Microsoft Adventure

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For there are treasures to be found
As mysteries unfold
In the depths of the great unknown
In the search for yellow gold.
But beware the shadows,
For who knows what they hold
In the great Colossal Cave?
From "Adventure's Song"
-Freerover the Bard

Of all the computer simulations available for the microcomputer user, none stirs the imagination quite like Adventure. And of all the Adventure games Microsoft's is one of the most intriguing.

The premise of this *Adventure,* exploration of the Colossal Cave, is not a new one. It is, in fact, the basis for the original *Adventure* that has been appearing around university campuses and mainframe computers for years. According to Microsoft, the Digital Equipment Corporation PDP-10 version is reproduced faithfully for the TRS-80 with 32 K bytes of programmable memory and a single disk drive.

[Editor's note: *I had the good fortune to log onto a Digital Equipment Corporation PDP-11/70 that was running the original* Adventure. *This version credited Willie Crowther with the original version of the program and Don Woods with "most of the features of the current versian.*
" Although the Softwin Company is *credited with writing the Microsoft* Adventure, *the names of Willie Crowther and Don Woods should be added to the list.*
Short sessions with both the Microsoft and the PDP-11 versions of the Adventure *showed them to be virtually identical in content, program logic, and wording.* Mr *Letwin has added some features (described below) and has made slight format changes that make the version more playable ....GW*]

The Microsoft *Adventure* sets itself against the *de facto* norm later established by Scott Adams. The split screen, the blinking cursor, all the slick niceties of the Adams and similar Adventures are missing. That does not detract from the game, though, because they are replaced by . technical innovations that make game play easy and painless.

The *Adventure's* acceptance of shorthand commands is a joy. Instead of tediously typing GO HOUSE or GET KNIFE, one needs only type HOUSE or KNIFE. The computer understands and complies. The directional shorthand commands, N, S, E, W, U, and D (for the four compass points and the directions UP and DOWN), are convenient. Adventurers will be very comfortable with the ease with which this program functions. Adventurers in the Colossal Cave will come across situations they may recognize from other Adventures.

This is acceptable. It gives a player a sense of comfort and familiarity in an otherwise hostile environment.

Most of the descriptions used for locations and objects are stored on the floppy disk and called only when needed. This arrangement prevents the descriptions from being terse as a result of limited program space. These plush and vivid descriptions add much to the enjoyment of the game. The puzzle of this *Adventure,* while difficult to decipher fully in one or even a half dozen sittings, is not impossible, It is well laid out, challenging, and presented logically, It is solvable, given time.

There are monsters lurking in the shadows. There is, in the first level of the cave, a knife-wielding dwarf who attacks repeatedly at nearly every turn. I suspected for a while that there was a dwarf-cloning machine somewhere far below me in the depths of the cave, turning out rubberstamp dwarves that stood in line to try to kill me. As fast as I dispatched one, another popped up to take his *place.*

Just out of plain view, a mystery figure beckons to me in the dim light. In trying to reach this spectre, to find out why he/she/it is there, I got lost in a maze of crisscross tunnels, not once but five times.

The nonplayer characters are not the only barrier to your progress as an adventurer. The cave is the adventurer's worst enemy. Its passages twist and turn, creating the kind of terminal (sic) frustration that has made this *Adventure* a favorite of thousands of personal-computer users.

The game is divided into three skill levels consisting of the beginning, intermediate, and advanced caves. The intensity of play increases by level so that, by the time the *Adventure* program offers a Grandmaster game to a player, the player has survived virtually every fantasy situation conceivable. The Grandmaster level is attainable only after every other puzzle is solved and all treasures have been obtained.

Few Grandmasters exist. It is a goal worth working toward.

The Microsoft *Adventure* is a gold mine for the enthusiast and a nightmare for the software pirate. (After all, you would expect Microsoft to actively protect its product.) I was unable to copy the Microsoft *Adventure* disk, even with the help of several disk inspection/modification programs.

The Microsoft *Adventure* is attractively packaged and well documented. The buyer should have no *trouble* finding it on the pegboard of his local computer store. It is well worth the price being charged. The Adventure lover is in for many hours of pure enjoyment with this one.

Conclusions

• This is an interesting Adventure in many ways. First, it is the original *Adventure* that was first running on a PDP-10. It is also one of the most sophisticated Adventure games I have seen. Since it is written in machine language, it is faster than the Adventures that are written in BASIC. It draws its descriptions from the floppy disk; therefore it is a fuller Adventure than most other Adventures, which offer limited description as a result of storing the text with the program and are limited by the amount of memory in the computer.

• This *Adventure* has a different format from that of other microcomputer Adventures. This should not be construed as a shortcoming; I mention it only for the benefit of Adventure enthusiasts accustomed to the other, more recent format.

• Microsoft *Adventure* is actually a series of Adventures that reveal themselves as the player becomes more skillful. It can be enjoyed by both the novice and the experienced player. The ability to save the game on disk allows a player to take advantage of deeper levels of play without being confined to one sitting .•

At a Glance

Name	Microsoft *Adventure*
Type	Adventure game
Manufacturer	Microsoft Consumer Products
	10800 NE Eighth,
	Suite 819
	Bellevue WA 98004
	(206) 454-1315
Price	$29.95
Format	5-inch floppy disk
Language	Machine language
Computer	Radio Shack TRS-80 Model I with single disk drive and 32 K bytes of memory (also available for Apple II with one disk drive and 32 K bytes of memory; same price)
Documentation	Instructions in game, plus short booklet
Audience	General audience