

Guardian War

Guardian War, originally called the Powers Kingdom in Japan, brings to the 3DO a very unique experience. The game isn't really a role playing game as it has been totted, but it is actually a personalized war game unlike anything you've likely seen. It's also an all around excellent game that is extremely fun and addicting.

The player takes control of little computer rendered warriors called golems. Golems are mechanical beings with interchangeable bodies which enable them to be equipped with a staggering number of different skills and abilities—similar to character classes in role playing games. Indeed, the character system in this game is very much like the traditional RPGs. as you progress, your golem heroes will gain experience points from battle which accumulate to increase their experience levels and overall power.

The golems, as you rescue them, come equipped with one main body that is the primary class (ie, fighters, wizards, priests, ninjas, archers, etc.). In addition to the golem's primary body (which dictates the golem's appearance), you can also equip the golem with two more subbodies. For instance, Pumpkin, the golem you begin with, is a fighter, but you can find or buy an archer body and priest body, equip him with them so that he will have at least rudimentary healing and archery skills. The system is a little complicated at first, mainly because it is so original, but it is easy to get used to and it makes the gaming possibilities nearly endless.

Of course, since this is a 3DO game, you would expect the game to be impressive to the eyes and ears as well and Gaurdian War is impressive. The computer generated characters, both the golems and the many types of monsters, have an almost life-like claymation look to them with excellent animation as well. The battle plains that you will traverse as you clear out the various monsters are incredibly diverse. They include scenes from deserts and forests to beautiful temples, beaches and even a journey to the ocean floor. The music is fantastic and varied with everything from hard rock to new age tunes and they all sound great.

The story of Gaurdian War revolves around an evil being, known as Azrael, trying to take over a fantastic realm of goodness and light. The Goddess of Goodness and love, Erald, raises the golem Pumpkin from his deep slumber so that he can go forth freeing his fellow golem companions and destroying all the evil that has infected the realm.

Throughout the game, you will constantly accumulate money from the many battles. You will have an opportunity to spend the coins at the shops which can be found on the main world map. The

shops enable you to buy healing gems, new bodies, weapons, and all sorts of other things. You can also sell your unneeded items as well at the shop.

Gaurdian War takes place from two different perspectives. The first is the world map which is an overhead perspective which enables you to move the golems from battle zone to battle zone or to the shops. There are four different worlds of varying sizes to clear out and within these worlds lie many battle zones that you must enter and clear of monsters. The battle zones switch you to a back view perspective of your golems as you move them through the varied landscapes in search of evil to battle and treasure to help you on your quest. In these zones, you will fight all manner of creatures including mermaids, goblins, giant snakes, dragons, demons, harpies, and many more. The battle zones are where most of the game is spent and Gaurdian War allows for the option of saving the game at any point during the game except in actual combat. Gaurdian War offers up to a maximum of three different save positions.

While Gaurdian War uses an RPG type character system, you will not find role-playing style puzzles or conversation. The game is essentially a journey from location to location to battle the hordes of monsters. As soon as you enter a new battle zone, you will be told how many monsters are there for the golems to dispatch and, in some zones, things can get very crowded.

Combat in the game is handled in turns, the fastest creature being first and then moving through each in turn. The fastest creature may not always be one of your golems. You have complete control over the action of the golems. You may choose to fight, move, use an item, etc.

If you choose to fight, you may have other options depending on the abilities of the golem. You may choose to use a weapon or to cast a spell and then you must decide which spell or weapon you will use. In the case of the weapon, you must already be equipped with the weapon before going into a battle zone. Now you must choose an enemy within range to unleash your attack. Combat is very self explanatory and user friendly in Gaurdian War, even if the game's instruction manual is not.

The most impressive aspect to the game is the visual spell effects. Simply put, Guardian War has the most incredible magical spells I have ever seen. From the old standards like fireballs, healing, and lightning, to the new and terrifying like black light and atomic bomb and many more. These spells are phenomenal— blinding lights; real fire that pummels down from the sky; nuclear mushroom clouds that rumbles toward you; as well as white, black, and rainbow colors

that surround the opposition. Almost everything you could think of or you have wanted from past past magical quests explodes onto the screen in Gaurdian War and all with sound effects to match the intensity of the visuals. If for no other reason, you will want to play Gaurdian War long enough to play around with these powerhouse spells.

Your party can have up to six members in it and you can even charm monsters to fight on your side by using the Bell of Love. There are secret locations that can be accessed on the world maps by using special items. There are also special zones that cannot be conquered, but are useful for gaining experience points and treasure. The first of these special unconquerable zones—just to the right and down after the second shop— is the best place in the whole game to bring up a golem's experience points. Simply bring each golem into the zone solo and have him keep going through until he reaches body level 5. There are only ten monsters in this level.

Gaurdian War is an excellent, highly original game for the 3DO system and there is nothing quite like it for any system. With it's charming graphics, incredible visual effects, great sound, And excellent playability, this game should garner its share of fans—hopefully enough to warrant a sequel. If you are looking for something original and magical, look no further than Guardian War. It is a long, involving, and charming quest that has a lot to offer.