

used in flight simulators) and conventional bit-mapped computer illustrations to create the most believable fantasy milieu ever seen in a computer game. And we're not just talking about interior decoration — even your character is constructed of 3-D polygons and strolls about with surprisingly lifelike, fluid movement.



Alone in the Dark is one of the must-play games of the year.

Enhancing the visuals is the game's display, which uses the full width and height of the monitor's screen to show your view of the surroundings — no cut-down windows or partial screen displays here. When you're alone in the dark of Derceto, there's no interface to get between you and terror. With occasional moans, howls, and a brooding musical score piercing the silence, exploring this dimensional domain of spirits is a totally engrossing experience.

As you wander from hall to horror, the camera-style angle showing your point of view changes to provide what the computer perceives to be the best perspective on your character and environment. This isn't always the best, however. Sometimes the computer places you in the cheap seats behind a pillar or post, making it difficult to accomplish a simple task.

Mechanically, *Alone in the Dark* draws on many of the conventions of computer adventuring: Find the object, go to the right location, use the object. The puzzles are challenging, sometimes brutally tough, with an occasional real-time spin put on them as a monster gets on your

tail and tries to keep you from completing a solution. If you're not fast enough, you'll die in a few moments of blood-splattered violence. That violence, by the way, sums up character interaction in the game. When you encounter another creature, you can pretty much count on a kill-or-be-killed relationship, nothing more.

On the up side, you can save the game before disaster strikes. (On the down side, I was unable to access more than one saved game, despite information in the manual that suggests several save games can be stockpiled and restored.)

GETTING DIZZY

Learning to control your character is a tad troublesome at first. Since movement is limited to

forward/backward motion and left/right rotation, you have to navigate a course through the house while keeping the character's orientation in mind. And because the camera angle regularly changes as you traipse through a location, figuring out which cursor key to press can be a dizzying experience until you adjust to the game controls.

For some players, finessing the keyboard will be a moot point. They'll be disappointed because *Alone in the Dark* has no available joystick control. It's keyboard only. A joystick would make movement more accessible and a two-button joystick would eliminate some of the slightly awkward multi-key combinations needed to control the character.

To select from a range of character actions, you'll have to leave the full-screen action and shift to an inventory/action screen to toggle between fight, drop, search, throw, and a few other activities. Real time stands still while you're readying your next move in this screen, so you're not going to get ambushed by a monster while you're off in computer-landscape. You'll scroll swiftly through a list

of objects in your possession and rapidly choose a move. Still, shifting away from the main action crumbles your suspension of disbelief in a game that has an unusually powerful habit of luring you into the fantasy. A few hot keys or some other device that would keep you in the house while making choices could be better.

And, like all 3-D graphics games, the more powerful your computer, the better the experience. A 386/33 is perfect.

Players comfortable with more conventional graphic adventures will be swept away by the excitement of this game. With a high sense of drama and atmosphere, state-of-the-art 3-D graphics technology, and some real knuckle-gnawing puzzlers, *Alone in the Dark* is one of the must-play games of the year.

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I•Motion, 1333 Ocean Ave., Santa Monica, CA 90401, (310) 576-1885; IBM PC or compatible (386 or faster recommended); 640K RAM; VGA (256-color); DOS 3.1 or later; \$59.95

SPACE QUEST V: THE NEXT MUTATION

By Wes Nihei

In space, no one can hear you laugh.

Sierra created *Space Quest* just for laughs, but it succeeded in building a top-notch series of adventure games. *Space Quest V: The Next Mutation* continues the tradition, and keeps 'em rolling in the asteroids.

Once again, you step into the soiled shoes of Roger Wilco, the galaxy's most inept janitor. This time Roger's bamboozled his way through *StarCon Space Academy*, and, unbelievably, now commands his own starship, the *Eureka*. It's only a ratty garbage scow — with a warp drive and a cloaking device — but, hey, a command is a command.

The story also picks up a piece of plot from *Space Quest IV*, as Rog finally meets the mystery woman from

the Holodisk. She turns out to be an ambassador who wants the Star Confederacy to capture the Sludge Bandits, nasty boys who dump toxic waste on the four planets in her star system. Unfortunately, Roger's not the only one pursuing this garbage-minded dream; so is Captain Quirk, commander of StarCon's flagship.

Your work's cut out for you here. You must outwit Quirk, win the lady's hand, escape an android assassin, battle gigantic robotic creatures, and capture a gang of half-wit mutants. You also have to take out the garbage.

LOST IN SPACE QUEST

Space Quest is a good-looking graphic adventure game that keeps you entertained with a far-flung space trek and plenty of yuks. Your quest begins in the hallowed halls of StarCon Academy, rockets through various vehicles in deep space, and lands on several far-out worlds. As in previous Wilco adventures, you must explore your surroundings, converse with other characters, and find various objects to guide Roger through a variety of misadventures.

Humor runs the gamut from slapstick to sight gags. The laughs and chuckles, most of them the slip-on-a-banana-peel kind, are almost all at Roger's expense. He's the butt — deservedly so — of every character's jokes. Science fiction buffs particularly will enjoy the countless references to films and games of the genre (the Bridge Simulator Room resembles the Millennium Falcon from *Star*

Wars, the guards play Asteroids on their security monitors, and Roger suffers from a face-hugging alien companion).

Typically Space Quest-ish, this fifth episode is full of perplexing puzzles as well as deadly alien encounters. You pilot your ship, the Eureka, through various space hazards, though half the challenge is just figuring out how to run things. Space Quest V taxes your brain more than your reflexes, and if you're easily exasperated, skip this one. Space Quest vets, though, should find it easier — about as much a challenge as IV.

Success comes from using well-worn adventure game strategy: explore everywhere and touch everything. You find key items hidden in out-of-the-way places, and even the most mundane objects may have a special purpose. Antacid, a hole punch, and a fuse, among dozens of other bits, play critical roles, for instance.

Fail, and you die. Simple. Except that you'll have to put up with a put-down by the program.

GARBAGE IN, YUKS OUT

At least the game is easy to play. The simple point-and-click interface, where the mouse really rules, will be familiar to Sierra adventure game players. To optimize the program's performance on your PC, you can adjust the graphic detail, volume, and game speed from a single control panel.

A easy-to-use menu bar displays the icons that make Roger walk and talk, look and grab. A special command lets you direct orders specifically to your sometimes restless crew. Space Quest V even hides the menu until you point at it, freeing up more room for the game's first-rate graphics.

That's important, for the program's 256-color VGA images are superb. All the hardware, including space vehicles and weapons, sport sleek, high-tech designs, while

the motley cast of weird characters showcase some imaginative fantasy art. Equally impressive are the lush scenery and the detailed background graphics.

Space Quest V is a well-designed, entertaining graphic adventure game that's funny and fun. Roger Wilco fans will definitely find their hero in good form, but should be ready for some serious problem solving.

We all know the final frontier comes charged with action. We've watched enough *Star Trek* for that. But it's nice to know humor isn't lost in space.

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Sierra, P.O. Box 600, Coarsegold, CA 93614-0600, (800) 326-6654; IBM PC or compatible (286 or faster); 640K RAM; EGA/VGA/Tandy VGA; supports AdLib, ProAudio Spectrum, Roland MT-32, SoundBlaster, Thunderboard; hard-disk drive required; mouse recommended; \$59.45

SHERLOCK HOLMES CONSULTING DETECTIVE: VOLUME II

By Bob Lindstrom

The game is afoot...all over again.

For the second time, Sherlock Holmes is sleuthing the upper crust and grilling the low lifes of London in a multimedia quest for truth, justice, and the solution to three insidious crimes.

As its name suggests the CD-ROM-based Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective: Volume II is the follow-up to ICOM Simulations' immensely successful Holmes mystery, which pioneered the use of live-action video in a multimedia game. No longer did the computer reduce the legendary Holmes to mere text or a Saturday morning caricature of the lanky, caped detective. Holmes moved and spoke and deduced in full-motion, color video clips. Somehow, the bat-



Great art, and some good grins, are part of Space Quest V's vision of outer space.