Tracey Geronimo, HFS0909

A cultish video game's user interface might seem to be a cliche, less interesting choice among all computer interface's out there, but I would argue that the interface for Diablo II not only allows for effortless interaction between the user and the program, it actually enhances the gameplay.

Diablo II is a great role-playing game that was released about 10 years ago, and I'm sure plenty of people out there would recommend I start playing newer games. However, despite it's outdated graphics and somewhat limited multiplayer cooperative capabilities, there is still something very enchanting about its gameplay - its user interface!

First off, let's talk about **mapping**. The player moves his/her character around the terrain by simply clicking in the direction s/he would like to go. Given that a person playing a video game already has a computer and knows how to use a mouse, movement by pointing the mouse (or gauntlet, in the picture) is about as natural as the mapping can get. Other games use arrows, a keyboard arrangement, or a joystick to direct movement which often requires the use of a second hand, but Diablo II is automatically playable by anyone who knows how to use a mouse (my mom).

Next, the character uses skills with one of the two mouse buttons which are assigned using boxes at the bottom of the screen. By no coincidence, the box on the left maps to the left mouse button and the right to the right mouse button. The use of these skills is also very natural and intuitive as well; wherever the player clicks the mouse is where the spell will be cast, the skill activated, etc.

Hell can be a dangerous place to hang out, as are the dungeons and fantasy worlds of other RPGs. However, in no other RPG is your relative proximity to death so visible. See the big, bright orbs on the left and right of the screen? They represent a character's life and magic, respectively, and when these begin to dwindle it becomes rather obvious. And of course, staying alive in the game is an utmost priority.

**Feedback** is also an important part of any video game interface; a player wants to know (usually by sound) whether an action or command was completed. The Feedback in Diablo II does not stand out particularly compared to other games, but it is still very reliable and helpful. Speaking of staying alive, for example, a player uses potions to keep his/her character's health high, and when a potion is used, the game produces a cute gurgling noise to assure the player the character is on its way to good health. Or when a character's equipment becomes damaged, an unpleasant, cracking noises plays; additionally, a small translucent figure appears highlighting which item precisely is broken (I couldn't a snapshot) providing a good example of both **visual** and **auditory feedback**.

None of these features by themselves sounds very spectacular; most games indicate a character's health, equipment status, etc. However, it is the **successful combination** of all these helpful features into a simple, uncluttered, and stylized user interface that leads to the fast, responsive, satisfying gameplay in Diablo II that many gamers (including me) prefer over most other games. A (unfairly) cluttered World of Warcraft interface is shown below, just to entrench my viewpoint...
And finally, all hail Diablo III!!!... (s user interface)