

RAMA

Revision E, February 17, 1996

STORY AND OVERVIEW

- 1) When the player initializes the game, he will see a beautiful picture of the entire RAMA spacecraft against a background of stars. The word RAMA will also be in a prominent position. After a few seconds, a selection bar will appear on one side of the screen. The player may select Start a New Game, Load a Saved Game, Prologue, Tutorial, or Videos.
- 2) The Prologue begins with Arthur C. Clarke talking about the game. His main message will be that he hopes RAMA will have the same impact on the multimedia interactive entertainment world that 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY had on motion pictures. After perhaps thirty seconds, while Arthur continues to narrate as voiceover, the screen will show highlights of the art, architecture, and creatures (humans, aliens, biots) from the game. The entire Prologue will be very slick, equivalent to a movie trailer, no more than two minutes in duration, and will conclude with a fifteen second video of Arthur.
- 3) The Tutorial will explain the game play elements, namely the use of the cursor, the map structure, the navigation process, the vidmail and data cube systems, the role of Puck, etc. The tutorial will also have interactive features. The player will thus perform a number of routine moves from the game before actually playing it for real.
- 4) If the player selects the Videos entry, he will be treated to a variety of supplementary information that will enhance his appreciation of the game. Included in this section of the product will be interviews with Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee (about the game, the RAMA world, and science in general), some footage from the filming of the major video scenes in the game (including those in Sri Lanka), and a slideshow tour through some of the outstanding art included in RAMA.
- 5) If the first view after the player starts a new game, he will be sitting in the front seat of a small, two person shuttle spacecraft, looking forward through a transparent shield. As the bay doors of the Newton open (the Newton is hovering about ten kilometers away from RAMA-- shuttles are used to move people and cargo back and forth from the Newton to the hub site on the platform at the top of the nearly endless terraced stairway down to the Central Plain) to reveal a starry background, the player hears a narrator's voice over low music. The narrator explains, as the shuttle eases out into space, that a dozen astronauts, carefully selected by representatives of all the important institutions on Earth, have been sent to investigate a giant, enigmatic, cylindrical spacecraft that has suddenly arrived in our solar system from the depths of outer space. After the first sortie by the astronauts into the dark and hollow interior of the spaceship known as RAMA, mission commander Valeriy Borzov has died following an emergency appendectomy. Dr. David Brown, an American scientist whose specialty is exobiology, has now been named as the new mission commander. The player's instructions are to join the crew as a replacement astronaut.
- 6) The narrator reminds the player that the fundamental purpose of the mission is to discover as much as possible about this mysterious, alien spaceship. The narrator also explains that all the other astronauts, except for medical officer Nicole des Jardins, who is waiting at the hub site just

inside the shell of RAMA for the player's arrival, are currently establishing the infrastructure necessary to begin the scheduled exploration of the mammoth spacecraft. When the narrator's explanation is finished, the music swells, the tiny shuttle banks to the left, and the North end of RAMA comes into view. The theme music will accompany a leisurely flight along the length of RAMA (total time for this non-interactive introductory sequence is roughly two minutes-- it can be terminated at any time during its play by pressing any key), toward the south, where the airlock is located. RAMA grows and grows as the shuttle comes closer, until it fills the screen entirely. The shuttle descends on one end of RAMA, and then maneuvers through broad corridors before stopping in a parking hangar at one side of a large hub site. This site has been recently created by the astronauts on the ledge/platform just above the beginning of the seemingly endless, terraced stairway that descends to the Central Plain of RAMA.

7) The first action that the player can take is to move out of his shuttle. When the player leaves the shuttle, he immediately encounters Nicole des Jardins. First she hands the player the ~~key~~ **key** to his ~~locker~~ and shows him with gestures where it is located at the hub site. Then, in a friendly, fairly long non-interactive sequence that contains a lot of solid advice, Nicole talks about the progress of the expedition, the vidmail system, the data cubes, the lockers, the thigh computer that is a part of each astronaut's uniform, and some of the other equipment at the hub site. After suggesting that the player take his time, explore the hub site, find his ~~backpack~~ **backpack** in his locker, look at messages for him that are stored in the hub site computer, and then join his colleagues down on the floor of RAMA, Nicole walks across the field of view to an enclosed cable car that quickly descends out of view. The player is thus left alone and has free will for the first time in the game.

8) What can the player do at this hub site at the South Pole of RAMA? First, he can check out his backpack, including viewing all the inventory items therein, some of which will be helpful during the course of the game. Secondly, and most importantly, the player can activate the computer, where he will find personalized vidmail messages recorded for him from most of the other members of the crew, as well as individual written dossiers on his fellow astronauts. There are vidmail messages from journalists Francesca Sabatini and Reggie Wilson, the two principal scientists Dr. David Brown and Shigeru Takagishi, military officers Michael O'Toole and Otto Heilmann, and professional astronauts Richard Wakefield, Irina Turgenyev, and Nicole des Jardins. The two other members of the crew, Janos Tabori and Hiro Yamanaka, never appear in the game, they do not send a message to the player, and their individual dossiers are censored and marked CLASSIFIED when the player tries to read them. In reality, Tabori and Yamanaka are the weapons specialists who, following Heilmann's instructions, deploy the nuclear bombs in the game.

9) The gameplay at the hub site begins with the reading of the vidmail messages. The cable car reappears after Richard Wakefield's message has been read; the code to cause the cable car to descend to the Central Plain with the player is contained in Michael O'Toole's vidmail. Once these two events have occurred, the player receives from Francesca Sabatini his first real time vidmail of the game. These real time vidmails, which happen at several places in the game, override whatever the player is doing with an interrupt. They are then automatically stored on the player's computer. In this first vidmail, Ms. Sabatini tells the player that Nicole has informed them all of his arrival, welcomes him again, and asks him if he will please retrieve her ~~cigarette lighter~~ **cigarette lighter** from her locker and bring it to her on the Central Plain. She laughingly tells him that she has misplaced her backup ~~key chain~~ **key chain**, on which she kept her ~~locker key~~ **locker key**, but since the hub site is small, the player shouldn't ~~_____~~ **_____** have much trouble finding it. Francesca adds that there are some interesting ~~artifacts~~ **artifacts** from inside RAMA also in her locker, as well as a couple of data cubes of her recent television broadcasts back to Earth. She concludes the vidmail by asking the player to leave her lighter somewhere in

the tent site at the bottom of the cable car ride-- where she promises to leave him some more data cubes of interest, one containing her profiles of all the player's fellow astronauts.

10) All the introductory vidmails at the hub site are essentially short self-portraits of the other astronauts. Nicole's is the longest. Half French and half African (from the Senoufo tribe in the Ivory Coast), a former Olympic champion in the triple jump, the thirtyish chief medical officer is a warm human being, concerned about the welfare of the replacement cosmonaut. She is solicitous without being condescending, offers help both in the present and the future, and makes suggestions that will be useful to the player. Nicole is the primary other character in the game and will become the player's best friend.

11) Richard Wakefield is in his early thirties and is a genius electronics engineer from England. Richard is also a Shakespearean devotee whose primary avocation is creating tiny robots, about as tall as a pencil is long, based on his favorite characters from Shakespeare. In his introductory vidmail he quickly strays from a discussion of the mission to a general welcome to a demonstration of the capability of his little robots. He shows how Falstaff can walk and talk on his own and then Richard tells the player that he has left another robot, Puck, from A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, as a gift for the player. Richard laughingly then hollers for Puck and his voice activates the little character, who is in Richard's locker. Puck opens the locker from the inside, and then, after introducing himself and telling the player he is going to stay permanently in his pocket, Puck flies toward the player and disappears. Puck is never seen again in the game, but it is his English voice that is heard often, sometimes as a result of an event trigger (explaining something that may not be all that apparent to the player), and sometimes as a result of a flag trigger that indicates the player may be floundering. There will be an option available in the game for the player to have Puck turned off permanently.

12) Francesca Sabatini is the other astronaut whose raw intelligence classifies her as a genius. Francesca, a world famous Italian television journalist at the tender age of twenty-nine, uses her considerable sexual attraction (she's a formal model and actress) to manipulate everyone she encounters, male or female. There is a sexual overtone to all her comments to the player in her introductory vidmail. She explains to the player that her primary job is to report on the mission to investigate RAMA, and that she is hoping for an early opportunity to introduce the new astronaut to the millions on the Earth who are following her daily reports.

13) Dr. David Brown, late forties, balding, bespectacled American, is a world famous scientist (as is Dr. Shigeru Takagishi from Japan) more because of his self-promotion and opportunism than his actual talent. He has become commander of the mission following the unfortunate death of Valeriy Borzov. Ruthlessly ambitious, Brown has made a deal with Francesca (sealed with sex and money) to guarantee that he is viewed as the hero of the RAMA mission. His tone in his vidmail is imperious, he obviously thinks he is really the cat's meow, and he makes it clear that he expects the player to follow his commands.

14) Dr. Takagishi is a brilliant, self-effacing scientist, early fifties, shorter even than the average Japanese person, who is extremely orderly in everything he does. He speaks only rarely, but when he does, he communicates a lot. In his first vidmail he speaks passionately about what it will mean for all humanity if the astronauts encounter extraterrestrial life forms in RAMA. His eyes sparkling with enthusiasm and anticipation, Dr. Takagishi clearly cannot imagine a more wonderful assignment than being part of this mission.

