Hull Breach: Star Command Review (Mobile)

I like space. I like space, a lot. It’s my favorite setting and the possibilities within that setting are pretty limitless. So when a new game about space comes out I’m usually on top of it, esecpially if you tuck it away in your pocket to play while you’re commuting to work or bored with a loved one’s retelling about that one time you watered down the soup as a kid. So when Star Command debuted on Android in a Humble Bundle of all places, I was estatic. Cheap and in space nevermind being beautifully done. I hate to say it but I was a bit disappointed.

Star Command is Android strategy game that places you in captainacy of the a starship as you traverse the galaxy doing battle with evil aliens and schmoozing green chicks, intitially the story starts you off as the lowly captain of a Star Command starship and your in-game avatar is fully customizable between male and female with a fair number of skin tones, hair styles, and facial hair options. Then you choose a specialty from the game’s professions. Red uniforms denote soldiers and command officers, yellow unforms are your engineers, and blue uniforms are scientist and medical officers. You can cross-train crew members as the intital specialization just makes the more proficient at that particular task. For example, you can turn a seasoned Laser gunner into a veteran engineer by simply assigning him to an engineering room for a few battles. The color specialization further stratified by the number of rooms you can construct on your ships which break down into weapons, engineering, and science rooms.

The ships you can start with are small and it’s easy to maximize what rooms will provide the most effiency. Combat follows a similar pattern with a few exceptions. Repelling boarders with soldiers, manage your systems and hull damage with engineers, and heal both from damage with science officers. Units are given directions by tapping on them once and then again on the unit you wish attack or square you wish to move to. They also have an aura that acts as their range for attacking, repairing, or healing. Additionally one crew member must be in each room for it actually function otherwise it powers down. Weapons operate in a mini-game format that helps break up the tension of battle and generally keep battles fresh as well giving tactile feedback to the damage you cause. To stop boarders you must eliminate the enemy ship so it becomes a juggling act as you shift units to and from battle as well ensuring your ship doesn’t implode while still fighting back, ensuring your can dodge enemy shots, and generally praying that the hull doesn’t breach and suck them out into cold vaccum.

The game adds yet another layer of complication when you start to get acquainted with the counter system. Counters come in red, yellow, and blue colors, and allow you to hire new crew, as well as upgrade your ship’s rooms. How and where you spend your counters dictates largely how your game turns out as upgrading a critical piece of weaponry or having a surplus crew members will make or break the next battle.

The campaign is linear, whereas I was expecting a rogue-like similar to Subset Games’ FTL but the plot is mostly servicable with a few optional “random” encounters to help grind your crew. The dialogue is fairly basic but there are some neat twists with picking the right (or wrong) options and the scenarios have interesting premises. The cultural references and in-jokes often brought a smile to my face and I expect no different from people who enjoy Star Trek. The animations are likwise very fluid, crisp, and often the small touches such as the flipping down of the hoods when repairing hull breaches and the reflection as well as how units go about their operations makes the game feel vibrant. There are issues with moving about the interface especially behind walls and a cut-away of the entire room would’ve helped immensely with putting out hidden fires the game is gorgeous and you can see a lot of love has gone into making this a living world. The game holds up well even zoomed and feels like it’d be right at home on a tablet but is playable even on a 4” inch screen. Audio-wise the game zips, zaps, pops, and cracks and while the music is mostly forgettable it isn’t irritating to the point of turning off. It can be a bit repetitive.

Star Command is definitely a must have even at 2.99, it has no-game purchases, no ads, and otherwise a very polished experience that could use a bit more. I look forward to what Warballon brings to us next as they promised to further expand the game in their Kickstarter.