

## review: **Realmz**

by Gene Alloway

Type: D&D/Adventure

Publisher: Fantasoft LLC, P.O. Box 1844, Waukesha WI 53187-1844

Shareware Fee: \$30.00

Requires: 1900k free RAM, 68020 or better processor, monitor with 640x480 resolution, 6 mb hard drive space. Will not work with Apple 12S monitors, and runs best with 3000K RAM.

Protection: None

One of the game genres for which the Macintosh has not had a large number of programs made specifically for it is fantasy adventure games. Well, we have a new one, and not only is it great fun and a good looking game, it's even shareware.

Realmz was first presented in IMG by Don Henson in the Sneak Peak section of the June 1994 issue. Since then, it has gone from version 1.01 to version 1.3.2, and is more robust and balanced than earlier versions. The major changes include centering ability for monitors over 14", more stable sound play, corrected overly powerful spells like Attack Deflector and Spell Deflector, removing a problem font (Theldrow), and fixing a problem with wearing certain items. Also, a number of general improvements were made in the stability of the game, making it much less likely to crash. I played Realmz on a Mac IIsi, Quadra 650, and PowerMac 6100 with no problems. However, word from the creator, Tim Phillips of Fantasoft, is that there may be some problems running on AV Macs. If you are using an AV Mac, turn off all the extensions you don't need, disable the screen saver (this is best done on all machines), and use the fast trade option when trading items among players or when in a shop. The click and drag capability when trading has been a problem on some AV machines, and is noted in the manual and on the well-done Realmz FAQ compiled by Ivans Shiachang Chou (ichou@helmholtz.bu.edu).

**Treasure from Chaos.** There are a lot of shareware games for all platforms out there, but this last year or so has seen some fine additions, for the Macintosh as well as for those Intel things. Most notably, Maelstrom has been responsible for countless hours in front of the white box by me, and thousands of others. Realmz follows in Maelstrom's impressive wake. While the genre, fantasy adventure game, has a number of solid entries, there's nothing like Realmz in the shareware arena. It doesn't add any breakthrough features perhaps, but it is professionally done, with great graphics, an excellent interface, outstanding manual, and

interesting storylines. In fact, there are a number of storylines going on at the same time, which makes the game, as Don pointed out in his Sneak Peak, non-linear in its approach. You can be pursuing several paths at once, and some choices you make resolving one storyline do indeed have repercussions to others. This makes the game very different each time you play.

The first (and only at this point) scenario is the City of Bywater. The goal is to resolve the many threats to the security of the city, including undead, arachnids and their evil mages, kobolds, orcs, giants, and a dragon. You get to meet some interesting city folk as well, from the blacksmith whose lost his son to the ever-at-odds captains of the guard to Mad Madam Otik and her expensive Magic Shop. You are often given a number of choices as to how you deal with a particular person or situation, which will help you learn more about the city and its environs. Also, just like in the Ultima, Kings Quest, or other games, there will be times when you need specific equipment, or to do a particular thing. The problems are straightforward and logically presented, so there should be little confusion about how to proceed. The only gripe I have about the storylines are that they are a little simple. Bywater is an entertaining place, though, and there are plenty of mini-escapades around to keep your interest up.

hat you get with registering this game is plenty. The most aesthetic thing that happens is that the loud and often annoying about box with its screams and crashes goes away. Gamewise, you can create characters up to 12th level of ability and they may raise as high as possible. Otherwise, you are limited to a set number of levels for characters in the beginning, and none can rise above level 3. Also, you will get to play new adventures for Realmz, two of which should be out by December. The shareware fee is \$30, and new

scenarios will cost an additional \$5 - \$20, depending on size and complexity. However, the manual assures us that the new scenarios will be shareware as well, so if you don't like a particular one, it won't cost you a thing.

[A Fine Parchment, My Good Man.](#) Realmz has superb documentation. The manual, done in DocMaker (just like our own IMG), covers all aspects of the interface and game play completely. Phillips also has the help of Lane Folk, the first Registered user and subsequent editor of the manual. Together, they have made a model of what a gamer needs be informed before he or she plays. The writing is clear, the organization logical, and the presentation professional. I especially liked the discussion of bugs, which are presented in context in the appropriate section. Troubleshooting information is also included as well. There are even sections on Shopping and money changing and an appendix of tables. The appendix includes information on spells gained by level, race attributes, abilities by level and by class, and more than a dozen others which gives a firm understanding of the building blocks of the game. There are more than a few commercial games which could take lessons here.

[Gems for Eyes.](#) Realmz also has a great look and feel. Phillips has created an overhead view, like that used in the Ultima series, and in combat, the view tightens to where you can see individuals. The city and terrain are especially attractive, and the icons for monsters and characters are many and well-done also. Some are almost too detailed, and I fear lose some impact due to their small size. In a future release, Realmz will sport a complete new graphical look. Considering how good it looks now, I am anxious to see what Fantasoft has done.

The interface is the real gem. A little less than half the screen is dedicated to the main map, with the right hand side devoted to character icons and information. The bottom of the screen contains buttons for group or individual actions and for text information. There is no where you have to click more than one level in, unless you are seeking a spell or item description. Everything is point and click, from trading to spell throwing. It is an marvelously easy thing to use. My hope for later versions is for a slightly larger viewing area, or for one that scrolls a little, to give a slightly wider picture, especially in battle situations.

[The Plays the Thing.](#) Realmz does play fast and fun. Characters are named and rolled for at the beginning of the game. Players choose sex, alignment, class, face and whole body icons, and race. Classes include fighter, monk, Paladin, ranger, cleric, thief, enchanter, and magic user. If a character does not have the stats you want, you can even choose to reroll. When you enter play, there will be some things you encounter, and a number that encounter you as well. Healing, resting, and trading are all available.

ombat is straightforward, though it is important to make sure you know what spells do, and make sure your people are out of the way when your mage pops a big one. You move individuals character, and can place ones with unused movement on guard. This is important, because it allows a character to strike at opponents when they approach. Conversely, opponents do the same thing, and will strike if a character moves away from an opponent which did not attack last round.

**The Last Word.** Realmz is without a doubt one of the finest shareware games, and an excellent RPG game period. It is easily in the same class as commercial games, and is still improving. Tim Phillips and Fantasoft have shown a firm commitment to correcting bugs and adding features to the game, and in a timely fashion as well. Though the registration cost is not dirt cheap, is fair and give a lot to the user, especially down the line when new adventures come out. If you've been waiting for a great new RPG for your Macintosh, let me tell you: Realmz is here. Play it, and send Tim & Co. a check fast.

And make sure you do send the money fast. Two new adventures, Prelude to Pestilence and Assault on Giant Mountain are due out by December, and only registered users will be sent them. In addition, version 2.0 will be released at near the same time if not before. It will sport the new graphics all through and new kinds of encounters as well.

#### Pros

- Shareware (look first, pay later)
- Excellent Manual, both in content and style %Very Good Graphics
- Timely bug fixes and upgrades
- Clear, easy-to-use point and click interface %Entertaining storylines
- No copy protection

#### Cons

- Battle screen a little too small
- Some Storylines too simple
- Detailed icons too small
- May have problems with screen saver