= Ace (video game) =

 Ace (stylized as ACE as acronym for Air Combat Emulator) is a flight simulator video game developed by Cascade Games for various home computers released in 1985 . In @-@ game , the player takes the role a fighter jet pilot defending an English coastland against an enemy invasion , having to fight off aerial , ground and naval forces while Allied bases evacuate . The display shows the plane 's instrumentation and cockpit view .
 The game was well @-@ received and , despite various issues , it was lauded by critics as one of the best air combat simulators of the time and particularly praised for its accessible gameplay . The game was developed with low budget by the small UK @-@ based Cascade Games , who later produced two sequels to the game .

= = Narrative = =

 The game is set on the Southern coastland of England during an enemy invasion against the remaining Allied forces . The player takes the role of a fighter plane pilot , who must defeat the invasion . To accomplish this , the player pilots one of the three available Mark 2 @.@ 1 AWAT (All @-@ Weather All @-@ Terrain) combat aircraft and is charged with defending the last three Allied airbases being evacuated in front of the enemy 's advance . Despite being the lone defender and greatly outnumbered , they must fight enemy forces on all fronts : aerial , ground and naval . The player progresses through the game engaging different contingents of the invaders . Initially , they must intercept enemy fighter planes , helicopters and landing ground forces , including tanks , land bases and SAM sites . Once the enemy is sufficiently driven back , the player can engage the naval fleet .

= = Gameplay = =

 At the start of the game , the player is presented with a range of options that determine the experience . The game offers nine selectable levels of difficulty , including a tutorial difficulty in which the enemy forces do not fire back . Among the options , the player can choose to play either in summer or winter time and either daytime or nighttime , altering the scenery . The player must choose from the range of weapons that will be mounted on their AWAT plane . These include air @-@ to @-@ air , air @-@ to @-@ ground , air @-@ to @-@ sea and multipurpose missiles , depending on what enemies the player chooses to engage . In addition , the plane is equipped with a machine gun and decoy flares against hostile missiles .
 In @-@ game screen shows the cockpit view split between top half for plane 's front view and bottom half for plane 's instrumentation . The control panel shows planes crucial data , including speed , altitude , thrust , fuel , roll / pitch indicators and a compass . The panel also features a radar that provided an overview of important nearby objects . An onboard screen displays various flight information and warning messages , and features a speech synthesizer that occasionally announces dangers , such as approaching enemies or missile attacks . Finally , a small rear @-@ view camera allows the player to observe enemies and missiles on their tail . The game also features a two player mode , where one player flies the plane and the other aims and fires the guns .

 At the start of the game , the player has to take off the runway at an Allied base . Afterwards they can fly around and look for enemies to engage . The player can open their Satellite Intelligence Map , which shows a live map of the immediate coastline with items of interest , such as , friendly bases , enemy positions , and refuelling locations . The player can perform various flight manoeuvres and stunts mid @-@ air , such are loops , rolls , or dummy stalls . Flying , especially at high altitudes , spends the plane 's fuel and the player must either return to their base or perform an aerial refueling . To refuel mid @-@ air , the player has to rendezvous with a refuelling plane at the specified coordinates and perform a boom and receptacle refuelling manoeuvre .
 The game ends in defeat if the player crashes , runs out of fuel , or is shot down by taking too much

damage . The player can also eject , but can only do so safely over Allied territory . The player is victorious if they defeat all enemy forces . During the game , points are awarded and displayed in the control panel for destroyed enemies and on game end tallied up in a high score table .

= = Development and release = =

The game was developed by Cascade Games founded in 1983 by Guy Wilhelmy and Nigel Stevens . Wilhelmy had a pilot 's license and had experience with aircraft control and responsiveness , while Stevens ' father had been in British Royal Air Force . Wilhelmy explained that he wanted to create a fast @-@ paced flying game with responsive graphics that other games of the time struggled with . Cascade hired programmer Ian Martin and graphics designer Damon Redmond to work on the project in 1985 . The first version known as A.C.E. : Air Combat Emulator was released in 1985 for the Commodore 16 and VIC @-@ 20 home computers . Martin describes that an advertisement erroneously promising a Plus / 4 version forced them to develop it under threat of action by Advertising Standards Agency .

Martin recalls that afterwards the team had creative freedom to pursue different ideas for the planned Commodore 64 version , and after several months of development and a small delay , the C64 version called simply ACE was released in September 1985 . ZX Spectrum version followed the next year . An Amstrad CPC version was announced and Cascade Games promised a quick delivery with " speed and smoothness exceeding previous simulators " . Having sold over half a million copies on 8 @-@ bit machines , the game 's port was announced for Amiga . ComTec was tasked with porting the game to Amstrad PCW and Amiga / DOS . The game was marketed to America , and the C64 and Amiga versions were released and published in US by UXB in 1986 .

Before the release of Ace , Cascade Games was infamous for their Cassette 50 (1983) game compilation that featured simplistic and subpar games . Stevens points out that without the income from the compilation , the project would not have been possible . The developers estimate the production cost of Ace at £ 40k . Following the release of Ace , Cascade moved into mainstream AAA game development . Wilhelmy says that Cascade boasted over a million GBP in turnover over the following years . The company produced two sequels Ace 2 (1987) and ACE 2088 (1989) and various other games before closing down in 1990 .

= = Reception = =

The first version for C16 and Plus / 4 received positive reviews . Commodore Horizons awarded 8 stars to gameplay , describing it is " as good as anything " within the C16 's limitations . Commodore User noted the C16 version for fast , but involved action . Their review of Plus / 4 described it similarly , and called it one of the best dedicated Plus / 4 games , only giving sound a lower score . Computer Gamer gave both the C16 and Plus / 4 version 5 out of 5 stars and described Ace as easy to use and understand . They later noted that Plus / 4 version was the best yet among the available platforms . Your Commodore criticized the Plus / 4 version for poor innovation , but scored it highly on gameplay and graphics , describing them as " realistic " .

The expanded C64 and Spectrum ZX versions received the highest critic attention and praise on release . Zzap ! 64 rated Ace 90 % and described it as the most exciting flight simulator on C64 to date . They noted good instruction , many available options , and easy controls . Computer and Video Games rated C64 version very positively , awarding gameplay 9 / 10 points calling it the new title for the best of flight simulators . They described it as very well presented with a clear layout . Commodore User lauded Ace for having found the right balance between simulation and action . Crash rated it 81 % , criticizing quite sound and calling out the graphics and overall quality as average for the genre . Sinclair User awarded the game 5 / 5 stars and praised the game 's intentionally accessible gameplay as the high point . They felt the environment graphics were not great , while important objects and effects stood out well . Your Sinclair gave the game 8 / 10 noting it as unrealistic for a simulator , however easy to get into and addictive . Your Computer gave Ace 4 / 5 points calling it a simulation that would appeal to arcade players . However , they gave the sound

1 / 5 points . ZX Computing review labeled it a " monster hit " and called it a quality flying experience praising good sound , excellent graphics with use of horizon line , and well @-@ defined objects .

 Several reviewers regarded Ace as one of the best available flight simulators of the time . Overall , the critics agreed that the game 's arcade @-@ like gameplay was easy to get into and play , but ultimately difficult to master and challenging to finish . Reviewers also negatively remarked upon the inclusion of Lenslok copy protection system where the game would display a garbled image and the player would need to use the provided colored lens to view the two @-@ letter code . ZX Computing and Computer Gamer reviewers had trouble getting it to work and pass . Retro Gamer called it " notorious Lenslok " in retrospect .

 Computer Gamer gave the Amstrad version 85 % , praising the gameplay and graphics . They noted that it was an approachable flight simulator that can be played without reading the manual . Amstrad Action rated this version at 54 % calling it challenging , but lacking in action . They described environmental detail and fighting as the high points , but criticized sound as poor and graphics as slow .

 The game was later sold at bargain prices , bundled with Ace 2 and received several retrospect reviews . Commodore User rated the C64 bargain game 8 / 10 comparing it more to aerial combat simulator than just a flight simulator . They noted plenty of gameplay and some simulation to keep the player occupied . Computer and Video Games awarded the game 90 % for C64 and 87 % for Spectrum version praising the game and describing it as " essential purchase " . Zzap ! 64 gave Ace 67 % and felt that , while the original reviewer 's opinions held true , the game did not stand up to time , with graphics being tacky and sparse and having programming issues . Commodore Force later gave the game 57 % and noted that , although receiving praise during release , its lacking gameplay did not age well . On the other hand , Commodore Format gave the game 3 / 4 points and lauded the game even by 1991 's standards . While they noted simple start , they also noted good graphics , fast @-@ paced gameplay with superb dogfights and basic simulation . Commodore Format rated the Ace and Ace 2 bundle at 89 % calling it an " indisputable bargain " . They praised the fast and uncluttered gameplay with simple objectives , while remarked that the graphics were not the best . Your Commodore rated the bundle 87 / 100 describing the bundle as closer to arcade games rather than flight simulators , concluding that they were good games " with a few bugs " .