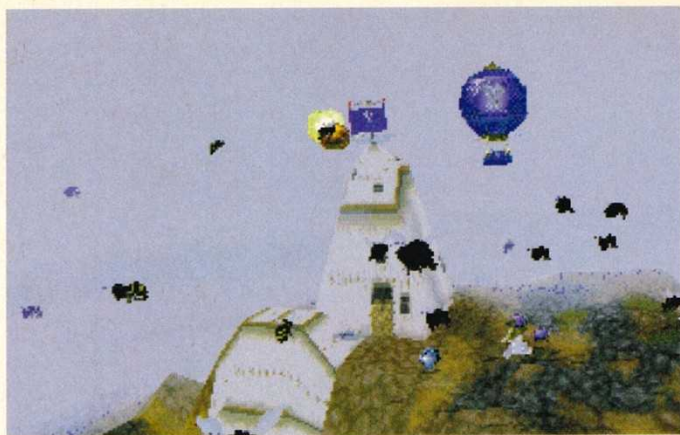




The balloons go out from your castle to gather any mana you have managed to claim, sucking it up into the basket with some vast Magic Hoover.



Now would be a good time to pull back. You're about to be overrun by a swarm of bees. These buzzing critters pack a nasty sting in their tail.

# Magic Carpet

**Y**our first game of *Magic Carpet* is a truly nervous experience.

Your palms sweat, your heart palpitates, your brow furrows and your mouth dries. All this trauma, for just one reason... will the gameplay match the graphics? These dazzling vistas are all very well, but at the end of the day are they anything more than just a bit of fluff? Read on and discover the terrifying truth.

The storyline of *Magic Carpet* is decent enough. There's this planet, see, and it's the one that everyone wanted to colonise, because it had loads of mana – that's magic energy to the man in the



**The carpets in James Binns' flat aren't exactly magic – they're beige and cigarette burnt. But we got him to get the hoover out and take Bullfrog's latest masterpiece for a spin through the skies.**

street. This mana stuff was dead handy and so the human-type-creatures of your race dedicated themselves to collecting the mana in order to harness its mystical powers. The planet wasn't too happy about all this so, in the gaia tradi-

tion, rendered itself barren. That meant less mana for the competing wizards to fight over, and then war. In a foolhardy attempt to destroy his opponents, one wizard prepared a spell which backfired, causing a huge earthquake,

killing the wizard and splitting up the world into separate realms... Doh! His apprentice survived the spell and sets off to restore the world to equilibrium... that's you, that is. So there you are, standing on this jet-powered rug,

## NOWT AS STRANGE AS FOLK

Across the *Magic Carpet* world you'll bump into various tribes, races and beasts – some hostile, some harmless, all to be approached with caution and an itchy trigger finger.



Emus are an unlucky breed. One moment being abused by Rod Hull, the next ridden by a maniac.



This guy is the Kraken. He swims around in the water, rubber bands you then attacks with lightning.



The archers defend castles. Be careful not to massacre any of your guards, and watch out for arrows.



The dragons are dead easy to kill with a hail of fireballs. They're your basic fireball fodder.



The Griffon has a rebound protection spell and can only be wasted with lightning. Keep back.



The Genie teleports in front of you, steals your mana then disappears. Pull out the big spells for this sucker.



Gargoyles seem relatively harmless – probably just there to scare the superstitious and weak.



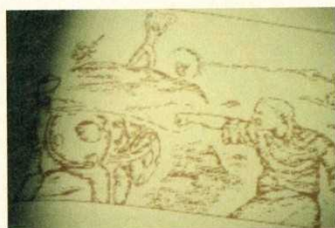
Letting loose with a bolt of lightning is an easy way to create some instant carnage. This castle is in for a pretty nasty shock



Attacking the purple balloon wasn't such a hot idea. Here comes the balloon's owner, firing all the way. There's an awful lot of this in the two-player game.



surveying a kingdom, with nothing but a few spells and a whole lot of work to do. The levels within *Magic Carpet* are sprawling geographies, with mountains, beaches, seas, valleys and even castles dotted around. You fly over this landscape, battling the chaos-created monsters and other wizards. To complete a level, you have to find, free and claim enough mana to impose order. At its most simple, you achieve this objective by shooting anything that moves and then claiming the mana which pops from its dismembered remains. Claiming the mana changes its colour and a balloon sets out from your cas-



The intro unfolds the background story to *Magic Carpet* across the pages of a book.

tle to collect it. Have we mentioned the castles yet?

One of the coolest spells in the Junior Boys Book of Spells is the power to create castles. When selecting this one, it's best to put some distance between yourself and the nearest enemy installation. Then you fire the spell into the ground and, from nowhere, a structure rises up. Starting simply, you get a single building, but collecting more mana and casting subsequent spells makes your fort grow. Guards come out to defend the battlements on your behalf and extra balloons go out to collect mana. You can build up a seriously impressive installation on the later levels, and they are a good way of rewarding all your effort.

### Witchcraft

At the start of the game, you only have a primitive batch of spells up your baggy silk sleeves. The fireball is a bog-standard weapon which will take dozens of hits to do any real damage to an enemy castle. Later, you'll pick up Heal, Speedup and Shield spells, all en route to the real biggies. These include the earthquake, which splits the land apart, creating a canyon for you to fly down. The volcano is rock hard, since it produces an erupting Vesuvius, complete with lava balls which set fire to just about everything. Casting that at an enemy castle can really make their eyes water. All in all, there are some 19 spells, and working out how to get the very best out of them is a challenge, though you're helped in this



You see, we bought the castle for 45 and now with the extension built, we could sell for as much as 79.

by the intuitive front end – two spells can be set up at any one time, one on both the left and right mouse buttons. You can also set up spells as number keys for faster, customised play.

As well as other rogue wizards, there are loads of beasts to deal with. Early levels break you in with dragons, who shoot fireballs and are relatively easy to destroy, and flocks of vultures who fly in close and give you a bit of a clawing. Later levels, however, feature the likes of trolls

who stomp around throwing rocks, and the Kraken, which swims about in the water. The latter's party piece is to fire a rubber band spell, so that he's dragged behind you, following up with lightning spells. Nasty.

### The lie of the land

The undulating landscapes of *Magic Carpet* are all brilliantly drawn, and stuffed with detail and features. Working out the best route on to an island, and an attack plan to win it over, is where most of the game's strategic side comes in. There are other elements in the landscape which change the way the game plays. These include dolmans, standing stones which recharge you as you fly over them, and teleports, which send you to another location in the realm. The graphics engine that handles all this is slick and fast – for lower specs there are options to strip out some of the detailing. The →

## HI-YA, HI-RES

Rather than lavish high-res screenshots across the pages, we thought we'd confine them to this smart little ghetto boxout. If you have a lean, mean dragster machine, then these are the kind of graphics you can look forward to.



The skeletons fire flaming arrows, and, if they're part of an army, they don't contain any mana.



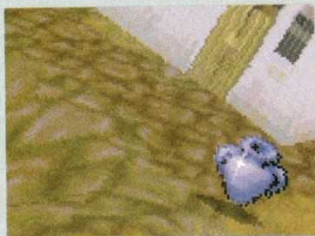
The indigenous population is pretty harmless. They just wander around with towels on their heads.

## MAGIC, OUR MORRIS

You'll need all the magic spells you can get your sweaty little hands on to survive in *Magic Carpet*. Here's just a selection of the firepower that's made available during the course of the game.



Here are the spells you can deploy. We'll give you the lowdown on these when we tip the game next month.



You collect extra spells by picking up these jars. You won't find these down your local Habitat.



The meteor packs a mean wallop - like a fireball, except you have a bigger blast radius.



The volcano rises up from nowhere and showers the surrounding area with red hot lava.



Lightning bolts are a versatile weapon, which feel rock hard every time you fire them.



The environment responds to your firepower. Shoot a tree and watch it burn.

→ only problem with the landscape is that, for all its visual beauty, at times it doesn't actually feel real. This is because, although landscape heights may vary, when you actually fly into a mountain side you are simply pushed on to the top of that peak. In terms of your positioning, the game has a surprisingly flat feel. What you actually vary when you move the

mouse up or down is your angle, whether you are pointing at the ground or into the sky, and where your auto-targeting projectiles are headed. The result of this in terms of gameplay is that you can never actually gain height, which means that diving attacks or steep climbs to escape an enemy are out of the question. It could be that this is just the way magic carpets handle in

real life... um, but it's more likely to be a programming short cut.

The slight failing in the flight engine means that you'll never really get the best out of the stereogram modes. These are the two extra settings you can choose for that true 3D feel. The first uses naff colour filter spectacles. The screen displays two super-imposed images on screen simultaneously. Your eyes see different

and pace as the action builds up and creating eerie silences when nothing much is going on. It gives the game an unrivalled cinematic soundtrack.

### Get the boys round

It's as a multi-player game that *Magic Carpet* really excels. The strategies become much more complex, as you and your opponents build up castles then fight over mana, chucking spells at

each other. The capacity for vindictiveness (a volcano here and there) rivals even *Doom*, and if you consider that you are not only destroying enemies but at the same time creating and defending a castle, then this makes for some

intensely sophisticated combat. There's much more room for alliances too, with up to eight players within a network. There are also extra levels included for network games.

*Magic Carpet* is a brilliant game. It's utterly involving and, if the control flaws were ironed out, the gameplay really would match the stunning graphics. **PCF**

So there you are on this jet-powered rug, surveying a kingdom, with nothing but a few spells and a whole lot of work to do.

### Magic Carpet

£44.99 Bullfrog/EA ☎ 01753 549442

**Minimum system:** 4Mb; VGA; 486 DX50; CD-ROM drive; hard disk (2Mb)

**Optional extras:** AdLib; Sound Blaster; Roland; Gravis; AWE 32; mouse; joystick

#### For

- Dazzling graphics
- Atmospheric sound effects
- Excellent multi-player game
- A rare chance to create as well as destroy

#### Against

- Sometimes feels a bit 'flat'

**PCF Rating 91%**

## Another perspective



James, bless 'im, has been ranting on about *Carpet* for ages now (it's all so exciting for him, this PC business). Sceptical as I was about yet another apparently wonderful Bullfrog game, the minute I played it I realised a) James was right and

b) I was going to have to continue playing this game for a very long time indeed.

It's hard to describe the sheer wonderfulness of the graphics unless you actually sit down and experience them for a while. In fact the game has a unique atmosphere, a combination of visuals, sounds and gameplay which is... which is... oh, just go and buy it, okay? It'll save a lot of trouble on our part.

**Ed Ricketts**

### Looking elsewhere

As if you'd ever want to! Load up on these other beauties.

#### Unmissable violence

**Doom 2**  
£49.99 Id/VIE, PCF 38, 91%

#### Pretty pre-rendered

**Novastorm**

Reviewed on page 120

#### Star simulation

**Dawn Patrol**  
£49.99, Empire, PCF 38, 89%

#### More mayhem

Both *Syndicate 2* and *Creation*, the next two major projects from the Bullfrog stable, are going to use an updated version of the *Magic Carpet* engine. Should be a couple of winners there, then.