ACRONIA™

by Clarissa Toney



User's Guide

Demo version 0.6 • 2023/07/30

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Dedicated to the memory of

Milo "Gradius" Sedlacek

System Requirements

One of the goals for *Acronia* is that it is playable on real DOS hardware as well as in emulators such as the various flavors of DOSBox.

At minimum, *Acronia* requires:

- Any 32-bit IBM PC or 100% compatible *(386 or higher)*
- Standard VGA video card
  (capable of 320x200 at 256 colors)
- 4 MB of RAM

For best performance, a 486DX2 is recommended. The game runs acceptably on 386s (at least, in the author's tests in emulation), especially with all the performance options turned down. Performance improvements will continue to be made over the course of future development.

If running in DOSBox, the default settings should be fine as long as your machine is set to "vgaonly" or higher. For best performance, set cycles to "auto."

Acronia currently supports PC speaker and Sound Blaster for sound, and OPL2- and OPL3-based cards (Adlib, Sound Blaster) for music. General MIDI support is planned for the final release.

Stay Up to Date!

This demo is a huge milestone for *Acronia,* as for the first time, it has its full feature set: music, sound, playable levels, enemies, weapon selection, powerups, and more. It's a complete, playable game—even if there's still a lot more we want to add between now and the final release!

If you'd like to stay up to date on *Acronia*'s development, see future demos when they drop, and know when the finished game is ready for sale, there are numerous ways to do so:

Become a patron today!
www.patreon.com/hadrosoft

itch.io store:
hadrosoft.itch.io/acronia

Wishlist on Steam:
store.steampowered.com/app/2292350/Acronia

On the web:
www.hadrosaurus.net/acronia

Follow us on Mastodon:
@HadroSoft@mastodon.gamedev.place

Getting Started

From DOS:

Acronia is a DOS game, and is designed to be copied to your DOS computer's hard drive. From the installation directory, type **ACRONIA** and press **Enter** / **Return** .

If you're running *Acronia* in DOSBox on your modern machine, copy the files into a directory accessible by the emulator, and follow the steps above.

(Mounting drives in DOSBox is beyond the scope of this manual; visit **dosbox.com/wiki/MOUNT** for details.)

Acronia comes with a setup program that can be launched by typing **SETUP** at the command line.

From a modern system:

You may have downloaded *Acronia* in a pre-configured package for your modern Windows, Linux, or macOS system. In that case, simply double-click on the appropriate launcher to play *Acronia* with or without a CRT graphics filter, or to open the setup utility.

In Windows, these launchers take the form of batch files. In Linux, they are bash scripts. In macOS, they are standalone app bundles.

The Story So Far

"A Slice of Hell"



It is the year 2087. **Acronia**, a private security firm, is under contract by the U.S. government to aid in its military operations in the South American jungle nation of Sengana. Although only officially contracted to guard the American embassy in Sengana's capital city and provide protection for its employees, the government is more than happy to turn a blind eye to Acronia's other activities, including fighting alongside American troops—and sometimes even alone—as autonomous combat units. A multi-billion-dollar operation, Acronia has grown into a private army of its own, completely separate from and almost untouchable by the military or the government.

You and your friends are members of **CE-149**, a ragtag unit of mercenaries employed by Acronia. Hidden deep in the jungles of Sengana, far away from Acronia's main base of operations (and far away from the eyes of both the U.S. and Senganese governments), the installation where you work is huge, with many restricted areas. Not even most of the staff at this unnamed base know what goes on in the labs, although rumors range from secret munitions development to experiments in genetic engineering.

You, along with a few trusted buddies from other units, are hidden deep in the basement corridors of the Acronia facility, playing hooky. With so many skirmishes with Senganese terrorists and lots of miscommunication, it's easy enough for a small cadre of troops to "disappear" for a few days and then escape punishment by claiming they got lost in the jungle. You've spent the last few hours hiding out,

drinking, playing video games, and gambling.

After a while, Roslyn decides she's risked her job enough for one week and excuses herself from the game to head up to the facility and resume her duties. She doesn't get far. A horrible roar echoes from within the corridors, followed by gunshots. Roslyn re-enters the room, her gun smoking, her clothes and body covered in gore.



You immediately drop what you're doing and rush over to her. Before you can ask her what happened, a monstrous creature bursts into the room. It's vaguely human, although it's at least a foot taller than even Harry. Its flesh is gnarled and gray. Stringy, greasy black hair cascades down from its mottled scalp. More of the same hair covers its body in a disgusting patchwork. It lets out a roar just like the one heard before. It rips off a chunk of its own flesh, leaving a festering, seeping wound. It hurls the flesh at Roland, a member of one of the other units, smacking him right in the face and covering him in foul-smelling green sludge. Roland undergoes an immediate transformation, his eyes turning yellow, his skin flushing red all over. He attacks Allie, who easily fights him off with a few swift kicks and a round or two from her sidearm.

Taradina, a member of CE-149, charges after the first monster, only to be seized in the thing's massive hands. As she struggles, the monstrosity lifts her over his head, palming her skull like a basketball. Swinging her flailing body like a ragdoll, it hurls her into a corner, snapping her spine in two. Barfing up blood, she dies.



A massive battle ensues in the basement of Acronia as more mutants burst in. The encounter is fast and brutal, and is over as quickly as it began. In the end, all the mutants lie in piles on the floor, their stench penetrating everything. All humans except for you and four other members of CE-149 lie dead, horribly mutilated.

Here, the game begins. Leading Harry, Roslyn, Allie, Dad, and Buddy, you must fight your way up through

each floor of the facility, which has been overrun by mutants. Bodies of mercenaries, scientists, and executives lie strewn throughout the facility. The deeper into the lab you progress, the clearer it becomes that you are the lone survivors. As the bodies pile up, the resistance from the mutants grows worse and more persistent. You encounter strange and dangerous Acronia-developed technology.

What happened? What went wrong? You don't know—perhaps you don't care. All you *do* know is that you have to get out...and waste any mutant scum that try to stop you!



Characters

In *Acronia*, you control five teammates, leading them to survival through three nine-level episodes. In this early demo, only the first two characters, **Allie** and **Roslyn**, are available.

Roslyn Giordano



Age: 32 • Height: 5'8" • Weight: 135

Personality: Has been with Acronia for 13 years; the longest-serving member of the core group. She's extremely career-minded and has no plans to retire or leave the company any time soon. Because of this, she tends to be more risk-averse than the other characters, though no less capable in combat.

Gameplay: Perfectly average. Average speed, average jump height, average health. Supremely accurate with all classes of weapons.

Default weapon: Rifle. Moderate damage, very slow rate of fire, but can penetrate through multiple targets.

Special moves: Roslyn can swipe at nearby enemies with her combat knife. Enemies hit with her knife will begin to bleed, continually taking damage. Some meeker baddies will even run away! She also has a stun gun that she can whip out at a moment's notice. It can be useful in a fight, as smaller/weaker enemies will be paralyzed, unable to move or attack.

Allyson "Allie" Connelly



Age: 24 • Height: 5'3" • Weight: 149

Personality: Has two distinct sides to her personality, and they never seem to meet in the middle or blend in any way. When she's with friends (such as the other characters in the game), she's "Allie": funny, charismatic, likeable. Otherwise, she's hard and serious, and refuses to answer to anything but "Connelly." Initially rejected by Acronia twice because of her height, she was finally hired on the third try. She has an aggressive attitude that stems from a desire to prove herself. Quick to anger and always on the defensive, she was assigned to her current post in Sengana as punishment for assaulting a supervisor after what she deemed to be an unfair proficiency-and-conduct review.

Gameplay: Fastest running speed, lowest health. Extremely athletic, she's the best climber, able to scale ladders at nearly full running speed. Deadly accurate with her pistol, not so much with heavy weapons.

Default weapon: Pistol. Low damage, but Allie can fire it as rapidly as you can press the *Fire* button.

Special moves: Allie can dodge incoming attacks if timed just right. She can also dash at high speed, damaging any enemies she comes into contact with. Be creaful not to crash into any walls, though, or she'll take serious damage.

You'll meet the remaining three characters in future demos, and in the full version of the game:



Reuben "Dad" Kallam

The team's cool, calm leader. A twice-divorced ex-Marine, he joined Acronia a year ago hoping for a quiet administrative post, and ended up right back in the shit.

"Big" Harry Johnson

Bold, brash, cocky, but fiercely loyal to his team. Self-centered and full of swagger, except in combat, where the safety of his team comes first and foremost.





Lonnie "Buddy" Branner

Brand-new employee of Acronia, hired only a few months ago. He looks up to the others, who have taken him under their wing. His teammates have nicknamed him "Buddy." It fits him.

Main Menu

When you launch the game, you'll be presented with the title screen and a menu. You can move up and down the menus with the arrow keys.

To choose the currently highlighted item, press **Enter / Return**. To get out of any menu, press **Esc**. Pressing **Esc** while in the game will take you back out to the menu.



New Game

The first time you play, this is the option you want. It allows you to choose Easy, Normal, or Hard modes. Easy Mode is appropriate for first-time players. Normal mode is designed for most game players. Hard mode is for those people who want a *real* challenge. The modes differ in the number of monsters you will face, and the number of shots you get for each heavy weapon you collect.

Options

This menu allows you to configure the game to act the way you prefer. You have a wide variety of options to play with. Try them out and see what works best for you.



Load Game

*(**NOTE:** This feature is not yet implemented in this demo.)*

This allows you to load a previously saved game. If you were in the middle of a game, you will be asked to confirm your choice.

Save Game

*(**NOTE:** This feature is not yet implemented in this demo.)*

Acronia allows up to eight different saved games. You get to name each one, so instead of saving "5", you can save "Ascending the tower." Just move the cursor to an empty spot (or an old game you don't mind writing over) and enter your description.

Read This!

A few screens of important info, including the default keyboard controls, staff credits, and an info card about the full version of the game. Press the left and right arrow keys, or **Enter** / **Return** to cycle through.

Quit Game

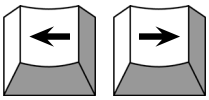
Now why would you want to do that, hm?



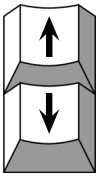
Figure AAAAAAAAAAA

Playing the Game

Acronia's core gameplay is running, jumping, and shooting. The controls can be configured to your liking by running the included setup utility, but the defaults are:



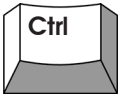
Run



Climb ladders



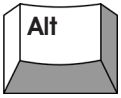
Crouch/go prone
(while on the ground)



Jump
(DOS/Windows/Linux)



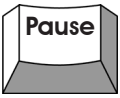
Jump
(macOS)



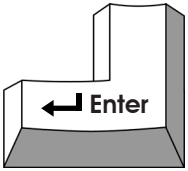
Fire weapon



Activate objects
(throw switches, open doors, etc.)

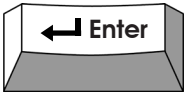


Pause
the game



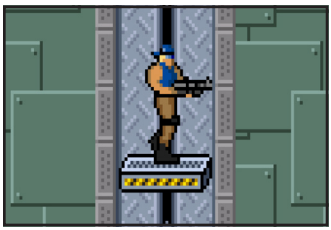
By itself:
Special action 1

With  or :
Special action 2



With  or :
Throw grenade

You can aim your weapon in eight different directions, using different combinations of arrow keys. Note that you can only aim straight downward while in midair. If you press *Down* by itself while on the floor, you will simply crouch/go prone.





Moving platforms, as well as certain tiles, are one-sided: they allow you to jump onto them from below, as well as drop down through them. When riding a moving platform, or standing on a one-way tile, hold the *Down* button and press the *Jump* button to drop down.

You can "baseball slide" along the floor, allowing you to pass through low tunnels. Sliding is also faster than running, if you need a little boost of speed. To slide, simply hold the *Down* button and press the *Jump* button. These are the same controls as dropping through platforms. Platform drops take precedence, so you cannot initiate a slide while on a platform.



You can control the height of your jumps. You will only achieve your full jumping height if you hold down the "jump" key until you reach your peak. Otherwise, you can let go of the jump key at any time during the jump for shorter hops.

If falling or jumping, and you miss the ground you were aiming for, it may be possible to grab onto the ledge if you're close enough by pushing the *Left* or *Right* movement button toward the ledge. If you're successful, you will grab onto the ledge and hang. From there, you can:

- Drop to the floor below, by pressing *Jump* or *Down*
- Pull yourself up to the floor above by pressing either *Up*, or *Left/Right* (toward the ledge)



If you're familiar with the classic Apple II game *Prince of Persia*, ledges work just like in that game. Just grab a ledge, and hoist.

Killer arsenal

Each player character comes equipped with their own unique, default weapon. These have infinite ammo, and you fall back to using them whenever your current heavy weapon runs out. See the character bios starting on page 7 for descriptions of each.

There are currently two heavy weapons available in the game (with many more on the way in future releases), and they are found throughout the levels or occasionally dropped by monsters.

The first is the **rocket launcher** (or **RPG**). Rockets deal massive damage to their target, as well as anything in the immediate area. The RPG has a slow rate of fire and limited ammunition. Includes 15 rockets on Easy mode, and 7 on Normal and Hard.



The **plasma rifle** has a much higher rate of fire, and can quickly eat through ammo. But it's great for crowd control, as it can carve through groups of enemies very quickly. Includes 50 rounds on Easy mode, and 25 on Normal and Hard.

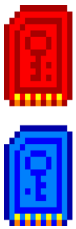


Whenever you pick up a heavy weapon, it will replace your current one. You drop your current weapon, which can be picked up again. If you pick up a weapon you're already equipped with, your ammo for it will be refilled.

You can also collect grenades, which are scattered around the levels. Grenades are useful for damaging enemies that may be out of your line of sight with normal weapons. Grenades are rare, but you have no limit on how many you can carry.



Exploring the facility



Certain locked doors, elevators, switches, platforms, and other devices can only be operated if you possess a keycard. Keys come in four colors: red, yellow, green, and blue, and can only be used in the levels they are found in. Unlike weapons, keys are shared among the team: if you switch characters, you still have all the keys collected so far.



Along the way, you'll find a host of collectible items. Some merely award you points:



50 100 200 400 400 400 400 800 1600 3200 6400

Other items help out in more tangible ways:



Stimpack (small): *Restores up to 10% of your health.*



Medikit (large): *Restores up to 25% of your health.*



Mega health: *Fills your health up to max.*



Health bonus: *Adds 1 health point (up to max).*



Armor bonus: *Adds 1 armor point (up to max).*



Combat armor (blue): *Restores your armor to full strength.*



Armor (green): *Only half as strong as the combat armor, but will still save your butt.*



Radiation shielding suit: *Protects you from radioactive areas and poisonous liquids for up to 60 seconds.*



Invulnerability: *You're an untouchable god... for 30 seconds, anyway.*



Quad damage: *4x the damage output, for 30 seconds.*



Speed boost: *Gotta be somewhere? How about 15-second burst of speed?*



High jump: *Springs for legs! You can jump 50% higher for 60 seconds.*



Light amplification visor: *It can get pretty dark. Shed a little light. Lasts 90 seconds.*

Teamwork makes the dream work

At any time during gameplay, you can press the Tab key to bring up the character selection menu and switch out your current character. If you make a switch while the current character is still alive, you pick up that character's progress in the level. If a character dies and you have to replace them, then you re-start the level.

Certain sections of the game are more suited to certain characters over the others.

Life and death



When all of your characters are dead, the game is over. When this happens, pressing any key will end the game and return you to the title screen and main menu.

At certain point thresholds (every 50,000 points on Easy mode, every 75,000 points on Normal, and every 100,000 on Hard), one of your dead characters will be revived. If none of your squadmates are dead, everybody will get a portion of their health restored instead.

Even without a game over, you can always return to the main menu by pressing Esc.



I'VE GOT A SECRET

There are five levels in this demo. One of them is a secret level.

Have fun looking for it!

Enemies

Currently, there are three enemies in the game (with many more on the way in future releases). They're remorseless, mutated killing machines, so be swift and be deadly!

Jumper



Humanoid heads atop a set of bloody spider legs. These creeps hop around aimlessly until they spot you...and then they go in for the kill, leaping at you to take a big bite! It's easy to get surrounded, so you have to be quick! Waste them all, or get the heck out of there!

Mutant Grunt



Acronia soldiers that have been transformed into zombie-like mutants by the McMaster Project. They patrol their area of the level. If they spot you, they unload on you with their equipped plasma rifle.

Bruiser



This big bastard will make sure you have a bad day. Twice your size and four times as mean, he's a huge mutant with horns on his head and wearing a shredded Acronia uniform covered in blood. At range, he can hurl yellow balls of biochemical waste at you. Up close...well, you don't want to find out.

Other Notes

Cheat codes

Hey, we get it. Games can be hard sometimes—especially when they're early in development and "gameplay balance" is theoretical at best. Besides, it's a single-player-only game, so who cares if someone cheats, as long as they're having fun? We're here to have fun!

You can type any of these codes during gameplay to cheat your way to success!

FREEPASS	All keycards
AJR	God mode!
MYPOS	Displays a message with the player's position in the game world. A development tool, but still kinda neat.
CLEVxx	Warp to any level! The two numbers represent the episode and level number. Valid combinations are: 11 12 13 14 19
GRABIT	Toggle powerups. Press another letter key for each powerup, which will be listed in the HUD's message area. **R**: Radiation shielding suit **S**: Speed boost **J**: High jump **Q**: Quad damage **I**: Invulnerability **L**: Light amplification visor
GREEDYGUT	All powerups and keycards
LETSGO	Clear the level (mark all secrets found, kill all enemies)
ENDITSOON	Set the player's health to 1
ENDITNOW	Kills the player outright

Choosing a level from the command line

If you *really* can't find that secret level and you *really* want to check it out, you can use the **-warp** command line switch:

```
ACRONIA -warp e1m4
```

Currently, valid levels are: **e1m1**, **e1m2**, **e1m3**, **e1m4**, and **e1m9**.

Performance

Acronia is a pretty demanding game for its genre: with full-screen, smooth-scrolling VGA graphics and lots of sprites moving on screen at once, it requires a 486DX2 or better to truly shine. Thankfully, there's a whole suite of performance options at your disposal, so you can enjoy *Acronia* on just about any 32-bit DOS machine (386 or better). From the game's main menu, select "Options."

"Screen size" will give you the choice of two different HUDs, as well as no HUD at all. Each option renders more or less of the game world than the others.



The "frame" style HUD draws less of the game world, and is more decorative, evoking classic DOS platformers.



The "minimal" style HUD gives you a larger view, but requires a little more CPU power to draw the game world.

The score totals that pop up when you kill enemies and collect items can tax the game a little. If they're too demanding for your system (or you just find them annoying), you can make them stationary, or even disable them entirely.

You may find success with toggling wait-for-vertical-sync (vsync) either on or off.

If you're not concerned with how smooth the animation is, you can enable frameskip. Frameskip 1 translates to a target framerate of 17.5 frames per second, frameskip 2 is 11.667 fps, frameskip 3 is 8.75 fps, etc. We've found that the game is quite playable even at frameskip 3! This is because, regardless of the framerate, *Acronia*'s world simulation always runs at its target of 35 updates per second.

If all else fails and you need to squeeze out those last few cycles... maybe try playing on a lower difficulty level. There are fewer enemies, so the game won't have to re-draw as much each frame.

The default settings are suitable on a 486DX2-66 or better. Of course, if you're playing in DOSBox, just crank those cycles up and go to town!

Joystick support

Although it will in the final release, *Acronia* does not currently support joysticks/gamepads. It did at, one point, have support for 4-button joysticks. However, while it did work in DOSBox, it was never successfully tested on real hardware. We are exploring options.

For the time being, if you would like to use a joypad to play *Acronia* (and you should! It's heckin' fun!), then on modern systems, you can use software such as Joystick Mapper, JoyToKey, or QJoypad to map your pad's controls to keyboard inputs.

There's even a joystick-to-keyboard mapper for DOS that runs as a TSR, called **JoyEmu**. We can't vouch for it as we didn't have time to try it out for ourselves before the demo dropped, but we've seen it recommended in a few places in DOS gaming circles. If you'd like to check it out, it's available on the author's website at:

https://szanella.tripod.com/joyemueng.htm

Known bugs

We couldn't get to these in time, but they're on our radar and will be fixed for the final release:

AUDIO:

- In OPL music mode, notes sometimes hang around longer than they should, especially when switching or stopping the music.

GAMEPLAY:

- On Easy difficulty, Jumpers can't hurt you. Like, at all. Even when they're biting. This is a coding oversight. Oops.



About the Author



From her beginnings writing simple programs on her family's first computer (a secondhand TRS-80), to the QBasic scene in the late 1990s, and into the present day, **Clarissa Toney**'s best, brightest dream has always been to make and publish a video game.

Inspired by her favorite shooters, platformers, and RPGs, she spent her child and teen years teaching herself to program by writing simple games. When her vision exceeded her skills, she drew maps, wrote stories, drew box art, and wrote manuals for those games that couldn't yet exist. Some of those early projects exist in one form or another to this day, and are the seeds of several of Hadrosaurus Software's upcoming game projects.

Although a graphic designer for newspapers by trade, Clarissa is a self-taught programmer, artist, game designer, writer, and sometimes musician. When she's not busy changing the world, she lives somewhere in New Jersey with her wife Denise and their black cat Kiki.

About Hadrosaurus Software

In eons past the Earth was dominated by mighty animals now known as dinosaurs. Thought to have gone extinct 65 million years ago, they have, in fact, been living amongst the younger species to this day. What do such wondrous beasts do these days?

Why, they make exciting computer entertainment software of course!

Hadrosaurus Software, named for the noblest of dinosaurs, is a team of such clever creatures churning out only the most delightful computer game experiences, with millions of years of experience to work from.

* * *

Founded in 2022 by Clarissa Toney and Tamsin Mugg, Hadrosaurus Software is an independent, author-focused, five-person-strong game studio. Our passion lies in telling stories and creating worlds.

Acronia, currently in development, follows our first published title, *The Aching*, which was released in April 2023.

* * *

To learn more about Hadrosaurus Software and all the exciting things on the horizon, visit us at **www.hadrosaurus.net**.



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