

CONDOR



Diablo



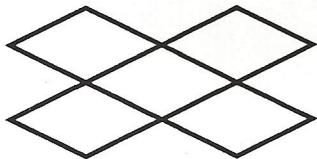
GAME CONCEPT BY CONDOR, INC.

The following is Condor, Inc.'s proposal for a role-playing game, playable on PC-compatible computers. *Diablo* captures familiar fantasy elements within a unique structure designed for maximum replayability, expandability, and versatility. *Diablo* fills a neglected niche in the computer game market. As games today substitute gameplay with multimedia extravaganzas, and strive toward needless scale and complexity, we seek to reinvigorate the hack and slash, feel good gaming audience. Emphasis will be on exploration, conflict and character development in a dark quest for justice. We hope to produce both a stand-alone game and its expansion disks. This initial document will be expanded upon and modified when development is initiated.

GAME DESIGN

OVERVIEW:

Diablo is a role playing game wherein a player creates a single character and guides him through a dungeon in an attempt to find and destroy 'Diablo', the devil himself. All the action takes place in an isometric, three-quarter perspective, with diamond-shaped, 'square' floor spaces (see diagram).



The entire game operates on a turn-based system. Using a mouse, the player moves his character from space to space, exploring corridors and rooms and engaging in combat. The character faces challenges in the form of hostile monsters and traps in his quest to descend deeper into the dungeon. Many beneficial weapons and magical items can be acquired and used to help on this quest.

A player will have the choice of many races and classes for his character. The player's character will develop as he defeats monsters and descends to deeper dungeon levels. A character will acquire new skills, improve fighting and magic abilities, and wield more powerful equipment.

Forays into the dungeon will be broken up by trips to the town located above. In the town, a general store will provide standard equipment and repairs, and will also purchase extra equipment from the player. A temple will provide healing for injured and sick characters. Training and other facilities may also be available.

The heart of *Diablo* is the randomly created dungeon. A new dungeon level is generated each time a level is entered, using our Dynamic Random Level Generation (DRLG) System. Rooms, corridors, traps, treasures, monsters and stairways will be randomly placed, providing a new gaming experience every time *Diablo* is played. In addition to random halls and rooms, larger 'set piece' areas, like a maze or a crypt complex, will be pre-designed and appear intact in the levels. This system facilitates the inclusion of puzzles and traps, and helps the addition of thematic elements. Deeper levels will contain progressively more difficult creatures and hazards. A character's quest ends with the defeat of Diablo, located deep in the dungeon.



Expandability and replay value are key to *Diablo*'s success. The randomly generated dungeon insures new opportunities for exploration as well as unique encounters and adventures; no two games will ever be the same. New magic items, creatures, traps, as well as complete scenarios can be added to the base game after the initial purchase and incorporated directly into the DRLG engine (see discussion of expansion packs later in this document). This expandability further adds to continued replay value.

Diablo will support 2-player and multi-player game sessions via modem or network. A special 'arena' dungeon will be available for opponents to pit their characters against each other. In two-player mode, a user-defined time limit forces players to move quickly; if they do not specify a move, they lose their opportunity during that turn. As soon as all players register an action, the game progresses, regardless of time limit. The ability to play against friends will add to the appeal of the expansion packs as players will seek the upper hand versus their friends.

PLOT AND SETTING:

Diablo is set in a fantastic, medieval world, where sword-and-sorcery-wielding heroes battle the forces of darkness. The player's character has just had his life thrown upside down when sinister raiders kill his family and destroy his home. Left with nothing but a desire for vengeance, the character traces the raiders steps to a crypt and an expansive labyrinth below. Gathering up his courage and initial weapons, he dives in with fury.



The world of *Diablo* will have a dark, evil tone. Initial levels will be set in an abandoned Gothic church. A marble mausoleum and progressively darker, dingier crypts and catacombs follow. Deeper, natural cave formations lead to supernatural, demonic halls, and finally to the opulent chambers of Diablo.

Creatures to be encountered will also follow this sinister theme. The undead will predominate in the form of skeletons, zombies, ghosts and the like. Deeper levels will be populated with lesser demons and chaos-spawn. A sprinkling of 'natural' creatures, such as spiders and snakes will add variety.

Magic items will reflect a religious/demonic theme. For example, a 'Mephistopheles Cloak' might allow limited control over lesser evil creatures, while a 'Holy Mace' may be just the thing to shatter pesky skeletons.

An open ending will allow for different themes in future sequels, where goblin caves or a living fungus world will have to be explored and conquered. The player will simply have to purchase an expansion disk to have access to these new worlds.

GAMEPLAY:

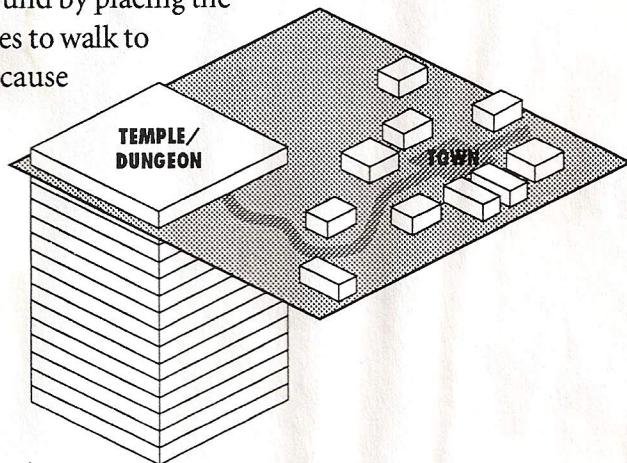
A walk-through of an example game session follows:

After starting up the game, the opening cinematic sequence segues into the main menu screen. The three options provided are: New Character, Load Character, and Options. New Character allows the player to develop a character and start at the beginning. Load Character picks up where an existing character last left the game, or allows a player to select a pre-generated character to 'quick-start' the game. The Options selection gives access to sound and configuration options.

A player generating a new character is first presented with a choice of race. We plan to offer five or six human races (hill people, forest people, etc.) each with advantages and disadvantages. After race, the player will select his desired class; choosing either a fighter, thief or magician, or possibly subclasses of these. Although all characters will be able to use most weapons, and cast some spells, different classes will provide special advantages. Fighters will gain extra attacks, thieves will move faster and with greater stealth, and magicians will have more spells and cast them more powerfully. After making these choices, the computer will provide basic statistics for the character in the categories of strength, magical aptitude, dexterity and vitality. The player will then be given some discretionary points to distribute as he sees fit. Magician characters will pick from approximately four 'schools' of magic. There will also be a general school, the spells of which are available to all characters. A character will be provided with some initial equipment and gold and then placed in town, where play begins.

If a player had instead chosen Load Character from the main menu and then picked one of the pre-generated characters, all of the preceding would be skipped and the 'quick-start' character would start in town, already equipped.

The town is presented in our isometric view with a main road, a town square, and a dozen or so buildings. The player will move his character around by placing the mouse-controlled cursor on the 'square' he wishes to walk to and left-clicking. Left-clicking on a square will cause the character to move to the selected square by the shortest route possible. Left-clicking on an item or creature will cause the character to move next to it. If already adjacent to an item or creature, a left-click causes the character to interact in the appropriate way (trade with a shopkeeper, attack a creature, open a chest, etc.). Right-clicking will cast the readied spell in the indicated location. The arrow keys will scroll the map independently of the character. Moving about the town, the character can visit various shops to purchase further equipment, a temple for healing, and his home to rest and store extraneous items and gold.



The fun really begins when the player guides his character down the road and enters the abandoned temple (the first level of the dungeon). At this point, the computer generates the layout of the first level.

The player can see as much of the dungeon as is visible to the character, determined by lighting, line-of-sight, and magical factors. Areas not brightened by light sources fade into blackness. Magical 'darkness' can block light sources. Infravision can detect heat sources within dark areas (providing red shapes of creatures in the distance). As the character moves around, new sections of the dungeon are revealed. If a player clicks on a distant square and a creature comes into view in the middle of the route, the character will stop to await new orders.

The game runs on a turn-by-turn basis; the player moves, then the opponent(s) move(s). Each character and monster may have a certain amount of action points which would determine what actions are possible in a given turn. For instance: a fighter character turns a corner to suddenly see a skeleton, eight squares away. The player left-clicks two squares ahead to close the distance. As the fighter moves forward two squares, the skeleton also moves forward two squares and a new skeleton comes into view. Moving more carefully, the player clicks one square ahead. The first skeleton also moves one square while the second fires an arrow, hitting the fighter. Again the player moves forward one square. The first skeleton moves on to the square directly in front of the fighter and the second fires another arrow, missing. Now the fighter and first skeleton exchange blows, with yet another arrow fired by the archer skeleton. Determining that the fighter can't keep sustaining the damage, the player clicks six spaces back, in retreat. The first skeleton follows, one space behind. The archer skeleton fires each turn until the fighter ducks back around the corner.

Assuming the fighter escapes, he will go on to explore the dungeon and finally reach the stairs to the next level, whereupon a new level will be generated. If one of those arrows ends up killing the fighter, that character will be erased completely from the hard-drive and the player must start from scratch.



MARKETING

While *Diablo* shares familiar role-playing elements with other games in this genre, its unique structure allows a different marketing strategy, one that could lead to sustained, long-term sales.

There are really two products here: *Diablo*, which stands on its own, and its expansion packs. These packs would consist of one disk and maybe an information card in a small package. The disk would contain new elements that are directly installable into the base *Diablo* game. These elements would include: new magic items, new creatures, new traps and new level graphics. Expansion disks would all be different (or maybe 16 or 32 combinations) and would contain approximately 16 new elements in varying degrees of rarity. A sample disk might contain: One rare sword, three uncommon magic items, eight common items, two creatures, one trap, and a new hallway type.

A player would buy a new expansion disk or two, go home and install the new data into his game. The new elements would be incorporated into the random mix when a new level is generated. Perhaps a player's character should have one goodie directly placed into his inventory for instant gratification.

We believe these expansion disks should be priced at around \$4.95 with the hope that they would be placed near cash registers as point-of-purchase items. Players would buy these packs as an afterthought, or maybe in an attempt to collect them all. A 'collector'-type art card, representing the rare item in a pack, could enhance this sense of collectability.

If *Diablo* and the expansion packs prove successful, additional expansion pack series could be released. Each series would have a theme like *Dark Nightmares* or *Holy Avengers*.

This marketing strategy provides many benefits. Expansion packs would add to replayability and lengthen the life-span of the product, while providing additional and continuous revenues with minimal investment. Point-of-purchase displays would serve as advertising, directing people towards *Diablo* on the shelves. The collectible nature would lead to increased sales.

The unorthodox nature of *Diablo* and its expansion packs would be unique in the computer game world, but it is not without precedent and existing parallels. *Magic: the Gathering* provides some of the inspiration for marketing *Diablo*. The Expansion pack structure would serve as our model. The collectible nature also transfers. The tremendous success of *Magic* is testament to the willingness of players to continue to make small additional purchases to revitalize their existing game. In the computer gaming world, *Diablo* and its expansion packs would have no real competition. *Magic* is sold at the register at Electronics Boutique stores; *Diablo*, being a computer game, would fit in nicely.

Some precedent can also be found in shareware and demos sold at the register at computer stores. The success of speech packs, expansions and sequels for computer roll-playing games, provides further evidence that *Diablo*'s expansion packs could be successful.

DEVELOPMENT

Condor plans to spend one year in the development of *Diablo*. Personnel will consist of: one designer; one chief programmer and two junior programmer; two art director/artists, one illustrator/sculptor and three pixel artist/illustrators; and one music/sound effects person.

Diablo will be art-intensive. We intend for the game to operate in Super VGA mode (640x480 pixels). The three-quarter perspective requires eight directions of movement, three of which can sometimes be flipped. Each monster will have multiple graphic deaths and will require at least 50 frames of animations. We envision approximately 16 monsters to start with. The player's character will require many more frames to cover different kinds of attacks, casting spells, opening chests, etc. Different weapons, armor and clothing types will be reflected in character sprites. There will be five or six initial level types as well as an above-ground town. Additional art requirements include cinematics, title screens, character creation screens and inventory screens.

The programming department's initial task will be the development of a clean, intuitive interface. After this, an overall shell structure, the Dynamic Random Level Generator, and a sound driver will be implemented in time to allow at least 4 months of bug testing, and, most importantly, play balance.

Music will consist of an opening theme and atmospheric music to accompany game play. Sound effects will cover fighting, spell casting, walking and the like.



The initial development schedule proceeds as follows:

