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I pulled my heavy cruiser in a tight turn and watched as the two Gaitori cruisers de-cloaked and opened up with their primary weapons. My ship spun hard and I opened fire directly into the mid-ship of the nearest enemy. I was elated to see his ship split in half and blossom into a bright fireball.

Firing my main thrusters, I quickly distanced myself from the other Gaitori ship, flipped my cruiser over and launched a missile directly into the enemy cockpit. The second Gaitori ship exploded, and I checked my scanner and headed for the Cantharan relay station. A few short bursts from my main lasers and the station was history.

I radioed back to my main base and ordered them to start constructing a heavy cruiser and a transport so we could land on the Gaitori planet and overrun their defenses.

My sensors beeped. A ship was dropping out of hyperspace. There was a flash of light and I stared in horror at the Cantharan Carrier that was opening its bay doors in front of me and releasing a swarm of fighters.

I called for help as I swooped in on the fighters and was delighted to see an Obish ship drop out of hyperspace and start blasting fighters.

<<Tweedle>>

What?!?!? Shields were failing. I turned but it was too late. I watched in horror as my cockpit cracked open and...darkness.

My consciousness returned as my sensors came online. My base had finished the new cruiser. I slapped the hyperspace control and the universe turned fiery green as my new ship leaped toward the awaiting battle.

### [Ares](#)

Ares is the new strategy/action game from the people at Changeling software. It takes place in the far future; a time after the great Cantharan Crusade that swept humanity from it's

home on Earth and flung them into the darkness of interstellar space. The time of waiting is over. It is time for you to lead humanity back to its home world and liberate the Earth. At first you are alone, but if you prove yourself, you may gain allies that will help you in your quest.

The Ares universe is home to eight alien races, 21 levels, dozens of ship types and more action than your average martial arts flick. To say Ares is action packed is like saying the Atlantic Ocean is damp. Ares will keep the trigger happy game fan engaged for hours. If you are a strategy fan, don't despair. There is a tactical element to the game that becomes very important if you are to be successful.

The comparison will be inevitable, so I will get it out of the way now. On the surface, the game will remind players of *Escape Velocity* by Ambrosia, but do not be fooled. The game play and look are completely different. The two games share the trait of being top down-full freedom shooters but that is where the similarity ends.

#### Graphics and Sound

Ares is a beautiful looking game. It is obvious that Changeling took their time with this game. The dynamic scaling is something to behold. The game starts at the tactical view in which you can see the entire battlefield. As you get closer to your objective, the game automatically zooms in closer for you. The zoom is smooth and gorgeous to watch. It is a bit disconcerting at first but you get used to it quickly. If you don't like the settings that the game picks, you can manually control the zoom with user configurable keys. Ares also has QuickTime cut-scenes embedded into it. I saw a few of them and they are splendid to see.

The sound is also a treat for the ears. The weapon blasts and explosions will rattle the walls, while a ship dropping out of hyperspace...well, you just have to hear it. The musical tracks also add a lot to the game, giving you a feeling of urgency.

### Game play

Ares was sweet to play. The controls were responsive and crisp. There is not an overabundance of keys but there are more keys than your average shooter to learn. The amount of keys is necessary is because of the various options that Changeling built into the game. The player can directly control one ship at a time but can switch control to any other ship in his fleet at the touch of a button. Not only that but the player can also control what ships are in his fleet by sending orders to any friendly planet. You can build any type of ship from the one man engineering pod all the way up to the massive space carrier.

The missions run the gamut from assault missions to disrupt Cantharan communications, to escort duty, to planet siege duty, all the way up to Cantharan fleet destruction. The mission are not easy. You must be aware at all times what is happening on the battlefield. If you just concentrate on your little area, you will not see the Cantharan transports landing on your allies home world and destroying your ship building capability. You must learn to think globally and react to threats that may not have appeared yet. This game is not only a shooter's but a strategist's delight.

### The Future

What is the future of Ares? Sorry, but I'm sworn to secrecy. Let me just say that there are big plans for this game within the next year and these plans will be something to watch.

Keep your eyes open. Ares should be making its appearance in your area sometime during the 4th quarter of 1996. This game is going to be hot, so check it out.