

k, so maybe I've been a little negative in my past articles about the Mac gaming industry. But honest, I don't boo the bride at weddings. Well, not usually anyway. I guess the bottom line is that it's just my underlying cynical personality that's rearing its ugly head in this column, for better or for worse. However, I'm not above taking an extended look in the mirror to reset my perception parameters. With my popularity dwindling faster than Pat Robertson at a Gay Rights rally, I thought that maybe I should take a long hard look at what's good about Mac gaming nowadays, instead of my usual dissenting ranting. So here's a list of four really good reasons why Mac gamers should be waking up in the morning like they were in a Folger's coffee commercial. "The best part of waking up is..."

he Mac has always had an advantage over the PC in screen resolution. Until recently, this advantage was actually a disadvantage due to the extra processing power required to handle the extra on-screen pixels. However, with the advent of the PowerPC chip Macs are now able to produce spectacularly smooth animation and gameplay in a full screen 640 x 480 environment. It has often been said that Mac users are very particular about what they will accept as a minimum quality level in games. Huge-selling PC ports with low resolution often don't even break even on the Mac. Many games really do have a higher quality of graphics on the Mac. Case in point: Bad Mojo from Pulse Entertainment. This game is considerably better on the Mac due mostly to the fact that the movie quality can have thousands of colors whereas the PC version is limited to 256. The reason for this lies mostly in the fact that to support most PCs, Pulse had to lower its standards. This brings us to the next point. Standardization.

e Mac owners know that all Macs are most certainly not created equal. However, when compared to the vastly diverse PC clone market, Apple's line of Macintosh computers look like Harcourt Fenton Mudd's cloned wives in that old Star Trek episode. This 'genetic' similarity in the Mac realm means that most games will run on the first try, without any system tweaking. Believe me, the difference in getting games to run on the two platforms is like the difference between buying a new car from GM, and making one from scratch after smelting your own metals. And anyone that owns a PC knows I'm not kidding ! When I get a CGW demo CD-ROM with 10 game demos on it, my P133 with Windows 95 will probably run

1/3 of them. The other 2/3 will either require the creation of special floppy boot disks, or a mystical religious rite involving goat's blood and a rhinoceros' gallbladder. In short, if you think you have it bad having to disable RAM Doubler every once in a while, you should be thankful you're an Apple customer.

ey, I know I've harped on this a lot lately, but Apple's move to the PowerPC-based machines has made a world of difference to us gamers. Case in point: I recently had a chance to watch Descent II run simultaneously on my PowerWave 604/132 and my Pentium 133. Amazingly, the Mac version performed better, and for some reason it just plain looked better. Of course, the folks at Interplay will tell you that both versions are identical and that any difference I saw was probably a holdover from a bad party. Whatever the case, the Mac is now on at least equal ground with the PC community, and in my opinion, could overtake the PC as the primary computing game platform if more companies would support the Mac as a primary development tool.

he future's so bright, I gotta...well, I gotta stop using cliches, that's what. My writing style aside, the Mac gaming community has never been bigger. In fact, it's grown 85% in the last year, and despite the doom and gloom surrounding Apple Computer there are ever-more announcements of 'A' games with simultaneous releases for both Mac and PC. Although it didn't work out that way, both Descent II and Wing Commander IV were supposed to be Mac and PC simul-releases. Activision's Elk Moon Murder Mystery, Microsoft's Close Combat, Interplay and MacPlay's Blood and Magic, and CyberFlix's Titanic are all slated as having the same Mac and PC release date. In the past, if a game wasn't actually designed on a Mac first, it had a zero chance of coming out within six months of the PC version. And although the Mac still lags noticeably behind the PC both in release dates and number of titles, the situation is infinitely more favorable than it was even two years ago.

lthough I can be pretty down on the future of Mac gaming, all in all I must agree we have a lot to be thankful for right now. Whether or not the Mac will continue to expand into the computer gaming market remains to be seen, but I have a feeling the Mac just might stand poised to take a bigger bite out of Bill's butt than any of us might have thought possible. The widespread acceptance of Windows 95 (a horsepower- sucking GUI), coupled with a growing demand from PC users for high-resolution 640 x 480 graphics has evened the playing field considerably. There is no longer a giant chasm of performance between the two platforms. Indeed, in some instances my PowerWave outperforms my Pentium even though they are supposed to be similar. Kind of gives you a warm fuzzy feeling, doesn't it?

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