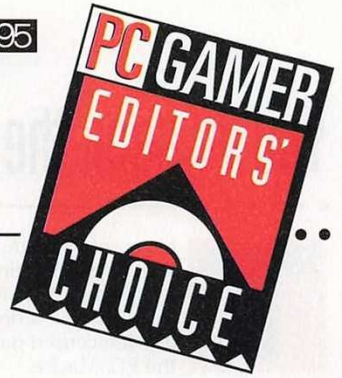


Dungeon Keeper



Category: Strategy

Developer: Bullfrog Productions

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94404 (415) 513-7171

Required	We Recommend
Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; 65MB hard-drive space; MS-DOS 6.22 or higher; Mouse	Pentium 166; Supported sound card; 14.4K modem

Learn the secrets of dungeon management as the ultimate bad guy in *Dungeon Keeper*.

They consider you vile, disgusting, a wretched pall of hate spewing forth the filth and dregs of countless crypts to foul the land with loathsome deeds. They hunt you like a dog and slaughter your brethren. Ah...if only they knew how much fun it really was....

Over the past couple of years, few games have been as talked about or eagerly awaited as Bullfrog's *Dungeon Keeper*. Originally slated for release in the fall of 1995, a number of setbacks and delays plagued the game, but Bullfrog remained committed to the project, promising eager fans that *Dungeon Keeper* wouldn't ship until it was ready. Lucky for us, they've been true to their word, leaving us with a wonderfully evil gift.

A dark and twisted take on roleplaying themes, *Dungeon Keeper* is a real-time strategy game that focuses on the ins and outs of building and maintaining a dungeon, where you assume the role of

an unseen, omnipotent beast in charge of controlling armies of vile creatures and managing their daily lives. As you start the game, you're the lowest of the low, a keeper without a keep. Your job is to enter a hero's realm and infest it with minions like Warlocks, Dragons, and Trolls, all lured by the promise of gold. Once your dungeon is overflowing with evil, you're ready to storm in for the kill. Throughout the game's single-player missions, you'll battle increasingly difficult foes (heroic lords and enemy dungeon keepers) in an attempt to claim the entire world as your own.

It's real-time strategy of a kind, but it only takes a few missions to discover that *Dungeon Keeper* is much more than a hack-and-slash C&C clone, skillfully focusing on life within the decaying walls of a dungeon, where untrustworthy creatures can storm away in anger while adventurers search for a breach in your defenses. Success in *DK* relies less on micro-management of units or skill in combat and ultimately depends on your ability to design an attractive, efficient dungeon while managing your creatures with constant and brutal discipline.

Players view their dungeons from a top-down isometric perspective in a free-scrolling, 3D world similar to that in *Syndicate Wars*. But unlike the open cityscapes of that game, *DK* is set in a dank, dark underworld where you must carve your dungeon out of forbidding rock. Each map may contain impenetrable rock, lava, or underground rivers — hazards which must be taken into account when designing your dungeon, and the lifeblood of every dungeon, gold, must be carefully mined without giving yourself away to the enemy. Using a few easy-to-remember keyboard commands, the mouse, and a handy interface to construct rooms and mine gold, you'll begin your task by calling upon a legion of



As your warlocks begin to practice their black magic in your library, you'll gain access to powerful spells such as this electrifying lightning attack.



The Dungeon Heart is your Achilles' heel; protect it well by surrounding it with creature-filled rooms and traps.

ready-made imps to do the dirty work while you fret over your dungeon design.

Instead of dropping down new buildings in haphazard fashion, a la C&C or *WarCraft II*, to receive new unit types, the design and location of each room in *Dungeon Keeper* is vitally important to the success of your dungeon. As you slowly excavate and explore the underworld, adding to your dungeon and amassing treasure, new creatures will be lured into your realm by the types of rooms you construct. Some rooms allow you to research new items or more advanced rooms. But this isn't *Field of Dreams* — just because you build it, that doesn't mean creatures will come.

















Like a web that builds its strength from each strand of silk, each room's efficiency is directly related to surrounding rooms, and each creature's happiness is related to the efficiency of a room. As creatures and their demands become more varied, this method of construction becomes a balancing act, and if you position a lair (creature housing) too far away from treasure rooms (for payday) or hatcheries (food), you may have a hard



Each creature will be drawn to your dungeon by different rooms. A warlock finds the volumes of magic tomes in your library an irresistible attraction.

T H E D A R K A R T S O F DUNGEON KEEPING

Though the main goal of *Dungeon Keeper* is to build a successful dungeon and allow your creatures to carry out your dirty work, researching spells can allow a keeper to affect the battlefield with the power of black magic.

POSSESS This allows you to jump into any creature you select and roam through your dungeon in a first-person perspective. Cast it on flies to explore the map quickly.			HEAL Makes sick monsters feel better.
CREATE IMP As your dungeon grows, you can create more imps (the only creature you can purchase) to keep it operating smoothly. Be warned: it'll cost you.			LIGHTNING STRIKE A powerful spell that can wipe out enemy imps or dwarven tunnelers in one strike.
SIGHT OF EVIL Allows you to see unexplored portions of the map.			PROTECT CREATURE Reduces damage on a selected creature for a limited time.
SPEED MONSTER Gives a selected monster a boost in speed allowing it to perform at twice its normal rate.			TURN TO CHICKEN Turns your enemies into chickens. Need we say more?
MUST OBEY A souped-up version of the speed monster, this spell accelerates all of your monsters in one shot.			CAVE-IN Causes a temporary collapse in the specified area, forcing enemy creatures to retreat.
CALL TO ARMS When cast, this spell rallies creatures to the specified location.			DISEASE Cast on an enemy creature heading back to join its comrades. The infected creature will inadvertently spread an infectious and deadly virus among an entire keep.
CONCEAL MONSTER Makes a selected creature invisible unless in combat.			ARMAGEDDON This spell transports all creatures on the level to your dungeon's heart for a sudden-death battle.
HOLD AUDIENCE Summons all of your creatures to your Dungeon Heart.			DESTROY WALLS Allows you to remove fortification from your enemy's walls to allow tunneling.

time luring creatures into your ranks.

Though you have god-like control over your creatures, you don't directly control their every action (unless you use the "possess creature" spell). Instead, a complex artificial intelligence makes creatures behave according to their own "personality." Your imps, for example, mine or excavate areas in a logical order, following your commands in the order they receive them — but if left alone, they'll act on their own, reinforcing walls, exploring areas and claiming enemy turf without your input. All of the other creatures in your dungeon act independently as well, going about their tasks without being told. You can redirect creatures by picking them up and dropping them in a different part of the dungeon — during combat, for example — but for the most part, you'll leave them to their own devices as you concentrate on building and managing the dungeon itself.

But that doesn't mean you won't interact with your creatures. If your dungeon design is inadequate, creatures may become angry or start vandalizing your dungeon to show their displeasure. When your creatures get out of line, you're free to deal with them however you like. You can slap your creatures around, bribe them with gold, or torture them mercilessly until they behave. And if all else fails, you can use your god-like powers to simply sacrifice or banish them.

This may seem like a strange way to control a strategy game, but in *Dungeon Keeper* it works beautifully. Instead of the frustration of micro-managing every step of every creature as in *WarCraft* or *Command & Conquer* — only to watch units get killed because they were too stupid to get out of the way of a tank — *Dungeon Keeper's* AI lets you concentrate on quality time rather than quantity time with your units. If you train your units, they'll do better in battle; if you've improved their lairs they'll be happier; but if you neglect them, be prepared to find your head riding a pike.

Though the depth of the game makes for a steep learning curve, the early missions serve as excellent tutorials, providing players with generous amounts of time and resources to learn the basics. But even more impressive is the inclusion of four artificial intelligence assistants



If the battle gets too hot, keepers can cast deadly spells like this cave-in.

(Aggressive, Defensive, Construction, and Move Only), which can take over various time-intensive duties. This leaves players free to concentrate on creature control or dungeon design.

Graphically, the game is very attractive, making good use of Bullfrog's trademark organic look in its 3D environments. But unless you have a fast Pentium, you'll want to stick to the low resolution mode; the high-res (640x480) is too sluggish and choppy to be playable on less than 166MHz machine.

As a single-player game, *Dungeon Keeper's* staggering amount of detail and variety makes it an exciting change from the norm, but as a multi-player game the sheer weight of the gameplay makes for extremely lengthy battles. Supporting two-player modem-to-modem (14.4K or faster) and four players on IPX networks (no built-in Internet support), the multi-player missions are immense, and with cautious players on either end, you can expect to spend hours playing out a single battle.

Still, *DK* is undeniably addictive and fun. It's humorous, dark, and skillfully done. Though there have been many attempts to describe *Dungeon Keeper's*

brand of real-time strategy with pat comparisons, one look at the final product reveals a lot more depth than would comfortably fit in a "SimCity meets WarCraft" comparison. The game design is very complex in comparison to most real-time strategy games, but it's flawlessly executed and easy to handle, with so many subtle tricks and surprises hidden beneath the surface that it would take several passes through the game to discover them all. It is another wickedly addictive real-time strategy game, but it's not like any you've played before.

—Todd Vaughn

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Highly addictive, lots of subtle detail, and very attractive graphics.

90%

LOWS: Slow pace in multi-player battles; no built-in Internet support.

BOTTOM LINE: The line on the box is right; Evil is good.