

# GAME

## Review



# King's® Quest VI

## Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow

*Get lost in  
this romantic,  
action-packed  
adventure.*

Sparked by love and guided by an enigmatic sense of destiny, *King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow* beckons all to join its noble adventure. Bigger and bolder than ever, this is an adventure few can resist.

The sixth installment in Roberta Williams's award-winning graphics adventure leads the series down a familiar path, but one emblazoned with story elements far richer than its predecessors. Aided by some of the most creative minds in the business—writer Jane Jensen, art

By Scott A. May

director William Skirvin, and composer Chris Braymen—Williams has assembled her most ambitious work to date.

Fans of the series will sink comfortably into a continuing saga of the adventure-



*Your quest begins as Prince Alexander sets sail to find the fabled Land of the Green Isles.*

prone first family of Daventry: King Graham, Queen Valanice, and children Alexander and Rosella. Newcomers needn't feel left out: As in earlier games, the story is completely self-contained. A

marvelous introductory sequence sets the stage while establishing a link to the previous episode, *Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder*. In that story, Daventry's royal family is kidnapped by the evil wizard Mordack. King Graham journeys to the warlock's island stronghold and rescues his family along with a beautiful girl, who turns out to be Princess Cassima. She takes a fancy to Alexander, and he, deeply smitten, wonders if he'll ever hear from her again.

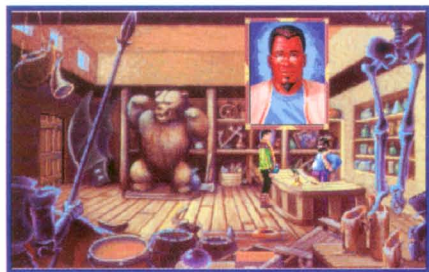
At long last, he's given a sign. He sees the image of Cassima in his father's magic mirror. Seeing her cry out in sorrow, Alexander sets sail for her home. Sadly, his journey ends in disaster when his ship breaks apart in a violent storm. He awakes on the Isle of the Crown, home to his beloved Cassima.

Assuming the role of Alexander, you now begin your adventure. Among your first tasks: Seek out the royal palace, where you'll meet the suspiciously belligerent vizier, Alhazred. He claims the



princess is in seclusion, mourning the recent deaths of her parents, and has requested not to be disturbed. You also learn that Alhazred and Cassima are soon to be wed. The vizier gives you a stern warning to leave the Land of Green Isles. Saddened and confused, you begin to doubt the image cast in the magic mirror. Still, you can't shake the ominous feeling that something is terribly wrong.

Although the game's central theme is readily apparent, your direction and goal



*You'll interview shopkeepers in your quest for information to help Cassima.*

are purposely vague. Through hundreds of locations in the Land of Green Isles, Williams has cut many paths, each crisscrossing to one of several different endings. Ultimately, the course you follow determines your difficulty level, opening the game to newcomers and seasoned veterans alike. This flexible, open-ended design also means that you can reach the end and yet still experience only a small portion of everything the game has to offer. Replay value in a graphic adventure? What a concept!

The game unfolds in a world significantly larger than those of its



*Experience an adventure so vast, you may never see it all.*

predecessors. Initial investigation reveals four main regions, each with unique geography, inhabitants, and puzzles.

One of the game's main assets is Sierra's evolving player interface. Gone is the traditional text parser; it's been replaced with a more intuitive graphical cursor. By simply clicking the right mouse button, you cycle through four all-purpose actions: Walk, Talk, Look, and Touch. Select the object to be acted upon and then press the left mouse button. Manipulating the



*Explore wondrous lands as you traverse the kingdom of the Green Isles.*

hundreds of interactive screen elements quickly becomes second nature. A hidden top-down menu offers additional control of inventory items and game mechanics such as Save, Restore, Speed, and Graphic Detail.

How grand is your crusade? To put it in rather outrageous historical perspective, the first *King's Quest*, released in 1985, weighed in at a mere 128K. By contrast, this truly king-sized adventure tips the scales at 18MB. Nothing goes to waste, however, as Sierra pushes the envelope of disk-based programming. The package contains both 256-color VGA and 16-



*You'll want to check the diplomatic maneuvering on the royal chess board.*

color EGA versions, although viewing the game's exquisite scanned artwork at anything less than its full-color palette would be a waste.

Typical of Sierra's commitment to cutting-edge graphic quality is the introduction, based on a 1.2 gigabyte animation by Kronos, the Hollywood special effects wizards known for their work in *Batman Returns* and *Lawnmower Man*. Like all of the game's minicartoons, the introduction showcases extraordinary cinematic finesse with its unique camera angles, 3-D panning, long tracking shots,



*The Land of the Green Isles has many interesting areas to explore for clues.*

and video-quality animation. Although the sampled speech is clear, it's rather stilted. Sierra would do well to hire professional actors for its next endeavor. For those who are concerned with hard drive space, this space-hogging introduction can be easily deleted.

Other graphic innovations include use of "pather" technology, a type of collision-detection system that ensures more realistic movement of on-screen characters. Instead of getting stuck or walking



*In dark underground corridors you'll uncover mysteries.*

through props, your character automatically chooses the most intelligent path when moving from point A to point B. The game also boasts improved depth of field, accomplished by scaling animated characters as they move from foreground to background and vice versa. Finally, subtle use of spot animation and peripheral sound effects greatly enriches the story's ambiance. On the beach, waves lap the shoreline while gulls squawk overhead. As you move slowly through a cave, shadows cast by the flickering light of your candle dance on jagged walls. All of these techniques help suspend



*Visit the Winged Ones and gain from helping a young girl who is on the horns of a dilemma.*

disbelief—one of the most important requirements in any fantasy—and further the illusion of reality.

The bulk of the game's puzzles merely require knowing which items to use when. Along the tenderfoot trail, most puzzles are painfully obvious. Players are helped along with telltale hints from not-so-subtle character dialogue and glaring on-screen clues. The further you stray from the beaten path, the more intricate and challenging the puzzles become, including





*Beautiful scenery may belie the beastly nature of the lord of the manor.*

spellcasting, arcade-style interaction, and occasional timed events. Particularly interesting are the Logic Cliffs and deadly catacomb floor traps, although solutions to both are spelled out in the 50-page guidebook.

One of the game's few shortcomings is common to the genre: Many solutions require tedious backtracking to pick up and deliver items, making you feel less like a brave adventurer than an overworked courier.

Williams and Jensen carefully balance the story line to attract players of every age, gender, and skill level. Those who love action will find plenty to pump their



*Alexander must seek out clues from many people to help him win Cassima's freedom.*

adrenaline, yet they won't be put off by the game's gentle, romantic side. Likewise, this tale of unrequited love will inspire the usually timid to complete its challenging quests.

Sierra describes *King's Quest VI: Heir Today, Gone Tomorrow* as an adventure so vast you may never experience it all. You'll have the time of your life trying to prove this claim wrong.

*Reprinted with permission from the May 1993 edition of COMPUTE.*



*You visit the Underworld and must find a way to deal with the Undead.*

## NEWS ABOUT

# King's Quest VI

**Now available for the Macintosh and on CD-ROM**

## Macintosh

### System Requirements:

4 Meg, 256 color, System 7.0 or better.

To install the game completely you need 25 Meg.

*King's Quest VI* is custom designed for the Macintosh in 256 colors with the graphics automatically resized to fit Mac monitors and algorithmically adjusted to eliminate distortion. The 4-voice driver with sampled instruments for music enhancement gives you great sound.

A really magnificent three minute opening sequence is available as a Quick Time Movie.

## CD-ROM

### System Requirements:

386SX or better, CD-ROM Drive, MS-DOS 5.0 or higher with 2MB of memory, Windows Version 3.0 MME or higher with 4 MB of memory, Mouse. Supports standard sound cards and sound card with DAC.

Professional actors, headed by Robby Benson as Alexander, recorded the narration and dialogue. High-res close-ups of characters use the critically acclaimed RAVE lip-synching technology. A stunning 50 megabyte animated introduction is by the same Special Effects people who created *Batman Returns* and *Lawnmower Man*. Also included is a special four-minute video through Windows about the making of *King's Quest VI*.

**"Proof that the era of CD gaming is upon us."**  
—Peter Speer, *QuestBusters*



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**King's Quest VI**  
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PC  
Macintosh

