

Reviewed by: Brandon Miquel

From the people at MacPlay comes the long-awaited sequel to the popular 3-D, 360° rotational game Descent. For those of you who don't know, Descent brings new meaning to "3-D." Unlike those other 3-D games, you can go in any direction- up, down, left, right, and just about any direction in between, all 360°. You aren't using a lowly pistol either, your space ship is packed with fully-upgradable lasers. Unlike those other games, you don't walk down straight hallways shooting Nazis and monsters, in Descent there are curving "hallways," and you are killing robots that are smart enough to run away so they can ambush you. And unlike those other games, you have someone helping you, you don't have to find keys in a dungeon you've never seen before, your GuideBot do it for you. Now, don't get me wrong, Descent II isn't just a new version with different levels and a few new enemies, this is like a whole new game (once again, though, it's only for the PowerMacintosh).

The full version of Descent II includes:

- 30 new levels
- 30+ new robots, including new bosses.
- 10+ new weapons and powerups
- Afterburner
- Full map power-up (reveals the entire map instead of just the areas where you've already been)
- Ammo rack power-up
- Energy -> Shield transfers
- Flash missiles
- Guided missiles - you control it!
- Smart mines (Hey, aren't mines just supposed to sit there and blow up?)
- Headlights power-up (Trust me, it comes in handy)
- GuideBot (Searches out keys for you- very useful)
- Thiefs (These guys come right up to you and steal your power-ups)
- Better AI
- Much, much, more!

Mass memory requirements. Unfortunately, Descent II demo requires 9,728 kilobytes of RAM, but prefers 11 megabytes. If that seems like a lot, hold onto your seat... they recommend 16 MB of RAM for the full version. From what I've seen, though, it's worth every bit of it. Now, for those of you with slightly, or much, less than 9 MB of free RAM, there are some alternatives. I used it on a 60 Mhz PowerMac with only 10 MB total RAM, which left me with less than 8 MB left with all extensions off except Sound Manager. I tried it out with virtual memory, and it ran quite well, despite the seemingly endless time it took to load the data. So, it would be possible to run it on an 8 MB PowerMac, but it would be very slow. Your only other option would be Ram Doubler, which will basically do the same thing as virtual memory. I haven't tested it to see if it would work with Ram Doubler, but I didn't see anything in the documentation about it, so I assume it would work, and that you'd get similar performance to what you'd get with virtual memory.

The Descent II Demo also consumes 15 megabytes of hard drive space for only three levels - two and a half hours (at 14,400 bps) is quite a bit of time to spend downloading a three level demo, but would you rather purchase the full version, then find out it runs too slow on your system? While three levels isn't a lot of playing time, it is enough for you to see how it feels. Of course, if you're planning on downloading this and playing it for months instead of buying the full version, you're in for a big surprise.

You say you need eight hands to play this game? Well, you don't really need eight hands, but a few extras could help. There are so many ways to control your vehicle it's hard to remember them all. If you know the basics- left, right, up, down, forward, reverse, fire, fire secondary, etc., you should be fine in the beginning, but when you get to the higher levels, you really should be comfortable with the positions of all of the keys. Of course, this being just a demo, there really aren't any "higher levels."

The only game that can really compare to Descent II is Descent. Some competition, eh? Of course, there is a myriad of other first-person, 3-D games out there, but none of them let you have so much control over where you're going. If you download this and find that it's too hard to control your ship, let alone kill the robots, your other options include Marathon 2, Hexen (reviewed in this issue), and Doom II. Personally, I think Descent beats just about any game I've seen, but the RAM requirements are a little ridiculous.

The bottom line. If you're the kind of person that likes Maradoom 3D kind of games, you'll love this game. If you're the kind of person who absolutely hates those kinds of games, you'll still probably like it. This game isn't one of those games where you run down hallways and shoot people, you are actually fighting against some pretty intelligent AI robots. This game is so addictive, you'll stay up until 3 a.m. trying to beat the last level on the hardest difficulty setting. I sometimes subconsciously move my entire body the way my ship is moving, that's how engrossing it is. Believe me, if you want a great game, look no further. Descent II has everything you could possibly want, and then some.

graphics
music

sound effects

challenge
fun factor

addictiveness

concept
story line

game play

overall

escent II's system

- 15 megabytes of hard drive space
- 9,728 kilobytes of RAM minimum
- 13" monitor or larger (640x480 and up)
- Power Macintosh required

Download Time: ~138 minutes (14,400)