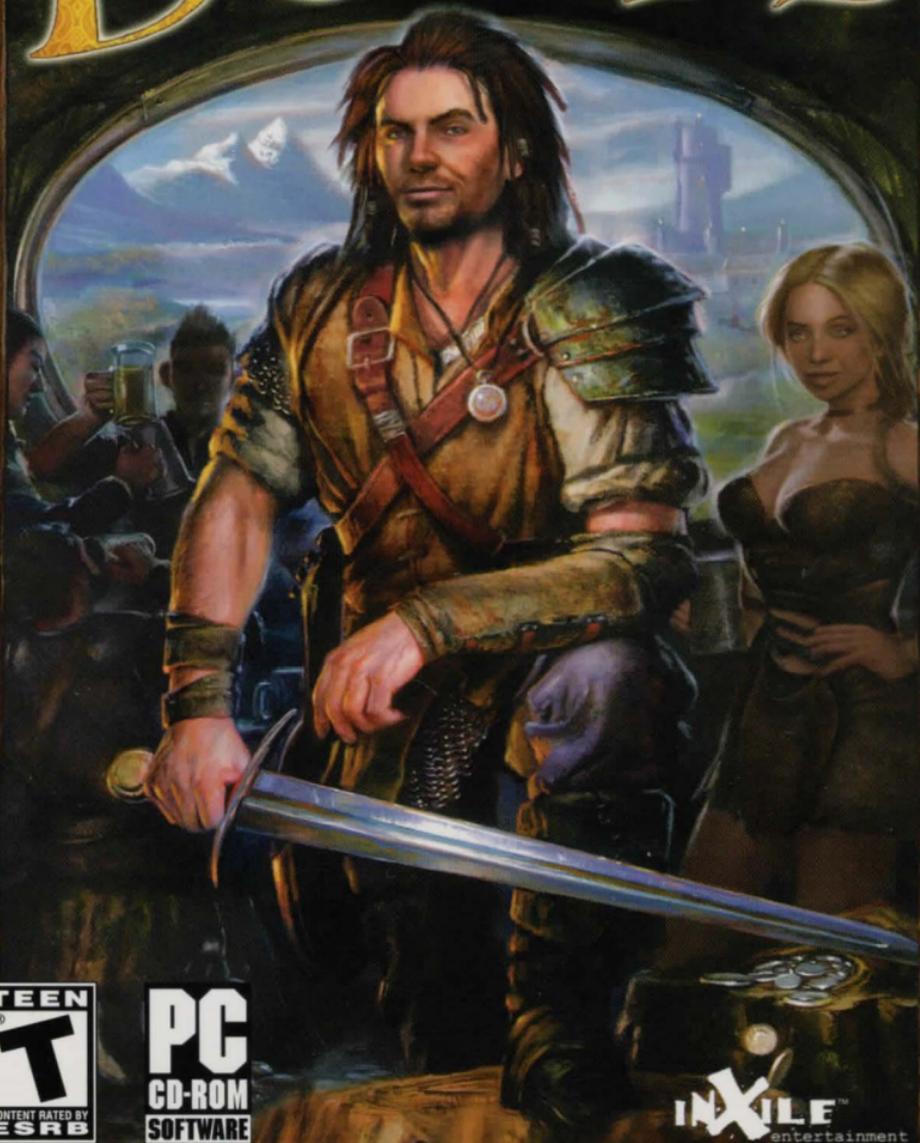


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introduction

The Bard was born to a working class family in a small country village one year after the new millennium had turned. His parents, Edmund and Adelaide, had married two years earlier, while Edmund was suffering from an ailment that was spreading throughout the globe like a plague. Many believed this “plague” was the means to the end of the world because of the new millennium approaching, but as it turns out, everyone



just had a touch of the flu. Later doctors would refer to this flu as The Millennium Virus.

2 ■ The Bard was a good baby, but had an unusual infatuation with rattles. Because of this, he developed quite the knack of conning other babies out of their rattles. “It was amazing,” his mother would say. “Every week he would have upwards of twenty rattles in his possession.” He spent his formative years attending school and working on his parents’ grub farm, neither of which seemed to inspire him, although it did inspire townsfolk to stay downwind.

A turning point in the Bard’s life was his first exposure to live music at age 12. While on an errand to fetch a bucket of lard for the week’s meals, he was lured to the town pub by the melodic sounds of plucked strings. He watched wide-eyed through the pub window for a good hour before a barmaid yelled, “Get away from my dressing room window, boy!” He then moved down to the window the music was coming from and listened with rapt attention while the band played to an appreciative audience. Periodically patrons would toss coins into a worn hat at the foot of the stage and the Bard couldn’t help but notice that the lute player’s hands were actually clean, unlike his which were the color of grub excrement. That alone was incentive enough for the Bard to become a musician. As the band stopped playing to enjoy a round of ale, the Bard’s eyes locked on the beautiful Isabel, the daughter of a nearby farmer, who was now the bar’s serving wench. It was at this very moment the Bard understood his true calling, prompting him to run back to the window of the barmaid’s dressing room. The very next day a black-eyed Bard rummaged through some wood scraps and constructed a crude, one-stringed instrument and learned to play the big hit of the time, It’s Bad Luck To Be You. To earn money and to gain a musical education, he performed odd jobs at the pub, such as killing rats in the cellar (or the barmaid’s dressing room), and made friends with the traveling musicians who filled its stage.

3 ■ Near the conclusion of his schooling the Bard felt he had no choice but to leave school and his village. This was of course because the school and the village asked him to leave. It seems the Bard had made a pass at every lassie in town and actually was in the process of starting the second pass. Also, his past caught up with him when classmates in his Warlocks & Witches class (the first year the class went co-ed) conjured up a spell to release blocked childhood memories. One by one, many of the Bard’s classmates began remembering being conned out of their rattles when they were small children. The Bard barely escaped with his own rattles that day.

On the outside the Bard's parents were bitterly disappointed in their son, but deep down, well...they were bitterly disappointed in their son. "I don't know what is worse," his father complained, "that he is so incompetent that he can't even take over the family grub farm or the sounds that come out of that blasted lute of his!" His first journey took him to a neighboring village where he became an apprentice to a barrel maker, enabling him to earn some money to pursue his music career at night. While making barrels his mind drifted off to thoughts of music making and women, or was that music and woman-making? At any rate, this lack of focus at work resulted in some shoddy barrel making which would soon come back to haunt him. His nights were filled with visits to the town pub, plying his preferred trade of music for a flagon of ale and hopefully the favor of any lasses who might be within earshot.

His tenure as a barrel maker came to an abrupt end when his barrel mentor Henry, the proprietor of The Barrel Barn, ran him out of town for producing barrels that shattered with a mere whack of a sword. "A key won't even be safe in these things!" Henry screamed while chasing the Bard down the street with sword drawn. Out of money and out of women, the Bard officially entered his career as a roaming musician and adventurer by wandering the land, every day looking for a way to secure a bed and a plate of food. His progress took him northward hoping to find new pawns in new towns, those unfamiliar with his trickery of separating them from their silver. With all the Bard's wits and all the Bard's talents, he was able to get by. He couldn't eat, and had to sleep on the ground, but he got by. Just when he was about to give up and head back to the grub farm, fate stepped in...or actually kind of slithered in.

During an extermination session, to the Bard's amazement, a rat spoke to him in an elegant English tongue and pleaded for his life. He wasn't really amazed that the rat was speaking to him, but that it was speaking to him after only two mugs of ale. The rat eloquently told his story—he had been a talented bard himself once, a refined gentleman actually and a bit of a gold-digger, when one of his conquests, a disgruntled mistress, turned out to be a sorceress. She exacted her revenge by relegating him to a life as a rat—a permanent reminder of his true nature. After the Bard heard this, he only had one question. "Her name wasn't Sheila, was it?" After being relieved his previous night's conquest wasn't the same woman, he then questioned the speaking rat as to why he should spare his life. The rat explained that he could teach the Bard a tune that, when played, would magically summon him out of midair, a talent he once had when in human form. He went on to explain that only the most talented musicians can work such magic, and he had witnessed the Bard's talented play. "Who knows," he said to the Bard, "you may be able to use me as a ruse to earn a few coins." With the thought of riches rushing to the Bard's head, a beautiful partnership was born between the rat...and the little rodent creature. The Bard had one simple request of his new friend the talkative rat: speak again, and he'd die before he could finish the sentence. "I agree..." responded the rat.

The Bard continued his trek through the countryside, using his now-silent rat to disturb patrons at local taverns and pubs and subsequently dissipating him for a modest reward. Searching for new towns to ply his trade took the Bard across the sea northward to the Orcades Islands, a mystical land storied for its unusual creatures and potent brew. After touring several settlements the Bard found himself in the village of Houton, outside the local watering hole The Drunken Rat, and that is where our story begins.

getting started

Throughout the manual, controls for keyboard/mouse control are listed first, followed by equivalent gamepad controls in parentheses.

Keyboard/Mouse Controls

Right Mouse Button	Move Bard
Left Mouse Button	Attack
Hold Left Mouse Button	Alternate Attack
Space	Block
"F" Key	Use/Interact (Open item, initiate conversation)
"1" Key	Artifacts Menu
"2" Key	Summons Menu
"3" Key	Melee Weapons Menu
"4" Key	Special Weapons Menu
"R" Key	Heal Shortcut
"D"/"A" Keys	Rotate Camera Right/Left
Mouse Wheel	Zoom Camera In/Out
"W"/"S" Keys	Zoom In/Zoom Out
Arrow Keys	(Up) Attack, (Down) Defend, (L) Stay, (R) Follow
"Esc"	Pause Game/Game Menu/Skip Cut Scene
Tab	Character Sheet
"X" Key	Toggle Map

Gamepad Controls

Left Thumbstick	Move Bard
Direction Buttons	Group Commands
Right Thumbstick	Camera Control—Press: Toggle Map
Left Trigger 1 (5)	Select Melee Weapon
Left Trigger 2 (7)	Select Ranged/Alternate Melee Weapons
Right Trigger 1 (6)	Open Tune Selection Menu
Right Trigger 2 (8)	Open Artifact Selection Menu
1 Button	Use
2 Button	Tap: Attack-Hold: Alt. Attack
3 Button	Block
Start (10)	Pause Game/Game Menu
Select (9)	Character Sheet

main menu

On the opening menu, you will be presented with six options:

Start New Game

Select this option to begin playing. Next, you may select the game difficulty: Easy, Normal or Olde School. The Bard would choose **Easy**, for it's the easiest way out. Choose **Olde School** to see the Bard get the beating he deserves, but keep in mind there will be far fewer save points in the game. If you are neither wimp nor stallion, choose **Normal**. To make menu selections, either left-click your mouse or press button "2" on the gamepad.

Next you will be taken to the Character Generation Screen, where you may either set the Bard's attributes to your liking or select "Auto Allocate" to have the game choose them for you.

Generate Character: The Bard's starting attributes will vary depending on the difficulty level. Attributes are as follows:

Strength- The stronger the Bard is, the more damage he can inflict in melee combat.

Vitality- A high vitality will improve the Bard's health and make him more difficult to defeat in battle.

Luck- Luck has a subtle effect on many aspects of the Bard's adventures.

Dexterity- A high dexterity allows the Bard to inflict greater damage with ranged weapons.

Charisma- Shopkeepers will offer significant discounts to the Bard if he has high charisma.

Rhythm- Rhythm allows the Bard to play magical tunes with greater skill which enhances the abilities and strengths of summoned creatures.

Once attribute levels are set, click on **Continue (10)**. You will be asked to choose a talent.

Talent: The Bard will begin the game with one Talent. The Bard will acquire more talents as the game progresses by way of experience he will earn by winning battles.

Two-handed Weapons- Allows the Bard to equip and use two-handed weapons.

Dual Wield- Allows the Bard to fight with a dirk in one hand and a sword in the other.

Flail- Allows the Bard to equip and use a flail.

Shield Bash- The Bard will automatically bash with his shield after blocking, stunning his enemy.

Riposte- The Bard will counterattack in a circle after blocking, knocking down his enemies. Used with the Dual Wield skill.

Heavy Parry- The Bard will counterattack in a circle after blocking, knocking down his enemies. Used with the Two-handed Weapon skill.

Shield Charge- A powerful charging attack which stuns enemies. Used with the sword skill. Hold and release the attack button to activate.

Blade Dash- A deadly charging attack. Used with the Dual Wield skill. Hold and release the attack button to activate.

Spinning Smash- A damaging spinning attack. Used with the Two-handed Weapon skill. Hold and release the attack button to activate.

Whirlwind- A powerful spinning attack which stuns enemies. Used with the Flail skill. Hold and release the attack button to activate.

Power Shot- A powerful ranged shot which passes through its target. Used with the Ranged skill. Hold and release the attack button to activate.

Arrow Storm- A ranged attack that fires multiple arrows which pass through their targets. Used with the ranged skill. Hold and release the attack button to activate.

Critical Strike- Gives the Bard a chance to score a critical hit on his enemies and inflict additional damage.

Improved Critical Strike- An improved chance to score a more deadly critical hit.

Treasure Hunter- The Bard gains bonus coins for any treasure he finds.

Once you've selected the Bard's initial Talent, the game will begin.

Load Saved Game—This option will allow you to load a previously saved *The Bard's Tale* game from your hard drive.

Options—Allows you to change controller configuration, adjust sound options, or various other options in the game.

Extras—The main menu has a selection containing Extras. We aren't saying exactly what they are or how to unlock them, but if you care to make a donation, you can see some fun behind-the-scenes material.

Credits—Select this to see the band of reprobates who brought you *The Bard's Tale*. Names may have been changed for their own safety.

playing the game

Most cut scenes or movies can be skipped by hitting the **Escape key (10)**.

Using a Mouse

To move the Bard, hold down the **right-mouse button** and the Bard will move in the direction of the cursor. To attack, move the Bard within range of an enemy and **Left-click the mouse**.

Using a Gamepad

To move the Bard using a gamepad, use the **left thumbstick**. The **right thumbstick** will rotate the camera. The Bard can speak with certain characters by walking up to them, and, in many cases, the Bard can choose how to respond. Use the **"1" button** to open a highlighted door or talk to a character.

Snarky or Nice

There are several opportunities throughout the game for the Bard to respond to someone in conversation. The player has two options—answer nicely or talk smack (snarky). The option you choose can change the outcome of the conversation, and nice is not always the way to go. When opportunities to reply arise, two icons will appear. Use the mouse and **left-click** on your choice (**1 button for snarky, 3 button for nice**).

Character Sheet

Press the **Tab Key (9)** at any time during the game to bring up the Character Sheet, which allows the player to view level, health, mana, experience and current attributes. It also displays the following:

Quest Log

Lists your current tasks.

Equipment

Displays which weapons, armor and shields the Bard is carrying.

Tune List

Brings up a list of tunes, showing the creatures the Bard can summon to fight at his side.

Talent List

Displays all the talents the Bard has learned so far in the game.

Token List

Shows each of the 25 tokens in the game and which tokens the Bard has found.

Making Money

The Bard can make money by killing enemies, be they human or beast, and collecting the valuables they are carrying. There may even be a few buried treasures here and there to fill the Bard's pockets. Use this money to upgrade weapons and armor or to buy the Bard out of precarious situations.

selecting and using weapons

Press the **"3" key (5)** to bring up your weapon options. Choose your weapon by pressing the displayed key or button. Weapons that are grayed-out are not available. Be sure to stop by the stores in town to upgrade the Bard's weaponry.

Available Weapons, Shields and Armor

The Bard begins his quest with a simple sword and modest armor. As the game progresses, the Bard can upgrade his weapons and defenses either through exploration or by going to village stores. The Bard can make money to buy weapon upgrades by either completing certain quests or killing creatures and foes. Keep in mind that every item available has different levels of quality and effectiveness. Pressing the **"4" key (7)** brings up alternate weapons.



Dirks

Not much for combat, but it's better than bruising up your knuckles. Use for dual-weapon fighting, with a sword for example, to give the Bard an extra edge.



Swords

Now we're getting more serious. Several swords become available as the game progresses, and upgraded swords require fewer blows to take down an enemy.



Two-handed Weapons

These are designed to utilize both hands, posing a double threat to the enemy.



Flails

For those unfamiliar with medieval combat, a flail is one of those pointy steel balls on a chain attached to a stick. Quite fun, actually, once you get it twirling.



Bows

Allows the Bard to fight from a safer distance. Available in several sizes and strengths, the bigger the bow—the sooner they fall.



Armor

As mentioned, the Bard begins the game with some pretty flimsy armor. As the foes get bigger and the battles get more intense, the Bard best find some stronger armor to help keep him alive.



Shields

Shields are very important when it comes to keeping the Bard's blood inside his body where it belongs. Shields can be upgraded, and used with some quality armor to keep the Bard in battle longer.

Health and Healing

The Bard can heal in several ways. He will heal naturally if given time between battles to lick his wounds. When the Bard visits a Kirk, he is asked if he wishes to make a donation. The Bard may donate any amount of money to a Kirk to receive a free healing and short-duration blessing, which gives the Bard extra resistance to damage. A very effective way for the Bard to heal is to summon creatures with healing powers when they are available.

12 *Artifacts*

There are artifacts in the game that the Bard may use to invoke great power. The first of these artifacts is the amulet of a sorceress which the Bard receives near the beginning of the game. As the game continues, the Bard can employ more powerful artifacts. Artifacts allow the Bard to summon the spirits of the characters to which they are attuned, unleashing their power on his foes.

To power an artifact, the Bard must collect Adder Stones. The total number of stones the Bard has collected will be displayed on screen whenever he uses one or collects one. The Bard may also consult his Character Sheet for the total number of stones he possesses.

To activate an artifact, press the "1" key (8) to view a menu displaying which artifacts are available. Once an artifact is selected, a second menu appears where you can select the number of stones you wish to use. Once chosen, the Bard will activate the artifact.

Sorceress

Power Level I (1 Stone)— Sorceress heals all members of the Bard's party. As a shortcut, you can press the "R" key while in the game without calling up a menu.

Power Level II (2 Stones)— Sorceress heals and blesses all members of the Bard's Party, which allows them to sustain only 50% of damage taken for a brief period of time.

Power Level III (3 Stones)— Sorceress heals and blesses all members so they are invulnerable for a short period of time.

Tokens

Tokens are items found throughout the game that add a bonus to the Bard's attributes. Each token can increase a certain attribute, such as luck, dexterity, charisma and so on. There are 25 tokens in the game; 20 enhance the Bard's basic statistics, and 5 rarer tokens have more powerful effects. You can see which tokens the Bard has or hasn't found by accessing the token page from his Character Sheet.

Shopkeepers

As you wander through towns, keep an eye out for the town stores. Inside these stores, you can speak with shopkeepers about the weaponry they have for sale. The shopkeeper will give descriptions and prices, and you may purchase these weapons. Always be on the lookout for upgrades. The better prepared for battle the Bard is, the more likely he is to live through it.

summoning and controlling creatures

As the game progresses, the Bard will learn or be taught new tunes to play and collect new instruments to summon creatures to help him in battle. Each of these creatures has specific talents and weaknesses, so selecting the right companions for each situation can make the difference between victory and defeat. Each summoned creature also has the ability to be upgraded to a more powerful level as the game continues. These upgrades range from new abilities to statistical upgrades.

Press the **"2" key (6)** to display the four categories of creatures: support, elemental, helpers and warriors. Select the category by pressing the appropriate displayed key or button and choose the creature you wish to summon. If the icon is grayed-out or a question mark is displayed, that creature is not currently available. The Bard will play a tune, and the corresponding creature will appear to help the Bard. If a creature is killed, the Bard must summon the creature again.

Each instrument the Bard owns has a pool of magical power known as mana. Whenever the Bard plays a tune, the mana cost of that tune will be subtracted from the mana pool of the instrument. Use an instrument's mana sparingly. Mana will regenerate to a certain extent over time, with the rate of regeneration depending on the level of the Bard.

Giving orders: The Bard can issue group orders to the creatures he summons by using the directional buttons. An order will apply to all currently summoned creatures; individual orders cannot be given to individual creatures.

Come To Me – Right Arrow (right directional button)

All creatures will go to the Bard. They will ignore attackers and try to get close to him. Once they are close enough to the Bard, the creatures will assume the defensive stance.

Defensive Stance – Down Arrow (down directional button)

Creatures will stay near the Bard and attack any enemies that come into range. They will not chase enemies that remain far away.

Aggressive Stance – Up Arrow (up directional button)

Creatures will attack the closest enemy until it is dead, then repeat. They will chase enemies a fair distance away but will remain close enough to defend the Bard.

Stay – Left Arrow (left directional button)

The creatures will stay where they are and defend themselves as best they can.

Summon Creatures



Rat

Description: A typical large brown sewer rat.

Ability: This ordinary rat can do no more than frighten the occasional maiden.



Mercenary

Description: The Mercenary is a rough-and-tumble fighter who travels around the world selling his sword to the highest bidder. He is crude, rude and very handy to have around in a fight.

Ability: Workmanlike in his fighting, he makes up for his lack of style with effectiveness. He uses his extensive combat experience to gain every advantage he can and knocks enemies to the ground with special combat maneuvers.



Knight

Description: The Knight is a massive warrior clad in heavy plate armor and wielding a gigantic sword. The Knight is chivalrous and courteous in all things, including battle.

Ability: Although slow, the knight can absorb enormous amounts of damage while using his shield to stun his enemies.



Gouger

Description: The Gouger is a large, bloated, insect-like monster.

Ability: The Gouger drains life from its enemies and then uses that energy to heal its allies.



Heroine

Description: The Heroine is a warrior of great skill. She is quick on her feet and wields her crossbow with deadly accuracy. Always eager for battle, the Heroine is quick of wit and full of spirit.

Ability: The Heroine fires a burst of crossbow bolts at her foes.

Brute



Description: The Brute is a large, dumb but good-natured giant. In combat, he hurls large rocks at his enemies.
Ability: The rocks that the Brute throws hit hard enough to stun any creature that is directly struck for a significant amount of time.

Elemental



Description: A bipedal being composed of flame, the fiery Elemental hurls parts of his body at his foes.
Ability: The Elemental throws balls of fire which burn foes.

Behemoth



Description: The Behemoth is a large, fiery monster capable of trampling its foes and burning them alive.
Ability: The Behemoth charges in combat and causes a damaging explosion when it hits a foe. When in close quarters, it uses its fiery breath to char its enemies.

Thunder Spider



Description: The Thunder Spider is composed of pure electrical energy. In combat, it attacks its foes by delivering a bite that both shocks and stuns.
Ability: The electrical attack of the spider stuns enemies for a short period of time.

Knocker



Description: A small humanoid of sorts, the Knocker runs into battle with a quiver full of lightning rods. He goes to where the fight is thickest, jams his rods into the ground and then runs for it before the rod is activated.
Ability: The Knocker uses charged lightning rods to attack multiple enemies at once.

Crone



Description: The Crone is a large, disgusting woman covered in tattoos and dirt. Despite her appearance, she is skilled in the magical art of healing.
Ability: The Crone heals injured allies in combat.

Enchantress



Description: The Enchantress is a magical being with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a snake. She flies around using her butterfly wings.
Ability: The Enchantress uses her mystical powers to reverse time to bring allies back from the dead.

Bodyguard



Description: A large man wearing a full helm and carrying a tiny shield, the Bodyguard is the most loyal of the Bard's servants. He has a high-pitched, squeaky voice unusual for someone so large. He is very enthusiastic about his work and quite good-natured.
Ability: The Bodyguard taunts ranged foes in combat, causing them to attack him instead of his allies.

Rogue



Description: The Rogue is a dangerously beautiful woman who lures enemies to her with honeyed words and body language, only to speed away, slicing them with her knives as she tumbles or vaults past. Her upgraded form uses poisoned daggers.
Ability: The Rogue taunts melee foes in combat, causing them to attack her. She then evades them and counters with her daggers.

Light Fairy



Description: The Light Fairy is a small sprite-like, flying creature.
Ability: The Light Fairy can illuminate darkened rooms so the Bard can see as well as stun enemies in combat with flashes of light.

Explorer



Description: The Explorer is an old, retired adventurer. He wanders around the battlefield picking up treasure and stumbling into traps.
Ability: The Explorer peers about an area, cautiously looking for traps. He can also open chests to grab loot for the Bard and uncover secret doors.

Characters

Throughout the game, the Bard will encounter several different characters, not all of which are human. They can be, but are not limited to, the following:



Kunal Trow

Kunal Trow are smallish, green humanoids with large ears, a stooped frame, pointy heads and a mouthful of sharp teeth. They are very nasty and vicious by nature and think that the only good human is a dead human.



Peerie Trow

Although related to Kunal Trow, Peerie Trow are not as hideous looking and not nearly as cruel. They have a penchant for mischief and delight in playing games and tricking others. They'll trick you, but they aren't likely to kill you.



Finfock

Half man and half octopus, these creatures live in the water. Beware, however—they can survive out of the water for short periods of time. They are also reputed to have magical abilities.



Firbolgs

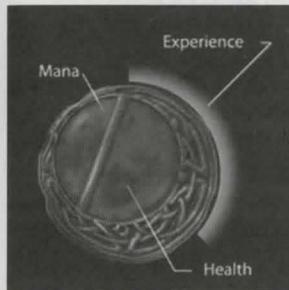
Firbolgs are built for digging. They have long muscular arms, aren't too bright and actually enjoy digging for countless hours in the mines.



Vikings

Vikings are, well, Vikings. Fighters who love to spend their days pillaging villages and drinking beer. You would never find a Viking at a high society party, unless he's pillaging it.

On-Screen Displays



Bard Health Display

In the upper-left corner of the screen is a small graphical display of the Bard's current health and mana. As the Bard gains greater maximum health and mana, the displays change to reflect the increases.

Hotkey Menu

When the player presses the "1, 2, 3, or 4" key (5, 6, 7, or 8), the appropriate hotkey menu appears in the center of the screen.

Summoned Health Display

When the Bard adds a summoned creature to his party, an additional graphical display will appear on screen indicating the current health of the summoned creature.

Silver

This shows the total amount of silver that the Bard is carrying. It only appears when the Bard gains silver. When a treasure item or loose silver is found, it flies to the upper-right corner of the screen and turns into coins which fall into a purse located in the lower-right corner.

Adder Stones

This displays the number of adder stones the Bard has available for conjuring up special spells.

Experience

This shows the total amount of experience that the Bard has gained for his next level.

Mini-map

In the options menu, you can choose to turn on the mini-map. This small map appears in the upper-right corner of the screen and shows the layout of the land or building and the location of enemies. Hitting the **"X" key (right stick down)** will toggle between the mini-map, a larger map and no map.

World Map

When the Bard leaves a town, he appears on a world map, which shows the various locations to which he may travel.

Controls

The Bard is represented on the world map as an animated character that the player controls directly using the **Right Mouse Button (Left Thumb Stick)**. The Bard can only journey on the world map and may not attack or play tunes. Players may access the inventory by pressing the **Tab key**.

Locations

Each specific location that the Bard may enter is located on the world map. Whenever the Bard walks near one of these locations, the player will receive a key or button prompt telling the name of the location and asking whether or not the Bard wants to enter. **Press the "F" key (1)** to have the Bard enter the location.

Random Encounters

When the Bard is traveling on the world map, he may encounter a creature or group of creatures wandering around the map. If the Bard gets too close to them, he will be transported to an area to fight. The Bard must defeat all of the enemies before he can return to the world map.

Level-Specific Counters, Timers or Health Bars

The Bard will often find himself in situations where he must keep track of either a number, enemy health or a certain amount of time. In these situations, a custom graphic is created and displayed at the top of the screen.

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