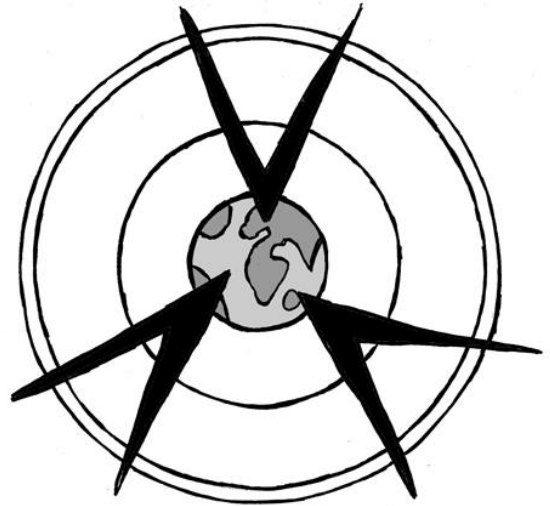


Destination: Planet of Origin

Part One – The Lost Planet

Background

The Lost Planet is the first instalment of a three-part text adventure called *Destination: Planet of Origin*, which was one of the first games I designed, way back in 1989/1990, but it was never programmed. Just for my own amusement, or rather as a favour for my sixteen-year-old self, I've finally taken part one's design off the page and turned it into a playable game.



The 2019 Version

When programming this '2019' version, I tried to follow the game design as accurately as I could; replicating all the original puzzles and text with as few changes as possible.

Some slight alterations have been made to make the finished product a little more palatable to a modern audience. The original designed featured several points of no return, for all three characters. At the time the game was designed, it was not unusual for games to put players in unwinnable positions and require them to learn from their mistakes or restart to see if they'd missed something earlier on.

The original game design also featured quite a few instances of sudden death. Although these have been retained, I hope I've come up with a way of making them less annoying.

Story Summary

On a search for the legendary Planet of Origin, the crew of the SS HERALD receive a mysterious message emanating from a promising-looking planetary candidate.

As they prepare to teleport down to the surface to investigate, the signal appears to cause a malfunction in one of their robots, the hybrid android ROA5, who attempts to scramble the teleporter beam and kill the survey team.

Scattered across the planet, the trio's only hope of survival seemingly lies in the ancient, abandoned temple structures. Perhaps they will provide a way of accessing the hidden underground city?

Switching between characters

Use CONTROL ALEX, CONTROL MIKE and CONTROL BOB or CONTROL 1, CONTROL 2 and CONTROL 3, to switch between characters.

Credits:

Game designed and written by Gareth Pitchford

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Programmed using the PAWs, by Gilsoft, and inPAWs, by Francisco Javier López.

Destination: Planet of Origin

The Story

[What follows is the original introduction to the game, as written by my 16-year-old self. I've resisted the urge to edit and alter it! Anyone with a passing knowledge of 1970s Science Fiction will be able to spot the types of books that I was reading at the time!]

GALACTIC EXPRESS 265.5074 AE

...Today saw the beginning of the biggest expedition to find the 'planet of origin' ever. Three ships, the HERALD, EXPLORER, and STRIDENT, have set off on a mission to find the planet on which humanity originated...

...Deemed by some experts as 'a laughable waste of time', it is an attempt by Professor John Marks to prove his theory that the many differing races of humans all originated on one, single planet. Whether or not this is...

BOOK OF GALACTIC LEGENDS (5th Edition)

...And it is said that the galactic spirit created a planet for his great experiment. On it, he put the fruits of his long labours. He created seas, deserts, plains, all to set a challenge for the people. And then he gave the people life. Life in a universe with a million billion planets to test their souls...

EXTRACT FROM THE ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR JOHN MARKS TO THE CREWS OF THE HERALD, EXPLORER AND STRIDENT 255.5074 AE

"...You have been chosen from scores of applicants. You have been chosen because you were the best of your kind, the top of your field. We need that because this will be the hardest of missions. Each of your ships will be following a lead, a legend, a hunch; anything that will lead towards the discovery of the planet of origin... called in many legends "Earth"..."

EXTRACT FROM SS HERALD'S CAPTAIN'S LOG 275.5074 AE – CAPTAIN ALEX PRICE RECORDING

...And so, we have started out on a mission that could last our whole lives. On board, apart from myself, are crew members that are all talented in their own areas of expertise: Chief Medical Officer and Chaplain-Psychiatrist, Doctor Mike Cooper. Galactic historian and Chief Engineer, Professor Thomas Edwards. And, of course, the two robots, R808 (who we have taken to calling Bob) and R0A5. Of the robots, R0A5 is the most interesting, being a hybrid robot. Whether or not this...

EXTRACT FROM THE ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA (8th Edition) ON THE HYBRID ROBOTICS

...For generations, engineers have iterated on a design of robot brain that has had the ancient Three Laws of Robotics firmly embedded in its programming. Cultural, religious and, indeed, technological limitations have prevented any change being made to these fundamental directives. Recently, though, splinter groups of scientists have experimented by creating hybrid robots which merged synthetic, but biologically derived, brain cells into a robot's electronic pathways...

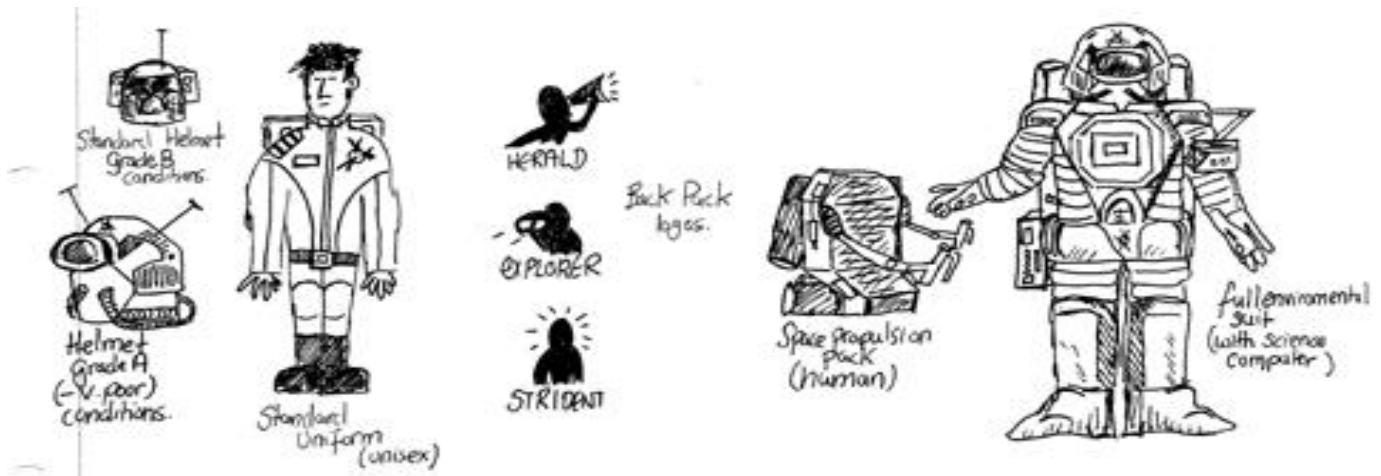
...A side effect of this technique is that it allows a robot more freedom and flexibility in dealing with and interpreting the laws. The major advantage being that these hybrids can be used in more complicated and nuanced scenarios without endangering the robot's sanity. For example, these robots can take offensive, but still non-lethal action, against human attackers in order to protect their owners...

...The uptake of this new technology has been rapid, despite warnings, both from religious groups and the mainstream scientific community who argue that there has not yet been enough testing...

EXTRACT FROM SS HERALD'S CAPTAIN'S LOG 318.5080 AE

...It has now been six years since the start of our voyage. Six years of exploring star systems and visiting planets. Six years of researching. Six years of investigating. And now those six years look to have paid off.

We have been exploring an uncharted and unpopulated region of the universe and have finally found a solar system that fits the legend's requirements. We are currently investigating the third planet of this system, the one with the curious twenty-four period revolution cycle...



Captain Alex Price of the Herald lazed sloppily in her command chair. Around her there was a hive of activity on the small, cramped bridge. Everybody was there. Professor Edwards was hunched over the sensor station, his eyes showing masked delight as he conversed with R808 on the suitability of the planet. ROA5 was monitoring communications, and Dr Cooper was there keeping an eye on everybody. Even he was actively participating in the data analysis, his usually placid features showing great interest, and Captain Price felt strangely out of place.

Finally, she could stand the waiting no longer.

"Right," she said as cheerfully as possible, "What have we got here?"

It was Professor Edwards who spoke first, "What we have got here, my dear Captain, is the best lead we've had for years."

"That wouldn't be hard," responded Price dryly.

The professor continued, ignoring the interruption, "It has an almost perfect 24 period rotation cycle and the solar system matches the legends almost perfectly."

R808 added further information, "It has a single satellite too... and I'm just picking up evidence of radiation."

"Really," this was news to Edwards who turned back to the sensors to analyse the incoming data.

"Is there any sign of life?" this came from Dr Cooper.

"Not yet," replied Edwards, "But we aren't close enough for a detailed sensor scan yet."

"Meaning you want me to give the order, I take it?" Price didn't wait for an answer, "Bring us into normal orbit please, Bob."

"Yes, Captain," R808 moved gracefully from the sensor station to the small navigation console opposite. Not for the first time the captain found herself marvelling at the ability of the galactic engineers to design a robotic frame that imitated the human body so well.

"Captain, we're picking up a weak communications signal from the planet below," said ROA5, who was manning the comm station, "It seems to be audio only."

"Amplify it and run it through the speakers," replied Price.

The bridge speakers crackled into life.

"This is the coordinator of... planet...E... We greet you in the name..." the message was repeatedly broken by bursts of static, "...This is... recorded mes... we... environmental problems... massive radiation... the majority of the population were taken underground... sleeper units... request assistance to wake..."

"That's it, Sir," said ROA5. "The message just keeps looping around."

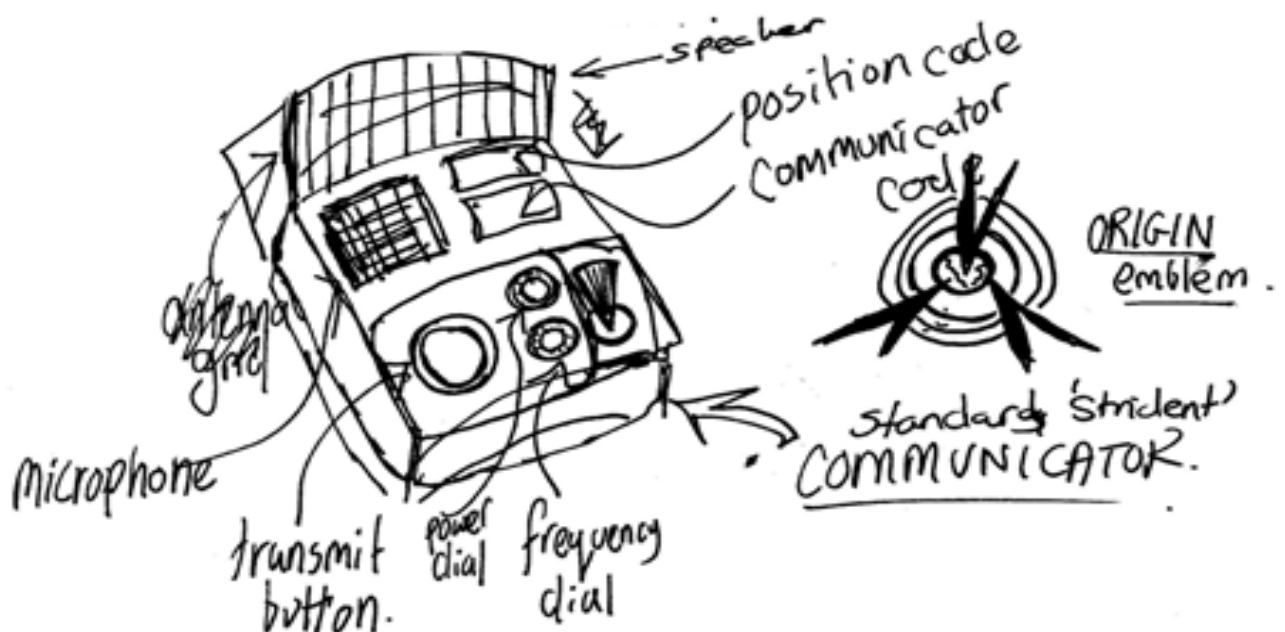
"Right, ROA5, pinpoint the source of the message. Edwards, scan for underground caverns. Cooper, scan for life forms. R808, take over the comm and get me a transcript of that message. ROA5, begin the preparation of supplies for a survey team."

The commands came fluidly even though Price had been without action for so long.

"This is getting interesting," she thought.

EXTRACT FROM CAPTAIN'S LOG 019.5080

...We have decided to teleport down to the planet's surface. I will be accompanied by Dr Cooper and R808. Professor Edwards and ROA5 will stay behind to continue scanning the planet.



Captain Alex Price attached the small laser-gun to her belt. Around her, in the teleporter room, Dr Cooper and R808 were also preparing their equipment, although they had opted for scanners and other scientific tools. They had both made it clear that they didn't want to be carrying a weapon, in tones that almost made Price guilty for asking. She shrugged off the guilt. She was the captain and it was up to her to see that her crew were protected. They had no idea what was waiting for them down there on that planet. The sensors had been unable to pick up any life signs, due to intense interference from the planet's ionosphere, but that didn't mean it was uninhabited.

"Are we going down to this planet or what?" Dr Cooper's voice rang around the closed confines of the teleporter room and Price realised that she must've been standing lost in thought for a while.

"Of course, as soon as Edwards gets here," Alex replied and then wondered where the professor had got to.

As if in answer to his silent question Edwards' voice, quickly followed by his body, came through the door, "Are we all ready?"

"Of course, Professor," answered Cooper grouchily. "WE were waiting for YOU." His voice betrayed his nervousness.

"Sorry," apologised Edwards, "I've just been getting RA05 to analyse a new secondary signal that we've picked up from the planet. It sounds just like gibberish to me but he's just running it through his decoding circuits."

Price, Cooper and R808 took their places in the teleporter booth as Edwards manned the control console. The transparent, protective screen slid into place and Edwards prepared to beam them down.

Just then, the teleporter room door opened and ROA5 entered. There was a weird, almost red gleam to his electronic eyes, and in his hand was a laser-gun. Before anyone could move Edwards was shot down. ROA5 took his place behind the teleporter console, rapidly altering the settings. Price and the others were helpless, separated by the thick safety screen. All they could do was watch.

Finally ROA5 pressed the transmit button and the room exploded in a blinding flash.

"Good bye, Captain," he said.

Price awoke. For miles around there was desert. Sand and dust whirled around in mini cyclones. The captain was bruised and battered, her clothes torn and her equipment missing. She realised that ROA5 must've tried to kill them by scrambling their molecules and dispersing them across a wide area. It hadn't worked. Or, at least, it hadn't worked for him. She had no idea about Dr Cooper or R808.

She surveyed the landscape around her.

"What now?" she thought.

In the dust besides her was her communicator. She picked it up and flipped it open. It let out a high-pitched squealing sound. Something was blocking or interfering with the signal.

There was no way of contacting the others, if indeed they had survived. Her only option was to investigate some of the large structures they'd detected from space and hope that the rest of her team did the same.

If they could manage to make their way into the hidden city below, then perhaps they could find some technology to get them off the planet and back to their ship...