

Carrier – Sega Dreamcast

Developed by: Jaleco (<http://www.jaleco.com>)

Published by: Jaleco (<http://www.jaleco.com>)

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: <http://www.jaleco.com/carrier.html>

Genre: Action/Adventure

Number of Players: One

ESRB: Mature

Overall Rating: 7/10

Graphics: 8/10

Sound: 7/10

Documentation: 8/10

Getting Started: 8/10

Gameplay: 7/10

Value: 7/10

The Good Press: Sharp, detailed graphics; intriguing plot; the scope is a really cool little gadget.

The Bad Press: Obscure camera placement; cheesy dialog; multiple enemies onscreen can drop framerates significantly.

Supports: VMU, vibration function

Overview: *Carrier* provides enough spine-tingling action to appease even the most demanding horror fans.

Tips:

Use your scope early and often. It is invaluable when you find yourself stuck in a less than ideal camera angle (and this happens frequently).

Don't assume an enemy is dead just because they're down. If you don't see a pool of blood or a big glob of goo, cap them another time or two until you do.

Strangely enough, being scared out of your wits while playing a video game is obviously a big selling point. Look at the *Resident Evil* games for example: it doesn't seem to matter that the control is clumsy, the dialog is weak, and the camera work is shoddy; as long as mutant dogs crash through windows and eat you alive when you least expect it, the game must be great. Now, don't get me wrong, I enjoy the *RE* series just as much as the next guy (when there is plenty of light in the room and people in the house), but with a little refinement, they could have been much better. That brings us to *Carrier*—the Dreamcast's first legitimate attempt at horror; and while it quite obviously has ties to *RE*, it offers enough originality to give the highly touted *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* a run for its money.

Carrier takes place in the beginning of the 21st century aboard an immense aircraft carrier known as the Heimdal. Since picking up an ancient organism from an isolated island in the South Pacific, the Heimdal and its crew had fallen silent. An emergency investigative team was dispatched to check the ship, but shortly thereafter, communication with them also failed. As a member of the second team, Jack Ingles (you) and his crew are ordered to board the ship and find out what's going on. As your helicopter approaches the vessel however, the ship's defense mechanism fires on you leaving you separated from your crew and your ride totaled. Armed with only a pistol and your wits, it is your job to explore the Heimdal and ascertain the truth.

As you adventure deeper into the belly of the enormous ship, you'll quickly realize that your own personal mission objectives have changed. Apparently, some sort of virus has spread throughout the ship causing many of its inhabitants to mutate into vile, zombie-like creatures (sound familiar *RE* fans?). Instead of finding out just what's happening on the ship, your ultimate job is to find any survivors and then find a way to get the hell off.

In terms of aesthetics, *Carrier* has its share of problems, but also does a pretty good job of showing off the impressive capabilities of the Dreamcast. The graphics are actually quite good and the game moves along at a brisk pace. The high-resolution backgrounds are very nice and really make you feel like you're trapped deep within the recesses of an enormous warship. The characters, although perhaps a bit blocky, boast high polygon counts and are well animated for the most part. Unfortunately, the game does suffer an occasional drop in framerate when multiple enemies are onscreen, but this problem is easily overlooked once you get used to it. Camera work is perhaps the game's biggest problem. Similarly to *Resident Evil*, the camera angle changes depending on where you are. In some situations, the camera may be following a few feet behind Jack, while in others, it might be more of an overhead view. This not only causes disorientation, but often doesn't allow you to see what's going on directly in front of you. It can be frustrating hearing an enemy approaching but not being able to see it until it's virtually on top of you. On the sound side, fans of the *RE* series will be instantly familiar with the cheesy, B-movie dialog in *Carrier*, but I'd have to say that it's not quite as schmaltzy here.

Apparently Jaleco knew that camera would pose problems for players, so they included a super handy gadget known as the BEM-T3 Scope. The scope allows night vision to some degree, can see through certain walls, find hidden items, and allow you to tell whether or not people are infected. When you look through the scope, the view changes to first person mode and allows you to clearly see what's ahead. The catch is, the image takes a few seconds to fully materialize, so it's wise to use the scope only after you've scouted the area for nearby enemies. Not only does the scope enhance gameplay significantly, it also heightens the tension. The time it takes for the picture to clear up can seem like an eternity when patrolling a dark hallway.

While the play mechanics mimic *Resident Evil's* significantly, kudos should go out to Jaleco for *Carrier's* much improved combat system. Instead of having to fumble through a menu to change weapons, you can equip the next weapon with a touch of a button in *Carrier*. Also, instead of only being able to aim straight ahead, up, or down, as in *RE*, *Carrier* allows you to aim at any vertical level. In addition, an indicator appears over where you're aiming on the enemy, thus eliminating the chances of missing if you weren't perfectly aligned. These impressive gameplay elements, combined with the abilities of the scope effectively keep backtracking to a minimum. Although you'll still have to frequently retrace your steps, you probably won't have to complete a full area again just because you happened to miss an important item. The game moves along nicely and you probably won't find yourself stumped by any overly difficult situations. This definitely can't be said for any of the games in the *RE* series.

When all is said and done, *Carrier* is in no position to overtake the upcoming *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*, but it does offer an engrossing storyline, and enough original gameplay elements to hold its own in a decidedly one-sided survival horror market. If nothing else, *Carrier* is a blast of a weekend rental, but if you're a fan of any game in the *RE* series, I have no doubt that you'll enjoy this game.