

review: QuePad

by Dan Radmacher

Type: Game Pad device
Publisher: MicroQue (801/263-1883)
Retail Price: \$34.95
Street Price: \$34.95
Requires: Any Macintosh ADB port
Protection: None

have to admit that I missed out on the Nintendo revolution. My only experience was a brief flirtation in my mid-20s with a game a friend bought called Blades of Steel. From that, I developed my first case of Nintendo thumb, that digital irritation hard-core players often develop into a thick callous.

Well, Nintendo thumb struck once more after I received the QuePad for review. I tried it on the shareware version of Glider. I developed a set for Solarian II. I used it for a secondary controller for F/A-18 Hornet. I used it to guide my MacSkier down the slopes.

Thumbs Up. My thumb aches. But, even so, it's a happy thumb. QuePad is a typical Sega/Nintendo-type controller. It has an eight-way directional switch plus four buttons that control different options in different games. To top it off, QuePad includes two thumb switches and a two-way button in the center of the controller, giving you a multitude of possibilities for practically any game.

With QuePad, as with other gamepad-type devices, all of the buttons are programmable. You can program any button to simulate a keystroke or a mouse click. The directional controller can also simulate mouse movement or keystrokes.

uePad is not a replacement for a joystick. I tried to use it with Hornet, and crashed and burned. The directional controller simply doesn't have the necessary sensitivity. It constantly overshoots the mark. However, as a secondary controller for a flight simulator, QuePad shines. The directional controller works fine to hone in the electrical-optical missiles. The other buttons keep you from having to reach for the keyboard to hit the afterburners, change radar mode or tap the rudder.

The control panel software that controls QuePad is kind of quirky. Every time you click on a function, you hear a boink that sounds like Moe bopping Curly on the head. Don't the folks at MicroQue realize that when a Mac makes a noise at you, it's supposed to mean that you've done something wrong? Other than that, setting up sets for different games is a snap. When you edit a set or create a new one, a visual representation of the QuePad comes onscreen. Next to each button is either a mouse symbol or a key symbol with the programmed keystroke beneath it. To change the keystroke assigned to a button, simply highlight the old keystroke, then press the new one.

Each button is limited to one key. No combinations allowed. To change from a keystroke to a mouse click, simply click on the key symbol and it will change to a mouse. The directional control can be set to either mimic mouse movement or respond to keys. A number of parameters help you tailor the movement to meet your particular needs.

nce you've created a set, attaching it to the application takes a simple mouse click. The software is smart enough to switch between two open applications, so if you go from shooting down MiGs to shussing down the ski slope, QuePad will keep up with you.

One really quirky feature: If you have the control panel open, the QuePad is completely disabled. It won't work at all until you close the control panel. I had another strange experience where the QuePad went ballistic. I called up a Hornet mission, and buttons started going off randomly: my view would change, the afterburners kicked in, the rudder went wild. To top it off, my Gravis Mousestick II was disabled. I tried quitting Hornet and restarting. Same thing. I had to completely reboot my system to fix it. That bug has yet to repeat.

Job Well Done. All in all, QuePad does its job well, if not brilliantly. The software is quirky, but functional. The ADB connector has two plugs, one male and one female. The setup contributes to cable clutter. I much prefer the Gravis single-plug/pass-through design.

If you're an arcade-game fan or need a secondary controller for a flight sim, but don't want to shell out \$150 for a ThrustMaster setup, QuePad just might be what you're looking for.

Pros

- Configurable buttons
- Easy interface
- Sturdy construction

Cons

- Odd bugs
- Each button accepts only one command, no combinations
- Beeps at you each time make a selection
- No substitute for a joystick