

Space Quest II: Vohaul's Revenge

By Stephen King

Well, he's at it again! Sludge Vohaul—mad scientist extraordinaire, creator of the dreaded Star Generator, dastardly enemy of all mankind—is out to wreak havoc in the Earnon system, this time by attacking your own home planet, Xenon. Vohaul's latest scheme is to scatter thousands of genetically engineered, obnoxious door-to-door life insurance salesman clones who will infest the entire planet's surface, thus rendering it uninhabitable by intelligent life. Not only that, he wants personal vengeance on you, Roger Wilco, for throwing a monkey wrench into his evil Sarien operation.

Rags to Riches to Rags

As you remember from chapter one of *Space Quest*, Roger was heaped with fame and fortune for his daring exploits in saving the planet Earnon from destruction by the Star Generator. Well, fame is fleeting, and all good things must come to an end. It seems that Roger is only suited to two kinds of work: saving the universe or being a sanitation engineer.

Unfortunately, the universe doesn't need saving every day, so *Space Quest II* begins with our hero doing what he does second best, sweeping up the decks of Xenon Orbital Station4. Don't worry: a "wristcom" call from your boss is all it takes to start you caromming wildly into a new adventure and a fight for Truth, Justice and the Xenonian way!

Almost all of the opening segment is automated. While carrying out your usual janitorial duties, you are abducted and introduced to the dreaded Sludge Vohaul himself. This scene is done in a new style for Sierra's animated adventures, a full-screen illustration more like those in standard graphic games, but with fine detail work and some nice spot animation that accentuates the evil Sludge's countenance. Humanely deciding not to kill you outright, he opts for working you to death in his mines. Gee, thanks Sludge!

Luckily your prison shuttle crashes in a rather exotic forest, and your guards are killed. From here, it is up to you to find your way back to the asteroid fortress and foil Vohaul's latest attempt to inflict himself on mankind. The forest is inhabited by many exciting types of flora and fauna: man-eating mushrooms, root monsters, swamp creatures and spinning Labion terror beasts. But most of the excitement comes in the adrenaline surge

you get when you first discover they are trying to eat you!

Two Guys Spaceware

Space Quest II was designed by those ever popular "two guys from Andromeda," Scott Murphy and Mark Crowe. Just like the first chapter of this series, it is destined to become a computer gaming classic and possibly best game of the year. *Vohaul's Revenge* is chock full of color animation that takes advantage of the larger color palette available to EGA, VGA, Tandy, and IBM PC and jr graphics adaptors. The sound effects are outstanding, from the whooshing water going over the waterfalls to the buzzsaw sound of the spinning Labion terror beast (hmm, haven't I seen you chasing after a certain wascally wabbit?) as it eats its way through solid rock.

A catchy little number plays during the opening credits (in three-part harmony on Tandy and jr machines) and a morbid sounding relative of it plays whenever you get killed (plan on a lot of this!). Once again, that special brand of Sierra humor is in full swing. Just look at some of the weapons poor Roger must use to defeat the ultimate evil villain: A plunger, an athletic supporter, a roll of toilet paper and a wastebasket.

It's a good thing he spends much of his time as a sanitation engineer daydreaming up novel uses for these mundane artifacts. Oh yes, and while you're on Sludge Vohaul's asteroid fortress, don't forget to stop off in the restroom and read the graffiti. Aside from finding out what Vohaul does with his spare time, you might read some interesting gossip about other characters around the Sierra offices.

Roger Wilco can be controlled by mouse, joystick or arrow keys. Moving him is a simple matter of pulling the joystick in the direction you want to go or hitting the appropriate cursor key. If playing with the keyboard, you can hit the same arrow a second time to stop his movement, or a different one to change his direction. The Escape key brings up a menu of special functions like save and restore, which you can step through with the cursor keys or joystick. Function keys control these directly.

You can save and name up to twelve games in a single save file and may keep as many save files as you need by simply changing the default name when it is displayed. Another menu option controls Roger's speed. Unlike in Sierra's previ-

ous adventures, I could discern very little speed increase as I changed from normal to fast, to fastest. One minor disappointment for me was Joystick control. The "A" button usually makes the windows disappear whenever text needs to be displayed, but I noticed in some places, primarily when talking to Sludge and the alien chief, that it stopped working efficiently and forced me to press the enter key several times to get through these long text sequences.

Also, in *Leisure Suit Larry* the "B" button was used to bring up the option menus. I enjoyed this feature immensely and really missed being able to use it in *Space Quest II*. One more thing, the F6 key is used to terminate certain actions, like monitor viewing and rope swinging, and I feel the "B" button would be handier for this too.

A Plethora of Mazes

Mapping the game is a simple matter, because it is divided into small areas that are available to you one at a time. There are, however, at least three different and very innovative variations of the classic adventure maze. The only one that I found worthy of mapping was the underground tunnels. The light from the glowing gem in this maze was handled beautifully, by the way. One maze that was displayed completely onscreen but nonetheless proved tough to navigate was the one guarded by the root monster. I generally find adventure mazes tedious

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Amiga: Mindshadow, Borrowed Time, Temple of Apshai, Rogue, Pawn, Deep Space, Phantasie 3. T. Ellison, 407 N. Division, Lowell, MI 49331

IBM & QUEST-ALIKES

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Space Quest II

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and unnecessary, but with creative handling Sierra has illustrated that they don't have to be.

The parser in this adventure is the same Sierra parser we've all come to know and love. It handles full sentences with alacrity but does not understand pronouns. For instance, if a small stone is described in the text window, "GET IT" will not suffice. It does handle several noun variations nicely enough though. For instance, "OPEN THE BOX" (where the oxygen mask is stored) works quite as well as "GET THE MASK." The parser generally doesn't handle multiple commands, but using them never seems to be necessary, and it does respond to "GET ALL" in most situations where more than one item is available.

Space Quest II comes in a colorful package with three 5-1/4" disks and two disks for people with the newer 3-1/2" drive format. Including both sets of disks is an extremely admirable practice that seems to be limited to very few companies, and Sierra should be congratulated for their foresight in this. The package also comes with the usual registration form and advertisements as well as a small "Getting

Started" type pamphlet and "Space Piston," a full-color action comic (complete with Charles Atlas ad) detailing the exploits of our hero after his triumph in *The Sarien Encounter*. A short walkthrough of the opening sequence of the game is included in "Space Piston" to give beginners an idea how adventure games are played.

As with most other 3-D Sierra adventures, *Vohaul's Revenge* is copy-protected by the key disk method. This means that you can install the game on blank floppies by using a simple COPY *.* command or put it on a hard drive with the supplied INSTALLH file (necessary because of hard drive sub-directories). But in order to run the game, you must briefly put the original floppy in drive A. I stress the word briefly here. Installing this program in no way affects other files on your hard drive. The copy protection is on the master floppy itself, and that is where it stays. The program asks that you insert the master disk in drive A when first run; as soon as the red light is out on the A drive, you can remove and return it safely to your library. This is about the least offensive method of copy-protection I've ever had to deal with.

The program requires a minimum of

256k and one floppy drive but will take full advantage of two drives if you have them. Play speed can be enhanced considerably by installing it on a hard drive. As previously mentioned, it supports many graphic standards including a minimum MCGA, so even monochrome owners will be able to play this one. **Conclusions:** Once again, Sierra has succeeded in putting together a puzzle-intensive three-dimensional graphic wonder. If a sequel is to be measured against the original, *Vohaul's Revenge* gets an A+. One word of warning though: While most of the game would be ranked as intermediate, there are several puzzles that require all the brainpower an advanced player can muster. Not to worry though, for players who find themselves up against a stone wall, a Hintbook is available.

System: IBM (see above for requirements)

Conversions Planned: Amiga, GS, Macintosh, ST, Apple 2e/c (128K)

Skill Level: Advanced

Protection: Key Disk

Price: \$49.95

Company: Sierra On-line