

## Cain, Billy

**From:** Gordon, Bing  
**Sent:** Monday, November 24, 1997 12:30 PM  
**To:** Cain, Billy; Roan, Frank; Downing, Dave; Young, Neil  
**Cc:** Carlross, Alex; Gordon, Bing  
**Subject:** Confessions of A Wing Commander Addict: Part 1

Version Nov 19 (or so) with the bug in the start up box.

Thanks to David, Frank and Neil for getting me thru the config bug. Played the first 5 missions.

### Design issues

#### MOTIVATION

So far, the motivation in Wing 5 is coming from different places than in Wing 4. That's good, but a little odd to me.

#### Good stuff

First, I'm finding the new "mystery enemy" hard to get excited about. The "flat heads" in the comm videos just aren't as cool as cats. And their "aarghs" when I blow them away aren't as rewarding as I remember the cats.  
- Hopefully, the back story video will improve this.

Ship explosions are very cool. Even more motivating than I'd expected from seeing the art in advance. So cool, in fact, that I wish there were more different kinds of explosions, and they actually affected game play. For example, hitting debris could cause "ping" sounds and create damage. So I'd have to learn to "pull up" when I take the final "glory shot" at an enemy ship that had "gone red."

Playing Casey is starting to grow on me. I started out not liking him at all (in the trailer), but he's growing on me. He's just edgy enough, and reserved enough, in the movies, that he's starting to feel fresh (yes, even fresh compared to Hamill). And the voice comms to Casey are a real plus.

Calls for help from my cap ships and refueller are cool. They made me afterburn into the fray, even though it increased my risk of getting blown away (rather than fly slowly in and mop up). Nice addition. (By the way, I assume that there is NO time factor in game score, and that this is just a fiction. How can I tell if this assumption is correct?)

"Mission status" screen is a plus for me. I'm finding it motivating to try to increase my % hits with guns and missiles, and am paying more attention to the number of "snap shots" I rip off. But:

- why call it "status" after the mission is complete (as opposed to "record")?
- what does "100%" mean?
  - is this the best possible score I can get? After all, I'm playing at Rookie; shouldn't there be a reward for playing at Ace instead
  - does less than 100 mean I can't win the game? or other?
  - should there be a final "finished game" score, as a motivation to replay?

There is an element of strangeness to the new enemy, which is good. Unfortunately, I don't really start feeling this until mission 4 or 5. Perhaps the movie will help impress me with this earlier. Also I wish that the strangeness was more obviously carried into the fighting, not just the story. I like the story stuff:

- "they picked up our language pretty quick"
- "science officer doesn't know what to make of these guys"
- "No idea who or what is talking to you"

#### Underdeveloped motivational stuff

I'm not finding the "new enemy AI", enemy ship graphics, and enemy ship flight characteristics and tactics to be different enough. In Wing 4, the simpler approaches of different weapons (torpedo, cloak, etc), and different ships felt like more variety, even though the programming involved was vastly less.

Here's what I do notice:

- enemy strategy of flying head on, and then circling right next to me, then pulling back to 6000 clicks, presumably to recharge shields. My impression is that he has a powerful weapon (different color flashes) that make his head-on charge a bit threatening (esp if I weren't in rookie mode).
- I think this guy also goes from red to green again, and changes shape. Is this the 4-way ship?
- I get the impression that this ship is faster than Wing 4 enemies. I can barely keep up with him in afterburner, or maybe I can't even do that.

Also, the dogfight comms aren't as interesting, motivating, character-developing as I'd imagined from the script and design goals. Couldn't the comms play a role in underscoring how different these new aliens are from the Cats? such as:

- "these guys might be too fast for me"
- "I thought I blew that guy away, and he changed shapes on me"
- "What kind of weapon was that?"
- "They don't behave like the simulators..."

I'm definitely missing the fiction elements. It will be interesting to see what it feels like when the movie is in.

Maniac isn't yet as interesting as in Wing 3&4.

### First time gamer experience

#### **Fun stuff**

The goal of "getting into action asap" doesn't seem to be working for me. The first dogfight is pretty boring. The enemies are kind of boring too. By comparison, the second fight is much better, seems fresher. (I don't remember exactly why, sorry.)

#### **Interface stuff:**

"All pilots to ships." Where do I go? There used to be a "to flight deck" door, and now I have to scramble through the briefing room?

I have a 2-button, 2 axis joystick. Why do I have to use RETURN to shoot missiles? (Both buttons tested live) *40 or 45*

Although the default targeting of enemy only is a plus, it's confusing that the target changes so easily. Suggest the default be "U" (target nearest enemy and lock), so user can concentrate on one bad guy till the death.

Comm commands (1-6) menu interrupts heads up display in cockpit. How do I turn it off?

#### **Info stuff**

In status screen: what does the damage number mean? Is 21 good, bad or indifferent? Does it affect my game score or future results? How bad does it get before I have to eject? Is there a graphic display (as in Wing 4) or ship damage in the cockpit?

Gauges: what does it mean when the triangle in the center of my ship display is yellow?

? Gwriss 206.7 mission: status screen said I "failed" to defend Midway. What should I have done differently? Can I keep playing? Or must I replay the mission till I get 100?

? Is there an audible cue that I'm getting hit? Do I hear the same sound when I'm getting hit as when bad guys are getting hit 1000 clicks away? If so, why?

#### **Possible bugs**

i As reported to DaveD, I couldn't find any instructions in the manual to get to the Options screen from inflight. (experimentation got to ESC). DD told me this is documented in the reference card, just not the manual. Suggest you add this to the readme file.

yes Once I clicked (ESC) out of the initial ready room movie very early on, and was bumped back outside the ready room, rather than to the next branch of the movie.

? Lots of movie voice synch problems. Lots of framerate stalls in flight. Dave told me these are both known issues.

? After Mission 4, Maniac was at 14 kills. After Mission 5, he was at 8 kills. (By the way, it might be useful to put a multiplier on kills by other pilots when player is at easier level than Ace. Being #1 killer is a real motivater, so it shouldn't be THIS EASY.)

? There is a lame missile that comes in 12 packs (I can't remember the name). The name in-game is different than in the manual.

#### **Miscellaneous**

I wish there was a lag of sound to video for faroff explosions. Right now space seems "small" when I hear cap

ships explosions the instant I see them, and the sound "quality" isn't affected somehow.

Nav screen problem when lots of ships are close together, and blue names jumble together. I believe future computers would provide automatic separation of some kind.



When there is a "Rush" return to Midway for impending jump, why not have the landing flick show a "panic recall" (multiple simultaneous landings) rather than the same old one ship slow landing flick?

Good work! More tomorrow. Bing