

Price: \$80

Rating Scale:

- 1-3--
(Absolutely terrible)
- 4-6--
(Average at best)
- 7-9--
(Very good -- meets expectations)
- 10--
(Excellent; the best of the best)

Graphics:

9.0

The graphics are classic 2D and look great on the Atari Jaguar. You can tell a lot of time and effort was spent designing everything.

Sound:

9.5

The music is some of the strangest ever heard. It's a mixture of techno-beats, industrial sounds, and other odd-ball instruments. The explosions, speech, and other effects vary in sample quality, hence the 9.5 score instead of a solid 10.

Gameplay:

10.0

The control is flawless despite not having rotary support. The action is fast, unforgiving, and the boss battles will make you pull your hair out. You are getting a challenge when you play this game.

Overall:

9.5

Mad Bodies by Force Design is well worth the asking price of \$80. You might be thinking that \$80 is a lot of money to ask for a small developer release, but when was the last time we saw a new Jaguar release?



ETHunter, Clay, Skip and Thunderbird need your help! They need to stop 'The Graphics Man' before his madness consumes the galaxy. Along with with your help, enter the Dark Knights Game Tournament co-hosted by Dave Vapourware to finally put an end to all the madness. From the very start, Mad Bodies is non-stop from start to finish. Once you pick up your jaguar controller, you find out very quickly why this game is titled 'Mad Bodies'.

The game feels like Breakout but plays very much like a traditional shooter. You control a spaceship-like bat at the bottom of the screen equipped with a square, green cursor for targeting. Sound strange? It gets better. The first few stages start off easy with little happening on screen. Small spacecraft hug the left and right sides of the screen, making it easy to dodge their fire. This speeds up quickly, though, as more enemy spacecraft are added to the mix. Think of a roller-coaster at your favorite amusement park. It starts off slow, but quickly picks up momentum. Just when the on-screen action reaches a fever-pitch, another obstacle is thrown in to make things more interesting; bouncing planets. These planets bounce around the screen rapidly and it's your job to prevent them from leaving the screen by using your spaceship-bat as a blockade. Most of this is fairly manageable until the action switches into overdrive. The planets move faster, enemies start attacking from all angles, and helpless astronauts are introduced as a (albeit third) distraction. Save them while you can! Snatch them up with your green cursor and save them like candy. The more you 'save' on your cursor the sooner you are rewarded with a power up once the Space Stations start rolling by. That's right; you need to stuff these little guys into safe spots! Once you have saved enough of them, you are rewarded with a power-up that extends your craft and increases your fire power. This power-up is a godsend and helps immensely when juggling those pesky planets.

Even with the power-up expect to continue and to continue often. MB's is a frustrating affair that is relentless to the core. This reviewer has never seen so much chaos crammed into a single screen and sometimes I felt cross-eyed trying to keep track of all the in-coming bullets, spacecraft, and crazy planets. MB spans across 10 stages and each one is harder than the last if you can even imagine. You really need the patients of a saint to play this game without losing your cool. Just when you think the coast is clear (and breathing room hardly exists) you find yourself running into something far more unexpected than the previous obstacle. Did I forget to mention that each stage has a boss battle? Sorry, you don't get off that easily. I will be very blunt; you don't know the definition of challenging until you have faced a boss in MB. Sheer madness! Picture the action described earlier but with a boss thrown into the mix (sans bouncing



planets) and you already have an idea of how crazy this is. Plus, you have to bounce the bosses fire back like balls, and each time they hit the boss, they turn colors. Once they turn purple, they have to be bounced back a last time to do any damage. This is all done while enemies and bullets are flying around in every direction and astronauts soaring by. Coupled with a health bar that takes forever to diminish, destroying the boss is not easy by any stretch of the imagination.

With that said, MB is an imaginative title that can't be placed into a single genre. It plays similar to Breakout with the ball-and-bat mechanics of the bouncing planets, but it also feels like a shooter with intense enemy fire, boss battles, and power-ups. The graphics are classic 2D and look great on the Atari Jaguar. The enemy spacecraft look odd (like cylinders or darts) and they fly in unpredictable patterns all across the screen. The astronauts (strangely enough) lack detail and only use one color. This is a insignificant gripe, but one nonetheless. The Boss sprites are massive! In fact, they remind me of the boss encounters in Devil's Crush. They're colorful, imaginative, and very odd-looking. This is all complimented by a techno-style soundtrack throughout. Developer Force Design did a fantastic on Mad Bodies. The presentation is top-notch; it includes a b&w printed manual, oversized clamshell cartridge case, color insert, and, of course, a game cartridge. As far as being a game, MB is a frustrating experience that delivers -- without a doubt -- endless hours of gameplay. It's challenging, fun, imaginative, and definitely worth the price of admission.

-Mike 'STGuy1040' Pittaro

