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ontrol of the game is extraordinarily simple and intuitive. Clicking on a unit or building provides you with a list of commands that can be issued to that unit. If you click on a peasant, you can command him to build a building, repair a damaged building, mine gold, or harvest lumber. Clicking on a knight allows you to attack an enemy, patrol an area, or stand your ground to defend the knight's current position. Likewise, buildings can be issued commands that tell them what to produce. Town halls will train peasants to aid you while barracks will crank out the soldiers and archers that will make up the bulk of your army.

Each unit or building in Warcraft 2 has a series of dependencies. The most basic of the units, the peasant, provides the brute force that will both collect natural resources and then put them to use by constructing buildings in your town. Creating new buildings gives your peasants the ability to produce new types of buildings. For example, the peasant must collect enough gold and lumber to build a lumber mill, which will then allow the peasant to build a shipyard along the coastline. The buildings that make up your town will then allow you to create units for offense and defense such as archers, knights, and ballistas. Because of these dependencies, the player is forced to build up the town in stages. In later games, it becomes especially important to design an efficient system for collecting and using resources to build up your town as quickly as possible.

Ultimately, the challenge of Warcraft 2 is in the need to manage your ever-growing town and

army while you are limited to micromanaging your units. The player must develop and execute a strategy for defeating the opponent while overseeing events on all corners of the game map. Production of units, defense of the town, and the invasion of the enemy town must all be balanced in order to play a successful game of Warcraft.

Warcraft Squared

Players of the original Warcraft will find that Warcraft 2 provides many new features which will be appreciated and enjoyed. In addition to the basic land units provided in the original Warcraft, Warcraft 2 allows you to travel by sea and air to accomplish your goals. Shipyards and foundries can be built in order to create oil tankers which fuel the construction of destroyers and battleships which can patrol the seas and attack buildings that have been constructed close to the land. Flying machines dragons can be built in order to scout territory ahead (especially when blocked by mountains) and dragons can attack enemy units without being threatened by land-only units. One of the most entertaining new features is the transport vehicle, which can carry land units across oceans and rivers to deploy them right under the enemy's nose. Even some of the most basic units have been enhanced; peasants can now attack their enemies and can contribute to a battle when you need every attacker (or defender) you can get.

Blizzard has also added to Warcraft 2 a feature nicknamed "The Fog of War" that obscures any parts of the terrain that are not visible from one of the player's units. This feature adds a new element to the strategy of the game. Even if you've explored the entire playing field, it is easy for an opponent to sneak a few attackers through to your defenses. Gone are the days of seeing attackers beginning the march towards you. For those who prefer the original Warcraft's style, there is an option to disable the Fog of War.

Warcraft players will also notice some improvements in gameplay. Roads are no longer a part of the game, so players can build more freeform towns and villages. Multiple town halls can be created, so the destruction of your town hall doesn't mean you've lost the game. You can even abandon your old town hall and build a new one near a fresh mine of gold. Also, you can issue simultaneous commands to nine units at a time, as opposed to four-unit simultaneous commands in the original Warcraft. Unfortunately, army management is still rather difficult; it's often a challenge to keep track of your soldiers in a large melee to make sure that they're doing what they should be doing.

Single-Player Campaigns

Warcraft 2 has two basic modes of play: single-player and multi-player. The single-player game provides two distinct campaigns, one for Orcs and one for Humans. Each campaign consists of about a dozen unique scenarios, each of which presents you with a different map and a different challenge. Neither campaign is more difficult; however, both Orc and Human units have the essentially the same characteristics and attributes though their names and graphics differ.

Each campaign provides a difficulty curve that slopes steadily upward. Even the most amateur player will breeze through the first campaign after a few tries, allowing the player to become accustomed to the game and its controls. Your options for buildings and units are limited in the earlier scenarios, which allows you to learn the basic strategies involving the basic units before you must deal with the options that accompany the more difficult scenarios. By the last scenario, though, you'll find yourself truly challenged with the task of managing dozens of units of different types as well as dozens of buildings which must be constructed to achieve your goal. And when you're finished with one campaign, the other Orc/Human campaign remains...

Mission objectives vary greatly, and this element enhances gameplay likewise. Most scenarios are search-and-destroy missions, but a few of the scenarios have different objectives. For instance, some scenarios require that you defend a town or escort a key player. In this case, the strategies you've developed to this point in the game fall apart as you adjust to the new scenario. For example, there is a scenario in the Human campaign where you must use the units given to you at the beginning of the scenario to escort a key unit from one side of the map to the other. Since there are no peasants, you must complete the scenario without building new units. This factor forces the player to change their playing style drastically.

Blizzard also maintains a rather interesting storyline through the missions in each campaign. It is evident, through the background material in the manual and plot detail in the game itself, that Blizzard has put a considerable amount of effort into making each single-player campaign a part of a cohesive story. Although the plot is negligible if you're just interested in the game itself, it does add to the detail and realism of the game.

Unfortunately, the computer's artificial intelligence is quite limited. Although it is capable of building towns and launching attacks, it is incapable of more sophisticated strategies and tactics. Thus, most of the scenarios (especially late in the game) are difficult because the player must overcome a large head start given to the computer opponents in order to win the scenario. For veterans of Warcraft, the computer AI has been upgraded. The AI will no longer send just one guy to attack your city but a whole force with magic abilities enabled.

Multi-Player Contests

Fortunately, the designers of Warcraft realized that Warcraft would make a wonderful multi-player game. There are a plethora of options for multi-player play, from serial connection to

modem play to IPX network connections. Also, the Macintosh version of Warcraft 2 has built-in TCP/IP support, meaning that it is possible to play games of Warcraft 2 over the Internet against players from around the world. You can play against PC players as well, but you must use a third-party utility called Kali (available at <http://www.kali.net/>) which allows you to play IPX network games over the Internet (the PC Warcraft 2 doesn't have built-in TCP/IP support). All of the Macintosh networking features are clearly documented in the Mac/PC manual, which should make it a rather simple task to get a network game going.

Internet play couldn't be easier. Just use an IRC client to log on to the "#macwarcraft channel," where you can get IP numbers of people looking for players. Join a game, and voilà! Instant Warcraft. (If you know very little about the Internet or IRC, you're hereby advised to look up information on IRC and Internet etiquette before trying to join a game.)

Blizzard has also created Warcraft 2 in a manner that allows you to play multi-player games without buying a separate copy of the game for each participant. Although you must have the Warcraft 2 CD in your CD-ROM drive to play the single-player campaigns, you can play multi-player games as long as there is one CD in a drive for every three players in the game. This CD "spawning" option makes it easy to set up local or wide-area network games.

Multi-player games have a distinctly different set of strategies. Often, the player is supplied with enough units and resources to begin construction of advanced units and buildings early in the game. Also, your opponents will be much more capable of forming intelligent strategies and offenses, so you'll find yourself rushing to upgrade your defenses rather than slowly but surely building up your infrastructure. Multi-player games tend to run at a frantic pace, each player trying to outbuild, outplan, and outwit each other. If you find the computer a dull opponent, just wait 'til you play against a human.

Instant Combat

Warcraft 2 is essentially a strategy game, but it comes across as a mix between a strategy game and a more reflex-intensive action game. The player must give individual units or buildings commands about what to produce or where to go, but the real-time combat gives Warcraft battles a sense of immediacy that is sure to raise any game player's pulse.

Also, Warcraft 2 is unlike a role-playing game that requires very long-term strategies and planning. Although you must plan for your attacks in the short-term, the outcome of one scenario (whether you won decisively or just by a hair) has no bearing whatsoever on your standing at the beginning of the next scenario. Warcraft 2 provides an excellent and engaging strategy game, but it also allows the player to jump directly into the game and get started without the kind of extended long-term planning and work necessary in a game like SimCity.

The Macintosh Advantage

Warcraft 2 has absolutely beautiful graphics and sounds. It is an exact clone of the PC version visually, but the graphics are crisper, sharper, and look as if they were designed for a Mac. If you were annoyed by the blocky graphics that plagued the original Warcraft, expect to be pleasantly surprised with Warcraft 2's beautiful visuals. The only low-resolution parts of the game are the video sequences that play after the game loads and at key intervals during the game, but this can be expected for full-motion video playback.

Warcraft 2 also has a slew of interesting audio features. 3D sound has been implemented on the PowerPC, thanks to Apple's SoundSprocket, meaning that you will be able to hear sounds of construction or battle from the left or right speakers depending on the source of the sound relative to the part of the map where you're currently working. Also, spoken commands can be issued to units using Apple's voice recognition technology. Although this

feature has little benefit in terms of gameplay, it's interesting to see such astounding technologies at work. Bells and whistles aside, though, Warcraft 2 has a stunning Redbook audio soundtrack that enhances the atmosphere without hurting performance. Unfortunately, the soundtrack has a nasty habit of becoming quite repetitive. If you enjoy it, it's a wonderful contributor to the atmosphere. If you hate it, though, you still have the option to turn it off...

In terms of speed, Warcraft 2 performs flawlessly on my PowerMac 7500/100. There are no slowdowns whatsoever, even with other applications open in the background. That said, there are many options provided by Blizzard/Future Tense to speed up gameplay. Warcraft 2 can be set to automatically hide the control strip, quit other applications, and turn off file sharing in order to speed up your game. This kind of attention to detail, among other things, makes it obvious that Warcraft 2 was designed as a quality Mac product rather than a PC port...

[Editors Galore](#)

Aside from the game itself, which provides dozens of single-player and multi-player scenarios, the Warcraft 2 package also includes tools for creating maps and sound files. You can record and add your own sounds to the Warcraft 2 sound files, and you can create new maps for distribution as single-player scenarios or multi-player combat. When you've exhausted all the gaming material provided with Warcraft 2, you can experiment with the game engine and put your own ideas to work by creating your own levels. The interface for both tools (sound and map) is clear and well-documented, which should make customization a simple task for any Warcraft player.

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Unfortunately, Warcraft 2 seemed to have a few compatibility problems on my PowerMac 7500/100 under System 7.5.5. Occasional freezes or crashes destroyed a few of my scenarios in progress, though careful use of the save feature prevented any serious losses. At the time of this writing, System 7.5.5 had just been released, and Future Tense (the folks who ported Warcraft 2 for Blizzard) have acknowledged these problems. Blizzard's response to these reports via Usenet has been swift and favorable so far; hopefully, an update that fixes these problems will be available by the time you read this review. (ed. — if the game freezes, press the command and power key to get the programmers key. Next, press G and the game will resume, though it will take a little bit for the screen to redraw.)

[The Bottom Line](#)

Warcraft 2 is, indeed, a game that will appeal to a wide range of gamers. It is not so simple that it will bore veteran strategists. The myriad units and buildings allow for a wide range of tactics and strategies, while the multi-player options assure that there will always be a human challenger waiting to play a game of Warcraft 2. However, it is also intuitive enough that it will entertain novice gamers or those who prefer to jump into the action rather than working to plan carefully for future scenarios.

The immense popularity of Warcraft 2 allows the game to provide a lasting challenge. New maps and new players will contribute to the challenge of the game once you've completed the basic campaigns. Despite small glitches in the latest version of the game as well as some problems managing large armies or slow units, I recommend this game highly to any gamer, whether an experienced strategist or an action game fanatic. Warcraft 2 is truly one of the most entertaining and well-designed strategy games available for the Macintosh.

[Pros](#)

- Well-designed, intuitive interface
- Wide variety of units and buildings
- First few levels are good training for beginners
- Lots of potential strategies to develop
- Varied scenario objectives
- Beautiful high-resolution graphics
- CD audio (Redbook) soundtrack
- 3D sound and voice recognition
- Wide variety of multi-player options (TCP/IP built-in)
- CD "spawning": Up to 3 players can play with 1 CD
- "Fog of War" option increases the challenge (especially in multi-player games)
- Takes advantage of Mac features and interface

[Cons](#)

- Still somewhat difficult to manipulate large armies
- Limited computer AI
- Occasional crashes under System 7.5.5 (fixed soon?)

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