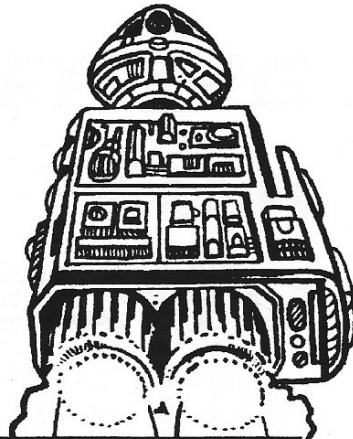


A review of the 2nd Edition
of Ground Zero Games'
Full Thrust

Full Thrust

by Chris Williams



Full Thrust

Number of Players: 2 or more
Approx. Playing Time: 30 mins -
 1 1/2 hours
Suggested Retail: £5.95
 (approx. \$18.00 U.S.)
Availability inside of U.S.: Very
 hard to find*

Over the years since I first started gaming I have played a number of science fiction ship-to-ship combat games. My enduring favorites are Iron Crown's *Silent Death*, Task Force Games' *Starfire* (which has recently been re-released), and West End Games' *Star Warriors*. *Silent Death* and *Star Warriors* are primarily one man fighter-type engagements, and *Starfire*, like its big brother *Star Fleet Battles*, can move a little slowly at times. Recently, however, I discovered a new game to add to my list: *Full Thrust* by Jon Tuffley of Ground Zero Games in the United Kingdom. Actually, I'd never heard of *Full Thrust* until a review copy showed up in my mailbox one day, but I was pleasantly surprised by what I found inside the envelope.

Full Thrust comes in a 48-page softcover book with a full color cover. The game is primarily designed for use with tabletop miniatures, but can just as easily be played with the counters provided at the back of the book. The rules are broken up into several sections which cover the basics and the optional advanced rules. Although it can be helpful to separate the basic rules from the advanced, I

found it to be unnecessary. *Full Thrust* is so easy to understand that the first time we played it we used most of the advanced rules, including our own ship designs. The only flaw I found in the rules, aside from one typo, was that the basic rules discuss the use of Needle Beams, which are not introduced until the advanced rules. Apart from that, the rules are very clearly written. Numerous examples, illustrated with diagrams and/or photographs, aid in visualizing the material which is being presented in any given section.

Movement is pre-plotted for each ship, and then all sides move their ships simultaneously. At the beginning of the game, one direction on the playing surface is designated as 12 o'clock. Ships must always move toward and face one of the twelve clock face courses. Movement is conducted using a pseudo-vector system. Ships obey one of the basic laws of physics: If a ship is moving in a given course at a given speed, it will continue to do so until it applies thrust to alter its speed or direction. However, instead of having to apply thrust in a given direction and then add vectors together to arrive at your final speed

and course, players simply apply thrust points to make a turn and change the ship's course by an equal number of clock facings. One half of the course alteration (rounded down) is applied to the ship before it moves anywhere. Then the ship moves in the new direction for half the length of its current speed. At this mid-point the remainder of the course change is executed and the ship then completes the rest of its move. This system is a fair approximation of the true vector systems which some older games employ, but makes the movement portion of the turn much faster.

Combat is also relatively simple. Beginning with the player who has the most ships in play, one ship declares and then resolves all of the attacks it intends to make during that turn. Fire then alternates between players until all ships have fired. Hit determination and damage are resolved by a single d6 roll. A roll of 1-3 indicates a miss, a 4-5 a hit and 1 point of damage, and a 6 is a hit with 2 points of damage. Bigger beam weapons, such as the "A" class beam, roll three dice at close range, while the smaller "C" class beam only rolls one die at close range. If the target ship has any defensive screens, the level of the incoming damage will be reduced. Any remaining damage is then recorded on the target ship's damage track (see sample ship record).

Rather than employing a system of internal component damage for each hit, the damage track represents the overall structural integrity of the vessel. When one entire row of boxes on the damage track has been filled in, the ship has reached a threshold point. When this happens a d6 is rolled for each internal system currently functioning to determine if it has been destroyed. This system of internal damage allows for a ship to take only minimal damage and still be crippled by a lucky shot, or to remain fully functional while still only having one damage point left. Each threshold point increases the likelihood of system failures, and any ship which has all of the boxes on its damage track filled in is destroyed completely.

The advanced rules introduce new weapon systems, fighter craft, sensor rules, and custom ship design. All of these rules are optional, but add to the enjoyment of the game while still maintaining its simplicity. Advanced weapons include Needle Beams, Pulse Torpedoes, Mines, and the Nova Cannon, a spinal mount weapon similar to the Wave Motion Gun. Fighter craft are essentially fast, highly maneuverable "C" beams. Since fighters operate in squadrons of up to six ships apiece, several squadrons swarming over one ship could easily wipe their target out. (Hint: Point defense and area defense weapons are useful!)

Ship design is a breeze. Three basic ship classes—escort, cruiser, and capitol ship—allow players to design pretty much any type of ship from fast attack boats, to missile cruisers, to slow moving fleet carriers. Very few calculations are required to design your own ship. First decide how big to make it. Everything else, from the

number of damage points your ship has, to how much its engines will cost, to how many weapons and other systems you can cram inside, is based off of that. The system also works well in reverse. You can fill the guts of the ship with weapons first and then determine how big the ship must be to carry everything.

The *Full Thrust* rulebook also contains some background information on the designer's own universe, and the system is supported by its own line of miniatures. The samples of the miniatures which I have seen were not spectacular, but were very usable. They were somewhat flat, and reminded me of the old *Star Fleet Wars* line of miniatures which Superior Models used to produce. They do have a fair amount of detail, and are well cast. They do not come with bases of their own, which reduces their cost, but they fit perfectly onto the flight bases produced by Citadel Miniatures. (Coincidence? You be the judge.) Ground Zero also produces smaller fighter craft miniatures which I have not physically seen. An entire squadron of six appears to fit onto one of Citadel's 40mm monster bases.

GROAN! Not another game which wants to cram its own figures down my throat!

Not so! Because *Full Thrust* was designed primarily to be fun to play, the author actually encourages the reader to use any figures which hap-

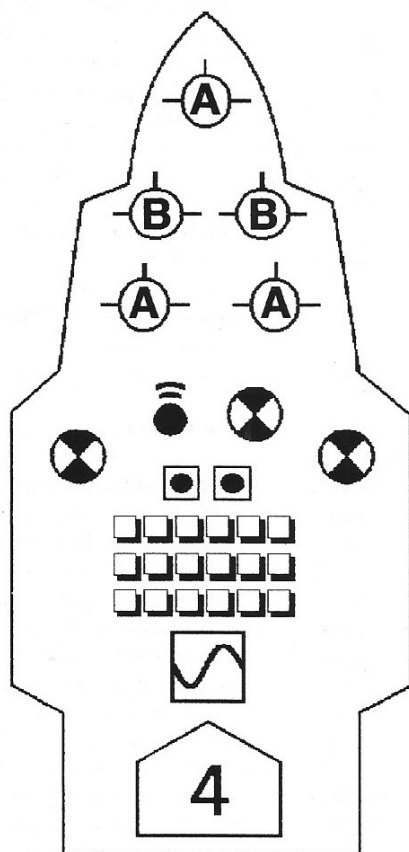
pen to be convenient. He even goes so far as to list off several other companies which produce suitable lines of miniatures. I found this to be very refreshing, especially after the way in which certain other companies (which shall remain unnamed) try to force feed players their "official, authorized, if you're not using our figures to play our game then you're some kind of subversive" miniatures.

On the whole, I would give *Full Thrust* the highest recommendation I can give to any game: My friends and I had fun and will play it again. I'm already busy painting up fleets of ships to use with it. Unfortunately, *Full Thrust* is almost unknown here in the U.S., and I assume in other countries outside of the U.K. as well. Do try and find it if you can. If retailers get enough requests for an item, they will pass them on to their suppliers who, hopefully, will try and bring *Full Thrust* into your country. However, if you cannot find it anywhere and really want to obtain a copy for yourself, Ground Zero Games is happy to take your orders directly. For more information on *Full Thrust* rulebooks and miniatures write to:

Jon Tuffley; Ground Zero Games; 'Finzo', Barking Tye; Needham Market; Suffolk, IP6 8JB; United Kingdom.

(Aren't British addresses fun?)

* Late breaking news: GEO-HEX informs us that they will begin importing *Full Thrust* to the U.S. soon.



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