

review by Erica J. Marceau

stars — 1 Star Poor, 5 Stars Excellent

**Title:** Exile III: Ruined World

**Version:** 1.0.3

**Developer:** Spiderweb Software, Inc.

**Price:** Game (\$25), Editor (\$9), Hint Book (\$6), Bundle (\$35)

**Contact Info:** <http://www.spidweb.com/>

**Genre:** role-playing game

**Requirements:** 3 MB of free memory, System 7, 7 MB of hard drive space, a 13" screen, and 256 colors.

## review

Exile III is a role-playing game with a rich story, interesting characters and many enemies that you will have to defeat in order to win. It is not necessary to have played the first two games in this series (Exile I and II) to enjoy Exile III. Everything you need to know is explained in the story and manual. However, if you have played the first two then the story comes to a satisfying conclusion that nicely wraps up the trilogy.

## tory

Exile is a vast network of underground tunnels and caves where the misfits of society were sent to through magical portals by the mighty Empire. The Empire ruled the entire world, and in its arrogance sent several mages to Exile. The Empire thought there would be no problem and that those mages might even be brought back for service to the Empire. The Empire was wrong. One of the mages, Erika Redmark, eventually killed Emperor Hawthorne in his own throne room.

The Empire immediately stopped sending anyone else to Exile and created new portals in remote parts of Exile through which troops were sent. Their mission was to kill everyone in Exile. The Empire was winning until they made the fatal mistake of stealing 3 crystal souls from the Vahnatai, a newly-found race living deep underground. The crystal souls are the spirits of the Yahnatai forefathers in crystal, which act as spiritual guides. The Yahnatai thought that the Exiles were responsible for this and attacked Exile. However, a group of Exiles were able to retrieve the stolen crystals and gained the Yahnatais as allies. With their help, the Empire was defeated and Exile was safe once more.

Now the Exiles are eager to escape from their prison and yearn to see sunlight once more. To further that cause, Upper Exile, which is a new network of cave cities just below the surface, was built. The plan is to secure some land from the Empire so that the Exiles can use it as their home. However, the state of affairs on the surface is not known, and investigation needs to be done before anything else can. Therefore, a small band of adventurers has been selected to go to the surface and do a simple recon.

You are among the adventurers chosen, and your job is simply to find out what the surface is like and report back. However, it is entirely possible that you will become more enmeshed in what's happening on the surface than anyone could have guessed or wanted. Will you have the skills to survive?

## reating Characters

After starting a new game, you are given the option of creating your own characters (up to six) or using prefabricated ones. You have complete control over the characters you create, and the method is very easy. First you choose which race the character will be. You can choose from human, Nephilim (feline humanoids), and the Slithzerikai (reptilian humanoids). Each has inherent advantages and disadvantages. You can then decide what strengths and weaknesses your character has. For example, they can be very good in magic and/or they can be frail. After that is done, you can train

your character in certain skills. You have a certain amount of skill points that you can divvy up. These allow you to be very strong, lucky, able to use a sword, have magical capabilities, and much more. You then pick a graphic and name for the character. Once you have your party then you can begin.

This process is very straightforward and easy. There is help at every step, either through floating help windows or in a section of the current window. It makes creating characters much less intimidating, especially for the person who has never played role-playing games before.

## ontrols / Interface

You are able to use either the keyboard or mouse, depending on your preference. There is also a button bar that has all of the major commands. Most actions are either a keystroke or mouse click away. This variety enables you to use whatever seems most natural at the time.

Talking to people is just as easy. All you need to do is click on the 'Talk' icon or press 't' on the keyboard to change the cursor into a balloon. Click on the person you wish to speak with and a window comes up. All of the most common questions (name, job, buy, sell) are accessible through the mouse or keyboard. Asking about what they say is just as easy. If a character says something about goblins then all you need to do is click on goblins to know more about them. This makes talking to characters quick and easy.

There are three windows that display the status of the characters (health and magic points, amount of food, and gold), the inventory of the selected character, and what is happening in the game. The windows are very well-organized and the icons are clear and recognizable.

This functionality is

extended to fighting

monsters and other bad

guys. Exile uses a

turn-based system

where each character

has a certain amount of  
points. Once those  
points are used up then  
control is given to the

next person in line. It's very easy to get used to this method. The black & white picture above is a sample of the kind of information that is provided in a combat situation. At other times, this screen gives information about what is happening in the game. If you miss something, all you need to do is scroll up.

## raphics

he graphics are  
colorful although  
somewhat repetitive.  
However, that doesn't  
detract from the  
gameplay at all. To the  
right is a sample when  
the characters are in  
combat. Notice the  
unusal side view that  
you don't see in many  
games today. This  
picture doesn't give  
the full range of colors  
or the other effects in  
the game. Effects like  
rippling water, spells  
being cast, arrows and  
other missiles flying  
through the air and  
much more. Overall,  
the graphics are detailed  
and pretty good.

## xtras

While there is no music, there are a wide variety of sound effects. Sound accompanies you walking, opening doors, cats meowing, spells being cast and much more. The sound adds a lot of realism to the game and makes Exile III more enjoyable to play.

The manual is a great source of information and is very easy to read. It's well-organized and well worth your time to at least take a cursory glance through it. Not only does it explain the entire interface, but gives you hints and tips on the first few puzzles of the game.

The quality of the obstacles is one of the greatest strengths of Exile III. Obstacles weren't just tacked on at the last minute, but instead are an integral part of the story. Everything makes sense, not only with the story but with the people in the story. Furthermore, Exile III is extremely open-ended. This means that there are many things that you can do that are not essential to winning the game. Essential or not, everything is interesting and everything has consequences.

## Character Editor

The Exile III Editor allows you to change many aspects relating to your party. In its unregistered state, you can give your party food and gold, bring dead characters back to life, restore the characters to full power, and more. If registered, you can additionally add/delete skills and abilities, change races, give items to characters, and many other things. In short, you have complete control over the status of the characters in your party.

You can use the Editor to cheat by giving yourself all of the spells, but it can also be used in other ways. Suppose you created a party, but later realized that you accidentally chose the wrong skill for a character. Instead of creating a new party, just load the saved game into the Editor and change it there. Or maybe you accidentally killed a dragon and later learned that you weren't supposed to. You can use the Editor to revive that dragon so you can continue the game. Both these features are only available in the registered version, making it worthwhile to register.

I found the Exile III Editor very easy to use and straightforward. If you're caught in a sticky situation in the game and don't see any way around it, the Editor can most likely help you.

## Hint Book

Exile III is a long and complicated game with many missions to accomplish, puzzles to solve, people to talk to, and monsters to vanquish. If you find yourself against a brick wall then you can open the Hint Book to find the answer(s) that you're looking for. It's organized with the questions that you are likely to have in one chapter and where to find the answers. This is nice because you don't find the answers to questions that you aren't having and it keeps the spoilers to a minimum.

It additionally has a mini-walkthrough for the early part of the game, where to get the spells, information about items in the game, interesting places to visit, a map with the most important places listed, some interesting things you can do while in Exile III, and a description of what each item does. In my opinion, the Hint Book is practically essential to getting as much as you can out of the game.

## Final Analysis

The world of Exile III is huge. You could spend weeks playing to get to the end and it would still have enough enjoyment left over for another game. This kind of depth is rarely found in games today and is sorely missed.

I haven't even begun to describe the many wonderful aspects of Exile III, because that would be giving too much away. Exile III is a wonderful game and if you're interested in playing an absorbing, high-quality, well-crafted role-playing game then buy Exile. Even better would be to buy the whole trilogy for months of riveting gameplay.

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