

Alpha Waves
Infogrames, 1991

System and control issues:

The game supports CGA, EGA, Tandy, Hercules and VGA graphics. It doesn't have any weird memory requirements, as I recall playing it happily on my 512K 8088 machine, of course YMMV. The internal speaker sound is decent, too (if somewhat annoying after a while).

There is a good demo that shows how to control the ship - you use the arrows for direction and camera positioning, and space for thrust.

Description and instructions:

Alpha Waves is an action/puzzle 3D game, with vector graphics which remind me of Elite. You control what the French designers call a "mobile", which bounces around on tiles which are scattered in huge cubic rooms. Your short-term objective is generally to reach the exit of the room, but read below for more.

There are six different mobiles to choose from, with each one having a unique appearance, but (correct me on that if I'm wrong) not affecting gameplay as far as I have noticed. You pick one based on aesthetic preferences - my favourite is no. 5, for all it's worth.

There are lots of different tiles that have different properties - one may make your mobile jump ever higher (usually placed on floors), others may move around, yet others might be slanted and send you flying off sideways.

In a few levels, there are wandering creatures / robots / whatever. They generally aren't very aggressive, but contact with some of them will destroy your mobile, while others will bounce you around. Rooms with such critters are quite hard, generally.

Certain exits have a blue spinning cube superimposed - this means you can't use the exit yet, and the cube will bounce you a long way up and sideways - this might come in handy in some levels. The exits are opened when you find such a cube (by itself) in a room and touch it. I am unsure of this, but touching crystals (see below) might open up exits as well.

The game has two modes, with different objectives for each mode:

In "Action" mode, your objective is to find all 10 (one for each area) of the crystals scattered throughout the game map, and touch them with your mobile - they will shatter, and once you've found them all, you'll presumably win the game. The catch is that you have limited time, but you gain time by entering unexplored rooms and (if I remember correctly), by shattering crystals. You always begin in the center of the map in this mode.

In "Emotion" mode, you choose an area of the game map which represents the state of mind you wish to reach, and the game starts from the starting room in that particular area.

The colors, music and nature of the rooms of each area are supposed to help you reach that state of mind, by playing on your brain's frequencies. (Alpha, gamma(?) and theta waves, if I remember the manual correctly. Hence the game's name.)

You just keep playing, with no scores or time limit. This is the easier of the two modes, and lets you explore areas you might not reach easily in the action game. This is the mode to start learning the game in.

NOTE: I am personally sceptical about the brain-wave thing, still, it might work for you. The game does have a hypnotic or

trance-inducing effect for me, but not more than other games ;) Anyone with a spare EEG (electroencephalogram) machine could probably verify the designers' claims, so let me know when you do. :)

I like this game a lot, even after all these years. The brain-affecting concept is innovative to say the least, and the implementation is excellent for its level of technology. Even if you disregard this, the game is definitely one-of-a-kind in its game design concepts, and the pretty colors are nice, too. :)

There are some points that might turn you off the game. These are:

- The game is somewhat hard, especially in action mode. The time limit is rather restrictive, and won't forgive many mistakes.

- Even worse, in some rooms, if you fall off the midair tiles, there is **no* *way** to climb back up again. Even with the quick save/load feature, this is very frustrating.

- The game seems to run way too fast (approx. twice the speed) on my PPro-200 NT machine at work. I haven't tried it at my home machine yet, as this is being written on a hurry. You might need a slowing-down utility to play this as it was meant to.

Disclaimer:

Alpha Waves is copyright Infogrames(1990). You probably should own this game before playing it. Don't hurt your PC while running this game, and if you do, please don't blame me.

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