

Drake's Corner

by R.L. Drake

Rebel Yell!

Recently, my good friend and editor of Inside Mac Games, Tuncer Deniz, told me to check out the Mac Games folder on a popular online service where Lucas Arts maintains a customer support area. He found this area rather amusing because of people's written impatience with LucasArts regarding the continual delay in the release of Rebel Assault. I started reading the messages and to my amazement began laughing at some of the rather asinine messages being posted. For example:

"Well...its been 4 weeks since Rebel Assault (Mac) was supposed to come out...why the delay??? I don't want to pay \$65 for the game direct from you guys?? Pleeeeeaaaasseeee hurry because my friends have this game and it is really good!!!"

As I read on I noticed more and more people asking about release dates. Heck, even DEMANDING to know what the release date was.

"I am looking forward to seeing RA on the mac--so when will it be out? I said WHEN WILL IT BE OUT?????????"

Hard to believe, huh? Seriously, I'm not making these up. As I continued reading, I noticed a disturbing trend. Now, I've been around online services for quite a while but in recent years people have seem to have forgotten something called online etiquette. Instead of people asking kindly for help and posting

worthwhile and meaningful messages, online services seem to have become a pool for frustrated faceless subscribers to vent their unbridled voice and anger. Hmm, sure smells like teen spirit to me. Not to single out teenagers but does the following message sound as though it came from someone sane and over 19 years of age?

"I WANT AN X-WING GAME FOR THE MAC!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I WANT TIE FIGHTER FOR THE MAC!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! AND I WANT A B-WING FOR THE MAC!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! NOW I DON'T CARE IF YOU HAVE TO REPROGRAM ALL OF THE GAMES BUT THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH LUCAS ARTS COULD MAKE. JUST ABOUT EVERYONE I KNOW WITH A MAC WANTS X-WING AND TIE FIGHTER. WHY NOT GIVE MAC A B-WING AND LET THE PC OWNERS YELL FOR A WHILE I AM MAD AS @*%&^%\$%!!!! IF YOU WON'T MAKE GAMES FOR THE MAC THEN MAKE A UTILITY WHICH CONVERTS THEM TO THE MAC!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Do the words "pathetic little lives" come to mind? Face it, without having any kind of parental guidance or having a policing policy against such behaviour on online services, the "flame wars" will continue to grow. The truth of the matter is that anyone can subscribe to an online service and begin to write whatever he or she wishes. In fact, being on online services to some is like creating their own fantasy world. After all, on many online services you are allowed to create your own screen name, user profile, or even decide not to place your name in the membership profiles area. This anonymity allows people to create a persona radically different than their true personality. For example, I recently read an article about a well-respected lawyer of 50 years of age who paraded on online services portraying himself in chats as a bisexual female prostitute. I knew some lawyers weren't to be trusted....

But the root of the problem doesn't just only stem from online services. There seems to be an assumption among game players that computer entertainment publishers "owe" the consumer for buying their games. "I bought your game, now your ass is mine." Many gamers believe if they buy a game, that publishing company owes them big-time forever. Simply put, the publishers owe the gamer nothing! Sure, the industry has learned that to maintain a healthy business they must release timely bug fixes, offer online and telephone customer support, and other customer-related services. To think a game publisher owes you a debt of gratitude beyond that of the actual game purchase is utter nonsense.

"Why is this \$&^%&^ game taking so long to come out ??"

Another problem is our human nature of impatience, something we all seem to have within us. I must have seen the words "I can't wait until Game X ships" or "why hasn't Game X shipped?" a million times (well, OK, probably a few thousand times) on online services. Why people don't just shut up, sit tight, and wait patiently for the release is beyond reasoning. Moaning about an unreleased game is, in my opinion, a waste of needed body fluids. Good game publishers don't release software until the title has been properly produced, bug tested, and so on..

To be fair, I'd like to add that not all of these complaints are unjustified. Publishers often tend to underestimate production schedules, sometimes by years. Some publishers tend to be care-free when announcing release dates—others might state "late fall" or "early next year" which I think is a smart option for them. And, I hate to say it, but part of the problem are the gaming magazines themselves—I'm not excluding IMG from that statement, either. As you may have noticed, IMG publishes a rather lengthy game release date list each month. Naturally, gamers read these release dates and then complain to publishers if the game isn't released by the date read in the magazine.

Publishers also place ads in catalogs like MacZone and MacWarehouse, months in advance of product release. (By the way, in case you didn't know, most of the products you see in catalogs like MacZone and others are actually ads bought by the game publisher, a fact I didn't realize until my editor explained the process to me). You'll often find people on online services screaming about a title being released because the latest software catalog has that title listed as available for purchase. In many cases, that's far from the truth. The only way to ensure a title has been released is to actually call the mail order house and ask if

the product is really available for sale.

Online services like eWorld, America Online, and CompuServe are great places to talk with other gamers about Macintosh games and to communicate with gaming publishers directly. However, as more online services appear and more users get online, the danger of flame wars is becoming more prevalent. The next time you post a message, think about who will see your message. Think about what you are saying, and, most of all, think about the person who is going to take the brunt of your message. After all, what we are talking about here is games—get that? Games! Games are supposed to be fun, games are supposed to be relaxing—games are not produced simply to elicit responses like this one:

"I can't believe you still haven't released Rebel Assault! I give up, I'm not buying your stupid game. I hope LucasArts burns in hell! What is the matter with you people?"

If this message sounds familiar to you—if you recall writing such idiotic text, then there is probably something terribly wrong with you. Seek professional help fast!

Opinions expressed in this article by the contributor do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors and Inside Mac Games.