

It's a Kind of Magic

Alan Bonsor gazes into his crystal ball and sees all his dreams coming

I was originally planning to write about all the exciting new developments taking place in the Archimedes games market, with companies such as Ocean, US Gold and Gremlin releasing games for the Arc. However, the arrival of an MS-DOS disc on my desk made me change my mind at the last moment. Not just any old MS-



Simon the Sorcerer is possibly the best adventure game ever DOS disc, mind you, but a disc containing Simon the Sorcerer.

Hands up all of you who torture yourselves by browsing through the non-Acorn computer magazines at the newsagent, wishing that we had games like The Secret of Monkey Island and its sequel LeChuck's Revenge on the Arc. Well I hate to disappoint you, but we're not getting either. There's a good reason, though. GamesWare, the company that's already brought us Xenon 2 and James Pond 2 - Robocod, went on a shopping

spree, and was told by some knowledgeable people to forget Monkey Island and obtain the conversion rights for Simon the Sorcerer instead. That was very good advice!

Simon the Sorcerer is possibly the best adventure game ever. Created by that most famous adventure games company, AdventureSoft, who did, I must emphasize, support the Beeb many years ago with the Scott Adams Adventures,

Simon the Sorcerer will have only just been released for the PC and Amiga by the time you read this. If all goes according to schedule, GamesWare will be demonstrating the Arc version at Acorn World '93, and will have the full release version ready by the end of the year. I've spent the last few weeks playing the PC demo version, from

which all the screenshots come, and I've been left speechless. I am actually playing it while writing

this; it's running in a window on my Desktop with Aleph One's 386 co-processor (boast, boast).

Simon the Sorcerer is an interactive graphical fantasy. The hero of the story is Simon,

The graphics are amazing, and have to be seen to be believed. Every single location is a work of art. It's as if the most atmospheric textual descriptions from Level 9's best adventures have been thrown into a pot together with the superb graphics from Magnetic Scrolls games, and a copy of The

a fairly normal 14 year old kid who, in Never Ending Story type fashion, is transported into a magical world of dragons, monsters, dwarves, swamplings and sorcery. You control Simon, guiding him through over 100 stunning locations, interacting with dozens of wonderful characters and solving mind-bogglingly complex puzzles.

All actions are performed with one of the most easy-to-use and intuitive user interfaces I've ever come across (it's almost as good as RISC OS!). Throw out the keyboard - everything is mouse controlled. The screen is divided into two sections, with the top two-thirds displaying the location, and



Hobbit, and left to mature for several years. The animation is superb, with Simon's walk made up of 80 frames. In one location, where Simon is contemplating the merits of sampling the Swamplings' renowned/infamous swamp stew, over 1000 frames are used for the various animations, which include Simon, quite literally turning green and losing his lunch. The Swampling is

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the bottom-third showing the 12 control verbs and the contents of Simon's magical hat, which is used to store everything he collects, including a voucher for a free beer at The Drunken Druid. As you move the pointer around the screen, you'll be told what different objects are (just like Help on RISC OS). To make Simon walk somewhere, simply point and click over the destination. If you want to pick up something, just click on Pick up and then on the object. To fill up a container with some delicious (not) swamp stew, made from the finest ingredients (swamp mud and woodlouse), click on Use, the container and then the stew. It's as easy as that.

an absolutely pathetic character whose birthday, it seems, everyone has forgotten, and who I imagine looks very much like a pleasant version of Gollum in The Hobbit.

The conversations between different characters are equally good, range from the sublime to the ridiculous, and are full of Hancock-type humour. Most of them take place

PRODUCT INFO		
Product	Simon	the Sorcerer
Supplier	GamesWare	Unit 26, The Bartlett, Hamble, Hants SO3 5RP. Tel. 0703 456523

