

## Cain, Billy

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**From:** Gordon, Bing  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 26, 1997 3:00 PM  
**To:** Roan, Frank; Downing, Dave; Cain, Billy; Young, Neil  
**Cc:** Carlross, Alex; Gordon, Bing  
**Subject:** Confessions of a Wing Commander Addict: Part 3

First time on build 1.21B

### Mastery!!

My first look at the opening flick, and first time I entered the game as a consumer will. One word response: mastery.

The opening flick is masterfully designed for both the experienced and new Wing gamer.

For the experienced gamer, whose key question is: "will this be a good game, or have they lost something?" The opening is more epic in scope, better edited than Wing 3 or 4 openings, and accomplishes more than any game backstory ever has (IMHO). By the time Casey and Stiletto have finished their tete a tete, I'm a) looking forward to playing as Casey, and don't miss Blair at all; b) a little nervous but interested in the "new aliens"; c) set up emotionally to prove that I can overcome the fact that the Midway is on a "shakedown cruise", and Casey is just a lowly plebe; and d) impressed by the design skills of WC team, for the flick quality (esp the mining stuff), the editing (esp the way "Death itself shall pour forth..." VO re-emerges on top of the alien ship showing up, and the smooth transition from flick to FMV when Casey and Maestro walk onto ship).

This dramatically reduces my concerns about motivation from all previous emails, from "big worry" to "some improvement possible."

### But then I want action!

the gamer should go kill something. Going to Rec Room, and having to sit thru the Hawk/Maniac flick is prolonged agony.

### Inside one gamer's mind

4:30pm: leave work early to play the new Wing Commander. Some lame excuse about "working at home."

4:45pm: stop off at Egghead to pick up my reserved copy. Clerk says, "It looks pretty cool, but since this is the first day we've had it, I haven't heard anything. You could be the **first person to finish the game...**"

5pm: Home at last. Luckily the kids and wife are out doing errands. No contention for the PC.

5:01pm: Rip the shrink wrap off, while doffing jacket and briefcase. Hope someone else picks up the shrink wrap from the hall.

5:05 pm: Still takes 4 minutes to get to Windows screen. Yay Microsoft! Click on CD drive icon.

5:06pm: Yes, I want to install. No, I don't want to read the damn readme file. Full install, because I want performance! That's why I bought the damn 3D card. Come on, let's go.

5:20-35: **The longest install in the history of mankind finishes. (took me 25 minutes last night). Since install gauge gets to 70% in 10 seconds, I have no idea how long music.tre is going to take, so I don't even start reading the manual. THEN it asks me to load CD#2. Is that going to take another 15 minutes? THEN it asks for CD#3. Holy prolonged agony, batman, don't they know I want to kill something?**

5:35: Alright. All is (mostly forgiven). Game is installed. And it recognizes my 3D card. Let's boogie! Type in my well-worn Wing callsign (Bingfish).

5:35 1/4pm: Origin logo. Yeah, I like them. dolby! cool. Wing Commander: Prophecy. Ok, no number, maybe that's good, I don't know, let's go.

5:36pm. The story begins. Looks like the Wing 4 opening. Big cavernous place, a little hard to tell what's going on. Uh-oh.

5:37pm Hey the Ten Commandments! Moses was a Kilrathi? Oh, something about the "heart of a kilrathi." Oh yeah, "Heart of the Tiger", Wing 4. Yeah, yeah, this is a continuation. Good thing I'm smart enough to have made the connection. Yeah, I'm an insider. Cool.

5:38 Space mining. Hmm. Wonder what this is all about. Looks like a bad profession, but the graphics are pretty cool.

5:39 They're hosed! "Death itself shall pour forth..." Wow, the voice of doom again. Cool how they wove that together. That alien thing looks baaaad. Was that a bitchin' wormhole, or what?

5:40 SOS probe away.... Guess the game's about to start. Duh!

5:41 "This is it Casey -- the big time." Yeah, that's how I feel: ready to kick some alien butt (if they got 'em).

5:42 Hey, these youngsters are the heroes of the game. Cool. I don't have to be 1970's teen idol any more.

5:43 Stiletto. Tough, attractive, and I can definitely imagine her in my air force. Most designers cast for looks alone, this is different.

5:44 "Live or die by your flight stats..." OK, mine'll be good.

5:44 1/2: "Midway is on a make or break "shakedown cruise." Lucky you got me then, because there are some bad dudes on their way.

5:45 Alright, I'm in the Rec Room! Let's go!

5:45:03: Should I click on Hawk or the door?

If Hawk: oh boy, this is boring. Hi Honey, yeah I can come to dinner now.

If door: (click on ready room) Alright Casey. C'mon Maestro. Let's see what they've got. Whoa! Luke Skywalker is looking pretty beat up. Glad I'm not playing him again. I wonder if HE's the turncoat this game. We'll find out. Hey, ICIS is cool - feels like a real high-tech air force here. Help Dekker? Yeah I can do that. Just Gimme a chance to be a hero. .

5:45pm Ship loading flick is ok. I wonder if it's covering load time, or if I really need to watch it. Let's see, how do I get rid of it? Button click? No. Return? No. Oh well, it's over. I'll have to read the docs after dinner.

5:46pm Countdown. Is this covering load time? Oh screw it, I can't remember the interface for clickthru.

5:46:05pm Oh yeah, power settings. I forget how to do that. But I'm locked out now anyway.

5:46:15pm Cool launch sequence. Did you see how fast that catapulted me out of there? Nice. Very nice.

5:46:30pm Maniac. What a jerk. OK, hit P for power. Hm doesn't seem to do anything. OK then, let's fly.

5:46 40pm Hit A for Autopilot. At least I remembered that one.

5:47pm OK the big kilrathi ship. Wasn't it supposed to look better on 3D cards? Hmmm. Hit minus key (hey I remembered that one). slow down and wait for Dekker. His comm vids are cool. Dead cats, eh? I know who did that, and you don't Dekker.

5:47:30pm Unknown bogies. Oh shit. Hit the + key, and accelerate up. How come those ships aren't red yet? I can't target them.

5:48pm Cool transition flick. Let's party! Bogies turn red!

5:49pm Having trouble keeping the + on one bogie. Bummer. Wish I knew how to lock onto one guy till I got him. Hey what's that shooting over my shoulder? Is that a wingman or a bad guy? Wish I remembered where my "six" was on the radar screen. Is it to the left, or below? Spin around and look. Oh well, I still can't figure it out.

5: 50pm boy these guys are tough. Oh yeah! I remember I used to be able to play at easier levels. I wonder how I do that? CTRL O? Nope. HMMM. Guess I better just keep fighting.

6:00pm EJECT! How do I do that? Hit E. Nope. That didn't work. CTRL E? Whoops too late. Dead. Bummer

6:02pm Replay? Nope, first I'm going to read the manual, at least to figure out how to change to an easier difficulty.

6:03 pm OK honey, I'm coming to dinner.

9pm (kids in bed) Where was I? (about to click replay) No. I've got to check manual first. Now which piece of documentation should I look thru? I'll try this one, with all the controls. (throws away install doc)

9:15pm ok I found the controls listing, but nothing about how to get into the Options screen. (scan manual 3 more times)

9:20pm view readme (hopefully this tells me about ESC key to options - if not 9:25 read ref card - hopefully get it there)

9:28 look at map doc. Hmm, nothing important here. put in drawer, with other game docs never to be looked at again.

9:30 Hit Replay. after launch, hit ESC. Change difficulty to rookie. Hit F to change to Full Guns from lame laser. Hit M to change from lame missiles to Heat Seeking. Win mission. Whoa, that was easy this time.

9:50pm Fire on flight deck! cool! Rachel is kind of ordinary here, but it's cool movie proof that Midway is on a "shakedown cruise."

9:52pm "All pilots to ships" Slight adrenaline rush. I remember from experience that this is not really time sensitive though, so first I do some "housekeeping."

10:00pm Review Killboard. YAY! My first kills. Maniac and Hawk are only 15 kills (or whatever) ahead of me.

9:32pm View mission "status" screen (why do they call it status when I'm already done with the mission?). Hmm only 11% shooting average. Not too good. Guess I better work on that.

9:35pm Into mission two. If succeed, 25% chance stay up all night or until death, whichever comes first. Odds of staying up all night increase if a) no work tomorrow, b) quickly get caught in intrigue of alien identity and ship tactics, c) sense of steady increase in fighting skills.

Hope that helps.

### Comments on new build

\* Didn't like new alien armor rating, esp on Morays. Takes way too long from "red" to death. Seems like 15-20 direct hits with full guns and even one missile at red doesn't do the job. And Moray ships accelerate (faster than my afterburn speed) while doing red death spirals. (note this was not much better at Rookie level)

\* Turned on cockpit struts. Didn't notice them during gameplay. So I'm pretty neutral about them. Art isn't that cool. Color flashes on the struts don't help me determine whether I'm getting hit or not. Probably worth keeping in default 3D accelerator mode, just for a visual difference, even though it's kind of lame.

\* Crash bug in save game routine. Repeatable 5 straight times, but with different locations cited. "Invalid page fault in module Prophecy.Exe at 0137:004439ba", next time "...at 0137:00415d66"

\* I like the new wingman AI. They seem much more motivated to "finish the kill." It felt like I got credit for more kills than I should have though. Hard to tell which shot was the finishing shot. In Air Force, when 2 jets gang up on 1 enemy, who gets credit for the kill? (do they split credit like in football on sacks?)

### Bing's game experience last night with new build

mission 1 at veteran

Time: 6:10, shots 25% 244 total; missiles 4/6 2 kills 0 damage.

question: is this mission tough enough for "veterans"? seems a little too easy, given all those missiles, and smarter wingmen.

mission 2 at veteran

Killed. Had to eject, even though mission status reported Damage at "68%".

39/318 shots 12%. 0 missiles shot or hit.

Still don't know who got me. Probably a six shot.

Very different balance from mission 1.

Reloaded Mission 1 from save game. Put me outside ready room. Click on ready room. Crash.

Relaunched game. reloaded from save game. same crash.

Deleted save game. Relaunched game from start.

Mission 1 at rookie

4:16 time

11% hits (weird, why lower in this sitting duck mission? is rookie level enemy AI different? or was I less concentrated?)

3/6 missiles

no damage

Mission 2 at rookie (all pilots to ships)

Time 13:11

Shots 34%

Missiles 8/15

6 kills

no decoys required at rookie

\* Noticed the new wingman AI, where they sit on my tail more often, and rush to finish yellowed enemies. Seemed good. Wish there were comms to tell me when they're changing tactics, though.

\* IR missiles don't work, even when there is a signal lock. Is this because my ship computer doesn't recognize them? by the way, I like the new signal lock graphics.

\* Hawk at 16 kills; Maniac at 12 kills; Stiletto at 9 kills.

Mission 3 rookie

Time 19:33

31% guns (2230 shots)

75% missiles

10 kills

26 damage (but no decrease in lines on power gauge; and no color changes)

\* Finally noticed that the game clearly distinguishes "unknown" ship from Moray. On the 5th time flying this mission, and after 12 or so total Prophecy missions. This is why I believe the game needs to be even more overt

about how the "alien mystery" is unfolding.

\* My impression is that Morays have heavier armor, evade left/right, attack broadsides, and have good quickness (lateral movement). My impression is that "Unknown" have weaker armor, better guns that blaze blue-green, evade by straight runaway to 5000-6000 clicks, and attack head on, then circle tight to me.

\* Hawk 25 kills; Maniac 22 kills; stiletto 13 kills. Nice that they seem to be moving up the kill list faster, probably since better wingman AI.

saved game. reloaded after Black Widow to try at veteran again, to see if enemy ships behave same in veteran as rookie mode. Click on ready room. Crash.

to history terminal. pick black widow. loads me in rec room. click on door. click on ready room door. Crash.

Loaded mission 3 at GAME LOAD terminal. click on ready room. Crash.

Fuggit.

Bing