Marathon CD

Are the new improved versions of old games really worth the discs they're written on?

The CD-ROM version offers utilities to create your own maps,
but be warned, it's not a simple job.

Marathon 2
Like all best selling items, the sequel is inevitable. Marathon 2 will be hitting the streets soon, and although largely the same, there are new weapons and aliens.

All the ratings
are for the CD enhancements. Marathon is still
a classic.

Marathon was a groundbreaker when it appeared six months ago. A fast, action packed and violent game, it seemed as out of place on the Mac as a relational database on a ZX Spectrum. It got rave reviews everywhere, including a massive 94% in Macformat 23.

The CD-ROM version promises more game for the same price. So, if you've resisted the temptation to buy Marathon so far, could these extras tip the balance? And if you've already bought the floppy version and played it to death, should you upgrade?

The first thing you get is Marathon (1.2), the latest version, which contains a few bug fixes and a few changes in levels where people, especially beginners, got stuck. But there are no new levels and nothing hugely exciting.

The main extra is a folder of shareware goodies. Marathon was designed to be easily customisable – if you're at all techie, you can alter aliens and weapons and design new levels. There are hundreds of such levels on the Net, but none of these are on the CD. Presumably Bungie wanted to keep the game 'pure'. But you can have extras such as anti-gravity boots, missile-firing hand guns, beefier explosions, and meaner aliens.

You don't get extra levels in the CD version of Marathon,
but you do get a serious armoury.

However, you risk unbalancing the delicately poised gameplay. Super duper weapons make killing too easy, anti-gravity boots bypass half the puzzles, and improved sound effects hold your interest for two minutes.

If you've already finished the game and want an excuse to replay it, these extras are fine. But if you've never played the game before, as soon as you get stuck you'll use a cheat, rather than work out the solution, and so ruin what is a superb game.

If you bought the floppy version, spend the price of this CD on Dark Forces. If you're going to buy Marathon for the first time, buy the floppy version – it's better.

Derek Smith

With the Physics Model Editor you can change most aspects of the
game. Seemed fine as it was.

Price: £49.99. Out: now.
Requires: LCIII or better, 4.5Mb of free RAM, System 6.0.5 or later, 256-colour monitor,
25Mb of free hard disk space, single-speed CD-ROM drive.
Contact: Softline on 0181 401 1234.

MACFORMAT rating 35%