

Summary:

Void Runners is a combination of top-down shoot-em-up and roguelike, set in a future galaxy where smugglers fight against the private armies of mega-corporations. The game plays like a traditional top-down shooter but has roguelike elements, including semi-randomized stages and enemy waves, death forcing the player to start a new run, and a macro-progression system that opens access to new items and characters. The game is designed for a mid- to hardcore audience of gamers, including fans of shmups and roguelikes, and should be designed for console and PC.

Setting:

Void Runners takes place in a far future where humanity has colonized most of the Milky Way galaxy with the aid of *slipstreams*. In this colony-focused, resource- and trading-based economy, mega-corporations have become the major ruling powers of humanity. A secret league of smugglers and bandits makes a living by undercutting these corporations and moving contraband material between planets.

The corporations have long tried to eliminate the smugglers without success, but only recently have they discovered the planetary location of the smuggler's home base. An assault force has been sent to attack the planet directly, while private armies have been stationed at the exits of slipstreams on nearby planets to catch any stragglers.

You are a League pilot tasked with shuttling the surviving leaders of the smugglers to a new home base at the Outer Edge. You'll need to battle your way through the battalions of corporate armies in your way if you want to ensure the future of organized crime.

Characters:

The Independent League:

A semi-organized guild of smugglers and bandits making a living by undercutting the mega-corporations that rule the galaxy and moving contraband between planets and colonies.

- *The Pilots:*
 - The player characters. League-affiliated pilots chosen to shuttle the League's leadership to their secret base in the Outer Edge. The pilots should be blank and anonymous; their faces are never shown and they never directly speak. They should be separated by different color schemes and headwear. The design of the pilots should echo the design of their ships and their fighting style.
- *Espia:*
 - Espia is the co-leader of the Independent League alongside F3nce. While F3nce runs the analytical side of the organization, Espia leads the social side. Espia has made wide connections with people and small companies across the galaxy, and is involved with most of the high-level bribes and secret meetings that keep the League undercover. The raid on Seneka was a surprise to her, and she's especially occupied with determining how many of her contacts were bought out by the CCI to keep them from revealing the truth. In any case, without Espia and

F3nce there is no League, so it's up to the player to safely shuttle them to their backup base in the Outer Edge.

- Espia is the “face” of the League and has most of the pre-battle conversations with bosses. She can also provide information on the player's stats in the menu between runs.
- *F3nce*:
 - F3nce is a high-intelligence A.I. and the co-leader of the Independent League alongside Espia. F3nce runs most of the business operations of the League, and is constantly keeping track of contraband prices, nearby League agents, and potential law-enforcement raids. The raid on Seneka was a surprise to even them, however, and now they need the Pilot to get them out. F3nce rarely speaks since most of their attention is devoted to keeping the League running, but like most A.I. personalities, they are highly analytical and difficult to dissuade.
 - F3nce runs the game's macro-shop. In between runs, you can spend the special currency (*contraband*) that you earn by defeating bosses and winning runs in the shop menu, to unlock new items and characters for future runs. They also have access to an almanac that provides rules, information, and flavor text on items, characters, and enemies that have been encountered/defeated.

The Coalition of Corporate Interests:

The CCI is an organization of the various mega-corps that control the galaxy. Their goal is to eliminate the Independent League's leadership and wipe their organization from the face of the galaxy. The individual companies of the CCI form the main enemy forces of the game, and have different ship designs and combat styles.

Tutorial Corps

- *Panopticon* (Law Enforcement)
 - In this future everything is corporatized, including law enforcement. Nearly every planet is surveyed and patrolled by employees of *Panopticon*, the single largest “public order” corporation in the galaxy. *Panopticon* agents and surveillance technology played a major role in finding the masterminds of the Independent League on the metro planet of Seneka. A *Panopticon* joint squadron, one of the largest in its history, is now running an assault on Seneka's surface, seeking to dredge out and capture or kill any League affiliates. *Panopticon* has been dealing with the Independent League's crime for centuries, and has never been this close to actually bringing them down until today.
 - *Panopticon*'s ships, while designed primarily for pursuit and non-lethal capture, can still down criminal ships in dogfights if forced. They eschew more absurd firepower for simple phasers, with the occasional explosive for larger groups.
 - *Executive Officer Justine Draconia*
 - One of the most prolific members of *Panopticon*'s aerial patrol force in her youth, Justine now serves as the corporation's CEO, managing her fleets of peacekeepers from afar. However, she's come out of her semi-retirement to directly lead the assault on

Seneka, since her experience makes her the best choice to land the killing blow on *Panopticon*'s oldest adversaries. No-nonsense and intolerant of any breaks in order, Justine won't show any mercy on League members trying to escape the law, even if she has to shoot them down herself from her seat on the P.C.V. *Fincher*. Justine is the boss of the tutorial.

Level One Corps

- *Portside* (Dollar Store/Variety Product)
 - A low-cost manufacturer of various goods, *Portside* has made a name for itself with its cheap prices, quick delivery, and iconic pirate aesthetic. Of course, that's not taking into account the cutthroat below-the-table deals *Portside*'s board makes in an effort to undercut their competition and keep their supply of goods at the highest priority for consumers. The one source of competition *Portside* has been unable to buy out or ruin is the League, who run goods even faster and for even cheaper than themselves. *Portside* joined the CCI specifically to get the firepower and support necessary to wipe out the League and move their way to the top of the second-hand market.
 - *Portside* ships retain their corporate aesthetic, mixing modern combat ship design with faux-wood bows and sterns, just like the pirates of old Earth used to pilot. Their weaponry is primarily explosive, with a focus on artillery-launched projectiles; these don't really work well in space combat, but for *Portside*, form always takes priority over function.
 - *Edward "Eddie" Teach*
 - The founder and CEO of *Portside*. Edward Teach wasn't his birth name; he had it changed after creating the company and developing its aesthetic based on his obsession with the cutthroat seafarers of old. Despite his juvenile obsessions, however, Eddie is still a cutthroat businessman and surprisingly decent fighter. From the helm of his ship, the S.S. *Sargasso*, Eddie leads the *Portside* combat fleet, or as he calls it, his "scurvy crew".
- *Kamasutra* (Beauty Products)
 - Many corporations specialize in a specific type of luxury goods, and *Kamasutra* is one of the most powerful. *Kamasutra* produces beauty products: makeup, cologne, skin-care, body-care, and everything in between. If it improves hygiene or sex appeal, chances are *Kamasutra* has a hand in it. Of course, *Kamasutra*'s name brand products carry steep prices, and the Independent League has found success in stealing company stock and funneling it to second-hand buyers for a fraction of the cost. Hoping to avoid any future blemishes on their financial records, *Kamasutra* has joined the CCI in their war against the League.
 - *Kamasutra* ships are just as beautiful as the products they endorse, with lithe, curvy shapes and color patterns of pastel pink and baby blue. They even find beauty in combat, using simple energy weaponry to spray out curving displays of synchronous death.
 - *VenuS*

- *VenuS* is a high-intelligence AI that controls and runs almost all *Kamasutra* business operations. Like most higher AI, *VenuS* is fully self-aware and a near-perfect replication of a personality. *VenuS*' shell has become an iconic symbol of *Kamasutra*'s PR team, and the company is proud to have such an image of beauty leading the force against the Independent League from their flagship, the P.C.V. *Lakshmi*. From within that shell, however, *VenuS* is a cold pragmatist, willing to take any risk and destroy any threat if it means the betterment of the company.
- *Medicus* (Pharmaceuticals)
 - Humanity still remains prey to illness, injury, and death even in an advanced galactic environment, but the colonization of new planets and discovery of myriad new species has led to great leaps and bounds in medical technology. Most of these advances are heavily controlled by *Medicus*, the premiere pharmaceutical company of the CCI. Under their control, drugs and medical devices are produced and shipped around the galaxy, but their near-monopoly on the industry has led to absurd prices and occasional planetary addiction epidemics. With no other options, many availed individuals have turned to the League, which makes a pretty amount of credits in the smuggling and selling of *Medicus* products. Of course, *Medicus* doesn't take kindly to this breach of product, and they'll do anything to make sure they remain the only source of lifesaving equipment in the galaxy.
 - Despite their role supporting doctors across the galaxy, *Medicus* isn't nearly as pacifistic as the people they supply with goods. Their stark-white and blood-red ships are armed with various assault weaponry, including powerful laser weaponry built from the same mold as more mundane eye-surgery equipment. Let's just say the company isn't quite bound to the Hippocratic Oath.
 - *C.F.O Philomena Johnson*
 - As the chief financial officer of *Medicus*, it is Philomena who is responsible for much of the company's aggressive pricing and monopolistic policies. Philomena has accompanied the strike force mainly to keep track of the monetary costs associated with their efforts to eliminate the League. Aboard the company's flagship, the P.C.V *Morpheus*, Philomena is more than ready to sever an arm if it means the rest of the fleet will stay profitable.

Level Two Corps

- *Positronics Inc.* (Robotics and Augmentations)
 - The oldest and most profitable of the robotics corporations, *Positronics Inc.* got its start manufacturing positronic parts for early robot designs, before eventually branching out into artificial intelligence and biomechanical augmentation. Most of the A.I.s in the galaxy were either created by or are regulated by *Positronics*. The company also secretly dabbles in weapon production, including the development of suicide drones and combat robots, although such stories usually stay buried thanks to the CCI. Robotic parts and upgrades to bioaugments are a mainstay of

League contraband, thanks to their high prices and low availability, and *Positronics* refuses to stand for any more financial loss.

- *Positronics* ships are unique in that the majority of them are unmanned, instead controlled by A.I. pilots within the ship's systems. The few human-manned *Positronic* ships remain in the backlines, controlling the movements of the fleets and directing the A.I. pilots into different formations. *Positronics* favors a rush of smaller drones and fast, weak combat ships, but don't assume that their human-manned vessels are any more fragile than the robots they direct.

- *C.E. Calvin Adams*

- Calvin Adams is the chief engineer of *Positronics Inc.* and has had a hand in the development of many of their best-selling models. They have also played a major role in the company's underground combat-development program, and many of the drones in the company's fleet were designed by them specifically. From within their surveillance ship, the S.V. *Rotwang*, they manage the fleet of automated drones and ships waiting to intercept any escaping League vessels. Calvin is a cold logician effective at determining how to cause the most damage with the smallest amount of effort, making them an effective and dangerous general for *Positronics'* combat force.

- *Kalorick* (Food Production and Transportation)

- While particularly isolated colonies may grow their own food sources, most of the food in the galaxy is cultivated by *Kalorick*. The company controls most of the major food production sites in the galaxy, as well as most of the shipping methods. The company is infamous for artificially raising the prices of certain goods in response to market changes, as well as constantly sweeping the environmental effects of their farming methods under the rug with the finances of the CCI. The League has capitalized on *Kalorick's* greed by running daring raids on company ships, stealing high-value food stock, and moving it to consumers on the cheap. *Kalorick* won't stand for this any longer, and plan to eat the League alive if given the chance.
- *Kalorick* combat ships are specially-made to transport large amounts of food stock across the galaxy. Their size and slow speed make them high-priority targets for raiders (League or otherwise), but they are heavily-armed and difficult to take down. *Kalorick* fleets use a select few dreadnoughts to swat away enemy ships, protecting them with fleets of weak drones.

- *E.P.O Joseph Hectate*

- Joseph Hectate is the executive production officer of *Kalorick's* largest and most profitable agrarie, *Neolith V*. The food products produced by the planet have been hit the hardest by League attacks, and Hectate is eager for the chance to repay the favor now that the raid on the League has begun. From his mammoth of a combat vessel, the C.S.H.V *Euphrates*, Hectate is preparing to eat up as many League stragglers as possible.

- *Fermata* (Music Production)
 - Although anyone in the galaxy is free to make their own music on their own time, it's unlikely anyone will be able to make a living off of it unless they sign a deal with *Fermata*. *Fermata* is the largest record label in the galaxy, and they make big credits by finding and exploiting the newest and freshest musical talent. *Fermata* produces songs in many different genres, but they all have the same controlled, inoffensive corporate feel. The company is also viciously competitive, gobbling up any and all potential threats to their creative monopoly. The League has been quick to exploit this, running several gray-web file-sharing services where individual producers can upload and make profits from their music, without requiring any of the draconic cover charges and creative control that *Fermata* is infamous for. The company is furious with the League, and after their efforts to strike down individual websites have largely failed, they've decided to join the CCI and take the fight to the source.
 - *Fermata* combat ships are unique in that they use high-frequency sound waves as a weapon, shorting out life-support systems with violent noises and often bursting the eardrums of enemy pilots. Outside of this unique type of weaponry, the ships are also equipped with more mundane offensive tools, in case death by noise is ineffective.
 - *DJ Major Panik*
 - DJ Major Panik was introduced to the public as an unknown independent who signed under *Fermata*'s label, and was especially favored by the company for his "bold sound" and "relevant social commentary". In reality, he was an industry plant, with a character cultivated specifically to appeal to the demographics drawn in by the League's alternative services. Although those efforts were a failure, the company soon discovered that Panik had incredible skill with the manipulation of high-frequency sound waves, and he was soon placed in charge of the company's combat fleet, piloting the P.C.V. *Arpeggiator*. Though Panik exuberates immense personality and has legitimate skill as a combat pilot, he is still an industry plant unable to truly create for himself and follow any path that isn't fabricated by his executive overlords.

Level Three Corps

- *Rumpus Entertainment* (Video Games)
 - *Rumpus* is the leader in the field of interactive entertainment, including virtual reality games, holographic simulations, and mental imaging hardware. *Rumpus* games are incredibly popular if for no other reason than they have no real competitors in the field; very few startups have the finances and manpower to hope to compete with *Rumpus*'s products, and the ones that actually manage to produce something half-decent often get quickly snapped up by the company. *Rumpus* has become infamous for their excessive monetization practices, especially after they joined the CCI. Most of their products are little more than

bundles of advertisements in a polygonal coating, and their titles are often pushed out blatantly unfinished in an effort to snap up as much money from gullible consumers as possible. The League has made a tidy business providing pirated *Rumpus* goods, from cracked software to pilfered hardware. *Rumpus* has no intention of playing around with the League any longer, and is greatly anticipating a chance to take revenge on the group stealing their business.

- *Rumpus* ships are floating advertisements, often explicitly designed to look like fictional ships in *Rumpus* IPs. Despite their often ridiculous paintjobs, however, they are fully functional in a firefight and can be quite lethal, especially in large groups.

- *Lead Designer Linus Duval*

- The lead designer behind some of *Rumpus*'s most popular interactive experiences, including the best-selling *Martial Law* series, Linus Duval is an obsessive, demanding creative, whose efforts to create the ultimate combat simulator are matched only by his desire to make as much money as possible off of it. Duval has found new and inventive ways of applying monetization to his games, and the company is willing to put up with his extreme personality as long as he keeps the credits rolling in. Aboard the company's flagship, the P.C.V. *Polygon*, Duval is overseeing the assault on the League in the hopes of applying real-world experience to his next title.

- *Gaia's Touch* (Planetary Terraformation)

- *Gaia's Touch* has a monopoly on the relatively recent industry of planetary terraformation, taking planets with inhospitable environments and using specialized equipment to gradually shift the planet's ecosystem to a level more conducive to human survival. *Gaia's Touch* has developed many of the premiere terraformation tools, including *reverse salters*, *pH drainers*, and *automatic pollinators*. The company's PR team has carefully cultivated the company's public image into one of a benevolent, nature-first corporation fully on the side of the public. The facade has been effective enough to cover up the various ethical concerns raised against the company, including claims of untested technologies resulting in long-term ecological devastation and low-income individuals being silently recruited from more populated planets to serve as near-indentured servants for new colonization projects. The League has occasionally blackmailed the company with such information, threatening to spread it across the web unless the company provides anonymous donations to League-run shell charities. Now that the League is under attack, *Gaia's Touch* wants nothing more than to rip them out by the roots.
- The ships of *Gaia's Touch* have a major solarpunk aesthetic, with many of them serving double-duty as greenhouses and research laboratories shuttling various new terraformation technologies from planet to planet. Just like the company, however, the curated green facades of their ships hide cold metal shells armed to the gills with "peacekeeping" weaponry.

- *P.R.E Gloria Grane*
 - Gloria Grane is the chief public relations executive for *Gaia's Touch*, and is responsible for cultivating much of the company's nature-first public image. Gloria is perhaps the person most well-versed in the company's wrongdoings, and it's her job to make sure as many of them get swept under the rug as possible. She's currently aboard the company flagship, the C.S.H.V. *Pangea*, hoping to find an angle that will allow the company to avoid any PR issues for their involvement in the Seneka raid and ensuing blockades.
- *Compass* (Newscasting and Information)
 - *Compass* is the CCI's resident newscasting service, producing informational broadcasts for various different mediums. While *Compass* does seek to provide information about major galactic happenings to individuals across the Middle Ring, it's no secret that *Compass* is a biased source. The CCI holds major stock in *Compass News*, so the company has obligations to present certain stories in a positive or negative light, especially ones about the various other corporations in the CCI. *Compass* also has a vendetta against the Independent League, spreading stories both real and exaggerated in a faint effort to turn public opinion against the smugglers. Now that the League is shattered and on the run, *Compass* wouldn't dare to miss the chance of reporting on the story of a lifetime, right where the action is.
 - *Compass* ships are designed as giant cameras, meant to capture as much visual information as possible as they fly. The largest ships often have grand screens mounted on them, providing a live broadcast to any commercial ships flying nearby. Though their newscasting vessels do have combat capabilities, they are usually flanked by a number of independent combat vessels from various PMCs, providing an effective and varied defense.
 - *Chief Newscasters Gerald Jones and AlexAndria*
 - The chief newscasters for *Compass News*, Gerald Jones and AlexAndria have become popular celebrities due to their personal rapport and ability to entertain. The two have all the markings of a comedy duo; Gerald Jones is a former entertainer-turned-newscaster, while AlexAndria is a high-intelligence software-based AI with access to large pools of information provided by swarms of workers combing the internet for new stories. The rapport between the two is entertaining enough to mask the clear bias of the stories they report on, while many major pieces are ignored in favor of food reviews, celebrity interviews, and other bits of news the Middle Ring can use. The two have been assigned to the largest *Compass* reporting vessel, the R.V. *Christiansen*, to provide live coverage on the CCI's efforts to eliminate the League.

- *Bargain Bin* (Generic Brand)
 - Independent businesses are almost non-existent thanks to the CCI's near-monopoly on labor, and it's an open secret that the CCI often purchases failed startups and smaller companies to make them part of *Bargain Bin*, a giant conglomerate and shell corporation that produces most of the "generic" competition to the CCI's own products. *Bargain Bin*'s products are notoriously low-quality and cheap and most people avoid them whenever possible; most of the company's profits are provided by the CCI, who use *Bargain Bin* as a poor excuse for "marketplace competition". *Bargain Bin* has been dragged into the CCI's war with the League, and their force must make do with whatever spare ships the other corps feel obliged to provide.
 - *Bargain Bin*'s fleet is extremely varied, mainly consisting of random ships from other enemy fleets combined with a few unique floating wrecks. Their attack types are similarly diverse, and they make up for their poor weapon quality with strength in numbers.
 - *See0o*
 - The "C.E.O" of *Bargain Bin*, *See0o* (self-named) is a low-intelligence AI created by the CCI for the purpose of providing the most basic of managerial support for the company. Like its company, *See0o* is a puppet that can't see its strings. A copycore of *See0o* has been built into the company's flagship, the *B.C.V. Thrifter*, and controls it automatically. *See0o* has no voice modules; it communicates exclusively with official CCI advertising, which it cuts and splices into new sentences.
- *Hephaestus* (Fuel, Energy, and Natural Resources)
 - A major financial backer of the CCI, *Hephaestus* manages nearly all of the fuel production operations in the galaxy. The company processes and ships fuel and other energy sources of various types across the galaxy to buyers both on- and off-world. *Hephaestus* privately owns a number of planets across the galaxy which they exploit mercilessly, hoping to dredge up as many useable resources as possible; the company has also started to secretly mine for energy on occupied planets, using their well-funded PR team to downplay the environmental impact of their endeavors. *Hephaestus* has long been one of the League's most common targets, due to the necessity of their product and the ease with which it can be stolen and smuggled. Alongside *Astrionica*, *Hephaestus* was one of the main financial backers for the League assault.
 - *Hephaestus* ships are well-armored and defense-focused, due to the volatility of the products they carry. They eschew projectiles in favor of close-range combat, utilizing tools intended for deep-space fracking to damage enemy ships. If necessary, the company may even jettison some of their cargo directly towards the enemy, detonating on impact.
 - *Executive Foreman Franklin Shaft*
 - Franklin Shaft is the executive supervisor overseeing *Hephaestus*' largest and most profitable mining operations, from asteroid

fracking to helium farming. Shaft has had a personal vendetta against the League ever since they ran a successful raid on his ship, the M.C.H.V. *Dozer*, and made off with several tons of experimental plutonium fuel. Shaft has spent years preparing his fleets for defending against League attacks, and now he relishes the chance to put that training into action.

- *DefCon* (Private Security)
 - *DefCon* is a highly successful private military corporation (or in their terms, “private security firm”), providing highly-trained combat forces to the highest bidder. *DefCon* forces served in most of the Corporate Wars leading up to the foundation of the CCI, and even now they make good business leasing themselves out to minor conflicts in settlements across the galaxy. Although not officially a member of the CCI, *DefCon* is never one to say no to a high-value contract, and they jumped at the offer to battle the League. Although they’d rather be attacking Seneka directly with *Panopticon*, *DefCon* has been ordered to hold back and wait for any escapees to engage. Anyone who manages to escape this far is bound to be a dangerous threat, the kind only a military force can stop.
 - *DefCon* ships are designed exclusively for space combat, and are armed to the teeth with various types of weaponry. A number of their ships are equipped with camouflage technology, allowing them to strike from nowhere.
 - *Sergeant Major Ruth DeBris*
 - The commanding officer of *DefCon*, Ruth Debris joined the corporation as a freelance mercenary and slowly worked her way up the corporate ladder with the aid of her immense tactical knowledge and cutthroat pragmatism. She refuses to underestimate the League’s combat potential, and is preparing for all-out-war on whatever manages to push through the slipstreams. From her combat flagship, the N.C.V. *Bonaparte*, she readies her forces for battle.

Final Level Corps:

- *Astrionica* (Spaceship Production)
 - In a galactic world, space travel is king. *Astrionica* is one of the oldest and most powerful corporations in the galaxy due to their near-total monopoly of spaceship construction. Even independently constructed ships have at least one or two *Astrionica* parts within. Their size and throwing power makes *Astrionica* one of the most powerful members of the CCI, and the attack on the League was primarily funded by them.
 - Their top-of-the-line spacecraft are designed exclusively for combat, and have a wide variety of weapon types. As the final barrier to the League’s new home, they should serve as the most dangerous threat.
 - *Commander Hannibal Corvus*
 - The C.E.O of *Astrionica* and executive commander of their combat fleet, Corvus patrols the galaxy within his flagship, the N.C.V *Minderbender*. Corvus’ strategic genius has served him well in the

worlds of business and war, and he has remained one of the League's oldest and most competent foes. The *Minderbender*, piloted by Corvus, is the final boss; defeating him wins the run.

BAZ.AAR:

BAZ.AAR is a franchise of independently-owned shops located within high-traffic slipstream routes, usually ones connecting planets. Despite their corporation status, BAZ.AAR is a neutral organization: they'll serve anyone with credits. BAZ.AAR shops have the aesthetic of an idealized 1950's gas station/auto repair shop.

The player visits a BAZ.AAR shop in between each level, where they can spend the credits they earn by defeating enemies on health, items, and upgrades.

Locations:

Tutorial

Seneka:

The Independent League has survived by hiding in plain sight; rather than making their base on some isolated, unpopulated rock, the League's leaders live within Seneka, one of the most populated planets in the Middle Ring. Their discovery took a huge joint effort from the CCI and required an absurd amount of surveillance work, but the leaders have finally been discovered. The planetary raid to arrest or eliminate the League has thrown the urban sprawl into disarray.

There are no stage hazards on Seneka outside of some skyscrapers that need to be avoided as part of a scripted event teaching the player about ground hazards. This area is the tutorial and only needs to be played through once; for the rest of the game, a regular run starts with the Level One planet(s).

Level One

Grenader Pass:

One of the most famous landmarks in the galaxy, Grenader Pass is a naturally-occurring cave system that formed within the moon of Grenader over several millennia, eventually reaching the other side of the planetoid and creating a hollow core within the planet. The CCI owns the rights to the planetoid and has ruthlessly monetized it, making major credits with the aid of an advanced tollbooth system. Ships from all across the galaxy fly through the pass, gazing at the incredible rock structures and spending extra credits at BAZ.AAR souvenir shops floating close by.

The main hazard of this stage are the stalagmite structures of the cave, which scroll down the screen and need to be avoided. Making contact with one will do damage, and they can block incoming projectiles as well.

Tempari Beta:

A large, temperate planet that is mostly ocean, with small smatterings of islands scattered throughout. The planet is fully owned by a travel corporation and marketed as a paradise, where visitors can bathe in the light of a foreign star and swim with benign extraterrestrial aquatic organisms, provided you have the credits. The company that controls the

planet also has their own private peacekeeping navy, which has been temporarily licensed out to the CCI as part of their blockade.

The main stage hazards of the level are the company battleships, which scroll along with the screen. As ground hazards they can be safely passed over, but will often fire out missiles or other tracking projectiles that can damage the player. These ships can be destroyed if they take enough damage.

Level Two

Zerheya:

One of the harsher inhabited planets in the Middle Ring, Zerheya is a planet with an orbit close to its system's star, resulting in a harsh, dry, desert of a landscape. While the air is breathable, most of the human colonists live in cities constructed beneath the surface. While these cities are surprisingly technologically advanced, they still lack sufficient methods of gathering natural resources from the planet, which means most of the food and water is shipped in from agraries across the galaxy. Food corporations like *Kalorick* make a killing by marking up prices for Zerheya's colonists.

This stage has two distinct obstacles. Dust devils will occasionally spawn from the top of the screen and swirl around a certain axis point, damaging ships and deleting projectiles that touch it. Also, at the halfway point of the stage, a sandstorm will roll in, turning all the ships and projectiles on screen into silhouettes for two to three waves. Dust devils do not spawn during the sandstorm portion.

Halcyon III:

This planet and several others like it orbit slightly too far from the Goldilocks Zone of their system, resulting in a technically habitable, but exceptionally glacial, global ecosystem. The planet is too devoid of supplies to sustain a prolonged human colony, so the planets are owned by various mining corporations (including *Hephaestus*), who use A.I. programs with specially-designed shells to run the mining equipment on the surface. The planets are highly profitable and require large amounts of goods to be moved off-surface, necessitating the need for an in-atmosphere slipstream.

Mining derricks will often spawn from the top of the screen, blocking projectiles and damaging ships that touch them. These towers do not move outside of the vertical screen scrolling, but they release clouds of smoke that billow horizontally across the screen. Projectiles passing through the clouds will be invisible until they exit the cloud, forcing players to remember bullet trajectories.

Level Three

Transit Station Theta:

This planet connects to a large number of slipstream entrances and exits and is used as a sort of layover stop for travelers across the galaxy. Whatever natural environment this planet once had has been coated over with acres of tarmac and looping ribbons of monorail tracks, and the only lifeforms that remain are in an endless dance of intergalactic commute.

The main hazard of this level are monorails that burst through the stage at random, destroying player and enemy alike in their path. They cannot be damaged or destroyed, only avoided. They can appear from the top or bottom of the screen from one of six to eight lanes, but a warning symbol will appear to warn the player of the lane and direction the train will travel from.

Grania Prime:

A well-populated but technologically stunted world, Grania Prime is covered in a vast web of waterways that endlessly flow across the planet between the great oceans that make up the planet's poles. These waterways have eroded the planet's surface to a point that nearly all of the planet is some kind of canyon. Some companies have taken advantage of this endless water, developing large hydroelectric dams to charge massive batteries, which are then shipped across the galaxy to more technologically-advanced planets.

This stage takes place in the middle of a canyon. The vertical edges of the screen are canyon walls, which do not damage ships on contact but will delete projectiles on contact. Rocks sometimes jut out from the walls and need to be avoided. One of the waves in the middle of the stage eschews combat entirely in favor of a navigation challenge; the walls tighten in and the player must avoid these rock obstacles until the wave ends.

Level Four

Albedo Mines:

A large belt of asteroids and other space debris orbiting around some solar system. A mining operation has been set up to extract whatever resources lie within the space rocks, hence the need for a slipstream to transport equipment and materials.

The main hazard of this level are the eponymous asteroids, which occasionally drift in from the left or right side of the screen. Asteroids absorb all damage types, including enemy attacks, and will (of course) split into smaller asteroids once they take enough damage. Smaller asteroids move faster and have a smaller hitbox, but have less health. All asteroids can damage enemy ships as well as the player on contact.

Assembly Line #3291

A moon-sized artificial planetoid orbiting a populated planet. Assembly planets like this one are common throughout the galaxy, as a factory of this size is the only way of mass-producing large spaceships. These factories are almost planets to themselves; most employees live on the factory in designated residential zones, and are usually paid in company scrip rather than credits. This factory in particular specializes in the creation of hull plates and outer armor for combat vessels.

This level has two distinct obstacles. Crushing pneumatic weights will occasionally move in from the left or right of the screen and slam into the opposite side after a brief delay, dealing high damage to anything caught in its path. These obstacles do not scroll alongside the screen; their position on the y-axis never changes.. In addition, suspended catwalks can suddenly drop down, dealing damage to anything they land on and blocking projectiles and ships. A shadow denotes the location of one of these catwalks; they can spawn anywhere and scroll down with the screen vertically after spawning, occasionally swinging back and forth.

Finale

Deep Space

A section of space devoid of any nearby planets. The entrance to the League's secret slipstream to the Outer Edge is around here, but Hannibal Corvus has predicted the League's intentions and led an *Astrionica* assault force to the area as a last line of defense for the CCI. If you want to save the League, you'll have to get through him.

There are no ground obstacles in this final level; the entire focus is on dealing with enemies and avoiding projectiles. The player will definitely need the empty space for maneuvering around.

Story Progression:

The story begins in the tutorial, with the Pilot, Espia, and F3nce fighting their way through *Panopticon* forces on Seneka. In between tutorial sections, there is some dialogue between Espia and F3nce that clues the player in to who they are and how dire their situation is, as well as their ultimate plan of using the slipstreams to escape to a secret outpost on the edge of the galaxy. The level ends with the characters confronted by Justine Draconia in the *Fincher*; the conversation between the two groups introduces both the Independent League and the CCI and why the two are in conflict. After defeating Justine, the player ship escapes Seneka and flies into a slipstream.

The main game follows a similar structure; in each level, the player first fights their way through various waves of enemies, before confronting the boss of the stage (usually some high-ranking member of the corporation). A brief conversation held between the two ships provides some characterization for the enemy corporation and why they are fighting the League (information expanded upon in optional flavor text). After defeating the boss, the player moves through another slipstream and to another planet.

The player visits a BAZ.AAR shop in between each stage. These stores are stocked by A.I. machines with a unique appearance based on which stage (planet) you just completed. You can click on these NPCs while shopping to hear their dialogue, usually polite requests to keep purchasing items or touristy factoids about the planet you just visited.

The final stage is where the story reaches its climax. The player's ship escapes into deep space and the characters think they're almost in the clear, only for an *Astrionica* force to attack from nowhere. The final boss, Hannibal Corvus, sends in a remote communication to the player ship. Here, the player learns that Corvus has ulterior motives for the attack on the League. The leaders refuse his deal, of course, and Corvus' forces attack. After fighting through the final waves, the player's ship duels Corvus on the *Minderbender*.

If the player defeats Corvus, the ship passes through the final slipstream and out to the outer edges of the galaxy. As the ship drifts down to the League's secret base, the leaders have a conversation where they discuss the future of the League and their hope that one day they can rally further and push back against the CCI.

Theme and Tone:

The game's story has a general theme on the negative aspects of capitalism, but this shouldn't be the focal point of the story or the main focus of the game. The setting of the game is absurd, a place where corporations have faced a comical, unrealistic lack of regulation and have grown to ridiculous size. This setting of hyper-capitalism is simply an interesting location for the player to explore. If anything, the game's theme is simply "rampant, uncontrolled corporatization isn't always a great thing," which isn't too extreme of a view.

The game also lightly explores themes of piracy and illegal activity, and why such activity persists. The Independent League should see themselves as operating in the moral right, if not in the legal right. Specifically, the League's activities remain supported precisely because of the negative actions the corporations constantly take. A company jacks up prices; the League provides the same product for a reduced price. An idea to explore is that the League and the Corporations are two sides of the same coin, and wouldn't be able to exist without each other.

Look, this is a game about shooting spaceships. Let this stuff lie in the background for those who want to see a deeper meaning; otherwise, keep the focus on the gameplay.

The game should have a semi-serious tone, focusing on the absurdity of the events of the game. The characters all take the story seriously and the stakes should be given some dramatic weight, but the melodramatic seriousness of the story also lends itself to humor. This is a story where a pirate-themed corporation led by a deluded man-child is treated as a serious threat by the main characters, if not the audience. In short, the players shouldn't take the game too seriously, even if the characters within it do.

Art:

The game's graphics should be in the "32-bit" style; pixelated but with high detail (see *Enter the Gungeon* and *Jamestown*). Since the game is 2-D the sprites should be as well.

Each enemy corporation has their own distinct style and aesthetic:

Panopticon: Bulky, angular ships; dark blue color with bright red and white sirens

Portside: Old-style ships with curved bows; different shades of brown; faux-wood paneling, portholes, and cannons (form over function)

Kamasutra: Sleek and beautiful, with lots of curves (hourglasses and shampoo bottles); mix of sky-blue and pastel-pink colors

Medicus: Dark red with streaks of white lines; ships are ovular like capsule pills

Positronics Inc: Shiny silver with squares of greenish circuitboards visible within; large boxy ships release small spherical drones; function over form

Kalorick: Very large, bulky ships covered in spiky armor; warm color tones of bright red and orange, making them look like a spiky fruit

Fermata: Party vehicles covered in speakers and rave lights; bright purple with yellow lights

Rumpus: Ships are designed after in-universe video game characters; retro look and paintjob, look like cartoony *Galaga*-esque ships; vibrant, neon color scheme

Gaia's Touch: Solarpunk aesthetic; chalky white ships with green plants visible through the windows; ships have a "divine" look to them, almost like Noah's Ark

Compass: Dark white ships covered in strips of blue, should look like a “Breaking News” bumper; covered in satellite dishes; larger ships have monitors that project what they’re recording for nearby ships to see

Bargain Bin: Cheap tan ships with mixtures of parts from all the previous corporations; should look like cheap knockoffs of previous enemies

Hephaestus: Dark silver with black-and-yellow stripes; covered in grime and dirt; should look like mining equipment and work vehicles.

DefCon: Dark black ships with red neon cooling tubes; some ships have camo shields that can be spotted by their motion; ships are strong, tanky, and designed for combat.

Astrionica: White ships with bright blue neon stripes; sleek, sharp, and immaculately designed; if space warfare is a swordfight, these ships are the rapier of a master fencer.

Music and Sound:

The game’s music and sound effects should be digitized, keeping in line with the retro-style pixel-based graphics. The music doesn’t have to be completely chiptune, but there should be a level of electronica or techno to it. It should be upbeat and intense, and there could be a level of adaptiveness to it (the music for a stage becomes more intense and gets more instruments during harder waves, for instance, or drops down to just the bass and drumline while the game is paused). Sound effects should be similar.