



(Left) Dropping a warlock into the sacrificial pool.  
(Above) A bunch of bile demons work out in the gym.

# Dungeon Keeper

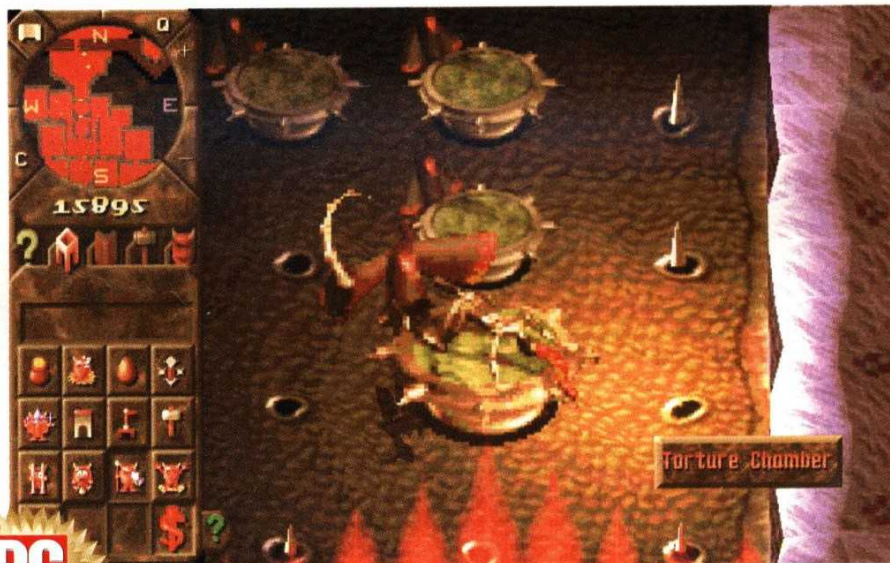
Deep, dark, complex and dangerous. That's a dungeon. Shallow, pale, backward and harmless. That's Charlie Brooker. Put them together and what have you got? Not "bibbety bobbety boo", that's for sure...

**D**

UNGEON KEEPER REPRESENTS A TRIUMPH of creative endeavour over marketing muscle. A bunch of imbeciles in marketing wanted it released over a year ago, but Peter Molyneux and his team have stuck in there and carried on programming to ensure the game measures up to their own expectations. And now, finally, it's ready for release. *Dungeon Keeper*, the most anticipated game in Bullfrog's history, has reached the end of its notoriously prolonged gestation period. And it rules.

## The underground movement

The game itself is a definite genre-buster. It's kind of like playing every Bullfrog game ever released, plus three or four new ones, all at once. In fact, it's an absolute *bastard* to describe. Trying to fit the game into an easy-to-comprehend pigeonhole is a bit like trying to stuff a live horse in your mouth – it just won't go. The best way to summarise it would be to imagine playing a three-dimensional hybrid of *Command Et Conquer* and *SimCity 2000*, in which you can actually 'become' one of the little munchkins that run around your ever-evolving landscape. There are also obvious parallels with *Theme Park*, but then there are equally obvious parallels with *Populous*, *Archon* and *Ultima Underworld*, too. And as a multi-player game, it's a cross between all of these and *Spy Vs Spy* as well. It sounds complicated, and when you consider the sheer number of disparate elements at work here, it is – yet the underlying principles are simple enough that you



PC  
ZONE  
Classic



(Above) Confusing, no. Complex, yes. When you see *Dungeon Keeper* in action, it all makes perfect sense.

can pick up them after about 20 minutes play. To describe it as a masterpiece of game design is no exaggeration.

Here's the deal. You, mister player sir, are cast in the role of 'Dungeon Keeper' – that is, you're the evil overlord who runs the subterranean dens so often encountered in RPG titles. As the game opens you gaze out across a sickeningly green and pleasant province, a blissful utopia populated by contented peasants, ruled by benevolent, honourable Lords. Your task is to convert it into a land of dark, nightmarish brutality and unimaginable torment, over which you may rule mercilessly forever more. Each time you complete a level, that section of the map is transformed from lush green forestry to toxic eyesore. Digging underground tunnels in order to *destroy* the environment? Perhaps they should have called it 'All Hail The Anti-Swampy'.

## Information overload

Attempting to explain all of *Dungeon Keeper's* elements in detail would be futile; we simply don't have the space. Check out the step-by-step walkthrough of level one (a tutorial





(Above) A monster's bedroom from a monster's point of view.  
(Left) That's what Claire Rayner looks like with nothing on. Tee hee.



level) on the following page for a glimpse at the (very) basics. Your objective in each stage is basically the same: to defeat everyone and everything else. At some point in each level, the 'Lord of the Realm' will enter the playing area, intent on destroying your subterranean playpen. Defeat him (and any rival dungeoneers while you're at it) and you can proceed to the next stage. And just in case you think that all sounds a little 'samey', here's a timely 'information belch' for you to consider. It's jam-packed with *Dungeon Keeper* statistics. See if you can swallow it all in one go...

There are 13 different types of 'room' in the game (14 if you count bridges), each of which serves a totally unique strategic function. You can cast 16 different kinds of spell and plant six different varieties of booby-trap. There are four different makes of door to protect yourself with. Your dungeon may be populated by any combination of the 17 different available monsters, each of which has its own



(Above) A big scaly dragon wearing white gloves and larging it on the dance floor. Massive.

## Slave labour



The imps are my favourite creatures of all. They're your dogsbodies, your slave labour – the poor bastards who have to physically undertake your every command.

Perpetually digging for gold, dragging corpses to the graveyard, fixing traps or mending the walls, they've got a firm grasp on the shitty end of the stick career-wise. Just like your average fast-food eatery employee, they are helpless, downtrodden underlings who have no choice but to conform to your every whim – something which wouldn't be half as satisfying if their AI wasn't so spot on. Like all the monsters in *Dungeon Keeper*, they're so adept at route-finding, you don't even notice they're doing it. Superb stuff.

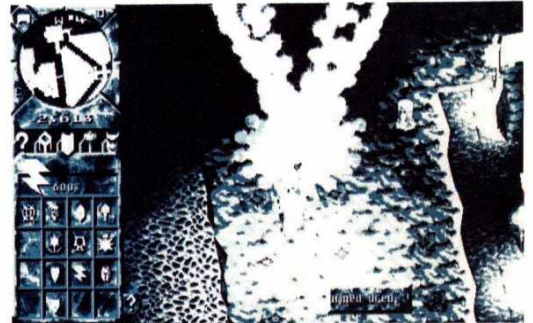
## Wee beasties

There are more visible signs of life in a single screenful of *Dungeon Keeper* than you'll find in most European nations (especially Belgium). When things are going well, the corridors are positively infested with creatures. Beetles scuttle this way and that, their tiny feet audibly tickling the cold stone floor. Bile demons grunt, break wind and haul their flabby, unpleasant hides through the earthen lair. Flies and dragons swoop through the dank air. You half expect the voice of David Attenborough to pop up on the soundtrack, explaining in a hushed and reverent tone the monsters' mating habits and dietary concerns.

Still, they may well fight the enemy on your behalf, but the creatures are hardly subservient. Fail to keep them paid and well-fed, for instance, and they'll begin to sulk, fight among themselves, vandalise your dungeon, go on strike – or even start deserting in droves. Different creatures get upset by different things (the warlocks are particularly troublesome). As in life, keeping everyone happy is a major headache.



unique set of characteristics (right down to individual blood types), appropriate first-person viewpoint, and access to a range of spells (24 in total) entirely separate from those available to you yourself. During a given level, you could end up under assault from any number of rival *Dungeon Keepers* (and their hordes), or from any of the 13 different 'heroes' – humans who try to vanquish you – who may (if you've built a Torture Chamber) be 'converted' to your cause and command. Dead creatures may be eaten by others, or (if you have one)



The lighting effects are fantastic. And they wouldn't look out of place on *The Hitman And Her*.



## Dungeon Keeper Walkthrough

Trying to describe *Dungeon Keeper* in words is a tad tricky, so here's a bijou walkthrough thing which takes you through the simplest of levels - namely stage one - in order to afford you a fleeting glimpse of the game dynamics. For added realism, cut these screenshots out, have them enlarged at a local print shop, then stick them on your monitor, one at a time, while holding the mouse in your hand and listening to *BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Death and Horror Sound Effects Volume Three*.



**1** Yo, suck-knuckle, check it out. It's a virgin dungeon. There's nothing here yet except the all-important dungeon heart (watch out - should the enemy destroy this, it's 'game over' time), a handful of imps, and an empty room in the lower left-hand corner. Let's get digging - and where better to dig first than that enticing gold seam up in the top right?



**2** I've highlighted the area I want my workers to concentrate on first. In a second they'll be along at my bidding and I can sit back and watch as they dig away like the lowly slaves they are. Looking on as they sweat their guts out gives you a warm glow inside. It's a bit like running a branch of McDonalds. Or one of Nike's production lines in East Asia. Or a dungeon. Doh.



**3** There they go, hacking away at the gold as if their miserable lives depended on it. Should your minions work too slowly for your liking, simply right-click to give them a few hearty slaps with your disembodied hand. They work harder when they're scared of you - just be careful not to accidentally beat them to death (which is easier than you think).



**4** Ooh, look. Hidden behind that gold is a whole new area. Part of the beauty of *Dungeon Keeper* is the way you never know what's lurking behind the next chunk of earth - until you dig through it. This could have been a lava pit, a secret tunnel, a cache of power-ups, even an enemy dungeon. But it isn't. It's just a pool of water. Phew. How lovely.



**5** Since the gold has now been successfully excavated, my imps can start to claim the area for my dungeon. A wisp of red smoke appears as each square comes under my control. Claimed areas have little red dots on them (to make matters easier, rival dungeon squares sport different colours), indicating land that I have full control over them (oh, the power!). I've decided to build on this area... so that's precisely what I'll do...



**6** A few clicks later and I've converted that empty space into a Treasure Room. This is essential for storing gold. Come payday, every critter in my domain will be in here, sniffing for cash like a pack of hollow-cheeked junkies hanging round the needle exchange. Your minions require a regular money fix - fail to find the necessary funds to placate them and there'll be hell to pay.



**7** I've decided to tempt some monsters in. That mist-shrouded doorway is a portal to the outside world through which beasties will enter. Certain facilities attract certain types of monster. Training rooms, for instance, tend to entice violent, brutal bastards, whereas more cerebral fiends (dragons or warlocks) tend to find research libraries altogether more beguiling.



**8** A few minutes later and a fly and a beetle have arrived in my dungeon, lured away from their natural habitat. Here's the beetle now, heading toward the lair I've just constructed. The lair is essentially a dormitory, providing rest and relaxation for your minions. It's an area that's fraught with problems, for example, you don't want giant spiders sleeping next to giant flies for obvious reasons.



**9** Next I've decided to build another essential area - the hatchery. After all, my creatures submit to hunger just like the rest of us and have appetites that need to be satiated. Should they feel in the mood for snacking on a bit of Chicken Tonight, this is the room they'll be visiting. You can also pick chickens up and feed your minions yourself, should you feel so inclined.



**10** Things are ticking along nicely, so I've decided to control a fly for a few minutes. Just cast the 'Possess Creature' spell on any of your monsties and you're whisked into first-person view. Since I'm a fly, everything looks a little distorted. Not only do different organisms view the world in different ways - beetles look through a fish-eye lens, hellhounds are colour-blind - they also move in a different manner, too. Beetles crawl. Dogs lope. Flies, unsurprisingly, fly.



**11** Uh-oh, trouble. Some sneaky bastard is attempting to break through my walls. See those little clouds of dust? That's a bunch of would-be heroes, banging away with their hammers and failing to make much impact on my fortified walls. It's only a matter of time before they breach my lair though, so I think I'd better start rounding up my forces pretty sharpish.



**12** It's hard to see what's going on here, but it's a heck of a barney. Two little dwarves have broken into my treasure room, and I've dropped a load of angry beetles and flies on their heads in revenge. Hopelessly outnumbered, the shortarse intruders don't stand a chance. Heh. Heh heh heh. Heh. Hee haw. Ahem. Okay, so the evil laugh needs a bit of work. I'm only on level one, after all.



**13** My murderous antics have alerted the Lord of the Realm - and here he comes right now, stomping towards my dungeon like a right smug, self-righteous tosser. Am I scared though? Nah - Esther Rantzen in plate armour, that's all he is, even if he doesn't have the same oversized great choppers. He must die. He must die. He must die. He must die. He must die. He must die. He must die.



**14** Sure enough, Captain Bigshot looks like he's destined to meet a similar fate to that of those luckless dwarves. If the battle starts going badly, I suppose I could always possess one of the monsties and finish him off for once and for all myself. But the battle seems to be progressing quite nicely, so I won't. Instead I'll simply sit back, put my feet up and watch him buy the farm.



**15** Victory is mine. The Lord lies sprawled across my dungeon floor like a carpet. A shiny, metallic carpet. Shaped like a man. Actually, he's not like a carpet at all, is he? Oh well. The important thing is this: I am the winner. I am King. And I am now proceeding to the next level. That's the basics dealt with - the game itself really starts kicking in around level five. By level nine, you'll be hopelessly, helplessly addicted...





(Left) Clouds of dust as the imps get digging. (Below) The hatchery: a good place to pick up a few fine chicks.



up close), hopelessly addictive – need I continue any further? Nope. Didn't think so. Just don't thank the imbeciles in marketing. If they'd had their way, it would have been released over a year ago in an unfinished form.

This kind of complex, balanced gameplay takes time to perfect. And it's well worth it. 7

dragged to the graveyard where they may rise as ghosts, skeletons or vampires. And last but not least, if you wish, you can play an entire level from the point of view of any one of your creatures, leaving the planning, building, wargaming and resource management side of things to the 'Computer Assistant' player (which mimics your personal playing 'style' as closely as possible). You want depth? It's right here, sunshine.

### It's not bad at all

Sounds too much to cope with? Quit your fretting, you big wuss. The learning curve has been worked out quite brilliantly, with the first handful of stages being simplistic tutorials which ease you into the game with the minimum amount of bewilderment. By the time you reach level five – which is where the game really starts to open up – you'll be confidently thinking you're an expert. And how very wrong you'll be, because there's still absolutely loads to learn.

*Dungeon Keeper* is a game of continual discovery and hitherto unprecedented depth. Technically stunning, visually dazzling (although it does bitmap pretty badly when you get

## More! More! More!

**There's far more in *Dungeon Keeper* than in any other game you care to mention. Fact. Now, 'more stuff' doesn't always mean 'better', but here each element has been perfectly balanced. As in life, each individual element influences the others in some way. If you see what I mean. Er, anyway, here's a list of some of the other cool things in *Dungeon Keeper* which we didn't have space to crack on about...**



- The graphics and sound effects – they're grrrrreat.
- It's a totally brilliant multi-player game too. And don't worry

if you don't have a network, or modem – or even any friends for that matter. You can play against the computer for endless, endless fun.

- The game has loads of downright spooky 'hidden features'. The team are intent on messing with your head, but I won't say any more lest I spoil the surprises to come. You have been warned.
- If you convert a hero to your cause, you can control him/her as well. So that's another 13 different 'creatures' you can play as.
- Some of the hidden levels require you to guide individual monsters to safety in first-person view. Raa. Fantastic.
- The music's great but, if you prefer, you can replace the game CD with an audio CD of your choosing, à la *Quake*. The team have listed their own recommendations in the back of the manual. Personally, I'd suggest *Down Down* by Status Quo. Or *Going Underground* by the Jam. Or anything with a 'subterranean' feel to it. Because I'm obvious and twee.

## Yeah, but...

**Hey, nothing's perfect. The sphinx even has a broken nose for god's sake, but tourists still gasp at it. Here are *Dungeon Keeper's* drawbacks in full...**

1. The first-person sections – these are more functional than they are exciting. It's worth possessing a creature (particularly a level 10 warlock) if you want to help out during a scrap, but it certainly isn't as much fun as the general planning and strategy itself.
2. Hi-res mode looks groovy, but naturally it isn't as fast and fluid as low-res (where everything looks a tad muddy). Mind you, a 3D accelerator patch is promised for the near future (then again, when *isn't* it?).
3. It's actually quite hard to *lose* a game until you get to about level 12. Or maybe that's just because I'm utterly brilliant at it.
4. It's got orcs in it, so your girlfriend can quite legitimately call you a sad bastard for playing it.
5. Battles aren't conducted with much finesse, and it's generally a case of everyone just piling in. Consequently, they can be confusing to watch.

## In Perspective

*Dungeon Keeper* has certain gameplay elements in common with more or less any game you care to mention – it's that eclectic. Still, for the sake of comparison, we'll line it up against some other classics and see how it compares...

Dungeon Keeper

C&C: Red Alert

Theme Hospital

Populous

SimCity 2000

X-COM3

## Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486DX/66

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard

Note: The recommended spec is a mere P60, folks...



## Score

The game that redefines definition.

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Price: £34.99

Release date: July

Publisher: Electronic Arts

Telephone: 01753 549442

Website: <http://www.bullfrog.co.uk>

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