

review: Unlimited Adventures

by Bart Farkas

Type: D&D/Role-Playing Construction Kit

Publisher: SSI (408/737-6800)

Retail Price: \$59.95

Mail Order: \$40.00

Requires: All Macintosh models, 1 MB RAM, 2 MB for Color & Sys 7, hard drive

Protection: Manual-based copy protection

[he History of D&D](#). Over the last few years SSI has churned out five Advanced Dungeon and Dragons (AD&D) adventures of increasing complexity. Few companies have challenged SSI for the Mac role-playing crown until recently, when New World Computing released Might and Magic III. With M&M III on the scene it became obvious that the interface utilized in the SSI games had reached the end of its life. This prompted SSI to put an end to the Forgotten Realms series by giving us the ability to create our own adventures in the Forgotten Realms world. This will be the last installment in the Forgotten Realms line, and indeed, SSI is currently working on an adventure game (Dark Suns) that will utilize a 16-bit engine to take better advantage of today's computing power.

[Creating the Ultimate Adventure](#). Although Unlimited Adventures comes with a complete ready to play game scenario, the underlying purpose of the program is to allow users to create their own worlds of adventure using the familiar interface that has made the AD&D series popular. If not familiar with the Forgotten Realms interface, Unlimited comes with a complete manual and game scenario for you to conquer. Once an expert at the nuances of the game, the real fun can begin with the creation of your very own D&D adventure. The game comes on four disks, occupies 6.2 MB on your hard drive, and comes complete with game and designer manuals that are excellent and thorough.

Unlimited allows you to create a quest as easy, or as difficult, as small, or as big as you feel like creating. There can be as many as 40 different places: 36 different dungeons, and four different overland regions in your adventure. The overland regions can have towns, wilderness, mountains, and events (events are the spots on the map where battles etc. can

take place). With a large pool of art for you to draw from, any aspect of the game can be customized. The walls of the dungeon, the appearance of the characters doing battle, and even the monsters are all changeable. And if you are especially keen, you can even draw your own art and import it!

You can begin virtually anywhere in the creative process. You can design or alter your monsters first, or set out your overland areas, or even design a couple of dungeons. After the areas are mapped out and you have an idea of what kind of a quest yours shall be, the events that will occur in the game must be placed. This means setting out an area or region that will bring on an event, such as an attack from monsters. This is triggered when a party passes over the area in question. In designing an event the creator must decide the number and kind of monsters attacking, as well as the platinum, gems, and items that the party will enjoy if successful in battle. After that is complete there is an option to alter every aspect of the monsters and the complexity of the battle. For example if you should want the Trolls to be fire resistant, who's to stop you?

Prepare yourself to make many tough decisions, as there are hundreds of different variations available in every aspect of adventure development. In fact, the real AD&D groupies will find that they can alter any aspect of a character or monster right down to the numerical values used in calculating battle resolution (or rolling dice, for the board gamers out there). We can expect a plethora of new adventure games à la World Builder showing up on BBS's everywhere.

[oes Creating Adventures Create Fun?](#) Unlimited excels at providing a medium for creating your own adventure. The user can play God with every aspect of game play and be limited only by imagination. One can only guess how much time could be spent creating an epic AD&D saga the size of Pools of Darkness. If you were to adjust every nuance of battle, monsters, overland areas, and non-player characters, then many hours indeed would need

to be sacrificed. However, you would end up with one heck of an adventure game. This tool is so advanced that it is foreseeable that adventures superior to the Forgotten Realms series could be produced by end users. Adjusting the nitty gritty of the game requires either an extensive knowledge of AD&D or a thorough reading of the extensive manual. The question is whether or not there are enough people out there with the desire to create their own AD&D adventure.

As adventure games, the Forgotten Realms series succeeds in providing interesting quests, puzzles, and story lines. There are a wide variety of monsters, weapons, and spells to utilize in game play, and for ardent AD&D folks this series of games will give plenty of enjoyment. However, Unlimited provides only a small quest to complete (after all, the game is there for designing adventures) and if a grand quest through a world of fantasy is desired, then one of the dedicated games in the series might be a better choice.

A Word About Interface. Unlimited Adventures cannot be reviewed without a word about its clunky 8-bit style interface. The game excels as a construction kit for adventure games, and that is its main function, but the interface and graphics feel and look more like they came from an EGA DOS machine than a Mac. On a 14" monitor the text is very boxy and at times difficult to read (kind of like looking at a 9-point font in 48 point without the benefit of ATM, better known as "the jaggies"), and the character figures appear as small globs of color boxes that barely resemble human figures. Admittedly, some of the still graphics are well done. But the overall game graphics are very average. I guess what it boils down to is that this game/construction kit is a port, and if graphics and interface are your bag and you are accustomed to great Mac graphics, this one may disappoint. The interface isn't all bad however. For example, buttons on the screen can be accessed by the keyboard by typing the highlighted letter on the button. And a poor interface doesn't necessarily make a game poor. It is merely a question of taste (and/or tolerance) in a time when there are increasingly refined games available for the Mac.

When is SSI going to realize that password copy protection every time the game is booted is VERY annoying?

Summary. The Forgotten Realms series of games has reached the end of the line with its outdated interface and below-par graphics; however, Unlimited Adventures allows the user to create truly spectacular games limited only by the constraints mentioned above. This game has virtually no other competition and thus fills a niche in the Mac gaming market. However, with refined fantasy games like the Might & Magic series and Dark Seed arriving on the scene, the Forgotten Realms interface falls short of expectations, and only the excellent game design aspect of Unlimited Adventures is worthy of praise.

Pros.

- Provides small game for beginners
- Excellent in-depth tool for developing adventures
- Great manual

Cons.

- Poor graphics for the Mac platform
- Password copy protection annoying
- Old 8-bit Interface quirky
- Only for game designers