

SOLOMON'S KEY

TEMCO/NINTENDO



RATINGS

GRAPHICS 81%

Excellent for a puzzle game, with detailed, colourful sprites and backdrops.

SOUND 64%

A bit dreary, but doesn't affect the overall game fortunately.

VALUE 87%

Irritating at first, but perseverance pays off and you're left with a well addictive cart.

PLAYABILITY 84%

Very difficult, but each level is nothing short of a challenge.

OVERALL 83%

What initially seems dull and pointless soon becomes an addictive puzzle game which fans of the genre will love.

Down in King Solomon's mines, Dana the explorer is trapped. And cold. And more than a bit peeved that none of his so-called friends have come to his rescue. But he's hard; he can do the job himself. He hopes.

Solomon's Key has you digging and building your way through the many levels of the mine in order to escape to freedom. On each of the screens is a key, a bell and a closed door. The object of the game is to open the door by collecting the key and, if possible, rescuing a fairy by ringing the bell. Collecting ten fairies gives an extra life, but the important job is to get out of the cavern. The air supply in each room is limited, and the time available to escape is shown by a counter at the top of the screen. Also depicted is the score and the number of fairies collected so far.

It would be easy to just escape from each cavern, so nasty King Solomon has placed baddies around his mine. Some just stomp around being a hassle, while others breathe fire at you and cause even more hassle. If you can't out run 'em, build a block and slow them down - alternatively, use one of the spell potions which are hidden in some of the blocks. Either way, just make sure they don't derobe you of your three lives, that's all!

Solomon's Key is, quite frankly, an absolute killer of a game. It starts off ridiculously easy, leading you into such a false sense of security that, as soon as you reach the second level, you are wiped out almost immediately and



have to really settle down and concentrate if you are to get anywhere at all. This may infuriate a lot of people - it did me - but after a few swift deaths you begin to progress and, with that progression, a feeling of achievement creeps up on you, making Solomon's Key ultimately more enjoyable to play. The graphics are uncharacteristically good for a game of this type, as puzzlers usually display rather bland

sprites and backdrops. Not Solomon's Key, with its detailed sprites and heavy use of colour. Sound is a bit flat, but it's unintrusive and serves its purpose. And anyway, you'll be concentrating on staying alive, won't you? I would if I were you. If this is a favourite genre of yours, why not add to it by purchasing the excellent Solomon's Key - you'll kick yourself if you don't.

PAUL RAND