

## review: Bridge Deluxe with Omar Shariff

by Greg Kirkpatrick

Type: Card game

Publisher: MacPlay (800/4MACPLAY)

Retail Price: \$59.95

Street Price: \$39.00

Requires: Macintosh color or black and white, 1000K free memory, System 6.0.7+, System 7 Savvy.

Protection: None

People often wonder why they play cards all the time. Playing cards has become, in large part, a part of our social culture. In college, I found myself always playing bridge whenever I had the urge to play cards, or whenever I was supposed to write a term paper. As a student, it was distracting because playing bridge was so addictive and a great way to have fun with your college buddies. I know what you're thinking, bridge in college?

Now that those days are over, I've yearned to play Bridge again. "Bridge Deluxe with Omar Shariff", an excellent bridge game from MacPlay, let's me play my favorite game right at home. A hand can be played much more quickly, and if you don't feel like paying attention, then the computer can give a hint. I would recommend the game for people who already know how to play, and for beginners, but I would warn beginners that they will quickly lose interest unless they are also playing with human partners. Bridge is a game of interaction. By definition, playing a computer takes some of the fun out of it. By the other token, "Bridge Deluxe with Omar Shariff" gives a newcomer to the game an excellent way to practice his bridge skills and knowledge without having to have three other people.

Have you ever gotten angry at your partner because he played the wrong card? You may also find yourself mad at your Bridge Deluxe computer partner. The computer plays very well, but predictably. Rarely does the computer offer a lead which will fill a partner's singleton or void. The computer's analyses are always perfectly executed, but sometimes miss valuable information. I even caught the computer claiming all the remaining tricks, and in the end play, he lost one!

[ame Features](#). The game allows for games to be saved, loaded, manually entered, dealt with a bias, and randomly dealt. The game comes with ten tutorials which are designed to teach the basics of the bidding (the most difficult part of bridge). The tutorials are designed play by play, which can be annoying because it doesn't allow for experimentation. If you don't play the correct card, the computer beeps, gives you another try, and then plays the "correct" card and explains why that is the correct play. However, you'll have to quit and reopen Bridge Deluxe after using a tutorial because the program makes you follow the bidding of the last tutorial.

There is an online help file which offers useful, terse descriptions of many of the elements of bidding and game play. It covers the basics of the game, but refers the user to find a good book on the more complex issues.

Bridge Deluxe has some other nice features. Probably the best feature of the game is the "hint" feature. If you're not following play because your hand is a bust, then just keep hitting "play hint", so you can get to the next hand. The other terrific feature, "take back", is very useful. If you make a bad play, just take it back. You can go back all the way to the bidding. The game has a "powerbook friendly" feature and a black out background feature, which both add to the atmosphere, game speed, and battery life for powerbook users. The spoken comments of Omar Shariff were charming for awhile, but eventually I turned them off. I am impressed, Omar really does have a nice voice. Occasionally, I found myself turning him back on so I could hear him say "That was good play."

[nly in a Perfect World](#). I commend the writers of Bridge Deluxe, they've created an excellent bridge game, but only in a perfect world. I would like to have the following features, and I am sure that I speak for many. First, the computer must remember the scores of all the games you've played, and not just the current rubber. In human bridge, after a few rubbers, you have a piece of paper with all the scores. Secondly, the "hint" function should include a reason for the current bid. Since the computer has to know the reason for its advise, why not have it tell the user tell its reason also. This feature, if added would make Bridge Deluxe an excellent teaching tool, instead of just a good teaching tool.

The "novice" preference menu item might have had added this functionality, but unfortunately I couldn't get novice mode to work.

The only other annoyance I had was rather minor. I type command-Q. I would expect to quit. But instead a box pops up "Are you sure you want to quit Omar Shariff's Bridge Deluxe?" Yes, I am. That is why I hit QUIT! It would be within Mac programming guidelines to ask if you wanted to save the current hand, but otherwise, this is a subtle annoyance.

[A Must For Bridge Fanatics](#). If you know a bridge lover, and you need to buy someone a gift, get them "Bridge Deluxe with Omar Shariff". They might just brush up there game enough to be forever in your debt. Bridge Deluxe is almost guaranteed to improve the game of an average or novice player. For a bridge player, this game is incredibly addictive. I would recommend "Bridge Deluxe with Omar Shariff" to anyone who plays bridge or is serious about learning the game, which incidentally should be the entire world.

### Pros

- Extremely fun
- Good graphics
- Great hint feature
- It's Omar!

### Cons

- AI not too bright