

review: **Wolfenstein 3D**

by Douglas Kiang

Type: Action/Arcade

Publisher: MacPlay (800/4MACPLAY)

Shareware Fee: \$14.95 (gets 27 additional levels)

Requires: 68030 Macintosh or better, 4 megs RAM, system 6.0.7 or later. (68040 recommended)

Protection: None

Just to prove to you how dedicated we IMG reviewers are to reviewing the finest in Macintosh entertainment software, I worked my way through half a box of Dramamine™ in order to complete this review. Castle Wolfenstein, once a legendary Apple II game, has been completely redone by Id Software and MacPlay in order to bring you Wolfenstein 3D for the Macintosh, a first-person perspective game that rockets you at full speed through a castle in search of Nazi treasure. The sense of motion is so smooth and realistic that the game ought to come with seat belts and a sign warning people sensitive to motion sickness that they are in for the ride of their lives.

You Must Be This Tall to Ride. Wolfenstein 3D is being marketed as shareware, which means that a 3-level version of the game (reviewed here) is freely available. By registering the game for \$14.95, you will gain an additional 27 levels for a total of 30 levels altogether. At this price, the game is a steal. As the game begins, you find yourself at the bottom of a vast castle, armed only with a pistol and a clip of ammunition. The object of the game is to work your way to the silver door at the end of each level, collecting treasure and keys and shooting any guards who get in your way (no subtleties of plot here.) Scattered throughout the castle are secret panels and passageways in which you can find additional weapons, ammo, and medical kits; one of the big challenges in the game is learning how to find these panels by pressing on the right section of wall. At the end of each level, points are tallied up according to the amount of time it took you to complete the level, what your kill ratio was, and how many of the secret areas you were able to find. You get far more points for finding treasure than you do for achieving a minimum time, so take your time and search carefully (finding the chain gun on level two can also make things a lot easier for you.)

[chtung, Baby!](#) To maximize game speed, you can change the screen size to one of three resolutions: 320x200, 512x320, 640x400, or 640 X 480. Wolfenstein 3D ran smoothly on a Quadra 660AV at the medium window size. In porting Wolfenstein 3D to the Mac from the original DOS version, MacPlay used special graphics created for the Atari Jaguar; the result is brand new 256-color artwork that is twice as sharp as the original version, yet manages to keep the same fluid frame rate. MacPlay also re-recorded all the sounds, even going so far as to bring in native German actors to give the cries of "Halt!" and "Achtung!" those proper Teutonic inflections. Finally, they added great new Wagner-esque background music that sounds great on external speakers or headphones, and keeps the suspense level high. All of these improvements make the Macintosh version of Wolfenstein 3D far surpass the DOS original.

[Down a Dark Hall.](#) The details in Wolfenstein 3D really do make it stand out. Scattered throughout the castle are golden chalices, boxes of treasure, portraits of Der Fuhrer, and enough Nazi flags and memorabilia to turn a military collector green with envy. The passageways are constructed of a variety of surfaces such as red brick, mahogany wood, and stone. While Wolfenstein 3D doesn't approach the photorealistic texture-mapping of some other 3D games, the smoothness of motion is equally effective at conveying realism; Wolfenstein 3D plays like a comic book brought to life. There are even some subtle lighting and shadow effects; the most impressive is the way a guard's chest is lit by the muzzle flash from his own gun as he fires at you.

Wolfenstein 3D does have some limitations, however, in the way it handles objects. You can only ever see one view of an object, for example: try walking all the way around a body and look at it; you will see that it re-orient itself to present you with the same feet-first view.

This has some impact on game strategy in that you cannot “sneak up” on an enemy and see his back; his front (and, unfortunately, his gun) are always facing you. In addition, many of the flags you see are actually the backside of a flag on the opposite wall—this is why some of the swastikas look backwards! Overall however, Wolfenstein 3D has struck an excellent balance between detail and smoothness of gameplay.

Wolfenstein 3D’s controls are very simple, using only the numeric keypad, the space bar to open things, and the control key to fire. The only other controls that would be nice to have would be a “strafe” option that would allow you to move sideways. This would make the submachine gun much more useful in a crowded room. (Of course, you could always find the chain gun on level two, and then most of your troubles would be over.) With a Gravis GamePad, Wolfenstein 3D is an absolute blast to play.

A Pressing Need. To pick up items, you simply walk over them, and you can press the space bar while standing in front of a wall to see if there is a secret panel hidden behind it. Some sections of wall will slide back, revealing a secret room or passageway that often contains useful items. This aspect of the game can get extremely monotonous, as there is a lot of wall to cover, and some secret areas aren’t even marked by paintings. In addition, an automap feature would be nice, since on the larger levels it is easy to get lost. Still, it isn’t too hard to find items lying around, and every time you kill a guard you can take his clip, so you don’t really need to worry about ammo conservation in this game.

“Nice Dog... Nice Doggie...” The guards in Wolfenstein 3D are, for the most part, not terribly bright. Unless you let them gang up on you, they are mere fodder for your chain gun. You will also come across larger SS guards in blue uniforms who carry submachine guns and take more punishment, but if you kill one of them you can take his weapon. Be forewarned that there are also Nazi guard dogs patrolling certain areas of the castle, and they will show you no mercy, so feeling sorry about shooting them will only get you killed. It’s a dog eat dog world, after all. Finally, at the end of certain levels you will encounter a “boss” villain who is quite heavily armored and can be a very tough customer indeed. The various enemies will follow you once they spot you, so one strategy for handling rooms full of enemies is to let them see you through the open door, then back off and pick them off as they come through the door. The enemies in the shareware version of Wolfenstein 3D aren’t terribly challenging; hopefully the registered version will feature some brighter opponents. Network play is not an option, unfortunately. Being able to play on an office network or through an online service would add a whole new dimension to the game.

[ith This Kind of Action, Who Needs a Plot?](#) Overall, Wolfenstein 3D is an excellent 3D first-person game, mixing smooth animation, graphics, and sound to create an exciting, adrenaline-charged shoot-em-up that is tremendous fun to play. Especially in view of its no-nonsense price, Wolfenstein 3D is a must-have for the arcade game fan. The developers at MacPlay have taken an excellent DOS title and improved on it to make a Macintosh title that far surpasses the original. Support their efforts by registering the shareware version, and let's hope to see more ports of this quality in the future.

Pros

- Very reasonable fee
- High frame rate, resizable window
- Sharp, detailed screen resolution
- Great music and sound

Cons

- Some parts are monotonous
- Limited frame of reference
- Nazis not terribly bright (but you knew that)