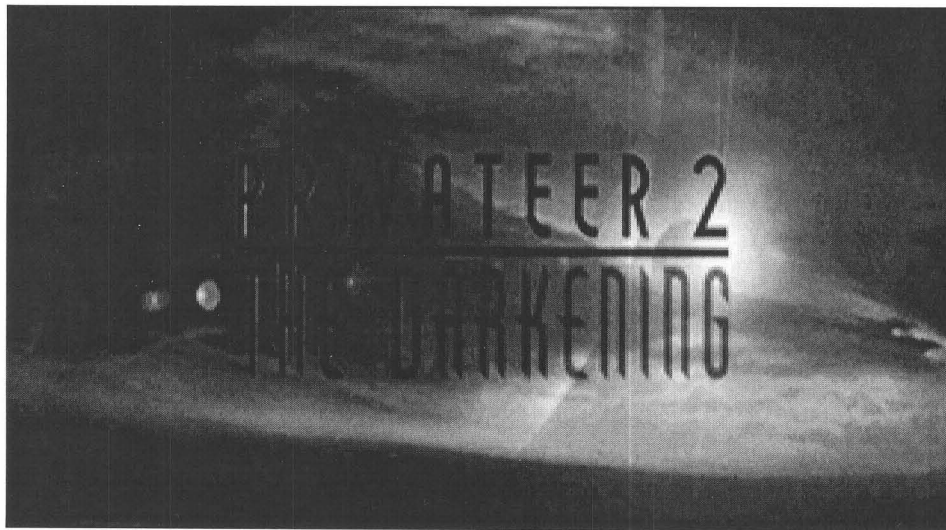


# **Privateer 2: The Darkening**

DOS Version



Product Support  
Post Mortem

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## **Introduction**

This post-mortem will summarize the performance of Privateer 2 during its first six weeks of release. It will also delve into the reasons behind the some of the issues that were encountered and look toward the future of Privateer.

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## **Release Dates**

The initial release of Privateer 2 was December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

The Patch was released on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

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## **Statistical Synopsis**

This is a collection of the some of the most important statistical data from this document. For more in-depth information, please refer to the complete reports in other parts of this document.

### **6 Week Call and E-mail Message Totals versus Units Sold**

<b>Game</b>	<b>Units Sold Through</b>	<b>6 Weeks of Calls</b>	<b>6 Weeks of Messages</b>	<b>Total Calls and Messages</b>	<b>Units to Calls Ratio</b>	<b>Units to Total CS Contacts Ratio</b>
Privateer 2	52,158	1,985	6,913	8,898	3.81%	17.06%
Longbow	38,508	1,103	971	2,074	2.86%	5.39%
ATF	26,109	682	N/A*	682	2.61%	2.61%
Wing IV	57,140	1,313	N/A*	1,313	2.30%	2.30%
USNF '97	28,396	263	N/A*	263	0.93%	0.93%

### **Privateer 2 Patch Information**

The Privateer 2 patch downloads for the tracking period totaled 24,397. The total number of downloads through May 15<sup>th</sup> is 79,449. Including the patches that have been mailed out, there are over 81,000 copies of the patch in customer's hands.

### **Financial Aspect**

With 13 people dedicated to phone and online support for Privateer 2, it cost a minimum of \$40,638 for the six week tracking period based on a \$25,000 annual salary. This only accounts for salary and does not take into account any other expenses such as benefits, supplies, etc.

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## Good Points

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### Graphics

*"Great game engine, very smooth..."*

*"The graphics in the fighting/flying sequences are awesome and rival TIE Fighter's graphics engine,"*

By far, one of the strongest points of Privateer 2 is the gameflow and spaceflight graphic quality. Even the customers who did not like the game could not argue with the fact that the art was stunning. Everything from the Booth system to gameflow screens to planets and the ships themselves, was of very high quality. The art for the game was spectacular. People enjoyed the smoothness that could be achieved with the detail level of the graphics. The smooth engine combined with the wonderful artwork, led to a visually stunning game that could not be overlooked even by the most disgruntled customer.

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### Marketing Plan

The Marketing team did a wonderful job selling this product. The magazine ad spreads and interesting box designs made for a very attractive and eye catching campaign. Thanks to the Marketing team, the product sold very well.

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### Box Contents

*"The installation manual was great, and so were the extra little things included, i.e. map of the universe, reference sheet etc."*

People love the various extras that can come with games. The Privateer 2 box came with additional goodies that customers thoroughly enjoyed. One of the most common requests from the original Privateer was an actual map of the universe. Well, thanks to our publications team, the US version shipped with just that.



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## Game Issues

This is a list of the issues related to the game design or engine. These could have been addressed before the game shipped, but due to time constraints, resources, and a difficult relationship, they were not.

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### **Privateer 2 Was Not a Sequel to the Original Privateer**

*"Now don't get me wrong, I enjoy this game too, but I feel cheated and that I was misled into something. You should have named this game something else, and then came up with the real sequel to Privateer."*

*"Yesterday I just bought Privateer 2, because of how great the first Privateer was."*

*"Having purchased P2 and found out it's got nothing to do with Privateer 1 or the WC universe, I'm damned if I'm going to buy WC5 if it comes out and find it's got nothing to do with WC1-4."*

Privateer 2 had nothing to do with the original Privateer. Aside from the fact that Privateer 2 was not a Wing Commander game, it had no connection whatsoever with its predecessor. With all the differences from previous products, and the market strategy targeting the new user, the fact that the game was named Privateer 2 was to attract the customer base that bought and enjoyed the original Privateer. The new user, who would have bought the game no matter what the title was, had few problems with design and fiction. But the veteran customer, who bought the game because it said Privateer 2 or Origin, was sorely disappointed. Ultimately, the name Privateer 2 was applied to this game to attract the loyal customer base. Sadly, these customers are the ones who will be most disappointed because it is neither a sequel nor a Wing Commander game. Privateer, Wing Commander, and the Origin brand have all been damaged by Privateer 2. It is this damage that has now caused the existing customer base to become weary of future products.

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### **Origin Quality**

*"I have recently bought your game Privateer 2 and wish to express my feelings of utter disappointment and betrayal in you people for the misleading title and producing a product so flawed I have since advised my friends and fellow fans of your Wing Commander series to steer clear of this piece of space drivel like VD as they will surely receive a beef torpedo to their faith in an Origin product and come up possessing something they don't want or need."*

The single worst thing to come from Privateer 2 is the reputation hit that Origin took. Even though the game was not made at Origin, everything that the customers saw as a problem was blamed on us. A game from Origin has come to mean 'of the highest quality'. If the game is anything less than 'up to Origin standards', the game is a failure. Even though the game may be better than another company's, people don't care about other companies. They bought an Origin game, and that is what they want. Because the game was branded Origin, everything that was wrong was put on Origin's reputation. Because of this, future games will be scrutinized with a microscopic eye.

*"I have played almost every Origin game in the last 7 years and this speaks of poor programming and game testing - not something I would normally associate with you."*

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### ***Can not install the game with "No Sound"***

For the game to install, you must have a sound card and sound must be set up correctly and have all available drivers loading properly. The sound card must also be configured correctly with respect to the rest of the computer. If there are any conflicts with other pieces of hardware within the computer, the sound card will not function correctly is DOS, and the game will not install. There are many reasons why a game won't install. Having a "No Sound" option allows the CS rep to determine sound problems right away. Without this option, it can take hours to figure out what is wrong.

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### ***Error: "Setstreamspped": Fixed in Patch***

This error occurred when someone would land on a planet after starting the game on a CD other than disc 1. The game can only be started from CD 1 no matter which CD you saved your last game on. If the customer tried to start up the game from any CD other than CD 1, this error occurred. This was the most common issue encompassing almost 1/5 of all calls.

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### ***OSI Lockup: Patch Helps***

The game would lock up at the OSI logo movie. Random video cards did not support the mode in which the movie player attempted to operate. There was no workaround to help the customers.

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### ***CD Swap "Lockup": Fixed in Patch***

*"...when I got the prompt  
"Please insert cd#2". I  
did...and nothing happened.  
Nothing meaning I couldn't  
get the game to run, I  
couldn't Alt Ctrl Del out of  
the screen, I couldn't do  
anything but look at the  
screen and scream in  
frustration."*

Customers called us telling us that their game had locked up whenever the game asked for another CD. When you are prompted to swap CDs, a screen comes up telling you which CD to place in the drive. There are no other directions. To complicate matters, every key on the keyboard is disabled except for the space bar. Customers hit Enter, Esc, and even Ctrl-Alt-Del. When nothing happens, they understandably believe that their computer is locked. This was not intuitive. US games usually take input from many different keys, work automatically, or have instructions on the screen. This was fixed in the patch and the game now starts as soon as you put in the correct CD.

---

### ***Error: "Assertion failed...": Patch Helps***

This memory problem error message, usually occurred during spaceflight. Trying different memory configurations, the tech could usually help the customer get around the problem. The patch helped this issue because originally, the game only used the first 14 megs of RAM, regardless of how much total RAM there was available. Customers with 32 and 64 megs of RAM or more, still received this memory error message. With the patch installed, the game used whatever RAM was available.

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### **News Bulletin Crash: Patch Helps**

News Bulletins are randomly generated. Some of the bulletins are corrupt. When a player clicks on one of the corrupt news bulletins, the game either crashes with an error or locks. There was no way to 'unload' a news bulletin, and therefore, there was no way to get around this problem except to tell the customer to either load a previous save game or start over because the corrupted bulletin is now in that save game.

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### **Privateer 2 Did Not Take Place in the Same Universe as the Original Privateer**

*"The title. 'PRIVATEER 2' implies this thing is set in the Wing Commander universe, which this thing is certainly not by a long stretch of the imagination."*

Privateer 2 was not set in the same universe as the original Privateer. Marketing did their best to separate the two, but due to the success of the original game, the name Privateer has come to mean many things, including the setting. When the customers bought Privateer 2 and found out that it had nothing to do with the original Privateer, most of them were very disappointed.

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### **No Skill Levels**

*"But why make it more idiot proof?! It is no longer hard or challenging."*

There were no skill level options within the game to cater to different levels of gamers. Some gamers felt that the game was too hard, while others felt that it was too easy. Not having these different options greatly limits the replayability of the game as well as the consumers who will enjoy playing it.

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### **No Invulnerability Option: Fixed in Patch**

*"Does the Privateer 2 have a feature that makes you invulnerable. I really enjoy playing these games but I never survive unless I can cheat."*

Without skill levels, there were many players who could not play the game due to its difficulty. An invulnerability option would allow players who were having trouble with the combat, continue to play the game.

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### **Hermes Lockup: Patch Helps**

The game would occasionally lock up on random machines whenever the player tried to land on the planet Hermes. You could work around this issue by copying over a 40 meg file called SETS.IFF to the hard drive.

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## **No Missions at the Beginning of the Game**

*"I never seem to have missions available in the Bulletin Board area. I receive SOS calls, cinematic, and main plot missions, but no Bulletin Board missions."*

When you start the game, there are no missions available at the Bulletin Board. You must first accumulate enough wealth to activate them. This is not known to the player because the development team designed it this way. Additionally, they did not want the documentation to give it away either. This predicament forces everyone to do cargo runs to earn money. Most players want to get involved with the fight early in the game, not orbit a ship they must protect.

---

## **Can't Carry Your Own Cargo**

*"You cannot even carry your own cargo!!! So every cargo mission becomes an escort mission."*

Without being able to carry your own cargo, you must hire a cargo ship, fill it with goods, and escort it to complete any trade runs. This, coupled with the fact that you are forced to do cargo runs to make money because there are no missions at the beginning of the game, leads to an abysmal beginning. The first thing that customers must experience is escort mission after escort mission. As these are very hard and boring missions, the game becomes boring and tiresome very quickly. With personal cargo being removed, one more feature from the original Privateer is taken away from customers, further limiting them in their gameplay enjoyment.

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## **Repeating Missions**

*"The repeating of missions is pathetic..."*

The missions are divided into 10 groups of 10 missions each. As you progress through the plot, different mission groups become available. Once missions begin appearing on the bulletin board, there are random machines that cause the same group of missions to come up over and over again. This can be quite annoying. Players would often play the exact same mission upwards of five or six times. After doing cargo run after cargo run to finally get the missions to appear, having them repeat left the customer feeling upset and defeated.

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## **Poor Joystick Calibration Routine**

*"Joystick configuration \_really\_ sucks. I haven't been able to find any joystick that centers properly after calibration. And trust me, I've tried many."*

The joystick calibration routine is incredibly poor. Obtaining a good calibration on some consumer's machines can be a great test of patience and troubleshooting skills. On some machines, an accurate calibration cannot be obtained at all with any joystick.

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### **No Keyboard Support**

*"But, I found out I cannot play the game with my keyboard, that it is necessary for me to spend 120 bucks on a joystick or play with a crappy mouse. Is this true?"*

There is no way to fly your ship with the keyboard. This normally isn't a big problem, but with a less than adequate joystick calibration routine, and sketchy mouse control at best, some players would have opted to use the keyboard for flight control.

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### **Economy Makes No Sense**

*"Trade Goods seem to buy and sell for arbitrary prices - no matter the times or conditions."*

The trading economy in the game makes no sense and has no continuity whatsoever. Places that offer the best selling prices have nothing to sell, and those that pay the most for items don't need any. Drought ridden planets don't need water and medical facilities don't need medical supplies. There are even news bulletins that tell of riches to be made by selling certain commodities at certain places. But upon arrival, the buying price is actually less than what you paid for it.

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### **Can't Play in Win '95**

*"I picked up Privateer 2 today and was quite disappointed to find out I couldn't play it because I didn't have DOS drivers installed on the machine I just purchased."*

There are a few crashes that are specific to Windows '95. For this reason, the game was prevented from installing or running in Windows '95. Customers were disappointed to discover that they had some work to do before they could play their games. Most of the new computers today do not come with DOS drivers. Because Privateer 2 was a DOS game, customers had to contact the various manufacturers of their hardware and hope for the best, or scour the Internet for drivers to run this game. Even after finding the drivers, they would find the common problems later on in the game.

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### **Palette Flashes**

*"I noticed that when the movies are playing, I get this white flash type of thing for a split second."*

There is a brief flash that occurs before and after each movie. This does not hamper the game in any way, it simply looks sloppy.

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## Poor Enemy AI

*"...the game AI next to nonexistent, or maybe all of the mentioned. Some people like shooting fish in a barrel, neither I or my friends do."*

The enemy AI is weak and predictable. There are no stock movements to give the enemy much character. The attack and evasion maneuvers make it extremely easy for the average player to take on as many as 15 fighters at once.

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## Ability to Actively Control Your Environment & Alignment

*"An opportunity to be a "bad" guy or a "good" guy would have been nice. Go with the pirates or become a policeman? Anything to provide a change of pace from shooting everything in sight."*

Players love options and control. This is what the original Privateer was all about. Being able to become a pirate, a bounty hunter, or a merchant, gave players the option to choose their own path. Without this, the game becomes another generic flight simulator that you must follow, instead of lead. It is this choice that made the original Privateer one of the most popular games in Origin history.

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## Communication is Ineffective

*"Why not let the player get friendly with some clans of pirates, or negotiate out of a confrontation?"*

The player's communication with other ships has no effect. There is no way to taunt or to apologize for accidentally shooting someone. Without taunting, drawing fire from your precious cargo ship was near impossible, and not being able to apologize, turned an accidental shot into a permanent enemy. The lack of effective communication was a noticeable feature loss from the original Privateer.

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## No Subtitles

*"Unfortunately to my horror, it is not subtitled. I'm giving Origin/EA the notice that you are violating the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)"*

*"Also, the lack of subtitles was very bad. I have a hard time recognizing foreign accents (even in the English language). Many times I got frustrated during movie sequences when I didn't understand what they were saying."*

There were no subtitles in the game. In a game that features long, critical movies, subtitles become even more important because many people play the game to watch the story line. When British accents were thrown into the mix as well, people had a hard time understanding the dialogue. Aside from the difficult accents, not having subtitles alienated our hearing impaired customers as well. This coupled with the fact that there was no way to replay any of the movies, made not having subtitles a very big issue.

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### **Inability to Run From Combat**

*"It appears the object is to quickly hammer the 'J' key as soon as your fuel 'Recharges' - if not, an infinite amount of bad-guys will appear for you to fight, until you jump away during the pause."*

Not being able to run from combat was one of the biggest design changes made in the game, and one of the more disappointing aspects as well. Being locked into combat greatly added to the monotony and frustration of the game. Customers soon learned that the excitement of dashing into a jump zone while fighters were bearing down on you and escaping by the skin of your teeth, was taken away.

*"How come you can't override your flight computer and jump anyway, no matter how many enemies are breathing down your neck?"*

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### **Can't Install into Nested Directories**

*"I go to install the game. It does not allow me to install into the directory D:\GAMES\ DARK. Claims it can't be put into a subdirectory. That seems quite silly."*

Not being able to install the game into a subdirectory looks very sloppy. With Windows on the forefront, customers don't understand how something that seems so simple can be left out.

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### **No Support for Multiple Button Joysticks: CH and TM added in Patch**

*"Did somebody there decide to screw everybody that had bought 4 button joysticks or is this just an after thought."*

This was the first Origin brand flight sim since 1993 to not include support for multiple button joysticks. Multiple button joystick support is a standard in the gaming industry. A clear lack of support for these joysticks have left a very bad taste in our customers' mouths.

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### **Poor Relationship Between Origin QA and the UK Producer**

One of the most significant problems encountered throughout the QA process was the fact that there was not a healthy nor beneficial relationship between QA and the UK Producer. The tracking period of Privateer 2 did nothing but reinforce this opinion. Erin ignored virtually all data given to him by members of OSI, some of which included members of the Maverick producer group. When problems were discussed, they were said to be impossible to fix, or blamed on relatively simple hardware problems, specific only local machines. After ship, contact was established with Paul Hughes. Many of the bugs that had been reported to Erin were unknown to the rest of the UK team. Paul quickly worked on a patch to solve many of the major issues. With an onsite Origin Producer, critical problems such as crashes and lockups would have been given the full attention they deserved. This in turn would have drastically cut down the number of calls, returns, and complaints due to technical problems. This approach benefits the game by allowing it to stand on its design merits, rather than being labeled "buggy" by customers.



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## **Small Universe Compared to the Original Privateer**

*"Another aspect that made Priv 1 so good was that the galaxy was so large that the possibilities were endless. Privateer 2's galaxy is very small, so small that is impossible to NOT see the story line!!"*

The original Privateer fans loved the open, random, vastness of the universe. The bigger the universe, the more that is open to them. In the original, players could earn money to buy maps and gain access to even more parts of the galaxy. Unfortunately for the consumer, Privateer 2's universe was given all at once, and was considerably smaller in size.

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## **Difficult Navigation Map Interface**

*"Though is there a easier way to find nav points? I'm having a heck of a time to have to click each nav point to just find a particular one."*

The 3D Nav map is interesting to look at, but it sacrifices functionality for looks. There are no buttons or directions for the use of the map while you are in it. Additionally, there is no depth perception until the map is actually moved. And because there are no controls or directions within the map, most people do not know that there is even an option to move it. Since the player must spend much time inside the map, a fluid interface and smooth controls with clear directions are a must.

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## **Effectiveness & Usefulness of Equipment**

*"In P2, you only really had one type of 5 laser weapons and those were a grave disappointment to begin with."*

The original Privateer had many different types of guns, software, equipment, shields, engines, armor, etc. There was much more to choose from than in Privateer 2. There are some new additions to the equipment list in Privateer 2, but their usefulness is close to zero. Without the abundant choices that the original had, each of the different upgrades, including guns, seems trite and useless as they are just a different version of the previous piece of equipment you had, with a different name and look. Also, without the radar, armor, engine, and shield upgrades of the original Privateer, ship customization dropped to almost nothing. With ineffective equipment, there was almost no motivation to upgrade your ship. This motivation was one of the things that made the original game so much fun.

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## **Different Keyboard Layout**

*"Why did you change the keyboard layout?"*

The keyboard layout was completely different from anything Origin had ever done in this genre. One static keyboard layout has been used for 17 different Origin games including the original Privateer. Our customers have acclimated over the years to this Origin keyboard. Even competing companies have adopted many of the Origin standards in keyboard layout, including X-Wing and TIE Fighter.



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### **Limited Afterburner Fuel**

*"Taking away the infinite afterburner policy of the original Privateer makes these encounters more lethal than any mission short of fighting a capital ship."*

With the option to run away from combat taken away, and the increasing number of pirates that jump into the area, combat can sometimes last a very long time. Surviving a combat takes afterburner fuel. The original Privateer had a rechargeable afterburner system. That was taken away for Privateer 2. With limited afterburner fuel, having to fly long distances to land on a planet becomes even longer when you have to coast along at a very slow speed because you used all of your fuel for combat.

---

### **No Animated Comm VDU's**

*"...the comms messages from other ships are insultingly poor....Not at all like the fun which could be had in WC3 with comms messages."*

The communication between other ships in the game has no real purpose. The VDU pictures are static and are the same every time. Even the original Privateer had some animation in the comm VDU's. Privateer 2 did not.

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### **No Autopilot System**

*"In addition, jump points should be from solar system to solar system, not from half a mile of empty space to another half mile of empty space."*

There was no real autopilot system. At least, not anything that our past Privateer customers are used to. In the past, autopiloting would take you from Nav point to Nav point, while jumping would take you to a completely different system. In Privateer 2, you had to jump to every Nav point. This was one more thing that separated the loyal Privateer customers from the game they knew and loved.

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### **Random Encounters not Random Enough**

*"Priv 2 becomes so repetitive that I could almost tell what ships will be waiting for me at the next nav point."*

With customers being forced to travel back and forth to do trading runs, they soon learn the patterns of the 'random' encounters. The repetitiveness soon takes its toll.

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### **Radar Coloring System**

The radar coloring system was very different from the previous Privateer. Each ship type had a static color assigned to it. People had a very difficult time figuring out who their enemy was and who their friends were. When you would accidentally shoot someone, and they became your enemy, you had no way to tell which one they were. Most of the time, the player would end up having to kill everything, friendlies and all, because there was no way to tell who was who.

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## ***Length it Takes to Fly to, and Land on a Planet***

To land in Privateer 2 is quite an ordeal. There is a troublesome series of steps that must be followed simply to land. This becomes an even bigger issue due to the amount of times that you must land at various locations. Here are the steps it takes to land, and the issues with them.

1. Fly towards the planet.

When you jump into the area, the planet is very far away. Chances are, you have used up your afterburner fuel during combat so you must coast at a very slow speed towards your destination that is very far away. This takes a very long time and is very boring.

2. Open your communication VDU.

This seems very simple. You open the VDU to communicate with the planet, and wait until you get close enough for the option to land. The problem is that after a short period of time the communication VDU will close down. So as you are waiting for the option to land, you must re-open your VDU so you do not miss your chance to land.

3. Choose 'Land' option in time.

Once the option to land appears in your communication VDU, you have a very small amount of time to choose it. If you wait longer than a few seconds, your ship will blow up, and you will die.

This process of landing on a planet, which is done throughout the entire game, is long, bothersome, and extremely frustrating.

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## ***Missile Effectiveness***

*"Also it states that certain missiles take longer to lock than other missiles, but the specs list all lock times as "3"."*

Most of the missiles in the game are not very effective. They very frequently miss their targets, and some have a range so small that by the time you get within that range you might as well just shoot the enemy with your guns. Even though there is a long list of missile types, they have very little noticeable differences in game play, no matter what the text in the game says. When the game manual that Origin wrote described the actual effects and statistics of the game, it didn't match the text descriptions within the game. The customers then thought that it was a misprint in the manual when it was actually a problem within the game.

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## **Future Privateer Wish List**

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This chapter includes the most common requests that were encountered during this tracking process.

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### **Greater Variety in Gun, Missile, & Weapon Functionality**

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*"Being able to upgrade your ship's engines and shields was a cool part about the ships in Privateer 1, and I can't understand why you guys yanked'em in P2."*

The more stuff the better. Privateer 2 took out many of the ship upgrades from the original Privateer, and added some new and interesting items. But, unfortunately, many of them were of little use. Overall, players felt that the control and options that were given in the original Privateer were taken out in Privateer 2.

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### **Main Plot Branching**

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Linear plots have gone by the wayside. Most people enjoy making choices and performing in missions to determine their path. Neither Privateer nor Privateer 2 had branching plot lines. It is time to catch the Privateer series up to speed. A branching main plot will not only add to the replayability of the game, but it will be one more area in which the customer gets to have a hand in their destiny.

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### **Increased Number of Contiguous Subplots**

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In Privateer 2, there were a couple of subplots that had one or two missions to them. Most of the subplots in Privateer 2 only had one mission to them. But the idea for multiple mission subplots was wonderful. With more complex subplots, the player would still be working on the main plot as they found themselves involved in various interesting tasks. Having these subplots with multiple missions would greatly add to the immersion, replayability, and overall enjoyment of the game.

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### **Increased Number of Options**

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There were not many game options in Privateer 2. The more options there are, the more the user can make the game exactly what they want. Customers getting what they want means they love our game and our company. The various types of options that should be available range anywhere from Skill Difficulty Levels to Volume Control for the sound. Here is a brief list of options that should be available. This is not all inclusive, but should give a good idea of the types and ranges of needed options.

- Skill Difficulty Levels
- Invulnerability
- Gamma Correction for Spaceflight and Gameflow
- Volume Control for both Music and Sound Effects
- Graphics Detail Levels
- Specific Multiple Button Joystick and Throttle Control
- Control Types such as Mouse, Joystick, and Keyboard
- Rudder Pedal Control
- Video Options for Gameplay and Movies

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### ***Give Access to the Nav Map from the Planets***

*"Also, the second serious design flaw is not being able to access the starmap when on a planet or station to plan what commodities you are going to trade and to where."*

Since the original Privateer, people have requested a feature allowing them to view the Nav map from gameflow. Having access to the Nav map allows the player to construct flight plans and plot out their course before they accept a mission. This gives the player a greater feel of control over their destiny, and therefore, a more immersive and enjoyable game.

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## **The Patch**

This section describes the various fixes and features that were added with the patch as well as some brief details with each issue. The download statistics for the patch are also included at the end of this section.

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### **Issues Addressed**

#### **Fixes**

- **OSI Lockup**  
Some people experienced a lockup at the Origin logo and various other places. The new movie player should fix this problem.
- **General Movie problems such as skips, slowdowns, and lockups**  
The new movie player should help alleviate many of these problems.
- **Hermes Lockup**  
The game would lock up when the player tried to land on the planet Hermes. The new movie player should help alleviate most of these lockups.
- **Rendition based Movie lockups**  
Video cards using the Rendition Verte chipset will usually lockup during the OSI logo. This is because the video mode the movie player uses is not supported by the video card. The solution was to write a special movie player specifically for these cards. To activate this mode, type "DARK -svga" at the command line.  
  
NOTE: This will use the SVGA movie player specifically written for these cards:  
Canopus Total 3D  
Sierra Screamin' 3D  
Creative Labs 3D Blaster  
Intergraph Intense 3D  
  
NOTE: While the movie player will no longer lock up, some cards will exhibit palette flashes while movies are playing.
- **"Setstreamspeed" error message**  
Several customers encountered this error message when attempting to land on a planet after starting the game on a CD other than Disc 1. This problem has been fixed.
- **News Bulletin crash**  
Certain customers encountered problems when reading News Briefs, mainly crashes.
- **Wingman Lockup**  
The game locks for some customers if they are out of wingmen, when attempting to enter the Booth.
- **Targeting saving during a roll**  
During spaceflight, while executing a roll, the targeting computer would sometimes change targets.

- **Saving gamma Correction**  
Gamma Correction/Brightness of movies can be controlled with the + and - keys. Previously, the settings were not saved between movies.
- **CD-ROM Disc Swap "Lockup"**  
When requesting the next CD, users were required to hit the spacebar after inserting the CD. Privateer 2 will now detect the new CD and continue without user intervention.
- **"Assertion Failed" error message**  
Certain users would receive an Assertion Failed error message in spaceflight if for some reason the game was not able to allocate enough memory for a function.

### **Feature Additions**

- **Native support for CH Flightstick Pro and Thrustmaster joysticks**  
Native support for CH Flightstick Pro and Thrustmaster joysticks has been added. You can select the appropriate joystick from the Spaceflight Options Menu. The table below describes the various available views:
 

<b>Hat:</b>	Selects the four views
<b>Main Trigger:</b>	Fires the selected laser(s)
<b>Button "A":</b>	Selects target under the HUD cursor. When held down rolls in the direction of the stick
<b>Button "B":</b>	Activates the Afterburners
<b>Button "C":</b>	Fires the currently selected missile(s)
- **Additional Keyboard Keys**  
Several keys have been added to increase the functionality of programmable joysticks. The table below indicates the new keys and their function:
 

<b>Spacebar:</b>	Fire selected laser(s)
<b>&lt;:</b>	Roll counterclockwise
<b>&gt;:</b>	Roll Clockwise
- **Invulnerability added**  
Due to demand, invulnerability has been added as an option in the Spaceflight Options Menu.

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### **Effects of the Patch**

Once the patch was added to the web site, the calls for the problems addressed dropped considerably. The patch also gave CS reps a possible solution to problems that were once unsolvable. Origin CS would very much like to thank Paul Hughes for making this patch possible.

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## **Results & Conclusions**

This section explains the various conclusions obtained about Privateer 2, based on all of the facts and data presented in this document.

The relationship between the UK Producer and Origin QA was not conducive to productive teamwork until he left. Erin had full confidence in his staff, and felt that they did not need the extra input on US expectations. The relationship established with Paul Hughes after ship was great. The work Paul put into the patch fixing items that Erin said could not be fixed was much appreciated. As we have learned in the past, open communication between QA and Development is necessary for a game to come together correctly. Because the game was going to be branded Origin, Origin Product Support should have had some kind of input.

There were a large amount of technical problems present in the game before and after ship. Even with design and fictional differences aside, this game should not have shipped due to the multitude of technical problems.

With an onsite Origin Producer, many of the problems that occurred with this product would not have been issues. Having an onsite Origin Producer has been agreed upon by Origin executive management, and Product Support is greatly appreciative. Our customers will undoubtedly be pleased with the results.

All in all, Privateer 2 had many things wrong with it. There were design flaws, title issues, fictional discontinuity, and technical problems. All of these combined to make a product that simply was not up to the Origin standard. Most people who spend any time in the game soon find out that it is not what they expected and not what they want. As one reviewer put it, "Privateer 2 is touted as a Wing Commander game, but no obvious connection exists. What we have instead of a true sequel is an aesthetically pleasing space flight sim seasoned with high budget full motion video and garnished with more bugs and glitches than this reviewer has ever seen in a product boasting Origin's seal of approval." Product Support could not agree more.

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## *Appendices*





## ***Appendix 1: Final Tracking Report***

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# **Privateer 2: The Darkening**

## **Day Thirty: Customer Service Tracking**

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### ***Introduction***

The purpose of this document is to detail the various experiences regarding Privateer 2: The Darkening during the Thirty days of tracking. This is the final tracking report.

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### ***Document Contents***

<b>Introduction:</b>	Gives small intro and lists new additions
<b>Document Contents:</b>	List of topic headings and their descriptions
<b>Call Breakdown:</b>	Details the types and numbers of phone calls received
<b>Letters and Faxes Breakdown:</b>	Details the types and numbers of letters and faxes received
<b>Online Messages Breakdown:</b>	Details the types and numbers of e-mail messages received
<b>Refunds and Exchanges:</b>	Lists the number of refunds and exchanges through Origin
<b>Grand Totals:</b>	Combines the totals from the above sections
<b>Comparative Analysis:</b>	Compares CS data with Sales data on various games
<b>Staff Allocation:</b>	Details the CS resources devoted to the game
<b>Patch Update:</b>	Details the status of the patch
<b>Call Type Explanation:</b>	Lists and describes the various call types and possible solutions
<b>Conclusion:</b>	Summary of the document

## Call Breakdown

The following table details the various problem types reported by our CS representatives for the Thirty days of product tracking. This information is up to date as of the conclusion of business Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Technical Call Type Breakdown From 1/9/97 through 2/13/97

Call Type	Number Of Calls	Percentage of Total	Number Solved	Percentage Solved
Setstreamspeed Error	339	17.1%	164	48.4%
Install	213	10.7%	88	41.3%
Lockup	209	10.5%	82	39.2%
OSI Lockup	181	9.1%	8	4.4%
Hermes Lockup	176	8.9%	76	43.2%
Error Message	118	5.9%	34	28.8%
Joystick Problem	96	4.8%	23	24.0%
News Bulletin Crash	89	4.5%	0	0.0%
Shortcut	76	3.8%	56	73.7%
Sound Problem	73	3.7%	42	57.5%
Video Problem	63	3.2%	11	17.5%
DOS/4GW Crash	49	2.5%	18	36.7%
Other	42	2.1%	18	42.9%
Infinite Reboot	23	1.2%	18	78.3%
Mouse Problem	22	1.1%	12	54.5%
Boot Disk	14	0.7%	7	50.0%
CD-ROM Problem	12	0.6%	3	25.0%
Game Speed	4	0.2%	1	25.0%
Memory Problem	4	0.2%	1	25.0%
Bad Disk	4	0.2%	1	25.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1807</b>	<b>91.0%</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>36.6%</b>

There are also non-technical calls which are reported separately, as they are separate classification of call.

### Non-Technical Call Breakdown From 1/9/97 through 2/13/97

Call Type	Number of Calls	Percentage of Total	Number Solved	Percentage Solved
Inquiry	120	6.0%	120	100%
Hint	40	2.0%	40	100%
Documentation Problem	9	0.5%	9	100%
Refund Calls	8	0.4%	8	100%
Exchange Calls	1	0.1%	1	100%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Grand Total of Calls From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97**

Call Type	Number of Calls	Percentage of Total	Number Solved	Percentage Solved
Total Non-Technical Calls	178	9.0%	178	100%
Total Technical Calls	1807	91.0%	662	36.6%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>42.3%</b>

The chart below details the breakdown of call totals by day.

NOTE: January 13<sup>th</sup> is omitted and January 14<sup>th</sup> was only a half day because the phones were shut down due to bad weather.

**Technical Call Breakdown by Day**

Date of Calls	Total Technical Calls	Total Calls Solved	Percentage Solved
1/2/97	32	9	28.1%
1/3/97	77	24	31.2%
1/6/97	71	20	28.2%
1/7/97	63	26	41.3%
1/8/97	56	21	37.5%
1/9/97	78	32	41.0%
1/10/97	76	28	36.8%
1/13/97	Closed Due to Poor Weather		
1/14/97	31	15	48.4%
1/15/97	72	28	38.9%
1/16/97	64	24	37.5%
1/17/97	64	20	31.3%
1/20/97	47	18	38.3%
1/21/97	68	27	39.7%
1/22/97	70	22	31.4%
1/23/97	57	19	33.3%
1/24/97	55	21	38.2%
1/27/97	87	30	34.5%
1/28/97	53	13	24.5%
1/29/97	63	19	30.2%
1/30/97	69	22	31.9%
1/31/97	63	25	39.7%
2/3/97	64	21	32.8%
2/4/97	63	22	34.9%
2/5/97	58	22	35.2%
2/6/97	40	14	35.0%
2/7/97	63	26	41.3%
2/10/97	72	35	48.6%
2/11/97	52	24	46.2%
2/12/97	37	14	37.8%
2/13/97	42	20	47.6%
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>1807</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>36.6%</b>

---

## Letters and Faxes Breakdown

This is a list of all technical letters and faxes that have been answered up to and including Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Total Technical Letters and Faxes From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97

Message Type	Total To Date
Setstreamspeer	12
Hermes Lockup	5
Sound Problem	3
OSI Lockup	3
Mouse Problem	2
News Bulletin Crash	1
DOS4/GW Crash	1
Install	1
CD-ROM Problem	1
Shortcut	1
Total Tech Messages	30

This is a list of the non-technical letters and faxes that have been answered up to and including Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Total Non-Technical Letters and Faxes From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97

Message Type	Total To Date
More Information	9
Documentation Problem	1
Inquiry	1
Total Non Tech Messages	11

### Grand Total of Letter and Faxes From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97

GRAND TOTAL OF ALL LETTERS AND FAXES	41
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## Online Messages Breakdown

The list below shows the total number of technical e-mail problems that were answered through Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Total Technical E-mail Messages From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97

Problem Type	Number Of Problems
Setstreamspeed Error	886
Lockup	541
Hermes Lockup	492
Joystick Problem	393
OSI Lockup	377
News Bulletin Crash	335
Other	317
Sound Problem	208
Video Problem	191
Error Message	177
Shortcut	157
DOS / 4GW Crash	103
Install	74
Mouse Problem	69
Game Speed	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>4385</b>

The list below shows the total number of non-technical e-mail problems that were answered through Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Total Non-Technical E-mail Messages From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97

Problem Type	Total
More Information	777
UK Version	500
Patch Inquiry	387
Inquiry	371
Complaints	160
Hints	126
How To Save	89
Gamma Correction	47
Documentation Problem	39
How To Start Missions	32
<b>Total Non Tech Problems</b>	<b>2528</b>

**Grand Total of E-mail Message Problems From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97**

<b>GRAND TOTAL OF ALL PROBLEMS</b>	6913
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The chart below details the breakdown of e-mail message totals by day.

NOTE: January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> are omitted because the phones were shut down due to bad weather.

**E-mail Message Breakdown by Day**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Technical Problems</b>	<b>Non-Technical Problems</b>	<b>Total Problems</b>	<b>Total Messages Answered</b>
1/9/97	96	56	152	159
1/10/97	134	70	204	193
1/15/97	72	143	215	200
1/16/97	156	78	234	240
1/17/97	183	119	302	280
1/20/97	182	110	292	266
1/21/97	365	199	564	466
1/22/97	521	200	721	537
1/23/97	661	355	1016	868
1/24/97	465	138	603	591
1/27/97	276	113	389	359
1/29/97	192	60	252	264
1/30/97	266	142	408	403
1/31/97	123	96	219	215
2/3/97	95	87	182	174
2/4/97	111	106	217	210
2/5/97	85	79	164	158
2/6/97	34	66	100	90
2/7/97	79	69	148	140
2/10/97	119	113	232	204
2/11/97	33	32	65	52
2/12/97	66	40	106	97
2/13/97	71	57	128	119
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	4385	2528	6913	6285*

\* The total Tech Problems plus total Non-Technical Problems do not equal Total Messages Answered because some messages contain more than one problem.

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## **Grand Totals**

The chart below lists the Grand Totals from each section above.

### **Grand Totals For All Customer Contacts**

Total Tech Calls	1807
Total Non-Technical Calls	178
Total Technical Letters and Faxes	30
Total Non-Technical Letters And Faxes	11
Total Technical E-mail Problems	4385
Total Non-Technical E-mail Problems	2528
<b>GRAND TOTAL OF ALL CALLS, LETTERS, FAXES, AND E-MAILS</b>	<b>8939</b>

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## **Refunds and Exchanges**

The chart below details the number of refunds and exchanges that have either been sent to Origin, or that have been reported to Origin by customers.

### **Total Refunds and Exchanges Through Origin From 1/9/97 Through 2/13/97**

Refunds	93
Exchanges	12
<b>Total Refunds/Exchanges</b>	<b>105</b>

NOTE: An exact dollar amount spent on refunds is difficult to determine based on the fact that refunds to customers are based on the receipt that they send in with the product. Also, some customers that call or write Origin specify that the store that they bought the game from will accept returns.



## Comparative Analysis

This section will display a comparison of Customer Service data, to sales data on various Origin games. All figures are based on 6 week totals unless otherwise noted.

### 6 Week Calls and E-mail Message Totals versus Units Sold

Game	Units Sold Through	6 Weeks of Calls	6 Weeks of Messages	Total Calls and Messages	Units to Calls Ratio	Units to Totals Ratio
Privateer 2	52,158	1,985	6,913	8,898	3.81%	17.06%
Longbow	38,508	1,103	971	2,074	2.86%	5.39%
ATF	26,109	682	N/A*	682	2.61%	2.61%
Wing IV	57,140	1,313	N/A*	1,313	2.30%	2.30%
USNF '97	28,396	263	N/A*	263	0.93%	0.93%
Wing III	83,682***	1,763	N/A*	1,763	No Data	No Data

### 5 Week Calls and E-mail Message Totals versus Units Sold

Game	Units Sold Through	5 Weeks of Calls	6 Weeks of Calls	5 Weeks of Messages	6 Weeks of Messages	Total Calls and Messages	Units to Calls Ratio	Units to Totals Ratio
Privateer 2	48,439**	1,753		6,382		8,135**	3.62%**	16.79%**
Longbow	38,508		1,103		971	2,074	2.86%	5.39%
ATF	26,109		682		N/A*	682	2.61%	2.61%
Wing IV	57,140		1,313		N/A*	1,313	2.30%	2.30%
USNF '97	28,396		263		N/A*	263	0.93%	0.93%
Wing III	83,682***		1,763		N/A*	1,763	No Data	No Data

\* No online messages were tracked for this game.

\*\* This is only a 5 week total. This will be updated later.

\*\*\* This is only a 2 week total.

### Key to Above Chart

- Game:** Indicates Title Tracked
- Units Sold:** Total units sold over a 6 week period unless otherwise noted
- Total Calls:** Total Calls received over a 6 week period unless otherwise noted
- Total Messages:** Total Messages received over a 6 week period unless otherwise noted
- Total Calls and Messages:** Sum of Total Calls and Total Messages
- Units to Calls Ratio:** Calls divided by Units Sold
- Units to Totals Ratio:** Total Calls and Messages divided by Units Sold

Examining the Units to Totals Ratio for Privateer 2, shows that the ratio of Calls and Messages to Units Sold continues to grow higher with every day.

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## **Staff Allocation**

This section will detail the amount of resources Product Support is devoting to Privateer 2: The Darkening.

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### **Phones**

Based on the number of calls coming into Origin, about 30% of them are about Privateer 2: The Darkening. The other 70% are for all the rest of Origin's game titles. This required at least 7 CS Reps to handle the incoming calls. Additional reps were added at various times to handle periodic swells of calls.

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### **Onlines**

Based on the number of e-mail messages coming into Origin, about 53% of them are for Privateer 2. The other 47% are for all the rest of Origin's game titles. This required at least 4 Online Reps to handle the message load. Additional reps were added at various times to handle periodic swells of messages.

Including the Product Trackers, the total number of people that have been dedicated to Privateer 2 totals to at least 13 people. More people are added as they are needed.

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### **Financial**

The financial responsibility that Privateer 2 requires can be loosely determined through an average salary for Origin Customer Service reps.

The average salary for an Origin CS rep is \$25,000 per year.  
This amounts to \$2,084 per month

With 13 people dedicated to Privateer 2, it amounts to \$27,092 per month to support Privateer 2: The Darkening. For the six week tracking period the total amounts to \$40,638.

Based on the current call volume, this figure rises to over \$148,000 that Origin will spend on supporting Privateer 2 for the 1997 year. This only accounts for salary and does not take into account all of the other expenses that come with supporting titles in Customer Service.

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## **Patch Update**

The patch has been officially released via the World Wide Web. This section will briefly list the status of the patch, all the fixes as well as any information pertaining to it.

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## **Patch Status**

Below is the list of Non-implemented/Fixes for the patch. Essentially, due to rebuilds, a version of the patch will be released to take care of 90% of our patch problems. We will then release an updated patch which will address the remaining issues.

### **Not Implemented:**

- ☒ Ensoniq Soundscape and Pro Audio Spectrum 16 installer problems.
- ☒ Adjust the random mission pool to correct the duplicate missions problem.
- ☒ Rendition Vérté video card lockups resolved.

### **Verified Fixed:**

- ☒ Add a keyboard key to fire guns.
- ☒ Add keyboard keys for ship roll.
- ☒ Change the CD swap screen to "check" for the correct CD.
- ☒ Make the movie player a bit more robust. (This encompasses e-mail PAD lockups, OSI lockups and Hermes crashes)
- ☒ Add CH and Thrustmaster joystick support.
- ☒ Add invulnerability option.
- ☒ Fix "Setstreamspeed" crash.
- ☒ Correct News Bulletin crash.
- ☒ Fix the "out of wingmen" bug.
- ☒ Relax the memory requirements thus reducing "Out of memory" crashes.
- ☒ "Patcher" program.

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### **Not Implemented Notes**

We have ruled the Ensoniq/Pro Audio installer problem not important enough to delay the patch any longer. While we would of course like the problem fixed, there is a work around which can be easily handled by Customer Service. The randomized mission pool problem relates to customers receiving the same "random" missions via the bulletin board. Essentially, if customers do not advance in the main plot, the pool of missions the game will draw on remains the same. Finally, Rendition based video cards would lock up at the Origin logo with the release version of P2. The four cards affected are the Canopus Total 3D, the Intergraph Intense 3D, the Sierra Sreamin' 3D, and the Creative Labs 3D Blaster. The patch includes a special video mode to allow these cards to work. The Creative Labs 3D blaster works perfectly with this new mode. The three other cards will experience heavy palette flashes with this new mode. We hope to have this resolved a bit better in a future revision of the patch.

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### **Patch Download Status**

Date	Attempted Downloads	Completed Downloads
Feb. 12	1959	1087
Feb. 13	2430	1307
Feb. 14	1841	1001
Feb. 15	1849	944
Feb. 16	1768	986
<b>Totals</b>	9847	5325

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### **Conclusion**

As the tracking reaches its end, the early concerns of QA and CS indeed caused major problems. Now that the patch is out, the calls have begun to slow down. With calls that do come through, the customers can now have some of their problems solved with the patch, instead of being let down. The only concern is that these problems could have been avoided in the beginning.

-EOF

J. Allen Brack  
Rhea Shelley

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## ***Appendix 2: Customer E-mail***

Origin Product Support has compiled a selected list of the relevant customer e-mail and various electronic reviews regarding Privateer 2: The Darkening. The complete customer E-mails are not included in the Post Mortem due to their size. However, several customer comments are sprinkled throughout the document. If you would like to view the actual customer E-mails, they are available at the following location:

ADMIN\GRP:\PSUPPORT\QA\PRIVATEER 2\REVIEWS AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK.DOC

Please do not hesitate to request this document should you encounter difficulty.



## The End

