y Bill Jahnel

urse of the Mummy is a strangely familiar product. It is fun with good acting and well rendered scenes, but the start is slow and shows little innovation or new technology. Even the plot itself is pretty much a retread, facing you with conflicts of corporate interests, an ex-love, a reincarnated Pharaoh's Queen, secret powerful artifacts, and the ubiquitous Nazis. Tomb of the Pharaoh as a result, is   well, average, not really something to be dreaded nor something to cheer about. It is fun to play for a number of hours, but it won't leave you raving for more or feeling you were cheated for buying it.

Ankh if you love stereotypes: You are the "corporate fix-it guy". You must go to a mining job in Egypt to get the workers on strike back to their jobs since the discovery of an ancient artifact has them spooked. If the dedicated archaeologist (also your ex-girlfriend) decides the artifact is real, then the Egyptian government Antiquities department will shut you down. The other real major player is the disgruntled and somewhat ominous rogue character (played with some enjoyment by Malcolm McDowell) who runs the dig and becomes more ominous and disgruntled as the story continues. Oh, and your mining site, which may or may not now be on top of the site of Egyptian artifacts, is definitely on top of the site of an old Nazi encampment.

n Interface for the Ages

Mummy has instituted the standard interface elements that have worked well in other games: a hand cursor that moves on hotspots to point to directions where you should go, an inventory that you can scroll through, a cursor that changes when it is over objects which can be interacted with, and a pretty simple point and click interface. The rendered backgrounds have been done with great care, but the best scenes -- the incredibly impressive ones -- really come much later in the game which is a pity. In fact, the opening scene in the cockpit is one of the most pedestrian of the rendered scenes. The greatest hindrance of the interface is its speed, or rather, lack thereof. I am playing on a souped-up Quadra 800 with an accelerator chip and 56 megs of ram, and the thing is still pokey. God bless Macromedia Director, it still makes a good engine reliable, if a terribly slow one.

Hidden Treasures

The sad part to all of this is that it takes forever to get to the good part of the game. Like many of the Sierra-styled interface games (this game is really nothing more than a Rise of the Dragon style of game, with great graphics and live actors) the action is hopelessly -- and often tediously -- linear. There are a few times where you can work through multiple puzzles, but for the most part, choke points come frequently, and you can't move on to step E until you have passed beyond D. However, once you finally get into the lower mines and eventually the Tombs themselves, you get a breathtakingly gorgeous game to play. There is a point in the game where you start an earthquake and have to hit a ferocious ride upwards and then make a harrowing escape up a potentially deadly area, but this happens easily over halfway in the game. I had two other friends playtest the game and they both quit from disinterest before hitting the good stuff. If Mummy is for you, keep on it -- and you will be rewarded!

n Summary

Mummy: Tomb of the Pharaoh suffers from a curse, that of mediocrity when we expect excellence. Its has some very fine virtues and some really cool graphic sequences, but so many of these are buried over halfway into the game. The conclusion of the game (there are a few different endings) is nicely done. McDowell and the rest of the cast perform well.

Should you buy it? If you enjoy the Indiana Jones / archaeological adventure motif, you will enjoy this game if you stick with it and are willing to ignore the pokiness of the Director Engine. It may be on a PPC that this game moves better, which could eliminate that particular stigma. I would question the playability of this game on 030 processor machines.

Pros
• Second half of the game is gorgeous
• Easy interface to use
• Some clever puzzles in the tombs
• Enjoyable if not memorable

Cons
• Pokey Director engine on even fast 040 Macs
• Extremely linear
• Game takes forever to get to really entertaining parts

Publisher Info
MacPlay
16815 Von Karman Avenue
Irvine, CA 92606
(714) 553-3530
Hintline: 1 (900) 370-PLAY ($1.25 /fist minute, $.75/min thereafter)
Email: IPTECH@aol.com; REVMPLAY@aol.com

http://www.macplay.com