

THE OFFICIAL
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EAMON DELUXE NEWSLETTER



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This newsletter follows no regular schedule and will be published, as time permits, when there is Eamon Deluxe news to share. It is distributed by email only and subscriptions are always free.

Contributors are welcome and any material relating in some way to Eamon or Eamon Deluxe will be accepted. Adventure reviews aren't limited to new or previously reviewed adventures and multiple reviews of adventures are encouraged.

Please send subscription requests, new adventures, reviews, articles, bug reports, thoughts, suggestions, *etc.* to: eamondeluxe [at] gmail.com.

EAMON ON THE WEB

▷<http://www.eamonag.org/>

The Eamon Adventurers Guild website is by far the best Eamon resource in the entire world. It is also the gracious host of the Official Eamon Deluxe homepage as well as the most current downloads and updates.

▷<http://eamon-guild.blogspot.com/>

The Guild blog is where the latest Eamon and Eamon Deluxe news is posted. New material is always encouraged here and contributors can submit their work to Matthew Clark at EamonAG [at] gmail.com.

▷<http://www.facebook.com/EamonGuild/>

The Official Guild Facebook page. A good way to meet and interact with other Eamon fans and sometimes former Eamon authors as well.

▷<http://www.lysator.liu.se/eamon/>

Once called the “Unofficial Homepage of Eamon Games.” Although it hasn't been updated in several years, the website at Lysator still survives and its webmaster, Fredrik Ekman, is quite friendly

and happy to answer questions via email. Though it contains no Eamon Deluxe material and much of its material can now be found at the Eamon Adventurers Guild site, it does feature some interesting, historical facts and is worth reading.

▷[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eamon_\(video_game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eamon_(video_game))

A further, thorough resource for information on Eamon (including Eamon Deluxe) is the Wikipedia page.

ARTICLES

Eamon Micro-Adventure Contest!

If you've read through the old NEUC and EAG newsletters, you've undoubtedly run across one of the contests held years ago. (This is why there are about a billion Eamons containing “Life Orb” in the title.) They tended to produce some pretty solid adventures. Well, we're announcing a contest in that vein.

Of course, actually sitting down to write an Eamon is a pretty daunting task. While it's certainly a lot of fun, to write an entire adventure requires some investment of time. So here's the compromise:

Consider a large Eamon dungeon in the shape of a tower. The challenge is to write *in approximately ten rooms* a miniature dungeon making up one floor of the tower. You can add monsters, treasures, secret doors, and weapons... whatever your mind can generate, so be it. Frank and I will string them together into a (dis)continuous whole and judge on the basis of pure awesomeness.

Not only will you have made a permanent contribution to an Eamon adventure but the winner will receive a plaque on the glorious Wall of Fame to be memorialized for all eternity for contributions to Eamon. (We'll throw in a free electronic subscription to the newsletter as well.)

You, reader, are afforded the opportunity to make your mark on the Wonderful World of Eamon

without taking three months of spare time to do so. Grab a few beers and a pencil, fire up the Adventure Designer, and in an evening you can be part of Eamon history.

Here are the rules:

1. The target is **around ten rooms**. If you want to dip your toes in, we'll accept fewer. If you're an old hat, we'll accept more.
2. Dungeons must include **a staircase leading up** and **a staircase leading down** at some point in the dungeon so that we can weave the entries together.
3. **No special programming**. Frank has equipped Eamon Deluxe with enough built-in functionality that you can produce a number of effects without hassle.
4. If you want to go all *House of Ill Repute* on us... well, please don't. A few salty allusions are one thing but bear in mind that there may be children writing entries. For some reason, I'd feel awkward leaving Sesame Street and climbing the stairs to *Return to the Cat House*.
5. Entries will be accepted in either **Eamon 7.x or 8.x** for the Apple II—as a disk image—or **Eamon Deluxe 5.0**.
6. As a special feature, entering a value of 1 in the User #1 value of a monster will ensure both that the monster's friendliness doesn't change and that the monster is invincible.

And that's all. If you want to keep in a medieval motif, feel free. If you want to go all high-tech, feel free. If you want to recreate your local Starbucks Coffee, replete with that cute barista who hooks you up with free mochachinos, go ahead (just bear Rule 4 in mind).

If you would like to participate but want assistance, you can write me at tfeamon [at] gmail.com or Frank at eamondeluxe [at] gmail.com. We'll be glad to help.

Submissions may be sent as disk images (for Apple II entries) or compressed folders (for EDX entries) to the above addresses by **June 1st, 2013** to be considered.



Recherche des Eamons Perdus: Imagery!

by Thomas Ferguson

In the past two newsletters, I've done a bit of kvetching about some of the ostensible "improvements" to Eamon (*e.g.*, Eamon Pro) over the years, suggesting that many of the added features are solutions in search of problems. In some cases, there are improved spells that serve no real purpose (then again, it's not clear that POWER serves much of a purpose itself) and in others minor tweaks such as carrying more weapons.

After getting the opportunity to play Dr. Evil Laboratories' *Imagery!*, however, I suspect that this judgment may have been premature. Perhaps my dissatisfaction with such features in *Eamon Pro* was due to poor implementation; in *Imagery!*, such features come off quite well.

The full story behind *Imagery!* for the Commodore 64 can be found at www.commodoreserver.com, in part one and part two of Kent Sullivan's excellent retrospective of Dr. Evil Laboratories. While it's a bit ambiguous whether *Imagery!* was a port of Eamon or inspired by it, its DNA puts it clearly in Eamon's lineage.

The system spawned only one adventure—"Beneath Mount Imagery"—though, as a beginner-type adventure, it is relatively simple and doesn't fully reveal the potential of *Imagery!*. That said, this result was perhaps inevitable; much of the strength of the system is geared to what happens *between* adventures and can't be seen with a single adventure released. (I'll note that the disk image for the Dungeon Designer has been improved and updated for the third millennium; readers are invited to help produce *Imagery!* Adventure #2, twenty years later!)

I've never personally played proper (pen-and-paper) role-playing games but I understand that part of their charm is the slow build-up of a character; while Eamon offers this in some way, it is very limited. The character can increase attributes by re-visiting the few adventures that offer such perks and, of course, the weapons one carries from an adventure remain constant. But this is really all the continuity there is in Eamon. *Imagery!* offers a number of means to introduce some of this sense of continuity into the system.

For one, the player isn't restricted to merely retaining a handful of weapons from adventure to

adventure. A host of magical effects are standard in *Imagery!*—ranging from invisibility spells to poisons—and *any* artifact can be coded to have such effects. In “Beneath Mount Imagery,” the player thus finds a ring providing invisibility and a host of multi-colored potions with mysterious effects. Had there been a second adventure (again, I remind the reader that it’s now possible to author one), the player could have brought these artifacts into *this* adventure as well. This would have led to an additional layer of strategy. Does one need to stock up on invisibility potions? That ring you’d picked up—should you sell it immediately or does it have hidden effects? Certainly, this would have added to the richness of *Imagery!*

With regard to the continuity of weapons, *Imagery!* makes some improvements as well. I made a quip in a previous article that I *knew* that Trollfire was magical and didn’t need to be reminded of this; to be fair, *Imagery!* does have this *Eamon Pro* feature of a variable for a weapon’s being modern, magical, or futuristic. But I also vividly remember being disappointed when the Trollfire for which I’d fought so hard lost its magical effects come the second adventure. In *Imagery!*, each artifact has associated with it a line of text describing what occurs when it is being used or otherwise wielded. Your Trollfire, with such an effect, would always glow with a green flame, irrespective of the adventure into which it was brought.

Likewise, an additional layer of strategy comes in with respect to weapons. Ammunition is, for one, limited. Magical and ranged weapons need to be recharged periodically from the wizard in the “Towne”—*Imagery!*’s analog of the Main Hall. Likewise, weapons and armor deteriorate with use and must be taken to be repaired lest they break. In battle, then, does one ready the Trollfire knowing it may soon be depleted or does one ready the mace knowing that it may soon break? All of these factors would have added up to create a deeper experience than found in vanilla Eamon.

Imagery! is an excellent system, improving on Eamon where it helps and leaving well enough alone where it doesn’t. In addition to the joy of reading Kent’s compelling, touching, and interesting posts—great even without knowledge of the Commodore 64—the reader can download *Imagery!* and its sole adventure “Beneath Mount Imagery” from the first post and a revised Dungeon Designer from the second. Any Eamonaut will appreciate

an induction into the world of *Imagery!*



Terminological Inexactitudes by Frank Black

Things appearing in this column must not be confused with actual facts.

Are Don Brown and Jon Walker really the same person?

According to longtime Eamon fan and Wikipedia enthusiast, Huw Williams, the Father of Eamon donned the Johnny Walker moniker and created an intentionally poor quality Eamon system for the PC to weaken the competition when sales of his SwordThrust series were not lucrative. “I actually now use Gmail for everything,” Williams stated on a recent Guild blog post “[and, while corresponding with Don Brown, I] may have been talking to the [person known as ‘Jon Walker’ all along.]”

“It makes sense,” said Nathan Segerlind (recipient of the 2005 Ackermann Award and the Association for Symbolic Logic’s 2004 Sacks Prize). “Any logical programmer understands numbering in the abstract and therefore will always start counting at zero rather than one. If you exclude ‘The Beginner’s Cave’ and ‘Search for the Key,’ Don Brown wrote exactly 9 Eamons. $9 + 0 = 9$ and there are 9 characters in the string ‘Don Brown,’ while the string ‘Jon Walker’ has 10 characters. $9 + 1 = 10$, therefore ‘Jon Walker’ comes next in the sequence.” Segerlind then laughed and said, “It’s so easy, even Mr. Roessler could have figured it out!”

Several messages were left for Mr. Brown to verify or deny these rumors, but so far he has not replied back...

Adventure in Interzone in IMAX 3D?

Why did the public release of Eamon Deluxe 5.0 take so long? Some say it is because of the high amount of quality attached to the work as well as Thomas Ferguson constantly flooding the author with new material, dug from the bowels of the “interwebs”; others believe it is because Eamon

Deluxe creator, Frank Black, was also busy writing and pitching his screen play for a full length movie based upon his popular 1994 Eamon adventure.

According to sources close to the Black household “a really major” movie studio has picked Interzone 3D up and hired “Señor Spielberg” to direct. “John Depp” has agreed to play the leading role of your old friend A.J., with a back up cast that includes “Billy Crystals,” “George Crooney,” and “Sarah M. Gellar.”

When asked about it, Frank replied, “Have you seen my glasses? I just set them down...” and, when pressed for details as to the film’s impending release date for local theaters he added, “They should be around here somewhere. They have tape on them, but the tape is the same color as the frames so you can’t really tell it is on there... Maybe I left them upstairs?”

We are predicting a release date March, 2013.

Eamon fans continue to torment confused rapper in a case of mistaken identity!

Sources report that a 5’8” Irish/Italian “Ho-Rap” artist named Eamon Jonathan Doyle, who has only once had a hit song in his 23 year career, continued to be flooded with emails, blog posts and guest book signings intended for the Eamon Adventurer’s Guild last night. The 30 year old entertainer who saw some brief record sales from 2003 to 2004 reported that he was “frustrated” and “upset” because every time he sees that his inbox has new messages he gets excited with hope of his career being revived, only to have that dream quickly shattered by a barrage of messages and posts which were actually meant for users and fans of the various Eamon gaming systems.

“I don’t know what these people want from me!” an anxious Doyle stated, going on to say, “I can’t even understand what they are saying! It’s like they are speaking in some sort of codes half the time.”

“I was supposed to open for Brittany Spears from June to August 2004,” Doyle later informed us without provocation, “but ended up staying home after she [Spears] hurt herself making a video and cancelled the tour. I’ve pretty much just been living with my folks since then, trying to get another record deal or go on a tour with someone.”

Scrunching up his eyebrows in thought as he tried to read yet another message meant for the Guild, Doyle mumbled, “I bought this computer back when I had a Top Ten hit on the charts... but I really only use it to find adult material and look for rap jobs on Craigslist now.” Adding, “It still uses Windows 95, so it can be kind of slow on the internet. That gives me time to write more rap songs though, so I don’t mind it most of the time...”

Doyle then appeared to express a sense of hope and relief as he showed us the message inbox at his Hotmail account which glowed with the mark of over 100 new messages across his beaming face. The glow quickly faded, however, and Doyle returned to a confused state of dismay as he started another attempt to read the series of messages intended for members of the Eamon Adventurer’s Guild. “This may take a while,” he warned us, “you can go watch TV if you want or see what’s in the fridge...”

Requests to forward the misdirected mail over to the Adventurer’s Guild were met with only more confusion as an exasperated Doyle offered, “Maybe I should just change my name... Or upgrade to Windows 98 and get a mouse with one of those little wheels in between the buttons? I don’t know, it’s a lot to think about right now.”

REVIEWS

Ratings Key: The ratings are determined on a ten point scale, typically with one value for difficulty and one for enjoyment. An explanation of the scale:

Difficulty:

- 1 Zero combat, zero puzzles.
- :
- :
- 5 Average, occasionally hit in combat, may need heal spell, some hidden and embedded artifacts.
- :
- 10 Impossible to complete.

Enjoyment:

- 1 Completely dull, no point playing at all.
- :
- 5 Average, worth a play and provides some fun.
- :
- 10 Legendary.

Also bear in mind that one man's trash is another's treasure; that one reviewer didn't care for an adventure doesn't imply that you won't enjoy it.



Tenement of the Damned (*Le HLM Maudit*) by J.M. Menassanch

(Eamon Deluxe #23) (Eamon #255)

Reviewed by Thomas Ferguson

Extra Commands: None

Deleted Commands: None

Special Features: French (and English)

Playing Time: 15 – 20 min.

Reviewer Rating: 6 (Average 6 from 2 ratings)

Difficulty Rating: 4 (Average 4 from 2 ratings)

Review: *Tenement of the Damned* (French: *Le HLM Maudit*) is the only known adventure for the French version of Eamon, *Le Monde Merveilleux d'Eamon*. Its function is effectively that of the *Beginner's Cave* in providing a simple "first outing" to players though the settings and mood of the two couldn't be further apart.

The action in *Tenement* takes place in a contemporary public housing block ("HLM," or "habitation à loyer modéré," denotes a block of state subsidized housing, with similar connotations as those of the American term "the projects") that has witnessed better days. Fire has damaged much of the structure and a host of unsavory characters has moved in, from a criminally insane physician to a bed-ridden fascist. There is no introduction laying down a back story or quest; rather the adventurer is merely asked to storm the tenement and loot everything that isn't nailed down.

As a "Beginner's Adventure," *Tenement* hits the necessary notes, introducing a new player to the fundamentals of Eamon without much stress. That aside, while not a masterpiece, I'll suggest that *Tenement* is a pretty fun adventure. What initially hooked me into Eamon some years ago were the adventures written by Jim Jacobson. Perhaps it was a function of my age to some degree but I found that each had a remarkable and compelling *joie de vivre* (and how fitting to use a French term!). *Cave of the Mind* in particular stands out with the absurd scenario of angering a soap opera watching wizard and being frantically

pursued through the halls by a sadistic chef wielding a meat cleaver demanded that the game be *played* rather than *studied*. The dada component of Eamon, to me, always ensured that it was *fun*.

And this brand of absurdist, Jim Jacobson-esque humor is omnipresent in *Tenement of the Damned*. The descriptions of artifacts and monsters more often than not bear some little witticism or other, some dry jab at the author or player, and for this reason exploring the relatively small map remains *exciting*. The player will want to discover the hidden rooms not to secure better "loot" but because he or she is guaranteed to find some odd feature likewise hidden away. As an example, the player will encounter a basket of diplodocus meat while battling the denizens of the projects. While translating *Le HLM Maudit* into English—the EAG-endorsed version is bilingual—I was quite worried that the term "diplodocus" had some alternative meaning in French that I was missing, or some interpretation to make *sense* of its presence in a corner of a dingy high rise. But there is no sense to be made of it. In participating in this sort of wackiness, *Tenement* and *Maudit* fully earn their place in the Eamon canon. *Tenement* is undoubtedly worth the short amount of time required to complete it.

And you may just brush up on your French while you're at it as well.



Stronghold of Kahr-Dur by Derek C. Jeter

(Eamon Deluxe #24)

Reviewed by Luke Hewitt

Extra Commands: None

Deleted Commands: None

Special Features: Variable difficulty

Playing Time: 1 – 2 hours

Reviewer Rating: 8 (Average 8.5 from 3 ratings)

Difficulty Rating: 7 (Average 7 from 3 ratings)

Description: You are milling about the hall of free adventurers when the burly Irishman approaches. "A raven just arrived carrying a message for you," he says grimly. You take the piece of parchment from him and read the hastily scribbled letter. It is from your brother, Jollifrud, who lives in the wealthy city of Fahrnor.

He states that a terrible menace has haunted a long-abandoned mountain fortress, known as Kahr-Dur, that overlooks the town. This unnamed menace has been quietly kidnapping the city's denizens during the night which has led to a general state of fear and anxiety. Even worse, Jollifrud's daughter Lady Mirabelle is among those who have been seized. He begs you to journey to Fahrnor and help him rid the city of this great evil once and for all. Your brother was once a great adventurer but has since retired after making his fortune plundering the great haunted tombs of the kings of old. The chance to stand next to him again in glorious battle is very tempting indeed.

You decide to set out for Fahrnor to help your brother and, after a week's journey on horseback, you arrive. A sense of doom pervades the city. Homes and shops are shuttered up and the usual bustle expected of such an opulent metropolis is nowhere to be found.

Jollifrud greets you at the gates to his spacious home. He says there is no time to waste and you both set off for Kahr-Dur to confront its resident horror...

Review: The best summation of *Stronghold* is that it is what many of the more childish, combat heavy classic adventures hoped to be when they grew up. The plot is absolutely typical of the genre, an evil necromancer causing havoc in a far off town, finally topping off by kidnapping a significant damsel (these evil sorcerers really should learn to only kidnap ugly, unimportant people). What however stands out in this game is the staggeringly good atmosphere. Though there are many empty rooms, I never felt uninterested since most rooms have very detailed descriptions of their surroundings, covering smell and hearing as well as just what objects were visible. In addition, a small line of special programming flagged up short effects of wind, distant howling, feelings of fear and other contributions to the environment, just to keep the atmosphere fresh.

I was also extremely pleased to find that the dusty, abandoned castle where you start is not the only environment you visit in this map either, and that later you'll progress to a dark and rugged series of caves, and a gloomy forest. Speaking of maps, this is definitely one for explorers since several later portions of the game became rather mazelike, though nothing that wasn't possible provided you kept track of where you were and where you next

had to visit, since the map does feature a deal of necessary backtracking.

One thing I did however find a little jarring in the game is the total absence of embedded artifacts. Atmospherically, I was occasionally quite sorry to have a fascinating object such as a statue of a warrior or a wizard's tome mentioned in a description and not be able to examine it, though being as the uses of what artifacts you find were clever and interesting, and quite unique in the way they interacted with the environment, they could've been confused by embedded artifacts. So, I can see the reasoning behind the author's choice here, even though it's probably not the choice I would've made myself.

One thing I was a little disappointed by is that despite the extremely good atmosphere, the plot still felt a little unfinished in some respects, for instance though the introduction said many townspeople had disappeared, you only actually find the damsel mentioned in the introduction (obviously being a beautiful and significant person also conveys survival value), and it was never made explicitly clear who the evil necromancer was or what exactly he was trying to do, since even in his lair there were no altars to mysteriously nasty gods or preparations for unpleasant magics, just the captive damsel herself who seemed to be there just for decoration (after all, every good necromancer's lair has to have an attractive, chain mounted lady as part of the decor). You also are said to be fighting along side your brother, - whether merely a comrade in arms or literally your relation I wasn't sure (I personally prefer the first explanation, since I like to imagine my characters' background myself, but it could've been either), yet unfortunately no special programming was inserted to allow him to speak to you throughout the adventure or comment on what was happening, even when you come across supposedly his daughter (possibly your niece).

There are no real puzzles provided you take care to examine everything, however the layout can get rather complex especially towards the end, which certainly added to the challenge. Also, though not exactly a puzzle, the author could've mentioned somewhere in the game that a knock spell is used to open doors (I knew this myself from playing other RPG games, but it might not have been obvious to everyone).

With light weight puzzles and medium mazes,

it's obvious that the above difficulty comes from combat. One thing Derek deserves credit for is that instead of loading the place with hoards of weaker enemies, he intersperses the atmospherically empty layout with fewer, tough battles, which gives them far more significance, especially given their difficulty. My medium strength character with a 2D16 weapon was often down to the wire, and it took use of spells and artifacts to win several fights, despite a hardy companion who is with you from the start. The big boss fight itself also deserves a mention as one of the better examples of special programming in combat I've seen, and entirely in keeping with the theme of a powerful, evil sorcerer defended by dreadful magic. I'd definitely advise people pump up before trying this one, especially on their magic spells. [Note: It's not apparent that the advice given will work; *Stronghold* employs a feature that scales the abilities of the monsters to those of the player. -TMF]

There are also several tough, but avoidable fights, which really could've done with some small reward, indeed given that one of them (against several skeletons), was in a room whose description mentioned exits but without any actual exits present, I wonder if Derek placed them with view to making a larger map.

All in all though, *Stronghold* is an extremely well written and put together game, a classic plot to a combat fest with well balanced fights, challenging exploration and extremely good atmosphere and special programming. Despite a few shortcomings, it's still an outstanding game and highly worth playing, since even if combat isn't your thing, the atmosphere, clever artifacts and dramatic final confrontation are definitely worth a look.



The Sub-Aquan Laboratory by Michael Penner

(Eamon Deluxe #23) (Atari ST #5)

Reviewed by Thomas Ferguson

Extra Commands: PUSH, INSERT, TURN

Deleted Commands: None

Special Features: Multiple endings

Playing Time: 1 – 2 hours

Reviewer Rating: 8 (Average 8.25 from 2 ratings)

Difficulty Rating: 5 (Average 5.5 from 2 ratings)

Description: As you descend the steps of the main hall, your vision grows unusually blurry, and soon fails you entirely. Your head begins to swim, and a dull throbbing sound fills your ears. Although you still seem to be moving, you can't tell if it's by your own power or if something is propelling you, and either way, you can't see or feel the ground upon which you walk. Soon, after a matter of what seems to be a few seconds, your head clears. You feel a cool breeze on your face, and a hint of salt tingles your senses. As you regain your sense of sight, you realize that you are still moving downward.

You are standing atop a tall cliff, with a ancient staircase winding down to a sandy beach below. Stretched out before you is a lake of enormous proportion....

Review: The introduction is a bit disjointed—and not entirely reproduced here—extending for a number of screens, describing the scenario from an adventure from TSR's *Gamma World* role playing game. The adventurer is summoned to a city called the Barony of Horn and is tasked with descending into a post-apocalyptic Lake Michigan to investigate some happenings.

The short-lived Atari ST port of Eamon is of a routinely high quality, possibly influenced by the fact that the Atari ST had 16 bit hardware. That said, although the Atari Eamon Newsletter spoke of its creator writing a new adventure, the available adventures were largely ports of old Apple II titles.

Michael Penner was the only known author of original material for the Atari ST. (He also went on to author *Eamon 3.0* for the Atari ST and two adventures, known only by the file names OASIS.ARC and PROVGRND.ARC.) Penner was undoubtedly one of the most talented individuals to write Eamons and the talent is evident in "Sub-Aquan," his first one.

"Sub-Aquan" has a fairly straightforward quest; the player is asked to investigate a facility and the reward and ending are determined by the amount of "information"—gotten through reading computers and documents—that he or she collects.

The player immediately meets a team of possible allies whose combined strength will make the exploration a breeze—granted the player's charisma wins the majority of them over—despite the general toughness of the enemies. The many puzzles

are intuitive and intelligently scripted but provide enough challenge to keep the game interesting.

A very unique aspect of “Sub-Aquan”—a quality that we’ll find perfected in “Crypt Crashers”—is the sheer abundance of things to play around with. Many rooms are filled with computers and other equipment with which it is a joy to interact. There are dozens of buttons to push and levers to pull, some with dire consequences and other with great benefits. Great examples are a food-making machine that randomly generates one of hundreds of different kinds of food and a wing of the complex involving SCUBA gear, a room threateningly filling with water, and a submarine. The richness of the environment is expressed through such details as the purpose of the facility is slowly—and effectively—revealed.

Most of the complaints I have are about the layout of the map. For one, though the map is 10-directional, often Penner will have the player enter a room from, *e.g.*, the southeast though the only (often unmarked) exit is south. This is probably a function of the fact that 10-directional maps are best employed as maps of open terrain but this leads to a few annoying revisions in the mental map as one plays. Also in regard to the map, there are a number of very similar, identical rooms. This may be a function of the original “Gamma World” adventure—as well as reasonable modulo the setting—but I spent a fair amount of time EXAMINE-ing items in the descriptions of empty rooms, only to come up empty-handed.

“Sub-Aquan” isn’t by any means perfect but its emphasis on detail, atmosphere, and subtle storytelling yields a quite pleasing product and it stands above the standard Eamon fare. The adventure is filled with puzzles and bad guys; any fan of Eamon will presumably have a great time exploring the Lab.



Crypt Crashers and the Tomb of Horrors by Michael Penner

(Eamon Deluxe #23) (Atari ST #6)

Reviewed by Thomas Ferguson

Extra Commands: TIME, WAIT

Deleted Commands: None

Special Features: Multiple endings, Dynamic weather effects

Playing Time: 2 – 4 hours

Reviewer Rating: 9.5

Difficulty Rating: 7

Description: After traveling with a party of adventurers, the player ventures to the estate of Kilroi the wizard.

‘Friends,’ he begins with an interesting smirk, ‘Many years ago, there existed in this region a man named Jaldial. He was no ordinary human, though, he was a Necromancer - a wizard of great power and authority. His deeds were known throughout the land, and he was greatly respected. However, somehow his ideas went awry, and his intentions were perverted. Soon, his very presence became a curse to the entire region. Eventually, he was destroyed by an association of Necromancers, but not before he had done much damage. Coincidentally, many experts consider it strange that the cause of his madness was (and still is) unknown.

‘Jaldial’s body was lain to rest in a large cemetery to the east, and there he lies to this very day. The path leading to it begins about 100 feet into the woods behind my place. Very few venture into that place these days, for legend holds that many night creatures haunt the grounds. It doesn’t seem surprising that I haven’t had very many people asking about the job.’

‘Here’s what I need: Someone must brave the cryptsite, and enter the grave of Jaldial himself. He had a book in his possession at the time of his burial, a very old book. We, the Grande Council that is (to which I am a member), are in desperate need of this manuscript, for we fear that another Necromancer has been affected by this strange madness. Perhaps Jaldial’s book can provide some clue as to its cause and even a possible cure...’

Review: “Crypt Crashers” is, like “Sub-Aquan,” lifted from a pen-and-paper role-playing game and the game is essentially a “hack-n-slash”-type Eamon, seeing the player searching out an item (the book), killing its possessor (the lich), and returning with it safely. It’s also in my opinion one of the greatest Eamons ever written.

Like Derek Jeter’s “Stronghold” (reviewed above), “Crypt Crashers” is not seeking to reinvent the wheel. But it is overwhelmingly strong in its execution and attention to detail. I’ll detail one such detail, though the reader will surely notice a host of such facets when playing the adventure.

When the player is in an outdoor location, Penner has programmed routines that keep track of the weather conditions, its strength, and day/night cycles. For example, at some point, the reader may be informed that a fog bank has rolled in, obscuring the stars above; after a few “hours” in the game, the player could be told that the fog hanging over the graveyard is lifting, revealing the sun’s rays above. The environmental effects play a role in how heavily the player’s light source is taxed to the effects triggered when a monster wanders into the player’s area (e.g., “a goblin has wandered into the area through the fog”). These also dynamically impact the myriad environmental effects that randomly occur; whereas it is reasonable that a scent of flowers meet the player when there is no wind or rain, that a heavy rain is falling precludes such an effect from being triggered. In essence, Penner has come as close to building an ecosystem in miniature as Eamon has ever seen.

But “Crypt Crashers” isn’t just an exercise in populating a text-based environment with cool effects; it’s also a heck of a lot of fun to play. Virtually every room has embedded artifacts, many of which trigger special effects. There are secret passages to explore, mysteries to solve, hidden artifacts to dig up (literally, in some cases). Even if one isn’t pursuing the antagonist Jaldial, the sheer fun of exploring the large map and taking in the atmosphere is independently entertaining.

There are three different endings, depending on how well the player has met the goals. The monsters trying to prevent the player from achieving the task at hand are quite tough though, as in “Sub-Aquan,” Penner has provided the player with an escort of relatively tough, friendly characters to provide support; moreover, Penner implemented a rather unique way of affording the player additional chances to beat the game even

after falling in battle.

I’m close to thinking of “Crypt Crashers” as the best Eamon ever written; from the depth of its execution to the sheer abundance of detail, it is improbable that any player will see all there is to see in this adventure on one outing. In tandem with the smoothness of the Atari ST port of Eamon, it is a pretty remarkable experience, and worth the hassle of downloading an emulator and the Atari ST TOS. Though the obvious trajectory from “Sub-Aquan” to this adventure—the increase of skill in programming and writing—makes the loss of Penner’s Eamon 3.0 more clearly unfortunate, it is a plus for the Eamon community that “Crypt Crashers” was preserved.

NEXT ISSUE

Upcoming features in the next issue include:

- History of Apple IIgs Eamons
- Review of *Imagery!* adventure “Beneath Mount Imagery”
- Reviews of the MS-DOS Eamon adventures “Cronum’s Castle” and “Lord of the Underland”

CREDITS

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