

ZENITH REPORT
By William Mills

These are my views on Zenith as it stands at 25\11\96

Characters

The main character in the game is now far too small. He has lost far too much detail and looks like a little blob of colour when viewed from the camera angle in the game. He looks fine when you zoom in on him for size but you see that they do not have any faces or any fine detail in them. The small character does make the levels look bigger and more imposing but I feel a compromise could be made to get the best of both worlds. The characters are all well animated and are designed well. The characters do not act quickly enough to commands from the joypad, you tell the character to turn and he eventually does but by that time you have fallen off the edge of the level. I really like the idea of morphing into other characters but when you do they all seem to act and feel the same, each character should have different attributes. The large red demon should be quite slow and clumsy but great in a fight, the woman should be really fast and agile and the man should be a good all-rounder but not really specialised in any one category. When you morph into a new character it feels that the only thing that you are changing is the graphic that you are playing with. The combat moves that your character has are far too limited and these should be expanded with new moves and perhaps one special per character. A throw move would also be fun so you can send your enemies to their doom by throwing them off the edge of the platform. Weapons could be added to give the player a choice whether to fight hand to hand or use any available weapons. The player would have to find these weapons or take them from defeated enemies.

GRAPHICS

At the moment I think the graphics are the best part of the game, to use one word they are fantastic. I especially like the wood texture. The levels seem to have the same colour of green for the blocks but the actual blocks themselves are all individual

enough to break up the large areas of similar colours. I also really like the use of the heraldic emblems and the statues of the warriors with their armour and weapons. The water and lava are well animated and when you are walking along the edge of a lava pool and a fire sprite jumps out you can't help but be impressed. The enemies are also well drawn and animated but they do suffer from being made so small, they look great when you zoom in on them. When you activate a switch and a lift appears out of the ground you do not see any seams on the ground until the lift appears and the lifts have very smooth animation.

THE LEVEL

The level is well designed and good use has been made of the 3D space. The puzzles are logical and you don't get stuck on any one area also the designer has used many different puzzle sections and enemy objects so the player does not get complacent and thinks they know how each enemy or puzzle will work. What looked like a nice safe ledge suddenly becomes a danger area as saw blades appear and try and cut your character down to size. Once the four sided levels go in the game will become more complex but much more fun. I would like to see more enemies on the level and a few more humanoid ones to fight.

CAMERA

I like the way the camera works although it takes a while to get used to moving your character and then the camera to get the best view possible. Giving the player control of the camera is a good idea and solves the problems with people getting annoyed with the game as they cannot see where they are trying to jump to because there is a pillar in the way. This use of the camera also seems to cut down on the times that the camera looks through objects which make the presentation of the game much more professional.

GAMEPLAY

Although the game looks very good indeed it is let down by its gameplay. The game needs more to it if it is left the way it is now I believe that people will become bored with it quickly. There needs to be more skill in killing the enemies, at the moment you can get away with just standing in front of them and holding down the kick button until they are dead. They should “gang” up on you and attack you from all sides if you are outnumbered. I also think there should be more fighting in the game as at the moment you only have two fights in the entire level. You should also be forced to think about if you should attack or not, well armed troops could be in one area and it may be better for you to hide and then out manoeuvre them than to fight them. At the moment I feel that the game is far too monotonous with you going from one puzzle to an other avoiding the spikes and lightning as you go, occasionally you get to fight but the combat is so limited that it is no fun either. Perhaps each level could be themed a Aztec temple, an Egyptian pyramid and a medieval castle could be used and the player could be given one task per tower that must be completed before you can move on to the next. Your mission could be to kill someone inside or to steal something and this would be the only information the player would be given how they went about it would be up to them. You could begin with the player scaling the outside of the building until they find a window or ledge from where they can gain entrance to the building. The idea of scaling the walls being to avoid detection from any guards that are protecting the main entrance. The player would only have his body as a weapon to begin with but if he killed guards he could get hold of weapons with which to kill his enemies. If the player was discovered then his progress through the tower would become harder with the enemy troops chasing him. If the player kills a guard he could throw the body over the edge of the platform to stop it being found, hopefully by the time the guard is missed the player will have completed his mission for that

tower. As the levels get harder more tasks could have to be done before the tower is complete.

CONCLUSION

I think Zenith still needs work on its gameplay and perhaps needs a definite storyline to help the game along. I think that the game graphics are good but the characters need to be made bigger and more combat and strategy needs to be added to give the game more depth. There does not seem to be a game of this type in production for the Nintendo 64 and with these changes in place I think Zenith can take its place in the market and should sell very well indeed.