

## review: Hoyle Classic Card Games

by Darren Challis

Type: Card game anthology

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, Inc. (800/326-6654)

Retail Price: \$49.95

Street Price: \$31.00

Requires: 16 Greys — 256 Colors; System 7; 4 MB RAM; 11 MB disk space.

Protection: None

single package containing Bridge, Crazy Eights, Cribbage, Euchre, Gin Rummy, Hearts, Klondike and Old Maid? Yes, Hoyle Classic Card Games offers eight disparate games ranging from the inane through the intricate.

Sierra's aim is to "present a range of complexity and challenge that will appeal to both children and adults." By doing this Sierra run the risk of appealing to everyone but satisfying nobody.

Yet, in the end, this is not the central problem facing Hoyle Classic Card Games. The real problem is that Sierra has produced this product as if it was one of their adventure games. Their method of porting games to the Macintosh may benefit adventures, but it is inappropriate for card games.

The eight card games are all well-known and very varied. For instance, there is the childish Old Maid next to the complex game of Bridge. At first, Bridge may seem out of place. But there is point to putting Bridge amongst simpler games: doing so gives players who would never buy a dedicated Bridge product an introduction to the game. Unfortunately, the Sierra rendition does not offer features, like hints, needed by novices. Nor is it appropriate for advanced players — there are no expert options and the computer opponents are weak.

The version of Bridge does not compare favorably with stand-alone versions. Indeed, on the whole you would be better off with other commercial or shareware incarnations. The only inclusions here which I don't believe exist elsewhere for the Mac are Old Maid and Crazy Eights.

**The Opponents.** For every game but the solitaire Klondike, your opponents are computer-controlled 'personalities.' You select the opponents from two screens each containing nine characters. The first screen contains characters from Sierra adventures, including Leisure Suit Larry, Dr. Brain and Willy Beamish. The second set are the 'Classic Characters' — sepia pictures of the development team dressed in old fashioned clothes.

The characters are classified with one of three different expertise levels for each game. There are headshot graphics and digitized-voice expressions for each character.

**Interface.** Let's not mince words: the interface is pathetic.

First, there is almost nothing Mac-like. The menus contain few commands — most options are accessed by moving the cursor to the top of the game window. Doing this reveals a row of six commands. This is similar to the interface employed in the Sierra adventures.

The interface lacks any innovative features. I did not expect all the automation and other niceties of a game like Eric's Ultimate Solitaire, but Hoyle has almost nothing. Yet the box still claims, "An intuitive interface makes this the friendliest collection of card games around."

To play or move cards you must always drag them — forget about just clicking. The games would be easier to play if you could either drag or click, just like in almost every other Macintosh card game. To make things worse, the game is pedantic — you have to be fairly accurate in where you drag to. Also missing are standard features like an Undo command.

So what is noteworthy? One unusual feature that I discovered is that you can cheat in some games by changing certain options (my guess is that this is a bug). For instance, in Crazy Eights you can change to the 'One Card Only' variation when it is your turn, and then back to 'Unlimited' after your turn. You'll have the advantage of only picking up one card when

you cannot play from your hand; your opponents will have to continue collecting cards.

The other noteworthy feature in this game is all the graphics, animation, sound and music. Though these add to the variety, they are probably superfluous in a card game. Music is important in an adventure game where it can add to the atmosphere, but it is silly in a card game.

The graphics are for the 18 different opponents. Children may like the idea of seeing who they are playing against, but adults will quickly tire of this, especially as they make the product slow. Yes, you can speed things up by setting the 'Detail' to the minimum and the 'Pace' to the maximum, but even then the play remains too slow.

Launching the Hoyle Classic Card Games is also sluggish. Card games are different to other computer games in that you sometimes want to play a quick hand. But with Hoyle there are parts of the drawn-out opening sequence that cannot be skipped — never mind the two menus through which you must navigate before commencing your game.

There is also a size problem. A sticker on the front of the box reads, "Great on PowerBooks." But how many PowerBook owners can spare the over 10 megabytes that are required for this game? You cannot even remove files to make the installation smaller.

[raphics](#). You could live with the interface if this game had decent graphics. The porting process is clearly similar to that used for the Sierra adventures. There are three window sizes: small; medium and large.

After a few minutes of playing Hoyle I found my eyes began to hurt. This happened in the small mode, where the graphics are crisp but tiny and in the large mode, where the graphics are too blocky. The graphics are so imprecise that the clubs are easily confused for spades.

The graphics are pitiable for a Macintosh game in 1994. Card games are different than adventures — you are more likely to spend hours looking at the same, static screen. The Hoyle Classic Card Games graphics are simply inadequate.

[Deal'em](#). Sierra and its Dynamix division specialize in adventures. Their games in other

genres on the Mac have a bad track record. There are exceptions: Thexder, The Incredible Machine and the upcoming Lode Runner. But if you think, for instance, of how Red Baron compares to other Mac flight simulators, you will understand the inadequacies of Hoyle Classic Card Games.

#### Pros

- Includes 8 games
- More variety than solitaire packages

#### Cons

- Painful graphics
- Poor interface
- Slow
- Uses too much disk space