# eview: Out of this World

Reviewed by Christopher A. Myrick

Type: Adventure/Action
Publisher: MacPlay (a division of Interplay Productions, Inc.)
Retail Price: $59.95
Mail Order:
$35.00
Requires: 256-color Macintosh, 2 MB RAM, hard disk, System 6.0.7 or higher
Protection: Code Wheel (appears only to be needed when game is first installed).
IMG Rating: √√√√

...Presently, Things Began To Happen. Your name is Lester Knight Chaykin, a young nuclear scientist with a propensity for running particle-accelerator based experiments during violent thunderstorms. This was never a problem, until this fine evening, when an errant bolt of lightning evoked some unknown physical principles and managed to transport you, somehow, to a different world.

Life on this world isn't so great, or at least that's what you first think as you find yourself sinking in a pool of water. You manage to swim to the surface, where you scramble onto dry land, the hairs on the back of your neck bristling, and a nasty feeling that something almost had you for dinner. Looking around, you realize that you are not at the lab anymore, and probably not even on planet Earth anymore. Suffice to say, you feel a tad lonely.

Walking around for a while, you manage to avoid sharing your precious bodily fluids with a group of disturbingly large leeches by using some deft footwork to smear the not-so-little buggers into the ground. You begin to wish for a slightly lonelier region. You keep walking though, always in search of some way to leave here and get back to Earth. Then you see it.

Take a black cat. Increase its size until it is taller than a human being. Add the posture of a hyena, with long legs up front, a huge powerful chest, and short but powerful legs in the back. What the hell, throw in a set of glistening white fangs. Got the idea? Perfect. Now, realize that having seen a living facsimile of this nightmare beastie, you begin to run as fast

as you can in the other direction. Too bad the beast is faster than you are. Will you survive?

The Plot? Anyone who has played Out of This World, a 256 color adventure/action game published by MacPlay, will recognize the preceding dilemma that young Lester has found himself in. As a kind-hearted human being sitting in front of a computer, your task is simple. Save Lester from whatever horrors might be awaiting him and get him back where he belongs. Sounds simple, does it not?

It would probably be simple if it weren't for the assorted bats, four-legged Lester-eating black-beasts, leeches, unseen beasts with very visible tentacles and other assorted creatures of this different world, none of whom seem to be herbivorous and all of whom seem to feed on fairly young human males. Especially those that get deposited on the planet with no clue as to what is dangerous and what isn't. One small hint: almost everything is dangerous.

f the unfriendly fauna isn't enough to make your task interesting, throw in an unspecified number of large humanoid creatures, armed with a variety of energy weapons whose blast rapidly reduces you to a charred skeleton. They appear not to like humans, and should you manage to get captured by them (it may be your only chance for escaping something else) and then escape, they will do their utmost to reduce you to a cute little skeleton! So all you have to do to save Lester is avoid all the little (and not so little) vermin that want to snack on you, evade the humanoid guys who don't like you and find your way out, somehow. I'd give you a hint as to how, but this reviewer is still trying to find his way out! Sleep has been forsaken in pursuit of this goal, and one day, soon, I should finish. Anyway, time to take a look at Out of This World and see just what the game has to offer.

Controls. Some have said that the simpler the controls for a game are, the simpler the game

is. While this may hold true for some complex games like Falcon MC and Mission: Thunderbolt!, rest assured that the "simple" controls for Out of This World are indicators of a simple game. You control this game via the keyboard, using the numeric keypad, the main keyboard, or with an Advanced Gravis MouseStick. While the game can be controlled exclusively by keyboard (and this appears to be the method of choice) you can use your mouse to make selections from the menu bar for things like sound, pausing the game, and hiding the background. You cannot use the mouse to enter access codes for starting at different levels (explained below), but this is only a minor inconvenience.

Sound. I have but one statement regarding the sound in this game. Hook your Macintosh up to a stereo, crank the volume until windows a block away rattle, and start playing. Like most recently published Macintosh games, Out of This World has good sound and takes full advantage of the Mac's built-in sound capacity (a moment of silence for owners of PC-compatibles who must deal with add-in sound card compatibility issues). Sound can be an important factor in the game, alerting you to incoming fire before you get nailed by one of those deadly energy beams. You also hear some neat sound effects when assorted bad things happen to Lester (I am particularly accustomed to the sounds made by the leeches when they successfully attack young Lester).

Color, Detail, Animation. If you don't have a 256-color [8-bit] Mac, you can't play. If you have a color Mac, you'll find that while the game does take advantage of the color spectrum, some of the screens tend to show mainly dull colors. This doesn't detract from the game, and in fact enhances the feeling of being in an alien world where even the terrain appears to be a gloomy harbinger of doom, which is no doubt waiting around the next set of gates. The level of detail is not as high as it could be, but this is more than compensated for by the animation. Unlike the classical adventure game where your character doesn't change shape as he or she moves, Out of This World uses smooth animation to enhance the game play. There is nothing like swimming along happily in a tunnel, only to be nailed by a grabber, a creature reminescent of an ant-lion gone bad in a major way. Naturally, the smoothness of the animation (i.e., the frame rate) is dependent on your CPU speed, the display size you choose (320 x 200, 480 x 300, 512 x 364 or 640 x 400) and whether or not you have an accelerated display system. If you are getting jerky animation, you can either reduce the display size, or, provided you have the cash, buy a faster Mac. Unfortunately, Out of This World only offers those four display size options and doesn't resize the display dynamically, so anyone fortunate enough to own a monitor larger than 13" will not be able to use their full screen to play the game.

Game Play. Unless you are one of those rare people who can start and finish complex adventure games in less than a day, a major concern will be the ability to save the game. Out of This World does not let you save individual games, but there really is no need, as you don't score points anyway. What Out of This World does allow you to do is start the game at different levels, assuming you've reached that level and have been given the appropriate four-letter password. As far as I can tell, there are 15 levels and you'd be a very foolhardy person to not write down the passwords for each level as you reach them. The manual even provides space for the passwords and a description of the level they refer to, so take advantage of this space and avoid doing what I did — forgetting a password and having to start two levels back (I thought my mind was steel trap, but it was working more like a leaking sieve that night).

...and thus your life became a living Hell! Lester, having been captured by the large humanoids, managed to escape through ingenious application of a couple of engineering principles (so obvious that I'll let you figure them out for yourself) and then happily blazed away with the laser pistol he'd "acquired." All was going well until the wonderful pistol ran out of juice, just as another large humanoid drew down with his own weapon and prepared

to toast Lester to a crisp. Fortunately, the toasting process is rather quick, albeit exceedingly painful, so your life will cease being a living Hell in a couple of seconds!

Summary.   MacPlay has done a good job of creating an action/adventure game that makes full use of the Mac's sound and color ability. Provided you have a fast CPU, the game can be very fun to watch, even if you keep leading Lester to disaster.

The game runs in 256 colors, which is nice, unless you happen to be one of the people who doesn't have a 256 color (8-bit) Mac. The sound, like that in most Mac games, is pretty good, and can be really impressive when your Mac is connected to a set of external speakers. Unlike Mission:Thunderbolt (see review in previous issue of IMG), Out of This World does not provide an infinite number of scenarios with different objects, monsters and threats appearing in different places. Thus when you do manage to finish the game, there is not much else to do. Of course, you have to finish the game first. Overall, MacPlay has included some of the best real-time animation seen in Mac games in Out of This World, taking this game into a different class than your average adventure game.


Pros
• 256 colors
• One-time copy protection scheme
• Nice sound
• Multiple window sizes supported
• Smooth animation (depending on window size and CPU speed)
• Lots of evil creatures to avoid

Cons
• Sleep deprivation may ensue from prolonged game play
• Maximum screen size of 640 X 400 [letter box]
• No instant replays of Lester's numerous brushes with death