

Pitch Proposals

Company: Spectrum HoloByte

Project: *Top Gun*

Platform/Format: Print

Description: This pitch was presented to Nintendo and accepted for co-development on the gaming platform that became the Nintendo-64. In addition to introducing the overall concept for the game, it presented the basic game mechanics, and the risks associated with development. Like film, the risks in game development can be fairly well qualified up front. What's the game engine? Who is on the development team? Can we tie it to a valuable license? Unlike film, however, the audience demands technical innovation in each offering, so there's a culture of risk-taking in games that doesn't seem to pervade the film industry. Experienced developers know that there must be something substantial in terms of technology, personnel, and risk management behind the pitch.

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Top Gun High Concept

For the Nintendo Ultra64

September 8, 1994

High Concept:

You strap into an F-14 Tomcat as Maverick, ace of Top Gun. The Cadre has struck again, this time dropping a diplomatic transport into the Sea of Japan. You and the Top Gun team have scrambled to respond in a game that combines the most polished flight sim technology and network play with rippin' fast dogfighting for the Ultra64 consoles. Flaps are down; you're cleared for take-off!

You're the best of the best, said the commanding officer. And it's time to prove it.

Welcome to Top Gun, the elite training academy for the Navy's best fighter pilots. You and your fellow cadets battle it out for the Top Gun Trophy, a sparkling line on any pilot's resumé. Inside the cockpit, you and the rest of the squad attack and parry over the radio and through the desert sky in a variety of training missions designed to test the mettle of the best F-14 pilots in the world. And only one of you can earn final bragging rights.

Elsewhere, all is not well. There's a growing insurrection in Cuba. At graduation, your squad is called to join the American forces in support down there. A series of missions and debriefings gradually reveal a lurking menace to world peace. The Cadre, a group of highly skilled fighters, will shoot down anything if the price is right. Your objective: hunt them down before they steal all of the pieces to build a nuclear device.

Top Gun blends the attention to detail of flight simulations with the shoot-em-up excitement of platform games. Plug in, turn on and take off into the high-atmosphere thrills of modern air combat where, with a few button presses, you can execute the most advanced maneuvers possible in a Tomcat.

You play as Maverick, a rebel in a flight suit, who's bound to get into as much trouble on the flightdeck as above it. Join Iceman, Viper and the rest of the Top Gun squad in your own F-14 Tomcat, as they track down the Cadre over forty missions in Cuba, Korea, Japan and Libya defending the good guys from the newest threat to global security.

License:

At the top of the movie hit list of all-time, Top Gun captured the imagination of armchair fighter pilots everywhere. Spectrum HoloByte has acquired the video game licensing rights which allows us to extend on story elements beyond the range of the film. Maverick and Iceman are on the flight deck, and here comes the Cadre.

Spectrum HoloByte:

Spectrum HoloByte, together with its subsidiary Microprose, has teamed up to become the undisputed leader in flight sim technology and networked gameplay. The depth of our simulation products cannot be matched. Combining the action of the Top Gun story with our in-house development of 3D engines, SHI delivers arcade performance never seen on a game console.

Game Control:

Flying a Top Gun Tomcat is more than a joystick wiggle. The Academy drills cadets on the finer strategies of aerial combat, and those important lessons come in handy in the Theater campaigns. A short button combination moves you and your wingmen into attack formation. With two bogeys tight on your tail, pressing A and B together executes a perfect split S to drop you behind them and into firing range. By the end of the Top Gun Academy, you'll have those moves cold.

Overview:

A high-speed dogfight in the milieu of *Top Gun* the film, typified by the following:

Fast action. From take-off to touch-down, there's little idle time and plenty of bogeys to dispatch.

Visual range dogfighting. Most targets appear immediately after take-off, but a few missions are long-range intercepts. The intent is to keep the action fast and continuous.

Naval aviation. The player must take off and land on an aircraft carrier—no simple feat when the deck is heaving in thirty-foot waves and you can't see the arrestor wire.

Multi-variate missions. Each sortie has a primary objective, but during the course of it, the player may discover new targets to address. If these targets are Cadre flyers, the player should attack immediately. Failure to deal with Cadre pilots results in more Cadre banditos in the subsequent mission.

Four Theaters. Top Gun takes the player from Cuba to Korea and Japan and to the skies of Tripoli with numerous missions in each locale.

Wide weapons selection. The player gets to outfit his own plane from the carrier's arsenal which is reconfigured for each Theater. Some examples:

Vulcan 20-mm Gatling cannon.

AIM-54 Phoenix missile: The Phoenix is extremely accurate. Only a few of these missiles are on board the carrier, so they must be used sparingly! Seeker: Semi Active/Active Warhead: 125lb high-explosive. Speed: Mach 5+ Range: 110 miles

AIM-120 AMRAAM: Less accurate than the Phoenix, but more plentiful. Seeker: Active radar Warhead: 40lb high explosive. Speed: Mach 4+ Range: 25 miles

AIM-9 Sidewinders: Plenty of Sidewinders on board. Fire at will! Seeker: All-aspect infrared Warhead: 22lb blast fragmentation. Speed: Mach 2+ Range: 10 miles

Mk82: General-purpose iron bomb: Warhead: 275 lb H-6 high-explosive

- **Railman or Radar Intercept Officer.** Depending on the skill level, Ranger, the railman, helps the player by handling the radar, ECM, Flare and Chaff chores as well as spotting enemy targets.

- **Virtual cockpit.** With the controller, the player can look around the cockpit at the dials and the planes and terrain whizzing by. Down to the rivets, the interior is modeled in great detail after the real Tomcat cockpit.

Features:

Lightning fast air combat. Top Gun places an emphasis on capturing the hair-trigger responsiveness of real aerial dogfighting.

Real-time rendered 3D terrain, planes and ground-based objects. Spectrum HoloByte is a leader in interactive 3D. The technology present in the smash hit **Falcon 3.0** is portable to the Ultra64 platform.

Multiple camera angles. A true three-dimensional universe permits viewing the action from any angle. Peek inside the enemy cockpit, or watch the dogfighters from a lateral position. Where else can you trail a missile right into its target? Pick an angle, any angle.

Wide range of usable weapons. The player can outfit his aircraft for each mission depending on the type of opponent.

Many types of enemy forces. Although the Cold War has thawed, the hardware hasn't. MiGs, Chinese J-8's and Mi-24's challenge the player to tailor tactics for individual situations. Rumor has it that the Cadre has a few Tomcats of their own.

Fightertown U.S.A. The Top Gun Academy provides optional instruction for beginning flyers in the art of air combat. Advanced flyers can proceed immediately to the Theater Campaign.

Scaled Difficulty. The player can choose to play on Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced or Ace levels with limited or unlimited weapons.

Button Combos. All aspects of flying a Tomcat are accessible to the player, but some beginners may not want to worry about the proper button presses to execute a split-S, a yo-yo or even landing the aircraft. Top Gun is equipped with short button combinations to perform these expert moves and more.

Autopilot. The Tomcat's sensors can direct the plane on the preset patrol pattern or back to the carrier.

Over forty missions. Top Gun integrates unique sorties all over the world into an entire campaign against the Cadre, a band of mercenary flyers.

Network play. Top Gun permits multiple machines to participate in the same game. Enemies or teammates, the choice is yours.

A great license. The film Top Gun grossed more than \$100 million and to this day is a video rental favorite.

Plot:

Because we're trying to make a fun game and not a duplication of the film, we needed to extend the scope of the original plot. The following section briefly summarizes story and character for the game.

Story Line

It's the dream of every Navy flyer. To go Top Gun. Cougar couldn't handle it, and here you are. First meeting in the briefing room, you, Maverick, are greeted by the taunts of the other cadets. Iceman, Werewolf and Raven all lay claim to the Top Gun Trophy, but you and your railman Ranger haven't come for the sightseeing.

At the Academy, you compete against the best of America's throttle jockeys in training missions firing mock weapons. Over the course of eight missions, the best overall pilot is awarded the Top Gun trophy.

After graduating from the Top Gun Academy, you're assigned to a carrier headed for the coast of Cuba. A revolution has ignited the countryside, and the U.S. of A is standing by in support of the rebels. Your commanding officer briefs you on the objective for the mission and on the suspected arrival in Cuba of Jackal, a former Navy ace who defected years ago to the Soviet Union and has reputedly formed a nationless outfit called, "The Cadre."

Over the course of forty carrier-based missions in four theaters, you gradual unravel the tale of the Cadre. Your best tactics are always a step slow; somehow, they seem to know what you'll do before you do and you arrive to their usual calling card—a smoldering heap of plane wreckage. Through intelligence gathered by U.S. agencies, you learn that they have been targeting key military installations in hot spots across the globe. Cuba, North Korea—even Libya. What they're after, no one knows, until the Navy's commanding officer for the Pacific passes an ominous report of Cadre sightings in the vicinity of a North Korean nuclear facility.

With the stage set for disaster, the Cadre's brand of terrorism for hire will command new respect in the global theater. Your job: ground them any way you can.

In the final battle in the skies over Tripoli, you go one-on-one against the bulwark of the Cadre, culminating in a Mach 2 game of guts with Jackal himself.

Characters

To make our version of *Top Gun* better as a game, we changed some of the names and roles of the characters in the story. The main ones, though, are still present and true to the original film.

MAVERICK : Like the name implies, Maverick's got his own style of flying. Respected as a pilot, questionable as a team member. In single-player mode, Maverick is controlled by the player.

RANGER : Maverick's long-time pal and railman from the big state of Texas. The railman is a second pair of eyes towards the back of the plane, and Ranger's got his own style of calling out the bad guys. He's also responsible for informing the player of the condition of the plane including weapons and fuel states.

ICEMAN : Cool on the stick and frozen cold in the Locker Room. Iceman is Maverick's main competition on the Top Gun squad. He's a textbook flyer, but sometimes a textbook's hard to read in the cockpit. As the Top Gun squad survives mission after mission, Iceman gives grudging respect to Maverick's fighting.

RAVEN : She's a hard-headed woman with a steel-trap mind. Few bogeys and fewer details escape her hyper-alert eyes. On R&R, Raven likes to read the Tomcat tech specs and official briefings on the Cadre.

WEREWOLF : The quiet one of the group. He's a listener, picking up pieces of information. Later, he defects to the Cadre after passing valuable intelligence information to Jackal.

HOLLYWOOD : Hollywood doesn't stop talking. Talk, talk, talk and often about his future career as a screen star. A fine flyer in his own right.

VIPER : Viper's a professional's professional. Years in the air have given him a respect for the dangers of flying. He sees greatness in Maverick's flying, but it's edged with recklessness.

JACKAL : Leader of the Cadre. Years ago, he defected to the Soviet Union and has since been selling his formidable skill to the highest bidder. A ruthless killer, Jackal will not surrender.

DIVA : Groomed to join the long line of Soviet heroes of space, this striking woman caused quite a uproar when she left her the program as the top-rated cadet. Boring, she said, you don't take off and land enough. Now she does, for whoever keeps her fuel tank full and her plane in good shape.

HORNET : A crafty veteran of the Soviet air force. Preferring to work alone, he's an expert in evasive tactics in the MiG's. Like a pesky mosquito, he'll get you when you aren't looking.

Victory Is Sweet

The player has three opportunities to complete the forty missions of *Top Gun*. Each time that he gets shot down, he gets an earful from Viper and a new plane. After each mission, the player can save him game.

To win the game, the player must conquer every mission and defeat the forces of the Cadre, including one-on-one battles with Diva, Jackal and the traitor Werewolf.

Gameplay:

Top Gun takes air combat to a new level. With polygonal 3D objects and exacting texture maps, the fighting sequences will extend beyond the limits of existing cartridge technology.

Did you bring your quarter? During the arcade-style Theater missions, the player can expect to fight up to fifteen opposing planes or ground-based systems in a wide variety of situations. Repeat plays are almost guaranteed to invent new situations because the

arrival of the Cadre is never announced and never precisely as anticipated. When the player fails to address all of the Cadre planes encountered during a mission, reinforcements will return with them for the next one. By the end of the game, the sky will look like a swarm of locusts.

The Cadre isn't just good, it's well-informed. Their squadrons strike early and usually from a choice angle on the Top Gun team. Over the course of several missions, it occurs to you and your teammates that someone in the ranks has been slipping flight plans to the Cadre. Who it is and why are questions for later; right now, you've got to invent new moves that aren't in any of the Tomcat textbooks.

In the air, you have access to all of the weapon systems of the F-14 Tomcat. Radar to locate, flares and chaff to distract, and an assortment of guns, missiles and bombs to destroy. All weapons are duplicates of the U.S. Navy issues for the Tomcat, down to flight characteristics and ordnance.

The player will have to use his tools carefully. In limited weapons mode, the carrier has a set inventory specifically established for each Theater, and if Maverick's spitting missiles, she's going to hear about it from the other squad members.

But it's foolish to get gunshy because of an inventory crunch. The first and foremost objective is to eliminate the Cadre threat. And there are plenty of Aces in their ranks. With Hornet, Jackal and Diva in the air, the player will be kept very busy as sorties of nationals from each Theater team up with members of the Cadre to bring the elite of the U.S. Navy to its knees. More than ten types of enemy aircraft and twenty types of missiles will zip in from all directions. Enemy AI is cloned from PC-based technologies, and special responses are given to Cadre members to make them more reactive and challenging targets.

Cinematic PiPs

Part of the promise of the Ultra64 is the expansion of the production values for games. Gone are static screens and 2-D backdrops, and in their place is the fluid grammar and presentation of cinema.

Spectrum HoloByte's 3-D technologies have expanded the viewing possibilities for a game, and *Top Gun* takes advantage of them. Through Picture-in-Picture (PiP) windows, the player can access any of multiple cameras placed in the 3-D world. Ever wonder what it looks like inside the cockpit of a MiG-29? Cut to the enemy PiP. Want to see the no-man's land on the edge of the Guantanamo Bay base? Cut to the belly PiP. Has your Shrike missile gotten close to the target? Cut to the missile PiP. Through the magic of 3-D graphics, you can plunge into any aspect of the *Top Gun* universe including even (gulp) a first-class chewing out from your commanding officer.

For Beginners

For years, flight sim enthusiasts have known the excitement of piloting your own plane, and *Top Gun* brings that excitement to a wider audience—without the strenuous complexity of authentic flight. Still, flying a Top Gun Tomcat isn't easy, so we've included a couple of features to bring the rush of aerial combat to our new audience.

Of course, there's an autopilot to navigate between waypoints on a mission or land the plane on a carrier's churning flight deck. There's no reason to impede gameplay because one of the most basic maneuvers of the game happens to be one of the most difficult in aviation.

Programmed into the simulation is a set of short button combinations, doors to a treasure chest of hot maneuvers and tactics. Bogey on your six means you need a solution fast. A combination of two buttons executes a perfect split-S, and you've ducked into the cloud cover. While these tactics give beginners a chance to fly with the big boys, experts can perform them through the standard, throttle-stick-and-rudder interface. Once these combinations are mastered, they can be used in combination. Press the "split-S" combo followed by the "barrel roll" combo, and you perform one right after the other.

Network Play

For the first time, console systems can support play between two machines. Now, gamers can participate in the same game if they're across the room or across the nation. And Spectrum HoloByte's Electronic Battlefield software has been proven to make this work. Imagine you and a friend, cruising along at 450 knots low over the beaches of Libya on sortie against Quaddafi's arsenal.

Perhaps you're more competitive. Top Gun supports two-man dogfight challenges where one player flies an F-14 and another pilots a Cadre MiG. Or, even things up with both players in the same kind of plane. May the best flyer win.

Development Strategy:

The next generation of consoles promises to deliver hardware capable of stunning three-dimensional graphics. Real-time rendering brings high-grade simulation values to the Ultra64 market. Leveraging its flight sim technology from the PC, Spectrum HoloByte intends to be among the first to bring thrilling, first-person simulations to the 32-bit consoles.

Also, to the console market Spectrum HoloByte brings its Electronic Battlefield Series technology for networked gameplay. Friends, rivals and neighbors across the continent can duke it out in the skies over a single game-world. EBS was developed in concert with the rendering technology in *Falcon 3.0* and has been implemented in multiple games across multiple platforms. Together, these two technologies open exciting possibilities within the performance range of the Ultra64.

Like the best games for the SNES platform, *Top Gun* emphasizes gameplay. “Let’s make it hot” is the operating principle around a company experienced in cartridge development. Combat sequences challenge even the most experienced sim pilots, and the Top Gun Training Facility offers beginning pilots a step-by-step course to catch up.

And it doesn’t stop there. The investment in developing flight sim technology for the Ultra64 will reap considerable returns on later ports of additional Spectrum HoloByte flight-sim products to the Ultra64. *Top Gun* is but the start.

Additionally, extensive work has already been completed on platform-independent SGI boxes for the DOS version of Top Gun. What we’ve got already gives us a big headstart towards an on-time release.

Conclusion:

Top Gun is an ideal first salvo for rich flight sims into the console market. It’s based on well-polished 3-D technologies developed here at Spectrum HoloByte, an industry leader in real-time rendering and networked gameplay. The license is strong and continues to have name recognition even among younger kids. The air combat itself is quick and thrilling and guaranteed to keep the most trigger-happy gamer on the edge of his seat. With its fast processor and low access times, the Ultra64 promises to be a ready harbor for this port. Let’s turn and burn!