

The Eliminator

Mayhem in Space, TRS-80 Style

Silas Pike
POB 75
Geneva, FL 32732

The Eliminator, a high-speed graphics game for the TRS-80, has that rare combination of fascination and frustration that will make you want to play just one more game. You must play several times to become familiar with its many aspects.

The Game

As the game begins, you see a side view of your Eliminator ship moving horizontally over an ever-changing planetscape (see photo 1). You can control your craft's speed, altitude, and direction. Below the ship are gantry towers of varying heights. Upon these towers rest small cylinders called energizers. Around your ship, a veritable smorgasbord of alien craft exit hyperspace and appear on your screen. Of the four alien manifestations, one type, the *disruptoid*, is after your energizers. You must prevent the disruptoids from latching onto your energizers. If they reach the top of the screen with one of your energizers, they transmute into pulsating forms from which escape can be nigh impossible.

From an offensive standpoint, your Eliminator craft is equipped with an unlimited supply of plasma bursts. But once the airspace becomes very congested, you may have to rely upon your ultimate weapon—the *disruptor charge function*, which eliminates *all* enemy craft from the immediate area. Disruptor charges should be labeled "For Emergency Use Only" because you have just three per game. Once all ten of your energizers are captured or destroyed, the planetscape and gantry towers disintegrate in a blinding flash, thrusting your ship into the alien equivalent of 5 o'clock rush hour. Disruptoids swoop in for the kill, frequently in numbers so great as to completely overwhelm you.

Playing The Eliminator

You can take many different approaches in playing a good game of The Eliminator because this game poses the

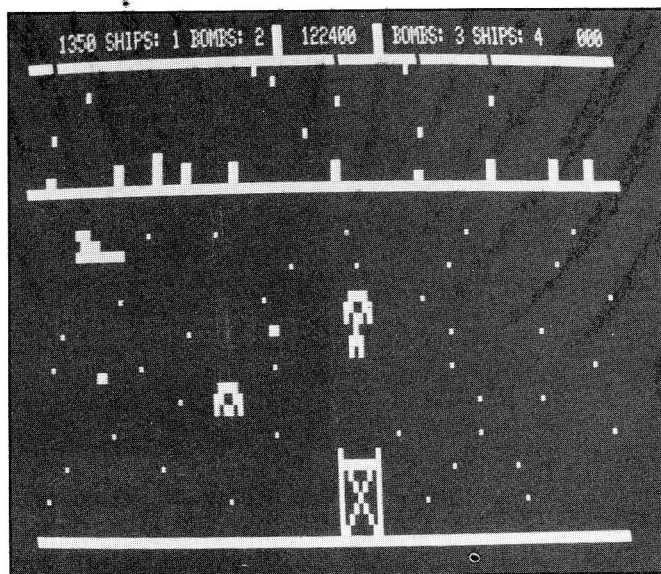


Photo 1: A disruptoid ascends, energizer in tow, while a second disruptoid hovers below and to the left. Your Eliminator ship is to the left of both alien craft and above them. Note the wide-screen monitor at the top of the screen.

triple challenge of (1) accumulating points (by destroying alien craft), (2) staying alive, and (3) preventing the capture or destruction of your energizers. You may focus on any one of these three tactics and play a moderately successful game. But the big points don't come until you are able to synthesize all three.

For example, one maneuver that separates the novices from the pros is the recovery of an energizer from an alien ship that has latched onto it and is in the process of ascending. This maneuver requires a deft hand and a steady eye and is done in several stages. First, the disruptoid must be destroyed. At this point you have an option:

Item	Point Value
Disruptoids	150
Drones	250
TDUs	1000
Tracers	150
Energizer save	250
Energizer replacement	500
Energizer interception	500

Table 1: The point values for destroying enemy ships and for saving your energizers.

either let the energizer fall slowly back into place upon its gantry pad (250 points) or maneuver your ship into contact with the free-falling energizer and replace it upon a gantry pad (500 points). Usually, this process requires several quick forward/reverse and up/down movements of your Eliminator craft. Once all ten of the disruptoid crafts have been dealt with, you will have a few seconds to relax while the screen displays the number of energizers remaining and designates the upcoming attack wave.

The second and subsequent waves consist of two types of alien craft: *drones*, which zigzag diagonally across the screen, and *TDUs* (Tracer Dispersal Units), which ascend and descend benignly until attacked, whereupon they discharge five small *tracer* craft which dip and dive with semi-intelligent abandon and change direction upon pursuit.

Points

Points are accrued for the destruction of enemy craft and for ensuring the safety of your energizers (see table 1). When you use a disruptor charge, all the other spacecraft in the immediate area will disintegrate, garnering the point values of each destroyed ship. A tactical maneuver such as blasting two TDUs, which in turn will release a total of ten tracers, and then triggering a disruptor charge will rack up a minimum of 3500 points. Anything in excess of 30,000 points can be considered a good game. Co-author Wayne Westmoreland reports a high score of 122,400 (see photo 1), most humbling compared to my modest 62,000 high.

Graphically Speaking

The Eliminator uses block graphics for most of the action. Interesting additions are the scrolling gantry towers and planetscape and a starfield backdrop, all of which serve to promote the illusion of true motion. Equally effective is the *wide-screen monitor* at the screen's top, which expands your forward/reverse view by the equivalent of about 2½ full-screen areas in each direction. This

At a Glance

Name

The Eliminator

Type

Arcade-type game

Manufacturer

Adventure International
POB 3435
Longwood, FL 32750
(305) 862-6917

Price

\$19.95, cassette tape;
\$24.95, disk version

Authors

Wayne Westmoreland and
Terry Gilman

Format

Cassette tape or 5¼-inch floppy disk

Language

Z80 machine language

Computer Needed

TRS-80 Model I or III with either 16K bytes (cassette version) or 32K bytes of memory and one disk drive (disk version)

Documentation

Pamphlet outlining key functions

Audience

TRS-80 owners who enjoy arcade games

enables you to monitor what's ahead or behind, before it arrives.

The sound routines in *The Eliminator* are definitely a cut above those of most TRS-80 programs. However, I prefer to be a member of the "soundless minority"; blips and bleeps make me nervous, so I usually play with the sound patch disconnected.

Possible Improvements

To be as fair as possible, *The Eliminator* does have two features that could stand improvement. First, the hyperspace control (Clear key) should be farther from the disruptor-charge control (Enter key). On occasion, I have detonated the disruptor charge by accident when attempting to use the hyperspace function. Second, it would be nice to be awarded an extra ship and/or disruptor charge after passing, say, 50,000 points, as a merit award.

Conclusions

- The Eliminator is a fast-paced arcade game that makes excellent use of the TRS-80's low-resolution graphics.
- The on-screen presentation is well done and the wide-screen monitor is a marvelous feature.
- The game requires both fast reflexes and strategic thinking to be played effectively.
- The Eliminator is the best thing to happen to the TRS-80 in a long time.

Editor's Note: *The Eliminator* is also available as a full-color, high-resolution game for the Apple II. This version requires an Apple II or Apple II Plus, 48K bytes of memory, and one disk drive. The price is \$29.95. . . . **A.A.L.**