

The software and movie industry's 'Summer of the Sequel' is upon us. These last few months we've seen more 'Part Twos' than you could shake a Roman numeral at. However, amidst this sea of [twice told tales?] there's one that the masses have been crying for. You know, the one starring that svelte man of action and adventure, that handsome herald of heroism, that man above all manly men. No, not Indy! Cpt. Kirk?! Get real! I'm talking about Roger Wilco, adventurer/janitor extraordinaire.

Yes, Roger's back in part three of Sierra's lampooning space adventure series, *Space Quest III (SQ III)*. In the previous games, Roger has been up against a tough lot. In the original *Space Quest*, he single-handedly foiled the Sariens' plans of universal conquest. In the sequel, he checked Vohal's sleazy insurance salesman scheme. But this time, our hero will meet his toughest challenge. He's dealing with the slimiest swarm of software stealing scuzzballs this side of Nimbus III, the notorious Pirates of Pestulon. The "Two Guys from Andromeda" have vanished and rumor has it that this pack of plagiarizing punks is behind it. *SQ III* sends our beloved Roger on a galaxy-wide hunt for the missing software celebrities.

Those familiar with Sierra adventures will be familiar with the game play. Players use a combination of text commands and/or joystick to maneuver Roger around a 3-D world where he manipulates items and solves puzzles, while avoiding the many gruesome (and often hilarious) ways of biting the silicon dust. Those who have followed the series, can expect a storyline laden with the same colorful sarcasm that marked the previous games. Those who haven't need not worry as *SQ III* can be played by those without previous *SQ* experience, but they may miss a humorous allusion or two.

The game makes marked improvement over its predecessors in most aspects, particularly in esthetics. The EGA graphics on the IBM are some of the best from Sierra to date. Further, the cinema-like title sequence is outstanding, similar to the movie emulating efforts of the folks at Cinemaware. The main graphics images are crisp and colorful, though I was most impressed by the finer graphic detail utilized in some of the cinematic sequences: shadows fall on Roger whenever lighting is obstructed, perspective changes as he walks into the horizon, and facial ex-

pressions reveal horror as you clumsily lead him to another untimely death. Roger is more animated than in his previous incarnations, the animated sequences reflecting the designers' close attention to detail.

While the graphics are well done, the presentation wouldn't be half as impressive without the sound. Those fortunate enough to

have a Roland MT-32 sound board or equivalent will be treated to one of the best performances their sound module has given yet. Bob Siebenberg, formerly with the rock group Supertramp, has put together a 30 minute score that captures the silly, tongue-in-cheek attitude of the game and will simply blow your ThermoWeave skivvies off. This sound track and the equally stunning sound effects combine to create one of the best sound efforts we've heard since the Midi track done by Origin for *Ultima V*.

On the unofficial CGW Adventure Difficulty Index, *SQ III* rates in the easy to moderate range. While a few of the puzzles require a little thought and experimentation, there's nothing that will stump the average adventurer for long. Most of the puzzles are fair, and there are no objects hidden in strange and unlikely places.

The number of game screens is relatively small, as well as the number of objects

players juggle at one time, so it is often not difficult to discern which object is appropriate for a certain puzzle.

As in all Sierra adventures, the game playing strategy involves extensive use of the 'Look' command. Fortunately, most of the problems that arise from the graphic nature of Sierra's games, i.e. being unable to identify an object from its graphic image and also unable to get a text description of it, have been reduced to a minimum.

Liberal use of the 'Save' command is recommended, as the wrong path almost always leads to a graphically gruesome death. In fact, half the fun is finding all the twisted ways Roger can kick the mop bucket!

Those who played the original *Space Quest* know the frustration of playing an adventure with an inadequate parser. Fortunately, improvements made over the last two games have brought the parser up to an acceptable level. While still not the

SPACE QUEST III

Pirates of Pestulon

by Chris Lombardi



TITLE:	Space Quest III
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	\$59.95
DESIGNERS:	Mark Crowe & Scott Murphy
PUBLISHER:	Sierra Coarsegold, Ca.

best in the industry, the game understands a reasonable number of synonyms for important verbs and objects. In fact, although most sentences beyond "Verb" "Object" complexity are out, the parser rarely bogs down game play.

Action sequences have always been and continue to be, Sierra's favorite way of adding variety to their adventures. Unfortunately these hand-eye coordination tests have not always been done well, and they've been justly criticized as cruel and unnecessary punishment. *SQ III* does have three action sequences, but it's evident that the designers have made a conscious effort to improve the quality of the sequences and integrate them more smoothly into the adventure. One of the action sequences takes the form of a coin-op machine Roger encounters along the way. It's the most difficult action sequence and takes a while to get the hang of. Those less dexterous with the joystick can forego the sequence if desired, as the clue provided upon mastery is not absolutely necessary to complete the game, though don't overlook the game completely.

The most interesting hand-eye puzzle is actually the climax of the storyline in which Roger battles "the bad guy" using a battle-tech type cyber-warrior. This is by far the best action puzzle I've seen in an adventure. It's fun, it fits nicely into the story, and victory requires a definite strategy rather than just nimble keystrokes. Though adventure game "purists" may still object to these tests of physical rather than mental abilities, those who enjoy variety will appreciate the designers' effort to create action sequences that are enjoyable and complement the game.

My only problem with *SQ III* is the game length. It seems most of the design effort went into effects rather than story development, creating a game that feels a bit rushed. While I didn't keep accurate time records, the game time for this adventure seemed about half that of the others. Thus, when the final credits rolled, I still wanted more.

All told, *SQ III* is a very nice blend of game and glitter. The combination of graphic effects, animation, action sequences, and biting wit leave no room for a dull moment. The game moves very quickly and, as a whole, *SQ III* is a wonderful product and a great time. Sierra fans won't want to miss it.

The Journal of Roger Wilco

The following is an excerpt from a data disk found on a deserted parking lot in Coarsegold, CA. It appears to contain GAME HINTS which may be of interest to our readers.

"Ahem...Testing one...two. Wilco Log Star Date...uh, ah well it seems my digital watch has stopped. Pity. At any rate, it seems my escape pod has been captured by a hostile alien force, drat it all! There goes my vacation leave on Hair Island."

"Using my keen eye for detail, I've located a hold containing a decent looking ship. The ship is missing some vitals but I've managed to round up the replacements. I found a motivator amongst the junk but I'll need a hand (even a claw would do) to lift it. I've also found a power supply, though the ship-board rodents didn't appreciate my intrusion. Insert tab A in slot B and this bird will be flying in no time."

"After escaping the alien vessel (what a blast!) I made a stop

on the planet of Phleebut, and eventually found the planets only known settlement and tourist trap. The proprietor seemed a nice chap though he did have quite a gift of loquaciousness. I sold him that stupid stone I've been lugging around. His initial interest in the rock was high, so I got a decent price. Didn't leave with all my buckazoids though, as I was talked into buying some of the tourist trash. Well, I guess it's not all that bad. The undies fit quite nicely and the Orat is kinda' cute. Upon leaving the joint I ran into someone I'd rather not meet again, though I don't think I need worry. In the end, the muscle-bound monster was nothing but a metallic morsel for one of the indigenous creatures that hangs around these parts."

"Ah, Monolith, over a billion gastrically disturbed. After inhaling my favorite Monolith meal (I've been ordering the thing since I was knee high to a slime beast), I discovered the latest coin-op from Scumsoft. Pumped half my buckazoids

into the thing, though I finally figured out the secret. Once you get the chicken directly over the trampoline/landing pad, you let the bird free fall and then give one flap up just after the halfway point of the decent. The single flap will set the bird down for a picture perfect landing (baacock!). More importantly I discovered a secret distress signal from the Two Guys. It's off to Ortega to once again save the day."

"Leaping lava lizards! The travel brochure wasn't kidding when it warned to dress light. If it wasn't for my ThermoWeave (the super-stretch waist-band snaps back wash after wash!) I'd be one crisp custodian. Now to find the source of the defense beam."

"It was only a matter of time before I got past the Scumsoft geologists. After that, it was just a small hike to the beam generator. Frankly, Roger Wilco is typically a calm and collected guy, but I was quite shaken up after I blew that beam. If it hadn't been for my stint on the intergalactic track and field team (ok, ok so I only laundered jock straps!), I'd be the latest addition to the Ortegan geography."

"Managed to infiltrate Scumsoft's Pestulon base undetected, thanks to my gift from Arnold, R.I.P. Even managed to change into something more comfortable. Using this cover, I could probably find the items needed to breach that security door."

"Ah the Two Guys! Once again I save the... huh? Never mind. I thought I'd emptied my last wastebasket when I entered the battle droid arena. But, in the end, my experience was too much for the pimple faced punk. All seasoned battle droids warriors know that if you anticipate the opponent's moves, punching at the same time as he does, you'll land the blow. Also, if you can get the opponent on his heels and you're aggressive, you can land several blows before he can recover his balance. If you get your opponent against the wall you'll limit his range of movements making for an easier target."

"After wasting the kid, it was a textbook escape. Raise a shield, lower a shield, blast a pirate into the afterworld. What could be easier? The difficult part was facing rejection by Sierra president Ken Williams. Oh well... unrewarded and unemployed I once again fly off into the sunset. Time for that trip to Hair Island."

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