



GENRE: ACTION-RPG
 DEVELOPER: CLOCKSTONE SOFTWARE
 PUBLISHER: LIGHTHOUSE INTERACTIVE
 REQUIRED: P4 2.2GHZ, 512MB RAM
 (1GB VISTA), 4.4GB HD SPACE, 128MB
 3D CARD
 RECOMMENDED: INTEL CORE 2 DUO, 1GB
 RAM, 256MB 3D CARD
 MAX PLAYERS: 1

VITALS

/// Harry Potter and the Lair of the Flaming Skeletons will be sold on a street corner near you sometime in 2008. ///

AVENCAST: RISE OF THE MAGE

NOT A CASTAWAY

In the glamorous world of game reviewing, it's rare for relatively unknown developers to exceed expectations. Clockstone Software (if you just asked "who?" then you're not alone) has developed the remarkably enjoyable *Avencast: Rise of the Mage*, an action-based role-playing game that revolves around

a wizardry school (no, not *that* one), spell-casting combat, a coming-of-age story, and a good dose of puzzle-solving to keep things fresh.

In the process of saving an ancient sorcery school, you'll level up your young mage in Health, Mana, Blood Magic, or Soul Magic, while loading up on a decent variety of supernaturally enhanced garments and powerful weapons. Blood Magic refers to melee-focused spells, while Soul

Magic harkens to the more traditional "fireballs coming online!" methodology. *Avencast* uses an "active movement" approach to combat, providing you with the ability to dodge quickly during combat. The game also offers up a spicy selection of foes—enough to keep you bobbing and weaving while zinging spells at your enemies. Key combos provide a welcome shortcut to casting your more important hexes during frantic battles.

I don't know if it's the creativity of the scripting and puzzles, the crisp and colorful graphics, or the emotive soundtrack, but *Avencast* simply feels more immersive than many game worlds. This suspension of disbelief isn't entirely complete, however, as the occasional broken quest or bugged boss battle can jolt you right back to reality. Melee combat also feels disappointingly airy, due to a



/// Wheel of Fortune, deathtrap style. ///

lack of solid hit feedback. And, while the game's lead roles are generally well-acted, the voice acting overall is merely average. These concerns aside, Clockstone Software has crafted a magically entertaining spell-casting experience—and an unexpectedly decent game. /// ANTHONY DULAC ///



/// The purple glow means someone is going to be in pain. ///

FINAL PC GAMER VERDICT

HIGHS// Good variety of spells, enemies, and supernatural items; immersive game world; snazzy "active movement" approach to combat.

LOWS// Occasional bugs; melee combat lacks oomph; some lackluster voice acting.

BOTTOM LINE// Despite a few rough patches, *Avencast* is a strong action-RPG with more than enough magic to cast an entertaining spell.

0% BETTER >> 100% **78%**

++ GOOD ++