



Many years ago there was a desolate wasteland called Karg. Nothing grew there, but strangely there was a motley human population. A passing god known only as Nexus saw this land and took pity on its inhabitants, transforming the desert into a lush valley of prosperity.

Sadly, Nexus had forgotten all about his night out with his pal Void the demon. Perhaps understandably Void was more than a little miffed to find his supposed mate gallivanting off creating new societies instead of joining him for a game of snooker and a meat pie.

This is the reason why the inflamed Void saw fit to wreak sixty-six years of cruel vengeance upon Nexus' people by stealing the Rod of Power. This minor incident escalated beyond the tiff stages and led to Nexus and Void partaking in a bit of fisticuffs. During this battle the rod was broken in two, and for some strange reason the two deities decided to turn each of their halves into rings, to prevent the other from gaining total control.

So what has this got to do with you?

Well, you are Buc, top sorcerer, who must now gather your party of fearsome warriors, recover all the lost rings and return them to Nexus assuring freedom and fabness for all eternity.

This task is performed in isometric view, with your characters roaming around the environment in a similar way to that seen in the Immortal. Spells must be learned, characters conversed with and battles won before your quest is out.



▲ Plenty of RPG-related action here!



▲ The map of the land.



▲ A close-up view of our hero.

RINGS OF POWER

COMMENT



RAD

It's strange how Rings of Power has all the ingredients of a deep, playable RPG but is still a pile of old trousers. I'm not RPG-bashing, far from it, it's just that all I see in Rings of Power is wasted potential. A lot of effort has obviously gone into the design but the implementation is shoddy, slow, dull and frustrating. Combat, for instance is usually a case of instant death in auto mode or death in a few rounds in manual. The movement is unresponsive and jerkier than Pee Wee Herman at a film festival. The title screen and before-game presentations offer a lot but the game fails to fulfill the promise. Once you get past the intros, graphics and sound take something of a dive, as does the gameplay. With any luck Rings of Power will have a sequel where as much care is put into the programming as went into the design, but as for this game, even the most die-hard adventure gamers will be very disappointed.

DON'T BE SO SORCERY

Your party consists of six wizards, each trained in a different art of sorcery. You are a sorcerer, the general all-purpose wizard with few specialist spells but a wide variety of handy low-power spells. Knights have a number of particularly nasty combat spells, such as Rend and Sever. Archers have mastered metaphysical kinetics and as a result can impose great forces (such as sharp magical arrows) onto (or into) their enemies. Necromancers have mastered arts which can either damage or heal bodies, or at great levels even raise the dead! Enchanters can change matter (including themselves) from one form to

another which allows them to pull off handy stunts such as creating a pool of water underneath some enemies, thus drowning them. Finally there are conjurers, known for their ability to bring matter through from other dimensions for their own use.



◀ Three of your magicians.



ARTY ANGLES



There are two modes of view in Rings of Power. The first is a general overview which shows your movements on a large-scale isometric map. You may move in any of four directions searching for vital clues to the whereabouts of each ring. If you should chance across a building of some description and decide to enter it, the view zooms in. The action is still viewed isometrically but on a much smaller scale, allowing you to see what is going on in greater detail.





AUTOMATIC DEATH AKIMBO

Combat in Rings of Power couldn't be simpler. In fact you don't have to do anything at all if you don't feel like it. That's because there are two combat modes in RoP. The first is automatic, which selects the spells for each of your characters and acts as appropriate. The second is (surprise, surprise) manual where you must do all your own spell choosing. It's generally a good idea to stick to manual though, as once on the Astral planes of battle the computer tends to lose its head and get you killed.

COMMENT



JULIAN

The concept behind Rings of Power is a good one, but sadly somewhere between the drawing board and the finished product something went wrong, and the end result is a very whiffy RPG. Sad, jerky scrolling, a hopeless combat system, unfunny jokes, tortuously slow gameplay, feeble graphics and ear-rendingly awful sound ruin the great ideas behind the game and make it a real mess to play. Even the biggest role-playing fan will find this a chore - my advice is to check out the other RPGs in the EA range. There are plenty available that are miles better than this.



BY: NAUGHTY DOG

PRICE: £39.99

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

GAME DIFFICULTY: HARD

LIVES: 1

CONTINUES: PASSWORDS

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: SL-O-O-O-W



PRESENTATION 80%

Smart title screen, intros and detailed story screens accessible from the options screen.

GRAPHICS 64%

Dull, poorly deformed sprites. Shambolic scrolling and hardly any animation. The backgrounds are hideous as well.

SOUND 31%

Crummy (out-of) tune plays throughout unfortunately, and the effects do nothing to lift the aural gloom.

PLAYABILITY 42%

Slow, unresponsive and frustrating. It's hard to make your characters do what you want them to and it's not much fun when they do.

LASTABILITY 60%

Rings of Power is a big game, that's for sure, and it's not easy either. Unfortunately it's so bad that you probably won't want to bother.

OVERALL 41%

A brave attempt a Dungeons and Dragons-style adventure game which is spoiled by poor programming.