

Title: Silver

Developed by: Infogrames (<http://www.infogrames.com>)

Published by: Infogrames (<http://www.infogrames.com>)

Reviewed By: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: (<http://www.silvergame.com>)

Overview: *Silver* effectively combines the entertaining combat in *Diablo* with the epic storyline of the *Final Fantasy* series.

Genre: RPG

System Requirements: Pentium 166 or equivalent
32MB RAM
8X CD-ROM
Windows 95/98
DirectX Compatible Sound Card
2MB VESA Graphics Card
Mouse

Supports:

ESRB Rating: Teen

The Good Press: Nice background graphics and sound, intriguing storyline, interactive battle system is a nice touch.

The Bad Press: Battles can be difficult to control with multiple party members, you can only save at predetermined points, characters look a bit blocky.

Ratings: Graphics: 8/10
Sound: 8/10
Getting Started: 8/10
Documentation: 8/10
Value: 8/10

Tips: If you're taking extensive damage while fumbling with your inventory, turn the menu pause feature on. This is almost essential early in the game when you're still getting the controls down.

Once your party receives the map, you can use it to instantly teleport to any previously visited location.

Role-playing games have come a long way in recent years. When *Diablo* was released about a year and a half ago, players were captivated by its new approach to the genre. The fact that the game combined traditional role-playing elements with a real-time battle system effectively merged the great aspects of both RPG's and adventure games. Shortly thereafter, console RPG king Squaresoft released its first port of the immensely popular *Final Fantasy* series to the PC. Experienced PC adventurers initially had trouble adjusting to FFVII's decidedly console interface, but its eye popping graphics and dramatic story line

proved that console RPGs could be successful in the PC realm. Most recently, Baldur's Gate has emerged on the scene and its long, harrowing adventure combined with a sophisticated battle system has set a new standard for others to follow. Each of these games vary significantly from each other in terms of gameplay, but they do have one thing in common: they were all insanely popular. That brings us to Silver, Infogrames ambitious attempt to merge all the great characteristics from these games into one epic adventure and, for the most part, they have succeeded.

You play as David, a cocky but skilled young knight who embarks on an epic struggle to free his enslaved wife from the evil sorcerer, Silver and his sinister henchman, Fuge. Under the careful tutelage of his battle-hardened grandfather, David sets out to destroy Silver and once again bring prosperity to his native homeland, Jarrah. Along the way, David interacts with many characters – some will join his party, some will offer aid, others will try to end his life. As his journey progresses however, David discovers that his skills alone are not enough to vanquish the mighty Silver. After consulting an ancient Oracle, David learns that his only hope is to find eight magical orbs which, when combined, offer the power necessary to end Silver's evil ploy. As you might guess, these orbs aren't just lying around somewhere, they are scattered all over the world. Thus, you embark on a journey to recover the orbs and, more importantly, your wife.

At first glance, Silver might seem out of place on PC since its interface is decidedly console-based. This is where the noticeable resemblance to Final Fantasy VII comes into play. There are energy bars located above your characters' heads to let you know when they are about to kick the bucket, long, scripted sequences are abundant (although you get actual voice-overs here), and saving your game can only be done at predetermined locations (similar to save points in FFXVII). The save feature alone may turn off some players, but places to save are actually quite abundant.

FFVII fans will also be quite accustomed to the visuals in Silver. The characters themselves, much like those in FFXVII, tend to look a bit blocky, but since you never really see them up close, it isn't a major issue. Luckily, you'll forget all about the character graphics once you catch a glimpse of the pre-rendered backdrops. The backgrounds are astounding and set the mood for the location perfectly. For example, in a town called Rain, where it is always - you guessed it – raining, the sky is dreary and flashes of lightning fill the screen. In your home town of Verdante, however, the sun is shining and townsfolk are cheerfully meandering about. On the sound side, Silver isn't spectacular but gets the job done. One nice feature is the ability to choose whether you want dialog to be shown as text, spoken, or both. I personally got a bit sick of reading the lengthy conversations in FFXVII and Baldur's Gate, so even though the voice acting is a bit quirky, it was still nice to be able to listen to it. The music, although somewhat muted, is also used appropriately.

Once you've seen the graphics and interface, the similarities between Silver and FFXVII disappear. Similar to the control in Baldur's Gate and Diablo, you use the mouse pointer to tell your character(s) where to go. When you hold down the Control key, your character shifts into "battle mode" and performs various actions depending on how you move your mouse and which button you click. If you click the left mouse button, your character will perform a standard attack with the selected weapon. If you move the mouse back and click the same button, the character will spin around and attack the enemies behind him or her. The right mouse button by itself opens a pie menu that gives you access to your inventory, your special abilities, etc.. When used in conjunction with the control key, right clicking causes your character to dodge attacks. There are numerous attacks and defensive maneuvers available to your character and once you've got the hang of when to attack and when to jump out of the way, you'll find that winning a battle without sustaining much damage is a very rewarding experience.

Unfortunately, with a battle configuration such as this, you can expect some control problems. It would work just fine if only one enemy attacks you at a time, but this almost never happens in Silver. Let's say you have a party of three and you're surrounded by enemies. You only have direct control over one character at a time and, as you might guess, he or she tends to do most of the killing. You can set it up so the other characters attack the foes, but the AI isn't that bright and they'll do little to avoid taking damage. This presents a more difficult problem when your enemy is in an unreachable position and must be taken down with a projectile of some kind. If the character you are controlling doesn't have a ranged weapon equipped, you might waste valuable time and energy fumbling through the menu to get the right item

equipped. This quibble is alleviated somewhat with the ability to pause the game while your menu is open, but this feature isn't nearly as intuitive as the one used in Baldur's Gate.

Nowadays, there are so many sub-genres of role-playing that it can be difficult to determine which is best for you. Perhaps you enjoy the depth of Baldur's Gate, but would prefer a more detailed story line such as that in FFVII. Or maybe you enjoy the action and varying control options in Diablo. In any case, you won't find a better combination of these great games than in Silver. Give it a shot.