's " suspiciously canned physics " , which offered " a grab bag of fidelity mixed in with heaps of silliness . " He summarized Jane 's Attack Squadron as " awful . " Josh Horowitz of The Adrenaline Vault noted the complex damage system , and he believed that the game " looks as good as most of today 's flight simulators " , although he experienced performance issues . He noted that the gameplay was hurt by " corner cutting or general incompleteness " , such as the limited in @-@ game tutorials . Horowitz found the game " repetitive " because of its lack of missions and " low sense of involvement " , and , like Chick , he disliked its multiplayer and " linear " missions . Although he offered significant praise for its sound , Horowitz concluded that the game was " a buggy , incomplete offering " , and that those " looking for the next great Jane 's title will likely be disappointed . "

GameSpy 's Bernard Dy wrote that the game failed to live up to the Jane 's Combat Simulations pedigree , and he believed that those who enjoyed " the realism of IL @-@ 2 Sturmovik will be disappointed . " He disliked its " relaxed flight models " and lack of features , and he cited a large number of glitches . However , Dy found its damage system " robust " and he believed that the game was " not a total loss . " Like Atkin , he hoped that fans would improve the game with its detailed editors , although he believed that this was somewhat unlikely .