

Air Raid: This Is Not a Drill

CATEGORY Action **ESRB** T **DEVELOPER** Made by Kiddies **PUBLISHER** Big City Games **REQUIRED** PII 266, 32MB RAM, 4MB 3D card **WE RECOMMEND** PIII 800, 64MB RAM, 16MB 3D card **MAX. PLAYERS** 6 (LAN only)

Make long-range kills unless you like the idea of sailing on the USS *Barbecue*.



It's bad enough that *Beachhead 2000* (PCG rating: 18%), the first attempt to update Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum classic *Beachhead*, was so lousy. Now we've got *Air Raid*, which, while not a total disaster, barely even offers cosmetic upgrades to the 2000 version's incredibly dull gameplay format.

In *Air Raid*, you battle through 99 levels, firing at aircraft in the style of an old-time console game. But with only 10 different "scenes" — each with static backgrounds,

skies, and the occasional rainstorm — it'll keep your attention for minutes rather than hours.

The difficulty curve doesn't progress very smoothly. You'll finish one level the first time through in about two minutes, then slog through the next one several times before figuring out the pattern. Whatever stress-reducing diversion blowin' shit up might give you is too often watered down by a hard crank in difficulty when a new element is added.

In staggered stages, you'll encounter torpedoes, bomber planes, kamikazes, and ace pilots with physics-defying aerobatics. You're armed with depth charges and heat-seeking missiles, but precious few of them — mainly it's just you and your trusty flak gun.

Friendly AI is another problem. Your immobile gunboat has five other high-caliber cannons, but none of your comrades-in-arms seems to know quite what he's doing, so you end up doing almost all of the work — a



■ Always lead your target to conserve shells.

major challenge given your limited ammo. You can earn more ammo by shooting down certain planes, but you'll run out quickly unless you're great at leading all your targets.

A multiplayer co-op option lets everyone take up a gun, but only on a LAN connection, and this mode delivers little more than a half-hour's entertainment.

With winners like *Deus Ex* and *Diablo II* in the bargain bin, there's no real justification for picking up this bore. — Tom McNamara

