



GOTHIC 3 WEARS "OLD SCHOOL" LIKE A BOY SCOUT BADGE, AND THAT'S TERRIFIC NEWS IF YOU'RE INTO THAT SORT OF THING.

You're probably wondering how Gothic 3 stacks up against Oblivion, and the answer's easy: not favorably. Still, the environments are mighty pretty.



Gothic 3's skill system is premised on a few core attributes (fighting, hunting, magic, and so on) that break down into dozens of subskills. Over time, you'll learn to do things like hunt, skin, brew, cook, and prospect for ore.

It's too bad combat's so screwy—it's the one thing a patch won't fix, and like in nearly all RPGs, it's the heart and soul of Gothic 3.

# GOTHIC 3

There's a hole in my RPG, dear Liza, dear Liza

PUBLISHER: Aspyr DEVELOPER: Piranha Bytes GENRE: RPG AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Teen  
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 4.6GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: None VERSION REVIEWED: Retail Box

## REVIEW

**Every RPG has its hook.** Some are practically orbital, trading depth to trace the contours of entire continents. Others might as well be fantasy sports leagues for all their buckets of exotic info. *Gothic 3* is the culmination of a third approach that renders mid-sized environments in painstaking detail while keeping its mechanics simple and unpretentious. I definitely heart the latter, so it's a pity to report that *Gothic 3* was released too soon and with too many glitches to warrant a recommendation unless you're supremely patient and own a sturdy desk—because when *Gothic 3* chokes, you will pound it.

*Gothic 3* picks up where *Gothic 2* left off, continuing the saga of the nameless hero who broke out of a magical prison and eventually



• You'll travel through three distinct areas, including the frozen northern land of Nordmar and the southern desert of Varant.

slew an undead dragon. Fresh out of the frying pan (Khorinis, the island setting of the last two games), you disembark on the mainland in time to grapple with an inferno: Orcs have overrun the continent, enslaving most of the human population...and only the capital is holding out. As a free-roaming mercenary, you can join with the Orcs, side with the humans, or pass the buck entirely to follow a mysterious third path.

Most of the questing betweentimes boils down to the usual RPG chores. Kill some stuff to help a village; collect a bunch of stuff for a mage; defeat something to get five animal hides for a guy who tells you how to enter a building where another guy asks you to do more or less the same thing. Still, you have to admire the fidelity here. *Gothic 3* wears "old school" like a Boy Scout badge, and that's terrific news if you're into this sort of thing.

### BUGS...WHY'D IT HAVE TO BE BUGS?

Other kinds of fidelity are less admirable, and *Gothic* fans who put up with the last two games' foibles probably won't be shocked to hear that *Gothic 3*'s troubles come in two familiar flavors: loopy design choices and out-and-out bugs. The European version's been available for months, but even the patched U.S. version (up to v1.09 already—yikes) still has the creepy-crawlies. Loading or saving games sometimes elicits "out of memory" crashes. A few quests remain unfinishable because the game won't acknowledge that you completed them. Overlong quest descriptions in your journal get truncated and—this isn't so much a bug as a missing feature—NPCs no longer come a-running when you bust into their homes. Sleep in their beds, pilfer

**EVEN THE PATCHED U.S. VERSION (UP TO V1.09 ALREADY) STILL HAS THE CREEPY-CRAWLIES.**

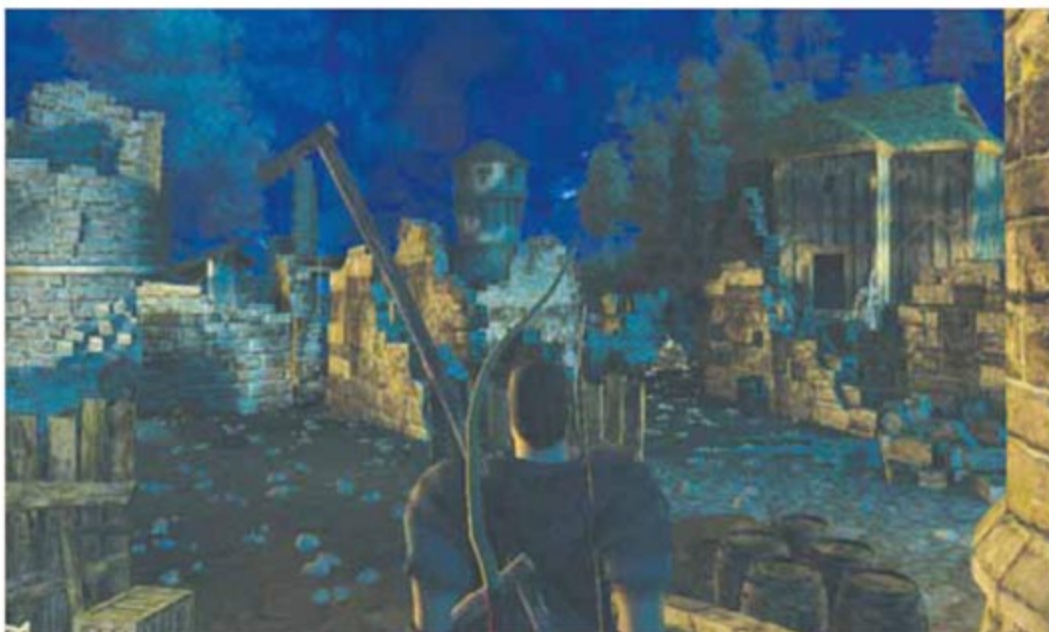
their goods...it's like paradise for newbie thieves or something.

More weirdness: Some NPCs get stuck against crates and jitter in place or fall through objects, and the text names over their heads are some kind of fugly font that looks glued in. You're also denied a crosshair reticule, which means constantly stumbling over items or bodies you're trying to target. Visual effects like lens flare (cameras in medieval times, guys?) render everywhere, including straight through mountains and inside caves. And on high-end systems, the game pitches and heaves for several seconds as on-the-fly scenery loads, like film hitching in a crappy projector. None of these by themselves are showstoppers, but taken together they certainly scuff up the chrome.

It's the goofy combat, though, that's most off-putting. By holding different buttons on the keyboard in conjunction with variably timed mouse clicks, you can punch, jump-attack, parry, cast spells, loose arcing quarrels and arrows, and pull off killing blows. It all sounds wonderful in theory; in practice, the game's creatures and human enemies only seem to know two moves: "lunge" or "back-up-really-really-fast." Which means you're either clicking like mad to keep your backpedaling opponents at bay, or falling over (much too frequently) when they score a hit. It's tough to actually lose a battle if you click fast enough, because you're constantly stunning your opponents. In short, a combat system meant to be tactically plush comes off instead as shallow and monotonous.

### A LONG AND WINDING ROAD

Nine patches in, *Gothic 3* has a long row to hoe before rating "close enough for government work." Try it if you're hardcore and even-tempered. But yep, here we go again—closing with another "until it's adequately patched, caveat emptor." • **Matt Peckham**



• The human cities are either overrun or under siege by Orcs...but which faction you choose to support is entirely up to you.

### VERDICT

■ Deep character interaction; vast world to explore; intricate branching story.

■ Broken quests; glitchy visuals; wonky combat; save/load crashes.

5/10

AVERAGE

Games for Windows  
THE OFFICIAL FIGURE

SUPREME COMMANDER \ GOTHIC 3 \ QUAKE WARS

**NEW!**  
THE ULTIMATE  
PC GAMING  
AUTHORITY  
Formerly Computer Gaming World



# Games for Windows<sup>®</sup>

ISSUE 03 \ FEBRUARY 2007 \ THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



**WORLD EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK**

## THE CROSSING

**HOW VALVE AND ARKANE  
ARE KILLING A.I.  
(AND REPLACING IT WITH YOU!)**

**FREE-O-RAMA**

## 101 FREE GAMES

GIANT MEGA-LIST OF GREAT GAMES  
THAT WON'T COST YOU ONE DANG PENNY!

**SPECIAL REPORT**

## MAKE MONEY PLAYING GAMES!

CHECK OUT OUR GUIDE TO  
REAL-LIFE GAMING CAREERS

**PLUS: WHY DO VIDEO  
GAME STORIES SUCK?**  
WE ASK GAMING'S TOP SCRIBES



**PREVIEWED**  
**TITAN QUEST  
EXPANSION**  
MORE KILLING AND LOOTING!



**PREVIEWED**  
**SUPREME  
COMMANDER**  
SON OF TOTAL ANNIHILATION



**TECH**  
**VISTA HANDS-ON  
REPORT**  
WHICH VERSION IS FOR YOU?

**ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA<sup>™</sup>**

FEBRUARY 2007 ISSUE 03  
\$4.99 U.S. \$6.99 Canada



14024 06950 9



Display Until February 6

**GFW.1UP.COM** **1UP**