



The Wide World of Eamon

by Tom Zuchowski

A HISTORY OF EAMON

Crowther and Woods' original *Adventure*, a text-only game program originally written for the DEC PDP-10 in the 1970s, has been widely imitated. Microsoft released a version of *Adventure* for the Apple II in 1979, and many similar games followed from Scott Adams, Infocom, and other publishers. (See "Classic Adventuring" in the last issue of *II Alive*.) In the early 1980s, Don Brown, spurred by the success of these games and intrigued by the possibility of creating his own, developed the Eamon adventure system. Now ordinary Applesoft BASIC programmers could make their own adventure games, using the Eamon software Brown had developed as a building block.

The Eamon system was immediately and enthusiastically embraced by a small band of players in the Des Moines area, where Brown lived. But Brown himself soon moved on to commercial programming, creating the *SwordThrust* adventure series. John Nelson, another Des Moines resident, saved Eamon from oblivion, founding the National Eamon User's Club and bringing the program through five major revisions.

While Nelson later moved on to the IBM PC, the Eamon Adventurer's Guild, which was the eventual replacement for the National Eamon User's Club, is still going strong today—as is Eamon itself. Eamon version 7.0 incorporates new commands, an improved player interface, and assembly-language additions for enhanced performance. Today, there are over 220 Eamon adventures available that run under DOS 3.3 (requiring a 5.25" disk drive to run). The best 100-odd Eamons have been converted to ProDOS, and nearly 40 of the very best were further modernized, converting them to 80-column display and adding upper and lower case text.

INSIDE EAMON GAMING

Eamon is not a role-playing system, like *Wizardry* or *Might and Magic*. There are no

experience points to earn, no levels to attain. There are no special abilities bestowed by race or good/evil alignment. There are also no graphics—the player reads descriptions of what he "sees" and types commands in response; descriptions of the results are printed on the screen.

Armed combat is a staple of such adventuring. Often there are puzzles to be solved. Many Eamons are simple "kill & loot" scenarios ("Monty Haul" adventures, in gaming parlance), with the simple goal of killing everything in sight and hauling out every treasure that isn't nailed down. More complex Eamons may feature a quest or even several nested quests to fulfill. The very best Eamons are intricate, with perhaps hundreds of rooms, scores of special effects, and dozens of complex puzzles to solve.

The Eamon gaming system consists of a central program that tracks four specific types of data: Rooms, Artifacts, Monsters, and Effects. Rooms make up the map of the dungeon; each room includes a description and a list of exits, and may contain hints about hidden artifacts or doors. Artifacts include every inanimate item in the dungeon: weapons, treasures, doors, containers, potions, and more. Monsters include every animate denizen of the dungeon: friends, companions, dragons, trolls, shopkeepers, etc. Effects are used for special events that are specific to a particular Eamon game.

There are five different types of weapons: clubs, axes, bows, spears, and swords. The player's character gains weapon expertise as he uses a weapon type, raising his ability to make effective "hits" in battle. Basic Eamon is not very magical. There are four basic spells: Heal heals the player's injuries; Blast makes an attack on an enemy; Speed doubles the play-



er's agility; and Power has unpredictable effects. Some advanced Eamons include many more spells and weapons, but they are programmed by the adventure's author and are unique to that adventure.

Your character has three primary attributes. Hardiness is the character's strength and resistance to injury. The greater this number, the more loot can be carried and the more combat hits can be taken. Agility directly affects fighting ability. The higher this number, the better the character stands to do in combat. And Charisma affects a neutral monster's likelihood of becoming friendly. Characters with high Charisma tend to pick up more companions, a big plus in combat.

PLAYING EAMON

Eamon adventures are begun from the Eamon.Master disk or folder. Here is located the Eamon Main Hall, where your character "sleeps" between forays. While in the Main Hall, your character can buy and sell weapons and armor, learn magic spells, visit the bank, and take advanced training in weapons and magic. All adventures are launched from the Main Hall, and all adventures return here when completed.

Once into the game, navigation is simple. NORTH exits the present room, traveling north.

You are in a dark north/south tunnel. To the north, you see the bright light streaming in from the outside. To the south you see flickering torch light, but you cannot make out any details.

Your Command? South

You are in a huge chamber, the roof rises out of sight. Burning torches line the walls, making it easy to see. Tunnels lead north and south, and there are small side chambers to both the east and west.

Your Command? East

You are in a small side chamber to the east of the large chamber. It is very cold here, and the only light comes in from the large chamber.

There is a grizzled old hermit (who smells as if he hasn't taken a bath in forty years) in the room.

There is a bottle here with a strange potion inside!

Similar commands exist for the other directions, including up and down. LOOK redisplay the room description and may discover hidden exits or artifacts. EXAMINE will print the description of an object (e.g., EXAMINE BOX). This command will also reveal certain types of artifacts hidden in the room.

GET and DROP are used for inventory management. Your character can pick up objects that might be useful on your quest, and drop items when the load gets too heavy.

READY is used to prepare a weapon for combat (e.g., READY SWORD). If you are carrying more than one weapon, this is how you specify which weapon to attack with. To attack, simply use the ATTACK verb (e.g., ATTACK TROLL). If you mistakenly attack a friendly character, you can also HEAL them.

You can also use longer, more complex commands, such as GIVE SWORD TO TROLL and PUT SWORD IN BOX. More recent Eamons permit the player to truncate the commands—for example, “AT UG” for “ATTACK UGLY TROLL”. (The two words “Ugly Troll” are considered to be a single noun by the Eamon interpreter.) Usually, the command’s object can be truncated from either end; eg: “AT UG” or “AT LL” for “ATTACK UGLY TROLL”. The truncation feature was added haphazardly over time, but the new version 7.0 incorporates uniform abbreviation syntax for all commands.

WHERE DO EAMONS COME FROM?

The Eamon gaming system is written in Applesoft, so anyone can write their own Eamon adventures. The quality of Eamon adventures, being directly dependent on the abilities and perseverance of each adventure’s

author, varies widely; some really stink, while others rival anything Infocom ever did. Don’t worry, though—the ProDOS list consists of the best 100 Eamons from the DOS 3.3 list. If you’re just looking to play, you can’t go wrong with any of those.

With the exception of “Redemption” (the Eamon adventure published in Softdisk 137), every single Eamon adventure is in the public domain. Eamons can be obtained from nearly every vendor of public-domain Apple software and most user groups. The ProDOS Eamons are also readily available on the commercial on-line services—the Eamon Adventurer’s Guild uploads them directly to GENie, and provides them to others for uploading to CompuServe, America Online, and Delphi. They eventually make their way to many other bulletin board systems and Internet file servers.

Most Eamons were written by experienced Eamon players for advanced characters. There is no particular adventure you should start with, and you can play them in any order. For most enjoyment, though, you would do well to use the character editor on the Eamon.Master disk to set these player attributes: Hardiness, Agility, and Charisma = 22; all weapon abilities = 50; chain or plate armor and shield; Shield Expertise = 25; all spell abilities = 100; one 3D8 weapon. This will enable you to at

least survive in the more difficult Eamons.

Since the development tools for designing Eamon adventures are readily available, so the real answer to “Where do Eamons come from” is “You.” Those who have designed their own adventures know that the real allure of Eamon is designing and writing them. Getting to actually play the game is just gravy. Eamon authors commonly agree that they have never done anything with a computer that was as satisfying as writing their Eamon adventures.

Eamon adventures typically take 30 minutes to 2 hours to play, and cost about a dollar or two to purchase or download. That’s a great value for any kind of entertainment these days. And if you get involved in writing your own Eamon adventure, you’ll undoubtedly spend dozens or even hundreds of hours on it. Now there’s a real entertainment bargain!

For more information sources of Eamon adventures, send a long (business) Self Addressed Stamped Envelope to: Eamon Adventurer’s Guild, 7625 Hawkhaven Dr., Clemmons, NC 27012-9408

The EAG is a non-profit organization and does not sell Eamon adventures. Instead, you’ll get an up-to-date list of Eamon sources, a complete list of Eamon adventures complete with notes and ratings on a 1-10 scale, and information about the club and newsletter. ■

TOP 20 EAMON ADVENTURES

As determined by the Eamon Adventurer's Guild

Eamon No.	Title	EAG Rating
N/A	Redemption (Softdisk 137)	9.5
124	Assault on Dolni Keep	9.2
114	Thror's Ring	9.0
78	The Prince's Tavern	9.0
194	Attack of the Kretons	9.0
120	Orb of My Life	9.0
204	Sanctuary	9.0
161	Operation Endgame	8.9
150	Walled City of Darkness	8.8
147	The Dark Brotherhood	8.7
129	Return to Moria	8.6
166	Storm Breaker	8.5
145	Buccaneer!	8.3
108	The Mines of Moria	8.2
148	Journey to Jotunheim	8.2
121	Wrenhold's Secret Vigil	8.2
169	The Black Phoenix	8.1
91	FutureQuest II	8.0
117	Dungeon of Doom	8.0
118	Pittfall	8.0