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Fantasy Adventure Issue



Sierra's
King's Quest III



Electronic Arts'
Bard's Tale II

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Fantasy Adventure Issue



OFF on a QUEST

by Roy Wagner

TITLE:	King's Quest III: To Heir Is Human
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
PRICE:	\$49.95
DESIGNER:	Roberta Williams
PUBLISHER:	Sierra Coarsegold, CA

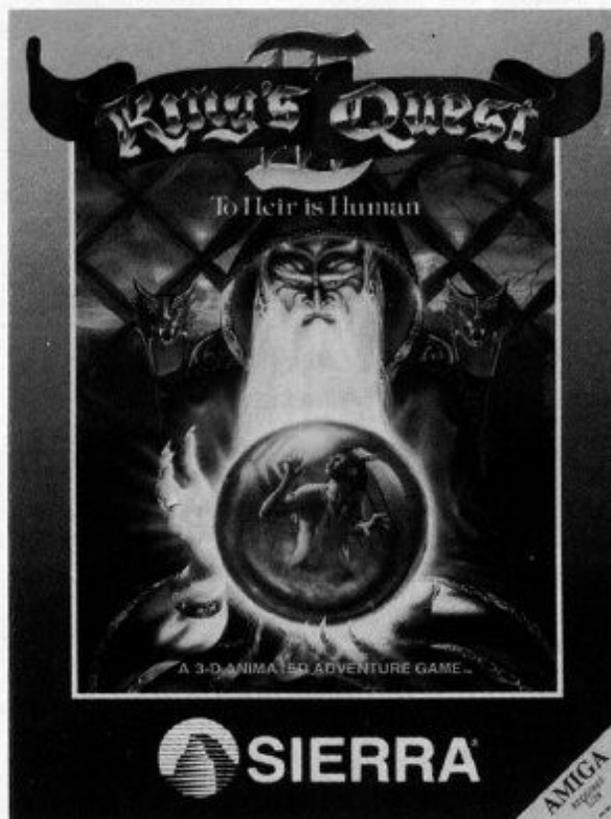
Sierra has produced some very popular 3-D graphic adventures for the IBMpc called the *King's Quest* series. The third title of this series, *To Heir Is Human*, and a new space parody game following in the same tradition, *Space Quest*, have just been released. A similar game, *Police Quest*, which is being written by a police officer, will soon be released.

This suggests that the *Quest* concept has been quite successful and popular with the buyers of software for the IBM type machines. From what I have seen of the product line as it runs on the IBM type computers, the software is *quite* impressive for what can be done on that type of computer.

In order to expand its market, these games have been ported to the Commodore Amiga. The Amiga ports are being exclusively distributed by Electronic Arts. An additional title, *Winnie The Pooh In The Hundred Acre Wood* (for the Amiga), is also being distributed by EA (This game is an outstanding graphic adventure game for children ages 7 and up.)

About the Quest Series

The *King's Quest* series was designed by Roberta



Williams a few years ago. It introduced a new twist to graphic adventures games. These adventures contained animation and some semblance of three dimensional animated characters, including the one you control with a joystick, which move about the screen passing behind objects such as trees or rocks, through doorways, and up and down stairways.

When this concept first appeared, it made quite an impression. It is still impressive and very few other games have dared to equal it. For it to be done on the IBM series and make a good use of the limited colors on an IBM was quite an achievement. This certainly gives it great reason for its tremendous success.

King's Quest, the first in the series, is the fantasy adventure of Sir Graham who has been commanded by the King of Daventry to recover three priceless items. These items were, unfortunately, stolen by three magicians (a greedy sorcerer, a coniving dwarf, and a deceitful witch). Treasures and clues can be found in any area. "Strategy plays big part in this adventure, as players must know when it is useful to challenge an obstacle, such as a fire-breathing dragon, and when it is wise to run," says Ken Williams, President of Sierra.

King's Quest II: Romancing The Throne contin-

ues the story. For, having returned the lost treasures, you have now been crowned King of Daventry. The Kingdom will not remain prosperous, however, unless you marry and produce an heir. To do so, you must rescue Valencia, a lovely maiden that is being held captive in a quartz tower by a jealous crone in an enchanted land.

The tower can only be entered through three locked doors and you must find the three keys. Along the way you will encounter characters of legend, folklore, and fantasy, as well as explore underground caverns, eerie towers and ocean wonderlands.

Our Quest Begins

King's Quest III: To Heir Is Human continues the saga of the King Graham family in the Kingdom of Daventry, though how is not apparent until the end of the game. It is not necessary to have solved or played, the previous *Quests*. This one is more challenging than its two predecessors. You play the role of Gwydion, a young slave to the evil wizard Manannan. You must learn enough magic to escape from his control or else you will be zapped from existence.

Your quest begins in the home of Manannan, high on a mountain top in the countryside of Llew-dor. Your first task is to thoroughly explore the household to learn what objects in its many rooms can be helpful. Not everything is easily found in the home of a mean wizard. He regularly requires you to perform several tasks such as sweeping the floor, feeding the chickens, and getting him food. Satisfying his hunger will with time become a major challenge, but one well worth meeting.

When he is not controlling your actions, he will generally be sleeping or away on some evil deed. This will give you time to do what must be done. Finding objects that are needed is not easily accomplished, since you must be able to identify each object from a less than high resolution representation of the object, then "get" or "examine" it using the correct words of the game's limited vocabulary. Some things are not so obvious and "get all" cannot be used to find all obtainable objects in a room.

The house is well displayed in three dimensions. You must go through doorways, as well as up and down stairways. This can be done using the key-

board, a joystick or, with the Amiga, a mouse. Using the mouse was most difficult and was not well-implemented. Movement up and down stairs is not easy, due in part to the 3-D perspective.

Once you have thoroughly explored the house and discovered some of the wizard's magic, you are ready to explore the surrounding countryside. It is also very helpful if you have found the map that is located in the house. (I'd like to tell you where it is, but won't. It is very well hidden and you are not given any clue that it is behind something you have already looked at.)

The first thing you will discover outside are some chickens and then a path down the mountain. Moving down the path is not so easy at first, but there is a useful set of commands (slow, normal, and fast) that can be helpful in several situations. On the Amiga, function key 10 controls the animation speed of your character.

The game lets you SAVE your progress and RESTORE to that point when necessary. Up to ten named files may be saved to your own formatted disk. A SAVE is highly recommended before going down the path. In fact, you are well advised to frequently use the SAVE option.

You will not be able to perform any of the spells without going down the path and exploring the countryside. And down there you will encounter several challenges. You will meet Medusa, who is so repulsive that you turn to stone if you look at her. Bandits will rob you of all your possessions, but all is not lost. The house of the Three Bears will let you experience some of the "fun" of Goldilocks and obtain some useful objects. If you can get past the Spider, a friendly oracle will tell you some interesting information and give you a useful item.

If you have gotten enough money, seen the oracle, and gotten rid of the wizard using tricks of his kind, you should be able to continue your quest by catching passage aboard a ship that arrives. Once you have gotten this far, you can feel pretty good about your questing skills, but there are still many more challenges.

You will now encounter some very nasty pirates that certainly test your patience and SAVED games. You'll find a lot of "red herrings" exploring this ship, but your main goal is to cross the ocean. If you have been using your magic as it was intended,



you will now be able to find some buried treasure. Of course, you may also have to contend with a pirate on the beach, but he *can* be avoided. Next, your path climbing abilities will now be put to the test (again!). You must also get past an abominable snowman. Then, once down the path and in the Kingdom of Daventry, an old gnome will tell you much of what is currently happening. The castle is locked, though, and a dragon is holding the Princess captive. If you've gotten this far and studied your magical spells, you will succeed and conclude this most challenging game.

The game has some very nice animation. For an IBMpc, the graphics are visually aesthetic, but for an Amiga they are very poor, and only 16 colors are used. The 3-D perspective is a nice concept, though. For the Amiga version, the game provides a good use of Function Keys.

Con-Questing the Will

Where there's a will, there's a way. This game is *tough!* When considering whether to pay \$49.95 for this game, be sure and add the price for the Hint Book too. There will be very few that can get through this game without a lot of help. Important clues are not given from the text.

For example, there is not a way to know where the map is without the hint book, unless you are extremely persistent *everywhere* that you look. Even if you know where it is and enter "get map", the game responds; "It's of no use" or "You don't need it" or "There's no reason to take it." Wrong! The map can be extremely helpful, but the game wants you to do something more. That is going beyond

fair game play.

It is difficult to keep the objects that you have worked so hard to acquire. The wizard, bandits, and pirates are all after those artifacts. It seems to be you and your SAVEs against seemingly random events. Some of them are not so random, however, and in some cases, you can get your objects back again.

There is just too much stairway and path climbing. Having to do something difficult over and over again is no fun. Having to do something over and over again, until you succeed, also applies to finding several objects. Even though they are there, you must use "get" in the exact location or you won't *get* the object you *know is there*. This also is very frustrating.

Here I would digress to say that this is where a pure text adventure proves more enjoyable and fair to the player. In such a game, the text is forced to describe each situation and you can act upon what you have read. If it tells you that there are acorns under the tree and you need acorns, you should be able to get them and not graphically move about the scene to be in the right spot to get them. Also, in a pure text game, you don't have to figure out what that object is that was drawn with two colors and a few pixels.

For an IBMpc or reasonable facsimile, this game is very well executed. On the Amiga, it does use pull down menus and requestor boxes, but graphically and colorwise, it is certainly at a much lower level than you have come to expect on the Amiga. It is highly commendable that it does multitask. (I am able to have the game running at the same time that I am writing this article.)

If you are interested in playing with the 3-D concept of these games, I suggest you try *King's Quest I* since it is much easier. (I found a brief encounter with *Space Quest* to be very similar to *KQ III*, excessive action to attain essential objectives.)

If your frustration level is low, I highly recommend that you purchase the hint book. The hint book is designed so that you only need to reveal the hints to those situations in which you need help. Knowing how to accomplish the task doesn't make it that much easier to do and it still requires you to explore most of the game. It is sort of like taking a guided tour versus just driving around without a map.