

ucasArts Entertainment, \$29.95 US. Requirements: System 7 or greater, 68040 processor or better 4MB RAM (8MB recommended), 256 colors, CD-ROM drive. Contact: LucasArts Entertainment at (800) 782-7927.

At first glance the Day of the Tentacle seems like just another bad DOS port with Space-Quest 1 playability and annoying puzzles. Makes you wonder why any company, especially LucasArts, would even attempt to convert a low-res aging game to the Mac. Fortunately, Day of the Tentacle is a prime example of the old adage that looks can be deceiving.

Day of the Tentacle (DOTT) begins with a light-hearted and mildly bizarre cut scene where two slimy tentacles, Green Tentacle and Purple Tentacle, are strolling around near the waste area of Dr. Fred's Sludge-o-Matic. Feeling a tad parched, Purple Tentacle decides to imbibe the Sludge-o-Matic's harvest. Green Tentacle tries to stop the purple suction-cupped menace from sipping the brown goo, but alas, Purple Tentacle drinks heartily. Suddenly, Purple Tentacle announces that he feels refreshed, invigorated, and is now fully capable of taking over the world. Oh yeah, and he grows arms as well (no hands or fingers though). Sensing impending disaster, Green Tentacle contacts Bernard Bernoulli (you) in the hope that he can help curb Purple's penchant for world domination.

After a friendly hamster drops off Green Tentacle's rather cataclysmic news, you and your two buddies, Hoagie and Laverne, scoot on over to Dr. Fred's in an attempt to travel back in time and prevent the Sludge-o-Matic from ever producing any tentacle- mutating sludge. Here's where the plot gets weird. In a first-ever attempt at time travel in one of Dr. Fred's machines, you end up right where you started, and Hoagie and Laverne end up 200 years into the future, and 200 years into the past respectively. It's now up to you, not only to save your friends, but to save the world.

No, I was not making any of this up.

The gameplay of DOTT is actually fairly simple and intuitive. Simply click on the area of the screen you want to interact with. The default setting is "walk," so wherever you click your mouse, you're going. Otherwise you must choose from an assortment of nine command words lingering (along with your inventory) in the lower portion of the screen. Open, Use, Pick Up, Talk to, the usual assortment of commands are available. The environment is surprisingly interactive. Instead of one or two key interaction points in a room, there are usually many different objects to manipulate, pick up or just plain look at.

hat really sets DOTT apart from any other titles in this genre is its incredible sense of humor. The hand-drawn cartoonish style of the backdrops and characters combined with a pseudo-'50s B-movie aura give the game a hilarious environment within which the adventure can flower. The characters have well-acted voices with snappy dialogue that kept me chuckling throughout the game. Intermingled in this search-and-rescue escapade are a fair number of animated cut scenes. Although some might be annoyed at the lack of interactivity in these sections, I found them highly humorous and refreshing after solving a difficult puzzle.

Despite its apparent graphical simplicity, DOTT has reasonably steep system requirements. LucasArts says that DOTT can only run on an 68040 processor or a Power Mac, and even then, tricks like RAM Doublor and Virtual Memory must be disabled to avoid a performance hit. However, I ran DOTT on a 604/132 with 32MB RAM, with RAM Doublor on and it made little difference. It's probably safe to say that more powerful systems are capable of overcoming any performance difficulties Virtual Memory or RAM-related software can cause.

ay of the Tentacle is one of the nicest surprises I've had in the last 12 months. Not only is it cleverly put together, but once you get over the initial low-resolution shock, the hand-drawn art actually becomes an asset to the ambiance of the game. The real kicker for this fabulous romp through the Cyber-'50s lies in the deliciously witty dialogue sprinkled liberally throughout the entire affair. So don't let looks fool you, Day of the Tentacle is a gem.

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Ambrosia Software \$15 US (shareware).
Requirements: 640x480 256 color display,
at least 3.8MB of free memory. A 68040 or
PowerPC Macintosh is recommended, but not
required. Contact Ambrosia Software at
(716) 325-1910.

Many years ago, back in the mist-shrouded days of Atari-dominated arcades, there was a game called Qix. The premise was simple enough: use a laser beam to isolate chunks of a preset area. Within this area there would be sparks and other nasty things bouncing around which, if they touched you, would end your game in a hurry. The challenge was to cut away bits of the area until you reached a selected percentage. This percentage changed depending on the degree of difficulty of the current level. As one would expect, there have been many shareware incarnations of Qix over the years, but none have successfully added to the plot (so to speak).

Barrack is an action game in which you must clear enough area in the given space to advance to the next level. You are equipped with a Barrier Gun that has a laser at both ends. This laser fires simultaneously from both ends no matter what its positioning, or at what angle it is engaged. To throw a wrench into the machinery you have an ever increasing (by levels) amount of balls bouncing throughout the enclosed area. As you reduce the size of the enclosed area it becomes increasingly difficult to successfully enclose an area without colliding with a ball. In fact, every time an enemy structure collides with a laser beam your Barrier gun is emitting, you lose a life.

It's a darned good thing you start out with a lot of lives.

Of course if this was all there was to the game than it wouldn't be much different than Qix, now would it? Fortunately, Ambrosia has incorporated the usual yummy enhancements that have become a trademark of their games. There are Lightening Bolts, which provide much needed extra "zip" to your lasers; there are Cluster Magnets, which attract bad guys through—you guessed it—magnetism; and there are even extra lives to be scooped up. However, the most important freshly baked yummy you can get is the Ammo Box. This gives your laser a supercharged ability to rip through the fabric of the playing field almost instantly. When there's 25 balls filling a single space, you'll do well to have saved some Ammo Box bounty. These yummys appear on the screen after a yummy "cake" floats around for a while before exploding. If you're lucky, you'll get a yummy shower.

The only other handy yummy-like entities are the multipliers, which can boost your score for any level from two to four times its original value. But there's a downside to the multiplier as well. As the multiplier cycles through its different bonus settings, you'll notice that there lurks a "1/2" multiplier which, as you might have guessed, is really a divider. Any score you get after catching a "1/2" multiplier gets divided by two. Yuck. Even more annoying is the "Nyah-Nyah" child-like voice that accompanies it. After a while you'll find this excruciating to say the least.

The enemies consist of various types of balls, and one shark. There are six balls in total including Pawn balls, Glass balls, Ooze balls, and yes, even a Nuke ball. The latter can turn

into a good friend if you can enclose it with several other balls in a tight space. When enclosed tightly the Nuke ball explodes, destroying anything with it in the enclosure.

Without a doubt, though, the most heinous of villains in Barrack is the Land Shark. This vile creature cruises under the screen with only its demonic dorsal fin exposed and will strike out at you quickly and effectively. Any contact with a Land Shark means a lost life; sadly though, avoiding them means having to endure their constant taunting of "I will kill you!"

The graphics and sound in Barrack are up to Ambrosia's usual standard and are very reminiscent of their past efforts, and anyone who has enjoyed the likes of Apeiron, swoop or Maelstrom will do well to download this gem. The crisp clean animation and highly addictive gameplay will not disappoint ardent Ambrosia gamers. In fact, this game continues in the vein of looking like a commercial product, but coming for the low low cost of only \$15. It appears Ambrosia can't miss when releasing cool new games for the Mac, and we can hardly wait for their next title, Escape Velocity! MacSense CD subscribers can obtain Barrack right off this month's CD-ROM.

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