

InterAct HammerHead FX Gamepad

Produced By: InterAct (<http://www.interact-acc.com>)

Official Site: [http://interact-acc.com/product\\_info/sv262/](http://interact-acc.com/product_info/sv262/)

Review By: Tim Maxwell

Overview: If you're looking for a new gamepad with all the bells and whistles, this is the one to have.

Good Press: The HammerHead has all the features you could ask for in a gamepad – analog as well as digital control, tons of buttons, force feedback, rapid-fire, and simple programmability.

Bad Press: Might be a tad too large for gamers with small hands.

Profile: Control pad

System Requirements: Windows 95/98, Standard Gameport

Our Ratings:

Ease of Use: 8/10

Compatibility: 8/10

Documentation/Tech Support: 8/10

Feel: 9/10

Value: 9/10

Way back in 1996, I first purchased the Microsoft Sidewinder gamepad and the pad and I have been inseparable ever since. Almost four years and dozens of controllers later, nothing had been able to replace it as my pad of choice for sports and platform games – that is, until the InterAct HammerHead FX pad arrived at my door. Since then, the Sidewinder has been collecting dust and, if I have anything to say about it, the editors at Happy Puppy won't be getting their controller back anytime soon.

Easily the most important aspects of any control pad are comfort and responsiveness. That's what I liked so much about the Sidewinder pad – it was easy to use, responsive and had a solid feel. The HammerHead not only delivers stellar performance in all these areas, but also comes equipped with quite an impressive feature set. You get analog and digital control, force feedback (which can be easily configured even for games that don't support force feedback), rapid-fire capabilities and simple programmability through the "InterAct Profiler" software. This "everything but the kitchen sink" mentality has vaulted InterAct into elite status in terms of sheer functionality.

The pad itself actually reminds me quite a bit of a Playstation Dual Shock pad on steroids. The weighty base is quite large and bulky but should still fit comfortably in most players' hands. There are a total of 12 buttons on the controller – six action buttons on the face, two triggers on the back, two more buttons up top, and two functional buttons to turn on force feedback or open the InterAct Profiler. Controlling the action can be done digitally using the standard, cross-shaped D-pad, or in 360 degrees using the analog joysticks. One of the coolest features of the HammerHead is the ability to change its modes of operation based on the game you're playing. For example, if you're playing a racing game, you could program the controller so the left joystick steers the vehicle while the right stick controls your gas/brake. All told, there are three default modes of operation (which are each suited to specific genres), and one fully programmable mode. As you can tell, the functional possibilities are nearly endless with this pad and you'll be able to transform the controller to suit your gaming preference without headaches.

I've mentioned the InterAct Profiler software several times, but what exactly does it do? Well it is a program suite that opens up an almost infinite level of customization for your HammerHead pad. Not only does it allow you to change modes of operation and adjust force feedback as previously mentioned,

but it grants you the ability to customize and save individual control profiles for each of your games. You can choose to create your own profiles (including the ability to map keystrokes), or surf over to InterAct's website and download pre-programmed routines for many of the most popular games. This feature is particularly handy for more complicated games such as space or flight simulations. Traditionally, a control pad such as this wouldn't be ideal for that type of game, but of any pad available, the HammerHead is perhaps the best option available for those gamers who aren't willing to shell out for a full-featured joystick.

Okay, so all of these features sound great on paper, but how does it feel during gameplay? To answer that question, I first popped in my copy of *NHL 2000*, set the HammerHead to Mode three (ideal for sports games), cranked on the force feedback for those vicious body checks, turned on autofire for those button mashing fights and hit the frozen pond. The first thing I noticed was how much easier it was to control skaters with the analog sticks. Simply put, if you've never played a hockey game with an analog controller, you really don't know what you're missing. The extra buttons were also quite handy as I was able to assign functions such as line changes or coaching strategies to them. Very nice. The next game I tried with the HammerHead was *Star Wars: Episode I Racer*. At speeds of over 900 MPH, you had better possess a high degree of hand-eye coordination and lightning-quick reflexes. Unfortunately, I don't have either but being able to steer with the left joystick while controlling my speed with the right stick was quite an exhilarating experience and helped me avoid kissing the walls as often as I had previously. I still wouldn't give up my joystick for *FreeSpace II* or my mouse/keyboard scheme for *Half-Life*, but as far as control pads go, this is about the best pad you can get for all your gaming needs.

InterAct has truly set a new standard for others to follow with the HammerHead gamepad. Its amazing functionality, solid feel and astonishing array of features has bumped this pad up to number one on this gamer's list. If you're in the market for a new gamepad, or even if you're not, go out and buy this controller now! You won't be sorry.