Zork III

Carl Townsend

Zork III, the sequel to *Zork I* and *Zork II*, starts at the bottom of an endless staircase: "As in a dream, you see yourself tumbling down a great, dark stairway. All about you are shadowy images of struggles against fierce opponents and diabolical traps. These give way to another round of images—imposing stone figures, a cool, clear lake, and an old, but oddly youthful man."

"He turns toward you slowly, his long, silver hair dancing about him in a fresh breeze." "You have reached the final test, my friend. You have proved clever and powerful, yet this is not enough. Seek me when you feel yourself worthy!" His words echo as the dream dissolves around you . . .

"You are at the bottom of a seemingly endless stair, winding its way upward beyond sight. An eerie light coming from all around you casts strange shadows on the walls. To the south is a dark, winding trail. Your old friend, the brass lantern, is at your feet."

As with most adventures, there are few instructions supplied. You must discover your own directions to the game as well as the object of the game. *Zork III* responds to simple verb and noun instructions (e.g., GO WEST) and in some cases requires an adjective or adverb. For example, if you are in a room with several doors and you enter OPEN DOOR, Zork asks you which door you wish to open.

As you begin your adventure, you find a sword protruding from a rock, but you can't wrestle it free. If you survive a fight with a strange hooded figure, you hear an ominous rumbling that shakes the entire cavern. The action moves swiftly, keeping the explorer on the edge of danger.

Time Is Related To The Events

Zork III, at times, appears to run in a real-time mode. Unlike Infocom's *Deadline,* however, *Zork* is not a real-time game. There is no clock ticking, and there is no demand on the user to com-

plete the game in a set period. You find, however, that time has a strange relationship to the events. To tell you more than this would spoil the adventure.
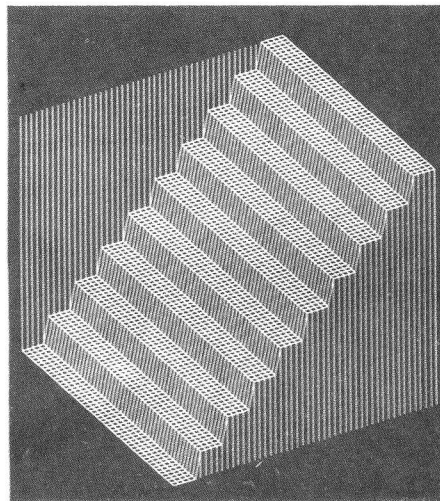
Soon you are aware that someone is watching you and is very interested in your progress. Almost in a real-time mode, the character appears at the top of

creative computing

SOFTWARE PROFILE

Name: Zork III

Type: Prose adventure game

System: CP/M with 48K, Apple, Atari, IBM, NEC PC 8000, DEC Rainbow, Commodore 64, Osborne, TI, Digital RT 11

Format: Disk

Summary: One of the best adventure challenges

Price: $39.95 ($49.95 on some systems)

Manufacturer: Infocom, Inc. 55 Wheeler St. Cambridge, MA 02138

a cliff while you try to open a chest on the ledge below. As you become frustrated, he offers to help. You have to decide whether you want his help and how much to trust this strange fellow.

Several well designed puzzles in the cave kept me busy for hours. If you think you are ready for the Royal Puzzle, you can drop down into a room of sandstone and marble walls. Moving walls, ladders, a strange door with a slot, and an odd black book all add to the puzzle. More intriguing is the mirror box with two poles, two panels, and four walls—all of which move.

I had a great deal of fun with the three machines in the Technology Museum, although I could get only one of the machines to work. It has enough power, however, to get you into plenty of trouble. The trick is to discover how the machine works (it has one button and a dial), what it does, and how to make it work to your advantage.

Solving The Final Puzzle

The end-game was particularly exciting. As the pieces of the game fall together, you suddenly become aware of the purpose of the game. You can then meet the challenge of the end-game and solve the final puzzle.

It is not necessary to have played *Zork I* or *Zork II* to enjoy *Zork III,* but there are relationships among the three games. *Zork III* is the last of the series. Playing *Zork III,* you find yourself in areas discovered in *Zork I* or *Zork II.* I have played all three, and, in my opinion, *Zork III* is the best of the series.

If you find yourself hopelessly lost and unable to solve a puzzle or reach the end of the game, there is plenty of help available from the Zork User's Group. You get information on this group when you purchase *Zork III.* The user group provides dungeon maps at reasonable cost and an Invisiclues book in which you can use a special marker to reveal invisible clues.

Infocom traditionally supplies some of the most entertaining CP/M games. If you like good game challenges, try *Zork III.* □

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