

The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

REVIEW OF
THE MONTH

THE BLACK MIRROR



REVIEW
LAW & ORDER II

AL LOWE SPECIAL!!!
INTERVIEW, REVIEW OF LARRY 7
AND LARRY PUZZLE PAGE

PREVIEWS OF:
MIDNIGHT NOWHERE
& SHADOWPLAY



INTERVIEW
JACK THE RIPPER

The Inventory

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LEISURE

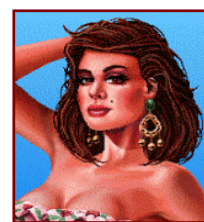
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Al Lowe, Philippe Gaudè
Tara Reed, Felix Drott

Prologue

Hello again fellow adventurers. The year is almost over and it is time for all of us to look back at the year that passed, think about what went wrong and what went right. I am afraid to say that this year I did not play a single adventure that I would call a classic but I am very optimistic about the year that comes.

In the last issue of *The Inventory* for the year 2003, we present to you the first in-depth interview with the legendary Al Lowe since the announcement of the new Larry-like game. Why do we call it Larry-like? Because a game without Al Lowe cannot be a Larry game. Period. It might be a good game or it might be a bad game, this we do not know, but what we do know is that this game is not a sequel to the Larry series.

The interview was conducted via internet phone by using a program called Skype (www.skype.com) and we will attempt to conduct more interviews via phone in the future because it gives another dimension to the conversation since we then have the chance to bombard our respondents with questions and squeeze exclusive information out of them! Al was everything we expected him to be, constantly funny and a pleasure to talk with. He also seemed more prepared to return to game development than ever before! Any publishers that might be reading this magazine, keep a close eye on this guy because he is a developer-goldmine having created *Leisure Suit Larry*, one of the most popular adventure series ever that has sold millions and millions of copies worldwide. To accompany his interview Justin wrote a review to *Larry 7* and a puzzle page involving questions around the Larry games.

Philippe Gaudé, the producer of the upcoming *Jack the Ripper*, based on the story of the famous villain, is here to tell us all the information you want to know about their new first person adventure game. Reviews of two very good adventures that could have been even better, the *Black Mirror* and *Law and Order 2* follow right after the lounge. The second part of the *URU* review has to be postponed because we have not managed to play the online version yet, since some kind of bug has not allowed us to do so.

In the previews section we have two thrillers waiting for you. Yngvil Runde makes a comeback article and tells us her opinion on the demo of *Midnight Nowhere* while Carla Melloni takes a first look at *Shadowplay*, which seems to be a cult mystery adventure with strong influences from the *Gabriel Knight* games and movies of David Lynch and Darren Aronofsky.

Our Leisure section just got bigger and from this month we include a fan fiction column where the fans write their own stories based on adventure games. Check out the first three chapters of Ugarte's *Lost Wind*, which is based on the *Quest for Glory* games. The Hydra discusses the year that passed and the year that is about to come in terms of adventure games. But for now let's move on to the very promising *Shadowplay* by Felix Drott.

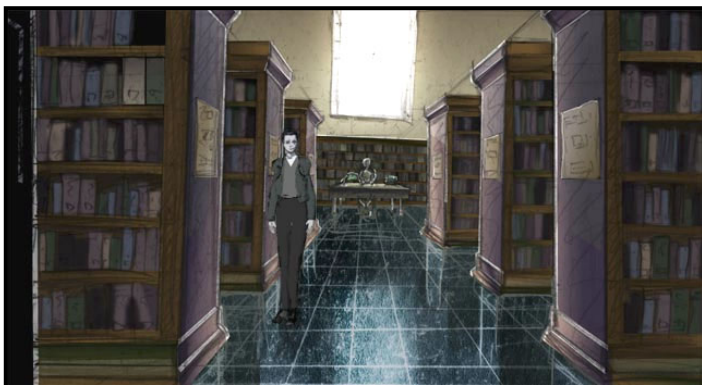
Dimitris Manos
Editor



'As a writer, I have wriety opinions about this. I would never rip off someone else's story and characters, and I think it's foolish to do so from a personal liability perspective. Why not create something similar but different?' So said Jane Jensen last month to our magazine, when she was asked how would she feel if someone made an unofficial Gabriel Knight adventure. Felix Drott, the developer of Shadowplay followed Jane's advice long before she even gave it. Since the very beginning of this magazine we have tried to highlight through our pages the great work being done by some dedicated people in the independent developers scene. The first preview of this month, Shadowplay, is one more promising example brought to us by a member of the AGS (Adventure Game Studio) developers' community.

Film archivist Dinah Burroughs stumbles upon a disturbing but extremely spellbinding silent film by Conrad Gray (notice any references in the characters' names?), a forgotten director of the 30's and 40's. What begins as a job, becomes a nightmare for Dinah, as she finds out more and more unsettling details about Gray's film...

This is the story of *Shadowplay*, a promising 3rd person 2D graphic adventure with a point and click interface, and a mystery plot -in the Gabriel Knight tradition- that blends facts and fiction. In the game, you're Dinah Burroughs, a film archivist who rediscovers a long forgotten director's film, which happens to have a certain hypnotic effect. With the aid of Lucas, the projectionist and only employee of the Carbon Arc,



Dinah inside the library during one of her research sessions

Dinah begins her search, reading reviews and interviews, trying to track down copies of Gray's other films. But Gray's career appears as complex as his life: His early German films, censored for their madness; a rumored collaboration with Orson Welles; accusations of Nazi sympathies, then of being a Communist. And finally, his premature death in 1947. The real journey starts when Dinah decides to track down the three people who came to Gray's funeral: the aging movie star, the blind cinematographer and the screenwriter... *Shadowplay* will feature a cast of 15 highly developed characters to interview and befriend, to suspect and seduce and more than 30 locations to explore in a contemporary, real world Los Angeles as strange and magical as any fantasy or sci-fi setting.

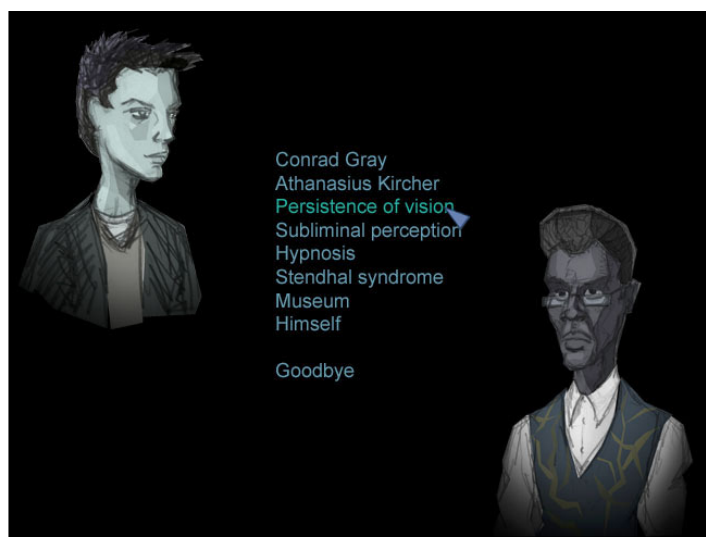
The gameplay includes investigation, research and interviews, as you move through decrepit Sunset Boulevard mansions, tomb-like studio vaults, dusty newspaper archives, and a ramshackle Hollywood hotel. According to the developer, puzzles are strongly entrenched in the plot: You will have to examine clips from Gray's movies on the editing table and analyze film stills with some computer aid, access to the director's personal notes in the library's restricted collection, and track down his few still living co-workers, to expose two terrifying secrets; one fifty years old, another spanning centuries.

In contrast to *Sins of the Fathers* with its trips to Germany and Africa, *Shadowplay* never leaves Southern California. *Shadowplay* consists of ten chapters, each being a day in game time. According to Felix Drott, the man behind the idea, each chapter will take about one or two hours to play -of course, if you don't get stuck-. Much of the time will be spent in dialog and reading books. It must be said that, as far as this previewer is concerned, Drott seems to be a literature fanatic. Each day introduces new characters and concepts, and although a number of puzzles can be solved earlier than needed, every day is a self-contained unit with its own tasks and events leading up to a cliffhanger climax.



Tristan shows Dinah the Thaumatrope

Regarding puzzles, Drott made a very interesting comment on their use in adventure games. *“Some time back, while replaying The Longest Journey, I realized that I’ve never liked the puzzle part of adventure games. I love the genre because it depends on story, characters and exploration, and most puzzles just get in the way of this. I find that the best game designs are those where the genre, setting, and story by themselves make for exciting interaction. In Police Quest there are hardly any puzzles at all, you just follow proper police procedure, and in the Quest for Glory games you do what’s expected from your character class. This is the reason that detective stories are so popular in adventure gaming, because the intellectual challenge, the gathering of evidence, the interrogation of suspects, are integral parts of the story. Le Serpent Rouge in Gabriel Knight 3 is possibly the best puzzle ever, because it ties directly into the treasure hunt plot and the tradition of Edgar Allan Poe’s The Gold Bug. It’s not a tacked-on obstacle to turn a story into a game, but an ingenious choice of genre which makes for enjoyable gameplay. These thoughts are the context for Shadowplay’s gameplay style. I could easily have thrown in a bunch of obstacle puzzles, where you’d have to repair a projector before watching the movie, or find your library card under the couch, but those merely prolong the game rather than advance the story.”*



The dialogue interface. Does it look familiar?

A similar comment was made by Philippe Gaudé, one of the developers behind the upcoming Jack the Ripper. Both those comments make up for a good discussion in The Hydra this month. But let’s go back to Shadowplay for the time being. Most of the game’s ‘puzzles’ are related to Dinah’s research, meaning that you have to find the right book or the right person to answer the questions at hand. Comparing the gameplay style to the Gabriel Knight series, you’ll find that it’s closer to the Grace than the Gabe parts, more of a research project than a criminal investigation. There’s a suspicious death involved, but it was half a century ago, so taking fingerprints and collecting forensic evidence won’t do much good. Your only leads are the highly subjective memories of those involved, and you’ll spend much

time discovering who you can trust, who are deceiving you, and who are deceiving themselves. According to the author, in Shadowplay written material is almost as important as the dialogs. You’ll have to trace Conrad Gray’s life through newspaper articles, film reviews, a magazine interview, monographs, encyclopedia entries, and websites. You’ll get access to diaries, personal letters and an annotated copy of a never produced screenplay.

Those who thought there was too much reading in the Gabriel Knight games should appreciate that you can LOOK at the page you’re currently viewing, and Dinah will summarize the text, bringing up its main points. Shadowplay also gets rid of the “look at everything to proceed” museum visits of The Beast Within, and the exhibits at the museum of optical illusion – the only one in the game – are just intended for player education. Those truly interested in film history and distant branches of the game story will probably take twice as long to complete as those who merely want to see the mystery to its end.

A major gameplay element is Gray’s films. You’ll never see any of his works in their full length. But you’ll work with selected scenes, scrutinizing them frame by frame on the editing table, and later getting them scanned into a computer for further scrutiny. This game element is reminiscent to SIDNEY and some of the Serpent Rouge clues in *Blood of the Sacred*, *Blood of the Damned*, as well as the image enhancement tools of the ESPER in Blade Runner.

The game will have a classic point-and-click interface heavily inspired by the expanded Sierra GUI used in *Sins of the Fathers*. *Shadowplay*’s interface combines some redundant elements (remember that in GK1 you could open a door selecting either the “operate” or the “open/close” action?) into one “operate” icon while still keeping “pick up” as a separate function. The two talk modes from *Sins of the Fathers* (“talk” and “question”) are reduced to one icon with varying effects depending on the character. If you speak to, say, a



The flatbed editing table.



Outside the Powell Library at UCLA, during sunset.

butler who won't let you in, conversation options are presented at the bottom of the screen in a *Monkey Island/Fate of Atlantis* fashion. When talking to major characters however, the screen switches to a special interview interface, familiar to those who've played *Sins of the Fathers*. Close-ups of Dinah and the non-player-character are displayed at the sides of the screen, while a list of dialog topics are displayed at the center. Among the less traditional features is Dinah's daily planner, which gives you an overview of each day's tasks and appointments. Completed tasks are crossed out and new ones added as you progress.

Shadowplay also contains a number of special interfaces for interaction with the editing table as well as several computers (internet search engine, library database, image enhancement program). While they are all complex enough to seem real, they should be quite simple to use. According to Drott, "they're supposed to be tools, not *Myst*-like machine puzzles".

The graphics of the game will reach resolutions of 640x480 with 32-bit colour backgrounds. As you can see from the screenshots, Felix uses his own unique style for the game's graphics that gives you the feeling of looking at a comic book brought to life.

This is what Drott had to say about Shadowplay's graphics: The backgrounds are drawn by hand in pencil, then scanned and colored in Photoshop. This is a fairly common approach, Tierra and the Fountain of Youth team use the same technique. But



Outside the mansion



Mansion interior with Dinah and Tristan

unlike them, I don't hide or paint over the pencil sketch. In fact, I put it on top of everything else, in plain sight. Most professionals would probably consider these backgrounds unfinished. But they seem to fit the story. Anything else would have been too glossy for the dark and unsettling tale of Shadowplay, the same way that Darren Aronofsky's Pi would never have worked in color and cinemascop. Shadowplay is all about "the great art of light and shadow", the essence of expressionism and film noir, and so is the art. We have to mention here that all the screenshots are work in progress and none of them are finalized yet. So expect the final versions of those screenshots to look even better than they do now. Consider the current screenshots as a prelude to what is going to come. According to Drott, the player will get to visit locations in different times of the day and in different weather conditions.

Instead of normal wall-to-wall music, this adventure will feature instead ambient sounds (both natural and artificial) used almost like a musical score in the tradition of films by David Lynch (*Mulholland Drive*) and Darren Aronofsky (*Requiem for a Dream*, *Pi*). There are no current plans for voice actors. According to Drott "Not only are there massive amounts of dialog in the game, but the nature of the story would require far more professional and nuanced acting than that found in most amateur games. Even if I could find the right actors for the parts, it would be much too difficult to direct the line readings by e-mail, as would be the case"

A demo is planned and should be released during the first months of 2004. The *Shadowplay* demo will be a style and interface demo, rather than part of the final game. It's basically a parallel story to the first day of the game, which introduces and follows the sidekick character Lucas through that fateful day, when a young woman enters the cinema with an old film can in her backpack, asking for his help. *Shadowplay* is currently scheduled for a Christmas 2004 release. No promises made, none broken. And guess what... this game will be available to you absolutely free of charge!

- Carla Melloni & Dimitris Manos



Waking up in a body bag is a good introduction to a horror adventure, and this is exactly what you do in *Midnight Nowhere*. A killer is on the loose, and he is a surgeon. Several bodies are found everyday, and they all show that the doctor has a morbid sense of humour. Heads have been cut of and sown on again, body parts have been cut off too, and of course, they are spread all over the floor. The police haven't got a clue about the killer's whereabouts, or what his next move might be. Now this is where it all starts. You wake up with no memory of what has happened, you just find yourself in a hospital, full of dead people.

Midnight Nowhere is a 3rd person point and click adventure, well settled in the horror category! The first thing that struck me when I played the demo was the amount of blood and body parts everywhere. Now this really makes a special atmosphere, along with the monotone music. The music sounds promising, and it definitely fits the game's gloomy mood. It's simple, dark and much piano playing. I believe they will stick to this throughout the game, since it's very effective.

The graphics of the game look scarily good. Every single detail is perfected, and objects have shadows and reflected light in them. By looking this real, the game becomes even more horrific. The only bump in the road there is the character. The shape of his body looks slightly unnatural, and he has almost no mimic in his



Dead bodies welcome you from the early moments of the demo

face. If they had improved this, I wouldn't have a single thing to complain about on the graphics of this game. The main character, who is left unnamed in the demo, reminds me of a really dark version of *Gabriel Knight*. They have the same dry humour, and a rather relaxed attitude to everything around them. He jokes a lot, so the game becomes a bit more humoristic, which I find necessary, because I feel like it would be a long and boring walk in the dark without the humour.

Now the puzzles are very logical, with a few exceptions. Since there is no magic involved in this game, the puzzles have to be possible to do in this scientific world. The puzzles so far do not require too much creativity from you, you just have to take a good look around. You have to get used to the gameplay and the interface. First of all, there are four different buttons in the upper left corner. You can speak/eat, look, press (like buttons) and move. I believe it will take sometime before you are handling these actions well when working with objects and people.

When you press the right mouse button, the inventory will pop up. It's a good inventory, and it opens and closes very nicely. You have room for many items there before it starts to get full. The buttons in the upper left of the screen will be the buttons you use to study things you have in your inventory, or to use them on each other.

It's very easy to move around, he can go everywhere, you just point and click! One thing that bothers me, is how difficult it is to find items around you. Little objects can be lying on the floor, and you really have to look all over the floor with the cursor to find them. It is a bit annoying, so I hope it is better in the other episodes of the game.

This game looks very promising, and it's probably the graphics that impresses me most, but also the engaging story. The main character spoke Russian in the demo, with English subtitles, and I really hope they find a good English voice actor to do this part. *Midnight Nowhere* will definitely become a hit among the horror adventure gamers, because of its grotesque setting and the disgusting environment. Saturn+, its developer, has made an impressively good adventure game, considering they've just made a couple of games from before. The company is Russian, and will publish the game throughout the world with the help of the also Russian company Buka Entertainment. If they add a bit more creativity to their (hopefully) next adventure game project, I'm sure they will make a very successful game!

- Yngvil Runde

ADVENTURE GOSSIP

Small adventure 'Sweet dreams' available for free download

Created as an entry for the 2003 Interactive Fiction Competition, Sweet Dreams is a short point-and-click adventure game set at a girl's boarding school. In this game, you'll explore the school looking for some items, solving puzzles and investigating mysteries that lie in the place. The best of all is: This game is freeware! Now, hurry up and download the most recent version here:

<http://papillon.fileburst.com/sweetdreams.zip>

Law and Order 2 online demo available

A few days ago, Legacy Interactive announced it has partnered with Shockwave.com, to launch the playable online demo for Law & Order II: Double or Nothing. The game, based on a popular tv series, was released in late September. Law & Order II: Double or Nothing online game begins with a notable scientist found shot to death in midtown Manhattan, and the player has just arrived to the crime scene with Detective Lennie Briscoe, in order to collect some evidence. The discovered clues lead you to three key witnesses, the crime lab and medical examiner's office, each providing crucial elements to the investigation process. The demo is available at :

<http://www.shockwave.com/sw/content/lawandorder2>

as well as at the game's official Web site:

www.lawandordergame.com.

Broken Saints adventure news

The Broken Saints level demo is in production, with the game design finalized and the schedule mapped. As most of you know, it'll be an adventure game, with some action sequences, inspired by classics like Shadowrun, Sierra's Quest games, Broken Sword and Silicon Knight's Eternal Darkness. As for the main features, only a small amount of info has been released: sandstorms effects and a certain bleach-headed rebel are already confirmed.

As for the DVD, a multi-disc collection seems possible, after Canada's Telefilm New Media Fund accepted BS's guys' proposal. Hopefully, they'll reveal the DVD's official feature list soon. The BS team asks you to write them to info@brokensaints.com and let them know which feature you're dying to see in the DVD release. (Thanks for the gossip, Petter!)

The return of Tex Murphy!

Believe it or not fellow adventurers, Tex Murphy is about to return. Aaron Connors and Chris Jones, the creators of the Tex Murphy series, have been hard at work for some time now on the sequel to the Tex Murphy series. Although there is no publisher announced or someone who is supporting financially the project, according to a post made by Aaron Connors himself on the unofficial Tex Murphy Message Board the prototype they have been preparing is near to completion and they are positive that it will attract interest to the game by investors.

The game will not feature FMV graphics, since the limited budget available would not allow for something like that, but it will use 3D graphics instead. The project team has recently acquired also the creator of the original Killing Moon 3D engine. Aaron Connors made mention of 3D models equal or even better in quality to the 3D models of the famous shooter Max Payne 2.

The story of the new game will resume from where Overseer left off. Aaron described the story of the new game as *'a Supreme Pizza - it's got a whole bunch of layers and different ingredients, but it's still a single pie. Think of this story as the bubbly layer of cheese thrown over the meaty trilogy; while it's the last thing added, it's just as vital to the whole experience.'* All the main characters will be returning and the Tex Murphy fans should not be surprised if they see old characters showing up. Adrian Carr is also expected to be involved even if the game won't use FMV. For more information check out:

<http://www.unofficialtexmurphy.com>

House of Tales signs Leading Studios

House of Tales Entertainment has taken internationally acclaimed CG Teams under contract to work on its top adventure 'The Moment of Silence'. Virgin Lands, known for its award-winning work on Robin Hood, Aquanox 2, and Spellforce, is to create the low polygon models for the 36 characters and 30 extras that make up the cast. The Light Works was signed to produce the complex series of rendering

sequences. With a powerful line-up of references like Star Wars: Rogue Leader, Star Wars: Rebel Strike and Batman in its portfolio, The Light Works is considered to be one of the leading graphic studios worldwide. The well-known Frankfurt Studio metricminds is to take over the implementation of the complete motion capture. Tobias Schachte (CEO House of Tales): "By placing The Lightworks, Virgin Lands and metricminds under contract, we are underlining our objective of developing an outstanding adventure in all categories. Our title shows excellent potential, and we want to take full advantage of this by only working with the best." <http://www.house-of-tales.com/>

Midnight Nowhere Demo

As an adventure game, Midnight Nowhere follows in the inveterate footsteps of horror/adventure games past. All the usual staples are here; a solitary protagonist, the bloody trail of an unknown assailant, and the ample fortnights of free time needed to casually inspect every loose object in the known world. With a list as short and simple as that, the room for deviation becomes a margin of creative freedom as wide as a shoelace. But the formula works, as is evidenced by the adventure games that continue to get marketed on a monthly basis. Playable demo of Midnight Nowhere now available at Gamer's Hell:

<http://www.gamershell.com/download/3865.shtml>

URU News

URU's fans and developers are certainly enjoying the success of the

game news galore at the webpage: <http://urulive.ubi.com/us/> There's a new "Solve the Mysterious Puzzle" from Sound Blaster, where visitors can win a new sound system: the latest Sound Blaster sound card and a set of creative 7.1 speakers. Find out more here: <http://www.soundblaster.com/contests/uru/>

Also, they've obtained permission from the DRC to link to their experimental D'ni Cavern Webcam. The Webcam will be placed in various locations in the D'ni cavern and city currently being explored. As more and more explorers are admitted to the site, this will provide an interesting real-time link to the explorers and developments going on. <http://drcsite.org/>

Last but not least (well, there are even more news at the webpage, but my space is limited!) Uru associate producer Jean-Christophe Pelletier made a live television appearance, in an interview with Denis Talbot on the Live Magazine Program "M.net", on Musique Plus, Quebec's answer to MTV. A must-see for French-speaking Myst fans.

<http://www.musiqueplus.com/fr/tv/25>

Say goodbye to Tierra, say hello to AGDI

The people that brought us the amazing King's Quest 1 and 2 remakes and are preparing to bring us a remake of Quest for Glory 2 have recently decided to change their name from Tierra to Anonymous Game Developers Interactive or AGDI for short. The reason for the name change, according to the press release, was that they do not any longer need to be called with a name that is reminiscent of Sierra in order to gain publicity. Whatever they want to be called, we will still be looking

forward to their gems. So from now on if you want to take a look at the latest development in their remakes development you are better off to check out the site:

<http://www.agdinteractive.com>

Want to be Graham?

The team behind the unofficial King's Quest IX project is going to run voice over auditions in New York on the 10th of January 2004. The auditions will be held at the following address:

Where Eagles Dare
347 West 36th Street
New York, NY

This is a non-profit project so do not expect to be paid for your work. It can however be a great way to get your voice-acting career started. If you cannot make it to New York, online auditions will also be held for supporting and minor roles. If you think you have what it takes to be a voice-actor/actress send an e-mail to auditions@kq9.org For more information check the King's Quest IX website: www.kq9.org

First info on CSI 2

Ubisoft released the first information on their forthcoming sequel to the top selling adventure based on the TV series CSI. According to the press release CSI 2 will bear the title Dark Motives and the planned date of release is March 2004. Some interesting improvements mentioned in the press release were the ability to adjust the level of difficulty and the longer duration of each case. You can read the press release here: http://www.ubi.com/US/Articles/news/2004-12-15_csi.htm

- Carla Melloni

Interview with Al Lowe

Some years ago, when you looked at the credits of a game and you saw the name Al Lowe, you just knew that you were going to (excuse my language) laugh your ass off with that specific game. The legend behind the famous Leisure Suit Larry games has not worked on a game for some time now. He was also one of the developers released by Sierra when management passed from Ken Williams to others.

The 'new' Sierra has decided recently to continue the Larry series but definitely not in the way that we all knew and loved Larry. The main character is not Larry Laffer anymore, the game is (according to Sierra) not an adventure game and to top it all, Al Lowe is not involved at all with the project, although he has expressed interest in doing so. Al Lowe, who is also writing a joke column for our magazine, was kind enough to accept our invitation for an interview regarding his past in games development, the new Larry game and his future plans.

Yourself:

- Most adventure fans already know who you are, but for those that do not, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?



Well... I was born a poor black child in Gumbo, Missouri... *laughs* Actually I *was* born pretty poor, come to think of it. I grew up near St. Louis, Missouri, went to college, then into education, teaching instrumental music at all school levels. But one day I looked around and realized I was 35 years old, at the top of the salary schedule, and I thought, "Now what am I going

to do for the rest of my life?" I had been interested in gadgets and electronics all my life, so computers seemed like the natural next step. I wrote some software for the school's DEC mini-computer and then bought one of the first Apple II's to come out. I created personal software to make my job easier. Later, I wrote some educational games for my son, Brian. Sierra On-Line saw those games at a time when Ken Williams wanted a line of educational software, so he bought my company. And then for the next 16 years, I worked with Sierra as an outside contractor, designing and developing 27 titles.

- Unfortunately you have not developed games for a while now, and your presence is terribly missed. What do you do nowadays instead of game developing?

I consider myself retired. I work on my website www.allowe.com and try to post as much humour as I find funny. I also have a free daily joke email called CyberJoke 3000™. I hope your readers will visit my website and subscribe to CyberJoke 3000™. Now I'm finally able to spend time with my family and friends, play a lot of golf, read, and do volunteer work. Plus, I have many hobbies and interests. So I stay quite busy.

-Are you good at golf?

No! Of course not. *laughs* But the more I play, the more I enjoy it.

- Do you play any adventure games nowadays? If so do you have any favourites?

I must admit I haven't played a good adventure game in quite a while. There just aren't many games now that appeal to me. I would guess *Syberia* was probably the last one I played and I look forward to playing *Syberia II*. It's funny: I got into this business because I loved playing adventure games, but the more involved you are with *creating* games, the more you realise their inner workings. They then become much less fascinating.

- Do you keep a close eye on the adventure scene in general? Do you read news about upcoming games?

Yes, I do.

The Past

- I have lots of friends who are not adventure fans but they have however played Larry. Actually the Larry games are one of the few adventure titles most people who are not fans of adventures will recognise. Why do you think the Larry games were so popular? Do you think the erotic theme had to do anything with it?

I think we inadvertently stumbled upon something that clicked with people. When I created Larry, games were childish and the only themes were “save the princess” or “save the galaxy.” There were no games set in modern times. I wanted to write a game that was a little more adult in nature. I wasn’t trying to “push the envelope” or to create an erotic game. I just wanted to create a game that I thought was funny and fun to play. People may have bought my games thinking they were only about sex, but the sex was just a hook to get them interested while the humour held their attention. They forgot about the erotic because they were having such a good time laughing.

- All of your games have been full of hilarious jokes. What is your secret? How does a developer come up with so many jokes? Where they all creations of your imagination or have you experienced/heard some of them in your everyday activities?

I’ve always been a working musician, so I’ve always heard lots of jokes and been at lots of parties and clubs. And there you see a variety of people. So did it come out of my experience? Yes. Did it come out of my imagination? Yes. Everything I read, plus films I’ve seen, and every other experience in my life! Understand: in a game with five to eight *thousand* responses, you use everything you’ve ever heard, or dreamed, or could imagine. That’s a lot of space to fill! Multiple that by the seven games and, yes, there’s a lot of me in every box!

People always ask, “Is Larry you?” I always answered, “No.” Slowly I realised that I **am** in the game, but as the *narrator*, not Larry. Larry was the foil that I played with and made fun of.



- Out of all the games you have developed, which one do you consider the best one?

Leisure Suit Larry 7: Love for Sail! was my favourite for several reasons. I was proud of its design. I felt like by then, I finally understood the limitations of the medium and could exploit it well. Things like the ship’s announcer whom most players probably thought at first was just a random collection of jokes until you later realise that he’s actually giving you clues, and then, even later, becomes part of the puzzles himself. I liked that idea. I also liked how the design started with limited areas of the ship, and then revealed new areas to you as you made progress. I always had a good time naming the women and in *Love for Sail!* they were named after famous movie stars. Also, by then I had become a better audio director. It took time to learn how to direct voiceovers, learning how to get exactly the performance I wanted from the actors. And *Love for Sail!* had great actors. Plus, and certainly not least, I loved the music. We were finally able to use real musicians playing real instruments, instead of MIDI! All those things together made Larry 7 my favourite.

- You designed Freddy Pharkas alongside Josh Mandel. How was the co-operation between the two of you?

Josh is such a pain in the ass! He should never work again! Nah, I’m lying--it was wonderful! Josh is a great guy and one of the funniest people I’ve ever known. His sense of humor is different from mine and the way the two of us melded made Freddy even funnier. I enjoyed the experience very much. He’s certainly gone on to great things afterwards.

- So tell me something. In Freddy Pharkas, whose idea was it to give the player 500 points when you enter the pharmacy? Was it yours or Josh’s?

Laughs I'm sure it was mine, but Josh is probably sure it was his! That's always a good approach: if it's a good idea, claim it, then sort things out later! Honestly, I don't remember. That was a long time ago. So let's just say it's mine! Josh? Rebuttal?

- It was certainly a long time ago, but I replayed it recently and I was rolling on my floor laughing when I entered the pharmacy and the narrator told me 'Congratulations, 500 points. You have just completed half of the game'.

Laughs Points were an odd part of my games. I usually did nothing about them until near the end of development. Then I would play through, looking at all the significant actions in the game, and assign each a number of points, along the lines of, "This is worth 10; this is worth less, so maybe 6; this isn't much, 1 point; this is tough, it gets more;" etc. I imagine that when I finished the first pass, the total was around 500 points. That didn't seem like enough, but I didn't want to go back and add a few here and few there, so I just made the dumbest action in the game worth the other 500. Hey, you've got to work efficiently when you do a game every 12 months!

I also remember one of the early Space Quest games where, if you typed in "win," the "Two Guys from Andromeda" responded, "OK. You get all the points! The End." and then threw you back to DOS. *Laughs*

- Yeah, you don't see that kind of thing anymore.

Frankly, you don't see much humor at *all* anymore. And I just don't understand why. Comedies are a big part of the movie business, television, and all the rest of popular culture. For the life of me I cannot understand why the only game play on a computer today is killing.



- Let's talk a bit about *Leisure Suit Larry 8: Lust in Space*, the game that you had originally planned to be the continuation of the famous Larry series. Did you have time to write the story for that game or was the game cancelled before you managed to do that? If you did manage to write the story, could you please tell us what the plot of *Lust in Space* was about?

Ken and Roberta were bought out a while before then and new management had been put in place. The new head of development was to negotiate my contract for my next game. But he dragged his feet so much that it was obvious things were not going to go well. So rather than just start writing my next game without a contract (which I would have done had I still been working with Ken), I insisted that I get a signed contract before starting. So, while I had a general plan for where Larry 8 would take place (on the giant spaceship that took Larry away in the end of 7) and its overall design (featuring a race of women warriors who centuries ago had eliminated all men as "superfluous," but now missed sex), it was far from being a finished design. In hindsight, it was the right decision, because Sierra soon announced that they would cease producing adventure games.

- Why did Sierra decide to stop production and how far were you in production when that happened?

Why? That you need to ask them. We had just started. I had only one artist to work with, Jason Zayas, who had been lead animator on Larry 7. He was learning 3D Studio Max. (Remember: all the artists at Sierra then were cell animators or background painters and they all had to learn 3D.) His first efforts are posted on my website. As far as I know, what's posted there is all that was ever produced.

- Would it have been a pure adventure like the previous Larry games?

Yes. Unlike the game I did, *Larry's Casino*. Sierra's new management had the idea to "take the Larry characters and slap them on top of *Hoyle's Casino*." I did the best I could to make that idea. I actually convinced them to include the online portion of the game and the four online-only humorous games. But I think *Larry's Casino* was the weakest game of the series because it strayed so far from the original intent. So, yes, absolutely: Larry 8 would have been an adventure game.

- Most of the old jewels you made are not available for purchase today and it is a sad phenomenon to

witness bearing in mind that many new adventurers are eager to play these games and are willing to play small fortunes to acquire them through E-bay. Since Sierra seems to not be interested in releasing these games anymore, do you think it would be a good idea that those games were also released for free downloads?

Absolutely! And I've asked Sierra: "If you're not going to sell my games, at least allow me to let people download them from my site!" Their response? Nothing. Perhaps if they bring out the new game next year, maybe they'll re-release the old games in a collection? Who knows?

Larry's nephew, Vivendi and Ken Williams

- When did you first hear of the new Larry-like game?

About 18 months ago. They showed it to Sierra's employees and some of them asked if I was involved. Evidently, it's been in development for quite some time.

- What do you think about it judging by the initial information that has been released to the public?

All I know what I have seen on the Internet; I haven't seen the game, its development documents, or anything else, only what the general public has seen, which is not much. I would love to play it and see how the conversation system works. Josh Mandel's online description says he liked the random conversation idea because it brought up interesting points when you made mistakes. But the proof will be when the game ships. If

"I've asked Sierra: "If you're not going to sell my games, at least allow me to let people download them from my site!" Their response? Nothing."

it's fun and sells well, then Sierra's decision to drop Larry Laffer from the game while still calling it "a Leisure Suit Larry game" will be seen as brilliant. But it feels like they're trying to get the best of both worlds by saying it's a Leisure Suit Larry game when it's unlike the previous games.

- Many fans after watching the trailer published by Vivendi have expressed opinions stating that the new Larry-like game has a Zelda feeling to it. Do

you agree with that and do you think this is the right direction for the new game?

I couldn't tell much about the game's feel from that trailer. It remains a mystery until they at least release a playable demo or until the game itself ships. Who knows? I'll refrain from passing judgment until I play the game. However, I do like their idea of using 3D. I would have done that six years ago with Larry 8. I know that they've hired some writers with Hollywood sitcom experience. But will it be a good game? Will it satisfy all the Larry fans that are out there? I don't know. That remains to be seen.

- Do you think it is a wise decision to not include Larry Laffer as the main character of the game but to feature his nephew instead?

It's one way around their problem, but it's not the only way. The problem they have is: they have a strong character created by a writer who (as you said) many people recognise. How to use him, without requiring me? Is it wise? We'll have to wait to see if the game's a success.

- You said through your website the following: I have been in contact with Sierra many times over the past week and, while nothing is finalized yet, today Sierra's legal department said I could release the following (grammatically challenged) message:

"Currently, I am in the process of negotiations with Vivendi Universal Games and my involvement with the next installment of the Leisure Suit Larry. Once we have reached an agreement I will be able to comment more on my involvement."

- Was it Vivendi that contacted you and did the fans' reactions have anything to do with it?

Yes, Vivendi contacted me and I believe it was because of the great outpouring of support from my fans! But notice the date of that posting: October 29, 2003. I responded quickly to their e-mail, but since then I've heard not a word. Nothing from anyone, not legal, marketing, development, nothing! It's been nearly two months now.

- Do you think that Vivendi's recent financial troubles have anything to do with the delay?

I would be amazed if it did not.

- If you and Vivendi did finally co-operate do you have any idea what kind of role will you have in the development of the new game? Will you participate in the decision-making process or will you act as a consultant?

I offered my services to Vivendi in any role they wanted, from a full-time position as director, writer or designer, all the way down to serving as a part-time consultant. I don't know what they are thinking because, as I said, I have yet to hear back from them.

- What would you change in the new Larry-like game if it were up to you?

I can't say. I haven't seen it. All I've seen is the trailer. I thought the closing gag in the trailer showed promise: "You just streaked a nun--10 points!" That line made *me* laugh. I sincerely hope it's a great game because I really want to see humour return to gaming and especially the consoles. It's time!

- The developers of the new Larry-like game, have mentioned movies *American Pie* and *Something about Mary* as sources of inspiration. In your opinion do movies like these have anything to do with the Larry spirit, or have the new developers missed the point?

Of course, those movies fit Larry's spirit perfectly. But Larry was always about more than raw sex, more than nudity, more than jokes. There was a balance in the character that I believe is the reason he was so well-liked and long-lasting. (As a character! A character!!) He was no shallow cardboard cut-out, but was well-rounded, with desirable traits that balanced the other, less-desirable aspects of his personality.

- I have a question that is probably a question that many of your fans have out there. Even if Vivendi does not contact you for the new Larry game, isn't it possible that you will work on another adventure for another company? Lately we have seen a resurgence of adventure games, and finally some publishers start to take notice of our genre giving adventure developers much more chances to put their creativity at work. Jane Jensen for example has found a new 'home' with The Adventure Company. Other publishers like Microids, Ubisoft,



Tri-Synergy, Viva and GotGameEntertainment are all publishers who have shown a great interest in adventure games lately. So is there any possibility that you will start something new from scratch? (A yes would probably send most of your fans to heaven for tonight).

I would love to do another game! But right now, publishers seem to be scared of humor, although they've made giant strides in the area of "adult content." I just haven't found a publisher willing to produce my type of game. That's not to say that one isn't out there. As soon as one humor game sell well, they'll all jump on the bandwagon. All it takes is one big hit to make a publisher think, "Hey! We need a game like that!"

- So if a publisher did approach you to develop a new game would you go for it?

Absolutely!

-Recently, Ken Williams said through his website (<http://www.sierragamers.com/bbs.asp?msgId=32726>)

:

My guess is that Al, Roberta and I will do something again sooner or later, possibly together, but that are no current plans. It would be fun. Roberta is the one of us most interested in doing something, and is constantly pushing me.

Do you have contact with Ken nowadays and have you discussed the possibility of joining your forces to get back in the industry?

As lead programmer on *King's Quest 3* and *KQ4*, I worked closely with Roberta and enjoyed it immensely. I'd love to do another game with her and Ken. We've

always had nothing but the best relationship imaginable. It was a sorry day when he got bought out by CUC, which merged with HFS to form Cendant, which sold the games division to Havas, which merged with Vivendi, which merged with Universal Studios. If Ken wants to do a game, I'm there for him!

- So does this mean you have already plans for a game?

No. Nothing yet.

- But is there a general idea going around between you guys?

Yes, but only to the extent of "If I would, would you?" We have no firm plans.

- If you were to start developing a new adventure game tomorrow, what kind of adventure game would that be? What kind of graphics would it have? Would it be a comedy? Would the gameplay be different to what we have seen in your past adventures?

The game play would be different from the point and click adventures of the past simply because gamers have moved on and their expectations have progressed. The parts I would keep would be the character development, the strong storylines, the feeling of

"As lead programmer on King's Quest 3 and KQ4, I worked closely with Roberta and enjoyed it immensely. I'd love to do another game with her and Ken."

involvement, that you are *in* the game. But it would have many new ideas.

If I produced a game exactly like Larry 7, with a similar interface, a similar design, similar puzzles, and similar humor, it would sell, but only in limited numbers.

But what if I created a game that was as funny, as interesting, and as clever, but with more interactivity, more "action," in true 3D, with more AI, that could also be played on consoles in living rooms around the TV, as well as at the computer desk. Imagine how I would deal with people controlling their own camera angles! ☺.

Without giving much away, I believe I have plenty of ways to improve the story-based games. And I'd love to have the chance to do it.

Adventure Games / General

- There is a huge increase of fan-made adventures out there. Many of the fans have decided to continue their favourite adventure series that commercial companies have decided to shut down (i.e. King' Quest, Space Quest, Indiana Jones etc...). What is your opinion on this? Would you be bothered if some fans made a Leisure Suit Larry adventure themselves? Would you feel honored by something like that or would you feel cheated, as if someone stole your property?

At one level, I'd be honoured that people like my characters enough to spend the unbelievable number of hours it takes to create a good game around them. On the other hand, I'd feel sorry for them because they would be missing out on creating their own characters. I'd rather see them create new games using new characters that reflect their personalities, their life experience and their sense of humor, instead of making a game that tries to be something made by someone else. No matter what you do, a copy is not an original.

But there's another, legal side to this: all the rights to all those games and characters are still owned by Sierra. Theoretically, they could sue at any time and shut down the whole effort. But if you create something original,

you can do with it as you please. So, while I'm honoured they like my characters, they'd be better off doing something original.

- A company formed by ex-Sierra fans, which is called AGDInteractive and was formerly known as Tierra (www.tierraentertainment.com), is remaking older Sierra classics with better graphics, music and speech. They have already remade King's Quest 1 and 2 and they are currently remaking Quest for Glory 2. Would you like to see a Larry been remade by them and if so would you rather they remade Larry 2 or 3? Would you accept to help them or counsel them if they were to make one?

I would be happy to see them remake the Larry games, if they had permission from Sierra. As I said, Sierra owns the rights to those games and I would be scared

to get involved unless there was some legal agreement with Sierra. Which game would I like to see remade? 3, I suppose. I believe it was the better of those two.

- We have interviewed Jane Jensen and Lori Cole in previous issues and we asked them to compare the old Sierra to the old Lucasarts, so now you have to do it as well ☺.

I really can't. I never had any involvement with Lucasarts other than as a fan. So I can't speak in regards of how the two companies compared. But as a fan, I can say this: I loved their humorous games and can't say enough good things about them. While I thought Sierra had superior technology (our games would allow you to walk anywhere and do almost anything while their games limited you to pre-programmed paths), Lucasarts was my favourite of all the rest!

- Adventures are just not as funny as they used to be. In the old days, humour was evident throughout most adventure games coming out, even those that were not comedies per se. Nowadays however, games tend to be much more serious and you just don't laugh so much with them as one would do with the older games. What do you think is the reason for that? Do you think there is a need for more humorous adventures out there.

Why? I have no idea. I presume it's because the person designing the game doesn't have a sense of humor and therefore doesn't include humor or that his publisher wants the game to be serious.

Is there a need now? Definitely. I think humor makes games not only more interesting, but more fun. If a game has good puzzles, good characters, a good story *and* it's funny, it's that much stronger. Humor is just one more weapon in the designer's bag of tricks to keep gamers interested.

Would I do a funny game if I were writing today? Absolutely. How could I not? It's my personality. I couldn't do a good first person shooter if my life depended on it! It would come out funny, because that's me.

But let me expand this topic for a moment. One of the reasons that Sierra was so successful in the late 80s and early 90s was because Ken Williams tried to hire people with strong personalities and then let them do what they wanted to do. One of the hardest parts of management is "staying out of the way." And it's hard to do. When he allowed those personalities to come



out, you got games like Space Quest -- done by two young guys who were more fun to be around than you can imagine. He didn't say, "Oh, no! Make a serious space game, because we already have a 'humor line.'" Rather, Ken let them make the best game they could. Roberta's skill lies in weaving fantasy and fairy tales and aspects of our culture into a rich new tapestry wholly her own. And that's what she did, not what some "marketing focus group" said she should. That was the genius of the old Sierra.

- In an earlier interview with Bob Freese from Just Adventure you said:

I'm optimistic about the future of storytelling games, games with plot, with interesting characters, with character development. I doubt that those will take the exact shape that adventure games have traditionally had.

(http://www.justadventure.com/Interviews/Al_Lowe/AlLoweIntv6_02.shtml) This indicates that your opinion is that adventures should change somehow. In what ways do you think adventures should change?

I think that as soon as a publisher hires me to do a new game I will be glad to answer all those questions for them! *laughs* I have many ideas about how games work.

But I stand by the above statement. Not to get too erudite here, but the whole history of the history of mankind has revolved around story telling. Look at any art form and you'll see that those with interesting stories are more successful. Storytelling that consists of "you're on an abandoned spaceship, now go kill anything that moves," can't last forever. Someone will create a game with great characters that you care about; a game that gives you a vast universe to explore; that lets you do a wide variety of activities; but especially one that makes you into the lead character and makes

you suspend your disbelief long enough to think, "That's me. I'm that guy. This is happening to me." First person shooters are good at getting you into the game, but weak at character development and story and plot development.

- Full 2D is almost non-existent nowadays but we see a lot of companies still using 2D backgrounds for their adventures (with 3D characters) and they have had some very successful results like Runaway and Syberia for example. What would you answer to the question 2D vs 3D?

Simple: I can't imagine ever doing another game in 2D.

- Most of your titles (if not all) have been 3rd person games. Do you think that 3rd person games have an advantage over 1st person ones?

Actually, the Larry games were "mixed-" person. You were third person while moving around, but when you interacted with someone, it went to first person. So I say why be limited when you can do both. With today's graphics, I'd allow the player to make the choice, as in a flight sim or racing game. Position the camera yourself. Why not do the same thing in adventures? More interaction, man!

- If Larry was to become a movie which actor would you choose to play Larry's role? Feel free to mention some female actresses that you would use for the female roles ;)

Laughs What I know about Hollywood casting is that you never get your first choice anyway, so see who's available and pick the best. Of course, I'm sure I'd have my choice of women for the female roles! *grin*

You know, picking a voice for Leisure Suit Larry was one the hardest decisions I've ever made. So much relied on the voice and the actor. I went through dozens of auditions for him, after the casting director had gone through hundreds more. But I'm proud of my decision to go with Jan Rabson (the actor who played Larry). He's a comic genius who is also great to work with!

As to who would play Larry in a movie? That's tough. There was some talk of Jim Carey playing Larry back in the early 90's. I know that Touchstone had a script prepared especially for him, but he passed on it, choosing to do *The Cable Guy* instead. But that script wasn't very Larry-like anyway; it was more like *Dumb and Dumber Meets Hugh Hefner*.

- So there have been already plans to make a Larry movie?

Several movie studios optioned the rights from Sierra to produce a Larry movie as far back as 1990, but none ever got through to production. Of course, Rob Schneider has already played Larry, in his Deuce Bigalow movies. Everyone who saw it told me, "Al, you've got to see that movie. They did Larry!" And I must agree; Deuce was Larry through and through!

- Apart from your own games which Sierra title was your favourite?

Space Quest. Of course, I enjoyed the *King's Quest* games and Jane Jensen's games, too. *Quest for Glory* and *Police Quest* were great games, but just not my "cup of tea."

- What about non-Sierra titles. Any other adventures that you enjoyed playing during the 80s/90s?

I'll put in a plug here for one of the best games ever, that is unknown today: *Loom*. It's an incredible game and it came out about ten years too early. If you can find a copy of *Loom*, buy it and thank me later!

- What is the funniest thing that ever happened during your game development career?

There were many wonderful stories about working at Sierra back then, many of which you can read about in the book, *Hackers*. "Bikini Friday" was good. That was a short-lived tradition in which any female employee who wore a bikini to work on Friday mornings got to leave at lunch and spend the afternoon water-skiing with management! And the birthday celebrations with live strippers dancing on the programmers' desks. Ah, the good old days before sexual harassment lawsuits!

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Yes, I want to thank all of you for your support over the years and encourage you to drop by www.allowe.com, spend some time laughing, sign up for CyberJoke 3000™ and send me an email. And I hope that at some time in the future, I'll be able to design another game for you to play!

- Thank you very much for the interview Al.

You're welcome. It was my pleasure!

Interview with Philippe Gaudé

The story of Jack the Ripper has been told through various sources (books, films, games). Now Galilea is going to bring the legendary murderer back to our computer monitors in their upcoming 1st person adventure game, bearing his fearsome name. The game is to be published by the Adventure Company. Galilea's previous titles, the Cameron Files, were more focused on puzzle solving than story telling, but it appears that Galilea has recently changed its attitude towards game design, if we judge by what we are being told in this interview. So let's turn to Philippe Gaudé, the producer of Jack the Ripper, who came by our Lounge to give us some insight on their upcoming thriller set in New York.

Yourselves:

- Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

My name is Philippe Gaudé and I'm the Producer of "Jack the Ripper." I've got a background in mechanical engineering, I co-founded the company back in 1996 and I've had various roles in all Galiléa productions since then.

- Do you play adventures in your free time? If so which are your favourite adventures?

I do! In the "square" adventure genre, my all time favourite is "Syberia." I did also enjoy "Dracula Resurrection" at the time, and of course back in the Stone Age, I did spend some nights on "Myst." If we accept a broader definition, I would say "The Nomad Soul" is a real jewel despite the 'so-much-freedom-that-you-don't-know-what-to-do-now' thing. And in a much broader way, the most chilling and engaging story I've been involved into was a Bungie game on Macintosh called "Marathon".

Jack the Ripper

- Tell us a little bit about the story of the game.

While writing a series of articles about horrible murders in the Low Side District of New York, a young reporter, James Palmer, will soon become involved in a game of cat and mouse with an illusive and deadly character - Jack the Ripper. Beginning with the search of witnesses to the crimes, Palmer's snooping will soon

lead him to investigate suspects. Along Palmer's dark journey in the murder district, he will foster a friendship with a young singer, Abigail, the "Irish Nightingale," and meet numerous colourful characters. His daily editorials trigger the interest of the serial killer, who begins to correspond with him...

- Could you describe to us the main character of the game, James Palmer?

Palmer is a young reporter at a small and decaying New York newspaper. His career might well take a new direction with his assignment of daily chronicles about the horrible murders happening in Low Side District.



- Why New York and not the streets of London?

The Whitechapel murders have been studied so carefully that there are extreme constraints on the historical material. The goal here was to make a good "What if?" story, so the shift allowed us a great creative



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freedom while staying true to the legend of Jack the Ripper.

- A recent successful movie featuring Jack the Ripper, called From Hell and starring Johnny Depp, assumed that Jack the Ripper was connected with the Freemasons. Will your game contain any references to esotericism or the paranormal?

This is not the main focus of the game.

- A lot of 1st person adventures feature only a few characters and focus more on puzzle solving than story telling. Will Jack the Ripper follow the same strategy, or will the game focus on story-telling and character interaction instead?

Jack The Ripper is heavily centered on storytelling and character interaction. Thanks to our Virtools based engine, we've been able to integrate real-time 3D characters into the 360° spots, thus designing the kind of game we wanted. My goal is to have our games going toward deep and strong emotional involvement of the player. And that is mainly brought on by characters.

- How many characters / locations is the game going to feature?

22 and 12 are the magic numbers!

- Let's move on to the graphics of the game. You have already released a trailer of the game but this shows mostly cutscenes and there is no in-game footage in it. How will the graphics of the game be during gameplay? Will the player roam freely in a full 3D environment or will the player move between spots separated from each other like in your previous game Cameron Files?



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It's the same 360° spots system, but with real-time characters integrated. This is the best system to have highly detailed graphics - even on low-end computers - and interactive characters. Eventually we'll make games with full real-time environments, but it's too early in terms of installed computer base, in terms of adventure game design and in terms of interface and control scheme design.

- What is the highest resolution of graphics that the game will have?

The game will have three resolutions: 640x480, 800x600 and 1024x768

- Cut scenes usually give a cinematic feeling to adventures. How much time of cutscenes should we expect to see in Jack the Ripper.

There are very few traditional cut-scenes in Jack The Ripper, as we decided from the beginning to leave the player in control as much as possible. But there are moments in the game where you'll WANT to stop and watch, which is much more engaging than be forced to!

- The appalling way that the Ripper used to slaughter his victims has become a hallmark of his stories. Will the game feature strong scenes to follow the tradition of the ripper stories or will you try to tone down the gore in order to make the game available to a wider audience?

Jack The Ripper is based upon suspense. We tried to avoid gore as much as possible. Anyway, past the basic repulsion, gore is not as engaging as suspense is!

- What kind of music will the game feature and how much time will the score last?



We've got original music for this game as usual, with several different themes related to the characters and the places. I have absolutely no idea how long it would be if I was to extract it from the game...

- Have you already hired all the actors that are going to perform the voice-overs for the game? If so, then how many actors did you hire and could you mention some of their previous work?

Singer Djazia Satour was already performing on "Pharaoh's Curse" soundtrack, and some of the voices have also been featured in our previous production.

"Most of the "puzzles" are interwoven with the story, and anyway, they're more problems to solve than strictly "puzzles". With very few exceptions, you should be able to rely upon common sense to solve them."

- The trailer of the game featured also an enchanting song performed by what appears to be one of the characters of the game. That is not so usual in adventure games. Will the game feature more songs or is this the only one?

There are other songs in the game – not enough to make an album, though! But since the beginning in 1996, all of our games have a strong emphasis on sound design and music. One of our kids game, back in 1999, featured 10 original songs.

- Tell us a little bit about the character that was singing in the trailer. Will she play an important role in the game's plot?

She will, indeed. But shhh... let the players discover by themselves.

- Let's talk about Jack the Ripper's gameplay now. Is Jack the Ripper going to be relatively easy or difficult to solve?

Jack The Ripper will be fairly easy to play. The goal is to live the adventure, not to read the walkthrough.

- Are you going to use inventory-based puzzles, investigative puzzles or mechanical puzzles for the most part of the game?

Most of the "puzzles" are interwoven with the story, and anyway, they're more problems to solve than strictly "puzzles". With very few exceptions, you should be able to rely upon common sense to solve them.

- How will the dialogue system work?

It's a very classic system, with conversations themes triggering exchanges between the player and the characters. We tried to focus on usability and content of the dialogue rather than on a fancy system.

- Will the player get to hear the main character's voice during the dialogues?

He will.

- Will the game contain any timed sequences like the Cameron games did?

There will be at least two, but no underwater timed maze for sure!

- Most stories around Jack the Ripper have been investigative in nature so far. Is your game going to follow in the same tradition? If so, what kind of investigative tools are the players going to use in order to solve the adventure?

The basis of the player mission is investigation, but as a reporter, not as a policeman. That means more freedom to roam around and talk with people, and different objectives.

- Approximately, how many hours do you think it will take an average adventurer to finish Jack the Ripper?

The tricky question! I hate that one... Based on play tests we've done with our casual gamers target, I'd say that the game will take 20 hours to complete. Probably less for a die-hard adventure gamer, probably more for the very casual gamers.

- When will the players be able to download a playable demo?

We've made a 15 minute long demo, but it would be very difficult to give a proper sense of the game without uncovering too much of the plot. It has never been released, and there will probably be no demo for it.

- What is the planned release date for Jack the Ripper right now?

Something like the end of January/beginning of February.

Galilea

- When and where was Galiléa founded?

Galiléa has been founded in 1996 in Grenoble, France. The sister-company in Montréal, Québec, is in operation for almost a year now.

- Why did you decide to produce adventure games instead of another genre?

Half by chance, half because of our interest in stories



and characters.

- So far you have shown a preference to 1st person adventures. Do you prefer this perspective to the 3rd person one and if so why? Do you plan to release any 3rd person adventures in the future?

As a player and as a producer as well, my focus is on 1st person adventures. Because in a 1st person game, you live the adventure instead of watching it. That is very unique to games. How many movies feature a 1st person perspective? So basically that's the reason. I want to produce games where we offer the player a great and emotionally involving experience. 'Jack The Ripper's' Game Designer had the same interest in this perspective.

Now, that doesn't mean that we'll never do 3rd person adventures, but unless we find a terrific character to work with, and a design team involved in 3rd person design, it is very unlikely.

- What do you think of your co-operation with the Adventure Company so far?

It's a pleasure to work with The Adventure Company. All the people here are really kind, efficient and involved into bringing up quality games to the players. I mean, they're just great!

- You have previously developed the Cameron Files. Were these games well received by adventurers?

Actually these games were quite well received amongst casual gamers and beginners though most die-hard adventurers felt they were too simple and pointed out their obvious flaws. So it was a mixed bag but we had positive returns from our core casual target.





- How many copies did those two games sell each? Were you happy with those numbers?

I can't tell you the actual numbers, but so far they've made a few tens of thousands each. Although these have been to date the biggest numbers for a game we've made, we need to reach a broader audience if we want to maintain and enhance the quality level of our productions.

“I think the adventure genre should go outside its traditional boundaries, get rid of the traditional puzzle spirit. I mean, there will always be an audience for puzzle games, but I think the keys to broadening the audience are emotion, characters, and stories. And very important: ease of use.”

- What did the players like most about Cameron Files and what were they not so happy with? Do you plan to work on the issues they did not enjoy in order to avoid them in Jack the Ripper?

Most issues had to do with the fact that the puzzles and the story were separated – which is hardly avoidable when your characters are only in non-interactive cut-scenes. The others had to do with the golden KIS rule: Keep It Simple! Most people didn't get even a third of the story in Cameron Files, it was way too complicated to convey through the game. We took a very different approach to Jack the Ripper: deepening the story instead of complicating it.

- How many copies would you like Jack the Ripper to sell in order for you to be satisfied with it?

The more people who play the game, the happier we are because that means an awful lot of people entertained. And, that's what we're here for, right? I hope that Jack the Ripper will surpass the 100,000 bar.

- What happens after Jack the Ripper? Are you planning to release more adventures after that? Have you already planned a new adventure game maybe?

You bet we will! We've got several recipes cooking; nothing signed yet, but stay tuned!

- What do you think is the future for the adventure genre? Do you see it going stronger in the near future? What do you think has to happen for adventure games in order for them to become more popular?

I know a lot of people around me that do not play video games because they're not interested in what they have to offer right now. I think the adventure genre should go outside its traditional boundaries, get rid of the traditional puzzle spirit. I mean, there will always be

an audience for puzzle games, but I think the keys to broadening the audience are emotion, characters, and stories. And very important: ease of use. People who will play adventure games in the future are not coming from the traditional gamer crowd; they will come from the general public.

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Yes, a simple but great “thank you” to everybody that made this game happen, and I cross my fingers in hope that the “curse” looming around “Jack The Ripper” stays away now...

Thank you for stopping by our Lounge to tell us about Jack the Ripper. We are eager to play your upcoming adventure and we hope that we will get the chance to talk with you again in the future.



After William's funeral

progresses. The characters that you get to meet in the game are all well developed, and they have distinct personalities. It was interesting that while playing the game I was constantly wondering what A character is up to, or what B character might know about this.

Samuel Gordon, the male lead, is a troubled man and it shows through his comments. He does not make a single joke in the whole game. The things he says are what you would expect hearing from someone raised in a strict manner from an upper class British family. He shows respect to other people from the same class but arrogance to those who do not have the same status. Nevertheless, he is prepared to go the extra mile and take actions not of his posture in order to find out what happened to his grandfather. In general, he is a well-developed character and it is a pity that the acting did not help to bring out his personality as it could have been.

The atmosphere created by the gloomy castle, the characters own worries and troubles, the general dark environments throughout the game and the depressing weather create a unique gaming world that you will be eager to visit again and again during cold winter nights. But as I have said earlier the ending will leave you with a sour taste in the mouth, mostly because of the cliché feeling to it but also because it does not give any explanation whatsoever to the background enigmas and stories developed during the game. Furthermore there are some characters that you never get to meet in the game but have a strong influence on the overall plot and while the rest of the game makes sure to build up their sagas, the end does not involve them at all, even though you would expect that they should be involved somehow. Nevertheless, the story of the game is its biggest strength and this is what is going to pull you back to this game every day until you finish it.

Graphics: The game uses 3D characters on 2D backgrounds seen from a 3rd person perspective, a technique similar to the one used in *Syberia*, *The*



A store in Willow Creek

Longest Journey and *Thorgal's Quest*. The backgrounds are the least to say, amazing. They play a decisive role in the unique atmosphere we talked about earlier. The architecture in the *Black Mirror* castle and the rest of the buildings in the game is fantastic and it makes you think that the walls would have lots of dark tales to tell if only they had mouths. The backgrounds are not that static for the most part. Little touches here and there like leaves falling from the trees or insects flying around lights during the night are nice to see. It would be even better if they were slightly less repetitive.

Other small touches include weather effects and day/night environments. The constant rain and cloudy weather set the mood for a good thriller taking place in the United Kingdom, and the thunderstorms later in the game look amazing. As I said before, the atmosphere is where *Unknown Identity* won big with this product. There are many 'disturbing' pictures throughout the whole game, especially during the second half of the story. Cemeteries, catacombs, sanatoriums, dead bodies and bizarre paintings are combined in a – surprisingly – not cheesy way to give you enough to think about the game when you go to bed. Even the map that you use to move around the several game areas is very stylish and matches the rest of the atmosphere. The main problem of the graphics is the very small amount of cutscenes. Even those few



Black Mirror has a lot of underground environments



Unlocking doors is something you will do a lot

cutscenes that exist in the game they last only for a few seconds and suffer from bad picture quality, as they seem quite blurry compared to the rest of the game. The characters are well drawn and detailed but their animation is a bit stiff compared to other recent games. For example when the character walks down the stairs it looks more like he walks diagonally than really bending his knees as someone does when walking down the stairs. But this is a very minor problem.

Sound: Undoubtedly the biggest flaw of the game is the voice acting. Particularly the main character was totally 'slain' by actor Tony Daniels. Especially in such an adventure where dialogue is vital for the overall experience, since Black Mirror is chock full of conversations, it is of utmost importance that the actors do their performance as more professionally as possible. And the Black Mirror actors just fail to keep on par with the rest of the game's aspects that create a haunting atmosphere. I would hesitate to call it acting actually, since stale reading would be a much more appropriate description. If you speak a second language and you can purchase a localised version of the game, I would urge you to do so. I do not know if it will be better than the English one, but it certainly cannot be worse.

The music of Black Mirror however is far better than the speech. The tracks of the game are appropriate for the game and match the eerie feeling emanating from the Black Mirror manor. A lot of detail has been put in sound effects as well. A nice feature involving sound effects was that every time you would click on an item in your inventory you would hear the corresponding sound that this item would do.

Gameplay: The interface of Black Mirror is probably the most innovative interface we have seen from an adventure this year. Easy to use and you will get accustomed to it in a matter of minutes. The most original feature of the interface is the elimination of

hotspots as you click your way through the game. That is, when you click on a hotspot once, you will get a description of the hotspot by Samuel and then if you cannot do anything further with the certain object it will not be a hotspot anymore. In the beginning I was worried that I might miss out on a description of an item and then I would not be able to receive feedback on it anymore, but after playing the game, Unknown Identity's new innovation seems a very logical thing to do. If the item is not a hotspot anymore it means quite simply that it does not play an important role in the gameplay any longer, therefore it is unnecessary to receive feedback on it. It might sound a bit awkward if you have not used such an interface before but it makes perfect sense after you play Black Mirror. And not only does it make sense, but it eliminates pixel hunting to a minimum. That's right, Black Mirror is a point and click adventure that does not require you to dissect each screen into every last pixel there is and Unknown Identity deserves kudos for that.

Left clicking on a hotspot makes Samuel either comment on it, pick it up or start a conversation if the hotspot is another person. Some items require closer examination for action to take place and you can do that by right clicking on them. Actually if an item remains as a hotspot once Samuel has commented on it a couple of times, it probably means you have to right click on it or use another item on it. And while this might make it sound as Black Mirror is an easy game, believe me when I say that it is definitely not easy at all. Right clicking on a person will give a description of him/her. Right clicking on an item will either give a description of the specific item or it will order Samuel to do something with it (i.e. read a document or open a box). By double clicking on an exit you are instantly transferred to the next area, something that makes travelling through different locations much faster.

The gameplay of Black Mirror involves lots of different activities like fulfilling tasks, inventory-based interaction



Warning: Tucked on & done to death slider puzzle approaching

with the environment, character interaction and solving puzzles. My opinion on the gameplay of Black Mirror was like waves in the sea. In the first couple of chapters I thought that the gameplay was absolutely wonderful, being challenging and lengthy but at the same time offering logical and original puzzles, as well as letting the story flow at a good pace. I found some of the puzzles presented at that point of time very fun to solve and totally in line with the story. ***Spoilers*** Some examples of the puzzles presented until that point involved reconstructing a torn photograph and solving some smart and entertaining riddles. ***End of spoilers***

However, all that changes radically from the moment our character reaches Wales. At that point the developers present the player with a combination of puzzles that a) have been done to death in adventure games and b) are there only to prolong the gameplay time without any significant role in the overall story. I usually post spoilers before mentioning puzzles of games I am reviewing but hey, a slider puzzle and a put newspaper under door – push key – pull newspaper puzzle are not spoilers for me anymore. Apparently there is some law written among developers that all adventures should be cursed with the two aforementioned puzzles (being sarcastic of course). And the slider puzzle was not just any dull slider puzzle. It was an extra-pain-in-the-ass puzzle since it required the player to know the position of the zodiac signs. So if you do not happen to know the position of the zodiac signs on some kind of zodiac table (I did not) you have to either a) go to a walkthrough or b) find a website or some other out-of-game source of information to help you solve the slider. Either a or b require you to exit the game, something that is the ultimate terminator of the immersion factor. I cannot understand why the developers expect gamers to have some kind of specialized knowledge in order to complete their game. Gaming is not supposed to be a school test, it is supposed to be something entertaining. They could

include puzzles requiring specialized knowledge by all means, but in that case they should make sure that it is possible for the player to find the information necessary for the completion of the puzzle from an in-game source, be it a book, another character or whatever else they consider appropriate. *Sigh* Sometimes I wish developers could see the bigger picture here.

The game continued in the same wavy fashion. For the most part puzzles came along that were original and fun to solve, that made me forget temporarily the uninspiring aforementioned puzzles. Later on, however, a couple of more puzzles requiring specialized knowledge came along without giving any in-game feedback to the player, that kind of ruined the good impression one got from the rest of the puzzles. Other negative aspects of the gameplay were some tedious moments where you needed a service from one of the other characters in the game and then you had to let time pass for them to perform this service. So even if you had nothing else to do in the game you would go back and they would tell you to come later resulting in you wandering around doing nothing and returning 2 and 3 times in the same location only to hear the character telling you to come later. I was even confused in the beginning and thought that I had to complete some other action in the game first before the characters would perform the service. Last negative aspect, but definitely not least, is that Samuel can die in some occasions during the game. You usually only get a few seconds to react and if you do not make it the game does not return you to the spot before you died but requires from you to load your latest saved spot. So if you had played the game for quite a while without saving then prepare to shout and scream a lot!

A very positive side of the gameplay however, is that there is so much of it. Compared to the rest of the games coming out nowadays the Black Mirror developers can be proud of themselves that they provide customers with the most content they can get



You will have to solve some ingenious riddles in the game



During night time in Wales



Down at the castle's cellar

for the game's price. It took me definitely more than 20 hours to complete and since it is very light on cutscenes most of this time is spent on actual gameplay. If we take aside 4 or 5 poorly designed puzzles, Black Mirror has something to offer for most tastes out there. From a large amount of typical use item A on hotspot B inventory puzzles, to mechanical contraptions that you have to fix and logical puzzles to solve. The tasks Samuel will have to accomplish will remind you of several past adventures such as Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Longest Journey, the Gabriel Knight series and Sanitarium. Whether it happened to follow a similar design to those games by pure luck or by the influence these games had on the developers is of course unknown.

General information: The version of the game we played is released in what seems to be one of the best packages we have seen this year. The package is the typical card box version that The Adventure Company encloses their games in recently. In the background of the cover you see the front side of the Black Mirror castle in a very dark environment (making everything seem almost black), while the cover of the box looks

and feels like a broken mirror. The game is protected by a special anti-piracy program that is called Starforce and you will need a code that you can find on a piece of paper in the box. So make sure that you do not throw anything away from the box because you might be throwing your only chance to play this game. The specific program has caused reactions from fans in the online adventure communities. How efficient it is towards piracy is still questionable. The same program was used for Runaway: A Road Adventure.

In a few words... In spite of the thorough criticism I have practiced during the review, The Black Mirror is still an adventure that no fan of the genre should miss. It has its share of flaws that refrain me from giving anything close to the grade 90+ that I thought I would give it after I had completed the first two chapters. But those flaws aside The Black Mirror is probably the best choice you have out there in the market right now, and I could not think of a better present for the holidays. If I have been rather critical in the review is because I had not granted any adventure this year a score even close to 90 and I was really hoping for Black Mirror to be a 90+ title. When I began playing it I thought it could actually make it and that it would be the flag bearer of the adventure genre for the year 2003.

It saddens me that it didn't manage that, but on the other hand if you consider that this is the first showing of Unknown Identity it is encouraging to think that they can only become better, especially if they learn by the mistakes of the first game. And those mistakes were: clichéd and rushed ending, poor puzzle design at some occasions and horrendous voice-acting (although the last part might not be their mistake per se). I am looking forward to their future releases.

- Dimitris Manos

The Black Mirror

Game Info:

Developer: Unknown Identity

Category: Point and Click

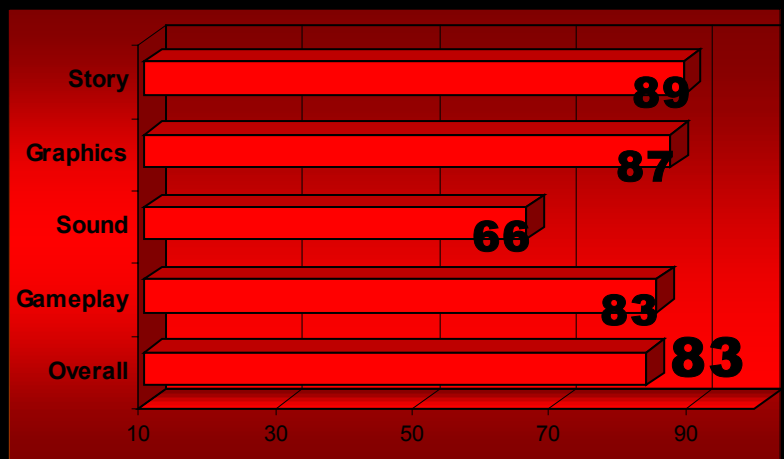
Perspective: 3rd Person

Difficulty: Medium / Hard

Site:

<http://www.futuregames.cz/poselsmrti/hlavni-Eng.html>

System Req.: Win 98/2000/ME/XP,
Pentium II 400, 64MB RAM, 2 GB HD,
12X CD-ROM, 4MB DirectX Video Card,
DirectX Sound Card





LAW & ORDER™

PREPARE TO GO BACK II TO THE COURTROOM

Law and Order 1 came out about a year ago and it was the first of a new breed of adventures that are based on famous TV series. Something that proved to be a successful marketing move as the first part sold allegedly well. Unfortunately the mistake of the developers to include a time limit did not let most gamers to enjoy it as much as they could have, therefore the developers published a patch on the Internet to take the time limit out. The developers seem to have learned by their mistake and decided to not include any time limit in Law and Order 2. So let's see how much different is the sequel to the original.

Story: William Ramos, a renowned scientist is found shot in his car, which was parked outside a hotel in midtown Manhattan. Initially you take the role of a criminal investigator and try to find as much more evidence as possible to find the murderer. As in the first game, you work alongside Lennie Briscoe and you have to interrogate witnesses and suspects to find the truth behind the crime. Later on when you manage to issue an arrest warrant, you take the role of a district attorney and the game shifts to the courtroom. You work alongside Serena Southerlyn and you try to convince the jury that the defendant is indeed guilty, by asking the right questions and presenting incriminating evidence.

As Christina Oliver Taylor, the producer of Law and Order 2, told us in an interview (The Inventory 8) they used a different writer for the story this time. The author of the story for Law and Order 1 was Suzanne Oshry, while the new storywriter is Douglas Stark. Both however have written for the TV show, and their professionalism was evident in both games. This time around, science is a central concept in the story. An interesting aspect of Law and Order is how it makes

you shift suspicion from one character to the next by letting you find small parts of evidence at a time. A nice feature indeed that keeps the interest high during the whole investigation session.

Law and Order 1 was not only innovative in that it was based on a TV series, but it also allowed players for the first time to take control of a lawyer in court. A quite original idea that strayed away from the overused themes we see in adventures often (i.e. Templars). In Law and Order 2 you get to go back to the courtroom and practice your persuading skills as an attorney.

Of course whether you will like this feature or not, depends in the long run on how much you like court-stories but I thought it was great fun to take part in a court, badger witnesses and see so much dialogue being used to build up the story. Dialogues are indeed lengthy and plentiful, as you would expect from a Law and Order game. There is a large number of characters for



The introduction of the game



Lennie Briscoe is sarcastic as always.

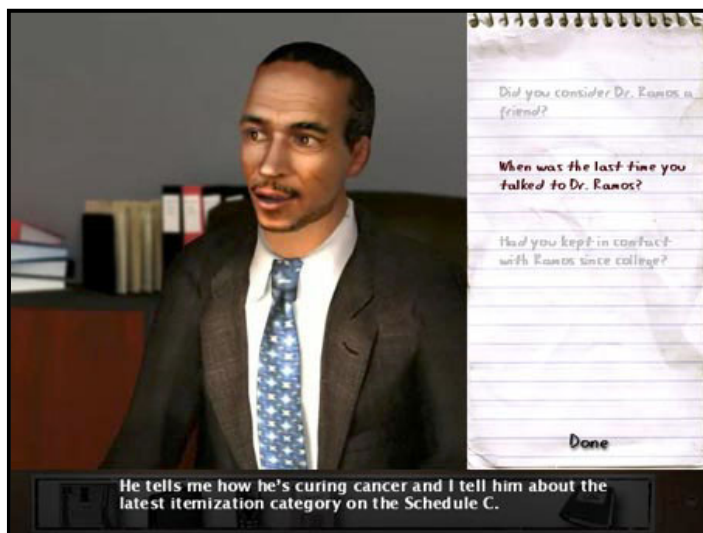
you to meet and interview. Some of the characters are taken from the TV series (like Lennie Briscoe, Serena Southerlyn and Anita Van Buren).

Graphics: Law and Order 2 is played from the first person perspective at all times. You never get to see the character you are controlling, not even during cutscenes. The game assumes that it is you who is in the game. Legacy Interactive promised improved graphics for Law and Order 2. The truth is that the difference with no 1's graphics is minimal to non-existent. The only difference I noticed was a slight increase of lighting effects, but nothing that will make you think that the game was revamped or anything.

The 3D models are very satisfactory and there is a lot of body-acting. The characters will frown at a direct question, they will use body language when they are speaking, they will shift their look from you to your assistant and so on and so forth. They will in general show a lot of emotions. The faces are very well designed but the body parts could be a bit more detailed, since sometimes they look like masses of polygons instead.

There are a lot of small details in the several rooms you will explore to find clues and the court room also convinces with its resemblance to the real thing. However, the engine used for movement is outdated and the Law and Order developers should consider moving to another engine for the next instalment of the game. It would be much more entertaining if you could move freely in the environments and play around with the objects than teleport from the middle part of one room to the next middle part.

Another negative point in the graphics department is the very non-aesthetic notepad that is used for the dialogues of the game. It covers almost half of the

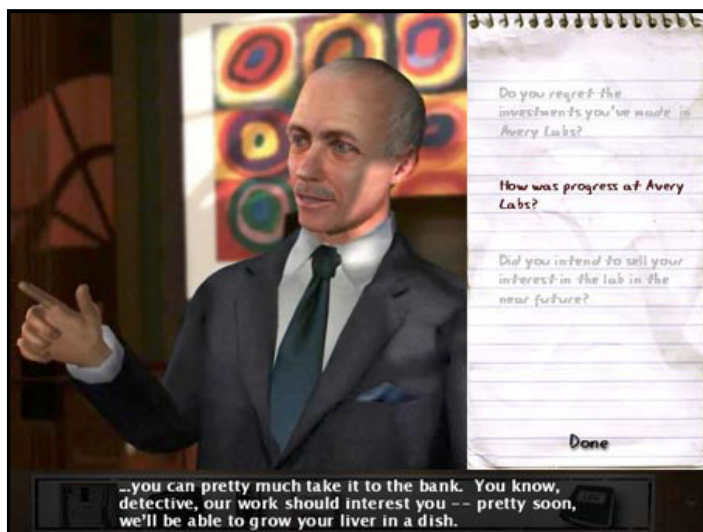


The dialogue system remains the same as in L&O 1

screen making the video area very small. It would look much more stylish if the notepad was significantly smaller and allowed for a much larger viewing area.

Sound: If you want to see an example of how much professional voice acting means to a game then play Law and Order 2. This, dear readers, is true acting. It is not 'reading the lines they gave me' as unfortunately happens in most adventures nowadays due to small budgets. The voices of the original actors that play in the TV series, are used in the game and the outcome is indeed impressive. It makes you feel like you have really jumped in your TV and you talk with the actual stars of the show. Especially Elisabeth Röhm gives an outstanding performance as assistant district attorney Serena Southerlyn.

There are more music tracks used this time than what we listened to in no 1, but do not expect to be in awe with the music of the game. It is there more as something supplementary than making a really big difference to the game. Sound effects are nothing exciting either.



The characters use a lot of body language

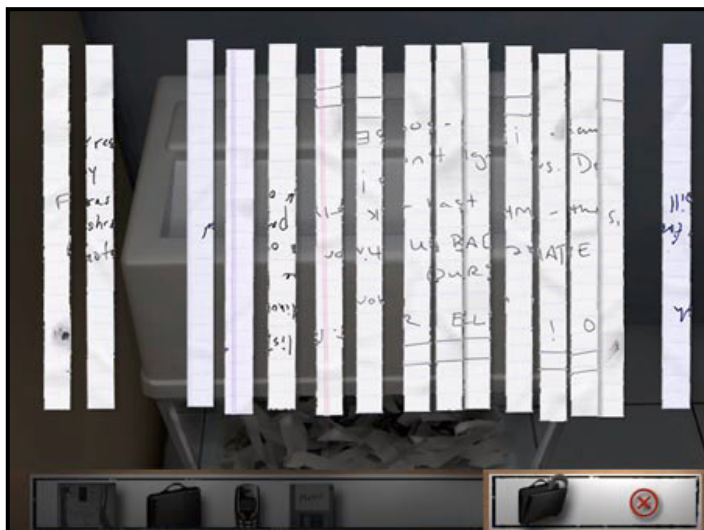
Gameplay: No time limit!!! The difference that this makes is vast. First of all, now it is possible to finish the game without running to a walkthrough. And you can finish the game without increasing your chances for a heart attack due to stress. The gameplay in general terms is similar to the first game. Before you start the game you have to choose two out of four skills that will give you special abilities according to your choices. The interview skill will show you which questions to ask in order to come up with the answers you need. If you choose the Teamwork skill then your supervisor will give you help when you are stuck. Case Organisation skill gives you hints in issuing search and arrest warrants. And finally the Evidence Collection skill changes your cursor to a magnifying glass when you pass it over hotspots. It is kind of obvious that the last skill is a must-have one and I am actually surprised that they use it as a skill and not as something that would happen anyway.

After you have chosen your skills you start to examine the crime scene in search of evidence. When you find the evidence you send it to the crime lab and to the research department to get some feedback that might lead you to new suspects. Interrogating witnesses is also very important and if you ask the right questions chances are you will get new information that can lead you to new locations or suspects. The interface of Law and Order, which was a negative side of the first game, has not been improved unfortunately. The case file is still humongous and everything is just added there without being split into separate categories. After some time into the game the case file gets full and you are not sure which evidence you have to throw away and which one to keep. Things get even worse by the fact that if you throw away an item and then later it turns out you need that item to issue a search or arrest warrant, then you are stuck in a dead end and you have to load the



Elisabeth Röhm gives a marvelous performance in L&O2
game from the last spot you possessed the specific item.

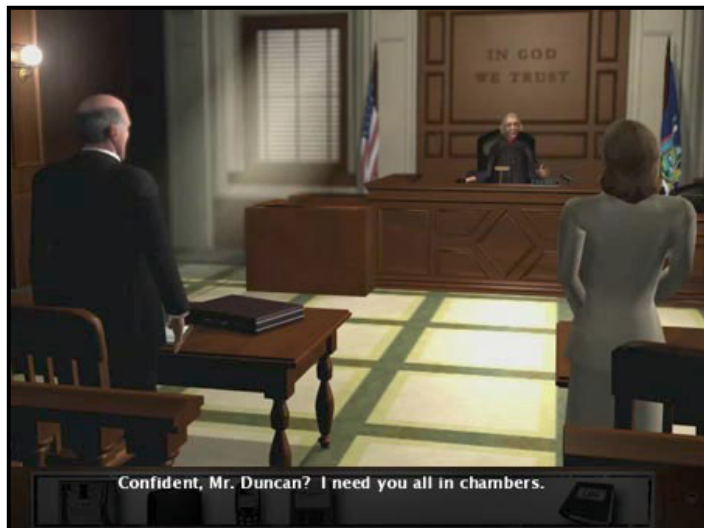
It would be much more user friendly if the case file was split into categories as: objects, interviews, lab tests etc and if there was a way to retrieve back the items you disposed of. Then you could interact with your findings much more efficiently and without the fear of losing something vital. However, it felt as Law and Order 2 had less dead ends than its predecessor. There are not so many 'wrong' questions to ask as there were in no 1. If you ask an irrelevant question you will probably get either a yes or a no and then the game will give you another chance to ask the right question. And on top of that now you have the chance to re-conduct interviews with all the characters in the game. These small additions make Law and Order 2 more comfortable to play than 1 and you are not so afraid any more to try different things in the game. Law and Order 2 has two puzzles – in the typical sense of the word – as well and fortunately the developers did not take the first puzzle they saw in another adventure and copy it but instead they made sure that the puzzles serve the story and not the other way around. ***Spoilers*** So this time you will



This time you will even have to solve a couple of puzzles



You have to search apartments for evidence



The defense will make your life in the court difficult

get to reconstruct a shredded letter and you will get to decrypt an encrypted e-mail. Both puzzles are well implemented and their solutions are logical. ***End of Spoilers*** This is not to say that the rest of the game is a movie that you just sit and watch. The gameplay of Law and Order is mostly investigative in nature. Therefore you will spend a lot of time searching areas for clues and interacting with other characters. You also have a mobile phone as in the first game but its importance is rather non-existent if you do not choose the skill where you receive help from your supervisor.

General Information: The game comes in a simple DVD case with the faces of Southerlyn, Briscoe and Van Buren on the cover. Each time you start the game you are being asked if you want to play the videos in full screen or in a window, which gets tiresome after a while. No bugs encountered while playing it, which is steps ahead Law and Order 1. You can try out an online demo of Law and Order 2 at Legacy Interactive's website (www.legacyinteractive.com).



The jury will base their decision upon what is said in court

And something else that I should probably add here is that I had rated the patched version of Law and Order 1 with the score of 85 in The Inventory 3, which is more than I should have rated it. The magazine was still in its beginning and the grading was done in a more haphazard manner than it is now. So even though Law and Order 2 gets a lower grade, in essence it is a much better game. Right now we are more critical with our grading than we were when we started the magazine.

In a few words... Law and Order 2 is a worthy title to buy, especially if you are a fan of the TV series or if you like investigative games in general. It bases its gameplay mostly on character interaction and evidence collection/analysis and it gives you the chance to act as a lawyer. The level of voice acting of the game should be the target that all adventure developers/publishers should aim for. A better graphics engine that would allow for more freedom in movement and a better organised interface would have made this game a classic.

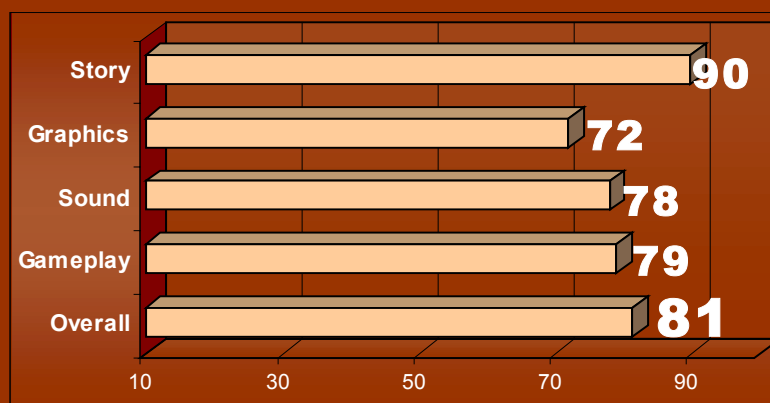
- Dimitris Manos

Law & Order 2: Double or Nothing

Game Info:

Developer: Legacy Interactive
Category: Point and Click
Perspective: 1st Person
Difficulty: Easy
Site: <http://www.legacyinteractive.com>

System Req.: Win 98/2000/ME/XP,
 Pentium III 500, 96MB RAM, 650 MB
 HD, CD-ROM, 16MB DirectX Video
 Card, DirectX 7 Sound Card





Some people complain that the crude humor and crass sexual innuendo in the Leisure Suit Larry series of games is not simply offensive, but so lowbrow as to be insulting to the intellect of the player; that Larry Laffer, being a foolish, sex-obsessed schmuck, can hardly carry an adventure game, much less make for an interesting one. Larry, they argue, is unfunny, unplayable, and just unbearable.

These people are twits. If you don't like this particular brand of humor, (namely, filthy and stupid, not that that's a bad thing) then you probably know well enough to avoid this kind of game, but the rest of you who can actually take a joke will likely enjoy it. Though it makes no great innovations in gameplay or technology, Leisure Suit Larry: Love for Sail is still an extremely fun game to play.

Story: You mean to tell me you play these games for the stories? All right, whatever... After being unceremoniously dumped by Shamara, Larry's latest

conquest from LSL6, our polyester-clad hero finds himself, through a series of events far too complicated and silly to explain, in possession of a cruise ticket on a luxury liner. He decides this is just the thing he needs to get himself back in the swinging game, and what better way than bedding the voluptuous Captain Thygh? And, thanks to another convenient plot device, Larry can do just that by competing in the "Thygh's-Man" Trophy competition, the grand prize for which is a week of "cruising on the captain" (wink-wink).

The chief component of the series is, of course, the oddball humor, and this game is just loaded with it. Arguably the funniest game of the series, Love for Sail is just chock full of innuendo, sarcasm, quips, double-entendres, puns, insults, sight gags, and just regular ol' jokes. This is where the real appeal behind the game comes; not for the sake of finishing an epic story, but just for the sheer silly joy of playing it. It's almost tempting to not finish it just to be able to continue playing and hear all the odd little jokes in every dialogue, description, and action.

Gameplay: The interface is a new take on Sierra's classic Point-n-Click, in that here you first select an object, and then chose from a list of actions to perform on it. Several puzzles will require the use of the game's text parser to enter other commands, as the necessary action may not be in the displayed list. The Parser serves as another source of fun though, as you can enter any number of ridiculous and lewd commands to see what kind of funny response you can get from the game.

The game is also chock full of fun little diversions to, I suppose, make sure you're having fun while you're laughing so much. Included in the box is a CyberSniff2000™ card with nine scratch and sniff tiles



Targets Sighted, Captain

to use at various points in the game, including suntan oil, chocolate and, god help us, bean-dip fart. Where's Dildo is a Where's Waldo-like minigame where you have to find a number of hidden... well you've figured it out already haven't you? You also have the ability to include yourself in the game, by scanning in a photo or recording your voice reading a brief script. Be the envy of all your friends! Impress your parents! Fun at parties!

Graphics: The game is drawn in a nice, soft cartoony style, and it's hard to imagine Larry any other way. A bit simplistically drawn, perhaps, but not without distinct style. Backgrounds are lush and rich without being distracting (except when a sight gag needs it to be), Larry is as short, pudgy, and retro as you remember, and the women... ooh my, the women... Steady now, must regain composure...

The animation is a bit of a mixed bag though. While many of the more lengthy animated scenes are thoroughly drawn, the in-game animations, lip-synching in particular, looks a bit stilted. An odd thing happens occasionally, when Larry or another character will be moving around quite a bit, gesturing with hands and such, and then they stop moving entirely to talk. The lip sync is accurate, no problem there, but it's just a bit jarring when the only thing moving is the mouth like that. A little thing like that is the kind of thing that can seriously distract from the fundamental seriousness and profundity of a storyline, but then again, this is Larry we're talking about here, so it's not that big a thing.

Sound: The in-game music is nicely done, a pleasant variety of mellow piano tunes, smooth jazz, and up-tempo beats that keep the good times rolling. Some of the animated sequences are also put to such classic 70's tunes as Kool and the Gang's "Celebration", Chic's "Le Freak", Iron Butterfly's "Inna Gadda Da Vida", and of



Man, Tourists are Everywhere!

course, the all time disco classic, Richard Wagner's Tannhauser Opera.

The voice acting is mostly very well done. The women sound as clever and sultry as cartoon women can, and the men, largely being there for comedic filler, also pull off their characters very well. The only complaint is the voice of Larry himself. Whether or not it befits the character is debatable, but without question his is one of the most grating, high-pitched, nasal, irritating things I've ever heard. I suppose it's funny, and in small doses it's fine, but a whole game full of having to listen to it is just a bit too much to bear.

Conclusion: Though it is hard to think of a game like this as being an adventure classic, the quality of design, the creativity of gameplay, and the sheer fun of playing make Leisure Suit Larry: Love For Sail one of the most enjoyable games of its time. Seven years after its release it can be quite difficult to find, but it is well worth it if you can.

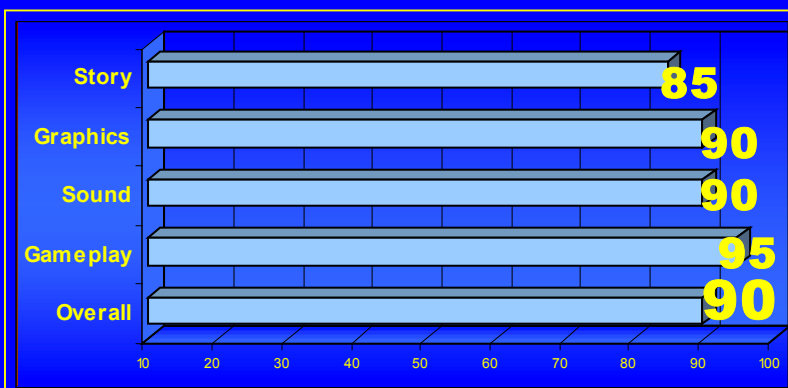
- Justin Peoples

Leisure Suit Larry 7: Love for Sail

Game Info:

Developer: Sierra
Category: Point and Click
Perspective: 3rd Person
Difficulty: Medium
Site: www.allowe.com

System Req.: Any recent computer with a CD-ROM will do



The Inventory is proud to introduce to you the creator of the legendary Larry games, and one of the funniest game developers in the history of the adventure genre, Al Lowe. Unfortunately for us, he has retired from game development and is now spending most of his time updating his humour site, www.allowe.com Al sends two jokes everyday to people who subscribe to his Cyberjoke 3000 project, and he is making a compilation with the best jokes of the month, for the readers of The Inventory. So welcome to... The Al Lowe Show!



* A father is in the drugstore with his young son when the boy discovers the condom aisle. "What are these, Dad?" "Well, son, those are condoms. They're for protection when you're having sex." The son points to a pack and asks, "Why does it have three in it, Dad?" "Well, son, those are for high school boys: one for Friday, one for Saturday, and one for Sunday." "Well, why does this pack have six in it?" "Well, son, those are for college men: two for Friday, two for Saturday, and two for Sunday." "Well then, what about this package with 12 in it?" "Well, son, those are for married men: one for January, one for February...."

* The football coach was talking to his team in the locker room before the big game. He said to his star player, "They tell me I'm not supposed to let you play since you're failing math, but we need you in there if we're gonna win this game. So, I'm gonna ask you a math question and if you get it right, you can play." The player agreed. "Concentrate hard. What is two plus two?" The player screwed up his face for a moment and hesitantly said, "4?" The coach got excited. "Did you say 4?" And all the other players yelled, "Aw, come on, coach. Give him another chance!"

* A woman walked out of Starbucks with her morning coffee and was taken aback by an unusual funeral procession. One long black hearse was followed by another long black hearse, which was followed by a solitary woman walking a pit bull on a leash, who was followed by at least 200 more women in a long single

file. Her curiosity got the better of her, so she respectfully approached the woman with the dog. "I'm sorry for your loss and I'm sure this is a bad time to disturb you, but I've never seen a funeral like this. "Whose funeral is it?" "Well, that first hearse contains my husband." "Oh, I'm so sorry. What happened to him?" "My dog here attacked and killed him." "That's terrible. But, who is in the second hearse?" She replied, "My mother-in-law. She tried to help my husband, but my dog turned on her, too." A poignant and thoughtful moment of silence passed between the two women. "Could I borrow your dog?" "Sure. Get in line!"

* A young man reported for his first day of work at the drugstore. The manager greeted him, gave him a broom, and said, "Your first job is to sweep out the store." "But, but...I'm a college graduate," the young man protested. "Oh, sorry; I didn't know. Here, give me the broom. I'll show you how."

* Sister Margaret died and, through some clerical error somewhere, found herself in Hell instead of Heaven. She immediately telephoned St. Peter about the mistake, but all she got was his voice-mail. She left a message explaining her situation, begging St. Peter to quickly set things straight. But a day passed and she heard nothing, so again she telephoned, and again she got voice-mail. "St. Peter," she begged. "Please rectify this error immediately. There's an orgy planned for tonight and the Devil is forcing everyone to attend!" But still, no response. The following morning she telephoned a third

time. "Hey, Pete! It's Maggie. Ignore those previous voice-mails!"

An English professor wrote this sentence on the board and told her students to punctuate it correctly: "A woman without her man is nothing." The men wrote, "A woman, without her man, is nothing." The women wrote, "A woman: without her, man is nothing."

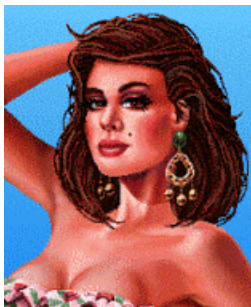
* A sweet young clerk at a big city store approached a rather large man in the men's department. "May I help you?" she purred. "Why, yes, ma'am. I wanna buy a complete outfit of them city clothes." Her eyes lit up. "Excellent. Shall we begin with a new suit?" "Why, shore ma'am. 53 tall." "Wow, that's big." "Yes, ma'am. They grow them big down in Texas." "And a shirt and tie to go with it?" "Why, shore ma'am. 19½ 38." "Wow, that's big." "Yes, ma'am. They grow them big down in Texas." "How about some shoes and socks?" "Why, shore ma'am. 15 double D." "Wow, that's big too." "Yes, ma'am. They grow them big in Texas." "And a new hat?" "Why, shore ma'am. 9-5/8." "Wow, that's really big." "Yes, ma'am. They grow them big down in Texas." She got him all decked out, rang up the sale and, as the Texan was counting out his money, couldn't help but ask, "Sir, I don't mean to be forward, but I wonder if I could I ask you a question?" "Why, shore ma'am. I already know what it is. And the answer is: 4 inches." She blushed slightly, but blurted out, "Why, my boyfriend is bigger than that!" Without a blink, the Texan replied, "Really, ma'am? Thick?"

- Al Lowe

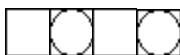
Inventory Puzzle Page

Leisure Suit Larry Word Jumble

Unscramble the names of these lovely ladies from the Leisure Suit Larry games. When you have finished, use the letters in the circles to unscramble the Puzzle Phrase below.



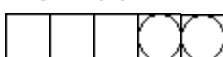
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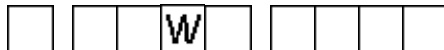
ASHOL



HEBLASE



Upon hearing that the latest Larry game will be made without the help of the series creator, many series fans have considered this...



Leisure Suit Larry Trivia

1: How much money does Larry have at the beginning of "Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards?"

A-\$100

B-\$94

C-\$69

D-\$42

2: Larry Laffer, being a nationally recognized comedy figure, has made guest appearances, or been referred to, in each of the following games, except which one?

A- The Colonel's Bequest

B- Torin's Passage

C- Police Quest 2

D- Space Quest 4

3: Al Lowe actually based Larry Laffer's name on which of these real-life people?

A- Pornographer Larry Flynt

B- Actor Lyle Lovett

C- Professor Lawrence Le' Ferr

D- Economist Arthur Laffer

- Justin Peoples

For the answers go to the last page

Time to see what our readers had to share with us in The Invento-mail. Before we begin I want to say that someone sent us an e-mail with a title regarding the interview with Jane Jensen in last month's issue. This e-mail arrived in the bulk mail and I accidentally pressed the empty button next to the bulk link so I lost all the e-mails in that folder (early mornings will do that to you). If you could please re-send your e-mail I would be grateful, and I apologise for the inconvenience. If someone else sent us a letter until the end of September and has not received a reply or seen the e-mail published then in that case please resend your e-mail. Now let's move on to the letters!

Dear Dimitris, I really appreciate The Inventory and your work. I'm 29 years old adventure fan. My first choice of gaming is always a "pure" adventure not hybrid types of games. If you ask me, i never accept arcade sequences in an adventure game. I hope we will all return to the brilliant days of adventures like the late 80's and 90's. I really appreciate the Adventure Company's efforts for adventure games but they really lack of vision. For example the real adventure must be 3rd person and with solid atmosphere and plot. (like Lucas and Sierra games) Thank you for your time, i hope we will regenerate the adventure genre.

*Best Regards,
Deniz Demirci*

The Inventory: Hello Deniz and thanks for the kind words. I wouldn't say that adventures have to be 3rd person ones to be great adventures. I think that the problem lies in the style of gameplay that most 1st person adventure developers choose to incorporate and in the outdated engines graphics engines most of them use. I could imagine great adventures in 1st person perspective with something different than 'get this complicated machine and find out how it works without any feedback' puzzles and an engine that lets you roam through the environment freely without getting disoriented. We try our best to regenerate the genre as you say but we need some help from developers who if I may put it so blunt have not been that creative or original lately. Check out the Hydra for more on the subject.

Hey Dimitris!

Just wanted to drop you an email all the way from SINGAPORE that i thoroughly enjoyed The Inventory #9 and that its my misfortune that i hadn't discovered the great mag earlier! To many more issues to come! Salud!!! :)

*Thanks!
~Clement, also SeÃ±orCalavera over at GameBoomers*

The Inventory: Hello Clement. No misfortune at all my friend. You can download all the issues you missed at this address: <http://www.justadventure.com/TheInventory/TheInventory.shtm> . Enjoy!

Dear Dimitri,

My name is Kostas and I am from Greece. I saw with great joy your magazine in www.justadventure.com Excellent magazine and I am very glad that such a publication exists for our beloved adventures. Continue on this tempo and I hope that someday we will see it in printed form. One suggestion: What would you say about a version of the magazine without pictures so that we can print it out?

K.M.

P.S. Check out www.geocities.com/civensoftware it is my webpage and I have some pictures from two small adventures that I made with adventure maker. Thanx.

The Inventory: Hello Kosta. I haven't had the time to check out your adventures yet but I urge our readers to try them out. Anyway since they are available for free, why not? As for a version of the magazine without pictures, I do not see it happening any time soon, because it would take an amount of time to do that. Small amount of time, but still a small amount of time I don't have. We have already started trying however to include less amount of pictures and smaller sizes of them than we did before for those who print the magazine since you are not the first one who complains about that. But if you really think about it, if you bought our magazine on printed form from a store you would probably pay more money than what you would pay now by printing it ;)

Hello Inventory!

My name is Bogdan and I'm from Romania (please excuse my poor english). I love adventure games since they are my first encounters (and the best) in PC gaming. I'll never forget the endless nights playing Beneath A Steel Sky, Sam & Max, DOTT, Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis and more recent, TLJ or Syberia. (By the way, why did The Inventory keep the silence about 'Beneath a Steel Sky'? In my opinion it is The Greatest cyberpunk ever made and one of the best adventures) ;)

I also want to congratulate You All, the inventory makers! Six months ago I was wandering hopeless on the web, searching for any trace of some adventure and.. found You. You brought back my hope and did a great job showing the world that ADVENTURE IS NOT DEAD !!!!!.... raising a wave of new or obscure games in the eyes (and mind) of the public. People should know that Adventure genre will always exist, at least as long as gamers can think and put their brain at work and not only consuming their frustrations of day to day by mindlessly smashing hordes of silly beasts. The ADVENTURE IS BACK!

So, here's why I wrote to you: Did you play 'Normality' ? It's an old, underrated (and revolutionary) adventure. It has the Hexen engine, as I know, and is set up in a 1st person 3D environment. I recently found this long forgotten gem and I can't stop playing it, in spite of heavily outdated graphics. But the more important thing is its 3D vision. I want you to know that I'm a total fan of 3rd person point and click adventure but that's because I've never seen a serious 3D first person adventure game (except 'Normality').

And here's the catch: in Normality you cannot die, get stuck or fight. All is pure adventure, with lots of inventory pieces and clever puzzles, plus a funny plot. And I can't stop questioning myself: why in the world there is nobody that can develop such a game????

The powerful 3D engine and amazing eye candies are a reality (I would say a 'Normality') in these days. Imagine a game like Max Payne 2 or Return to Castle Wolfenstein but pure adventure !!!!!!! That's the future and nobody sees it! Please let me know what do you think about that and.. I can hardly wait for the future!

***P.S.
Normality can be found (along with Beneath a Steel Sky and other gems) at www.the-underdogs.org, another supporter for the adventure's rebirth. Also, here is the Scratchware Manifesto which independent game designers may find interesting.***

The Inventory: Hello Bogdan. I personally have not played Normality yet but from what you describe, it sounds exactly like my view as well on how 1st person adventures should evolve. A full 3D environment where you can walk everywhere in the gaming world would be the ideal way to play such titles. And graphics is not the only department where these games have to evolve but as I said earlier puzzles as well. Copying the game design of Myst over and over again brings the genre to stasis.

We need new ideas, new gameplay methods. We need developers with vision. With creativity and imagination. Let's hope that in the future we will see the work of such developers.

Fan Fiction

From this issue of *The Inventory* we are starting a new column called *Fan Fiction*. In this new section we will include stories written by fans based on adventure games. This month Ugarte, contributes the first 3 chapters of his story called **Lost Wind**. The story is based on the legendary *Quest for Glory* games. If you have written a fan fiction story that you would like to get published in our magazine then submit it to us by e-mailing us at theinventory@yahoo.com and if we find it interesting we will contact you as soon as possible. But for the time being let's move on to Ugarte's story. The story is split in 70(!!!) chapters and you will read the first 3 in this issue.

LOST WIND

Madrick Doomslayer is a Fighter who graduates from the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School in Silmaria. As an avid adventurer, he journeys to the land of Mariunia, a place he believes to be a paradise. However, things turn out more grim than expected. As a Hero, Madrick tries to bring peace to two feuding towns, help a group of Dwarves, and battle fierce insect creatures. He also meets Trolls, wumus, and a beautiful woman named Sidra. Madrick's adventure takes him through danger and excitement on the road to becoming a Hero and a Paladin.

CHAPTER 1: COLD DEATH

The man walked forward in a tiring manner, exhausted from treading the thick snow and battling the bone-chilling cold. He gasped for breath as pain forced him little by little to drop and let himself die. Despite the difficulties, he was strongly determined to walk through the horrendous and relentless blizzard. He believed in the possibility of triumph over this obstacle, no matter how small it seemed. The snow fell like rocks out of the sky, and the powerful wind blew through the area with a tremendous force. There was no sign of life nearby. There were only the remains of animals that struggled against this adversary: solid bones, frozen red flesh, and rotting skulls. The trees already looked like lifeless stone in the thick blanket of white.

The man kept fighting the storm with each step bringing a sharp tension in his legs. Keep breathing, he thought. Don't stop moving, he mentally told himself. Soon, the man succumbed to the intense pain all over. He dropped to the ground, and his eyes lost their fight to stay open. The man lied still with his unshaven face touching the chilly snow. While his eyes had lost their strength, his ears were still open. He only heard the eerie howl of the wind that made him more frightened every second. There was also something else amidst it. It sounded human, almost like a woman. The sound was almost inaudible even with his keen ears fully alert. A moment later, he heard it come closer. The man believed that he heard a spoken word: "wind." The voice said something more.

"What are you saying?" the man called out, but the voice only seemed to repeat its words. His mind seemed to float away from reality, the snow, and the cold. He felt as if the snow had gradually disappeared. Either that or he no longer felt the chilly snow that was still around him. Before long, his entire body, like his eyes, became depraved of its life force. Only his ears seemed to be alive.

"Madrick," said the desperate voice clearly in the man's ears.

"Hello?" the man said back with an echo.

"Madrick," uttered the heavenly woman's voice. "You've got to help me." Madrick didn't have a clue about who she was. Nor did he have any idea as to how his body slowly lost all senses apart from his hearing.

"Who are you?" Madrick asked the voice. He heard his own voice and the mysterious angelic voice accompanied with vivid echoes, as if they were speaking in a deep cavern.

"Where am I?" Madrick said nervously. "What..." He soon gasped in shock without a sound as he discovered that he could not make any sound with his own voice. With his body beyond his own control, he waited in anticipation for the voice to speak and satisfy his curiosity.

"Your strength and honor are invaluable," said the ethereal voice. This time, the voice seemed much louder in his ears. Madrick had no choice but to hear.

"You are a man of much courage," the voice continued. "And I admire your persistence to be a fighter. That's why I'm calling out to you. I can no longer maintain the balance of Nature, for my powers are gone. A dark evil may soon wreak havoc on many, and I am helpless. Please..."

There was a moment of silence that followed, and Madrick waited a moment for the voice to finish. Then, it was as if the voice was right in his ear.

"Help me," the voice whispered. "Help me..."
 "Help me..."
 "Help me..."
 "Help me..."

Madrack couldn't help but hear the unknown voice pleading him for help. His sense of sight did nothing to find out, and his ability to speak had disappeared. He was also unable to feel anything around him with his bare hands, for his sense of touch diminished to nothing. He was curious about the voice, yet desperate to escape at the same time.

"Help me..." the voice repeated.
 "Help me..."
 "Help me..."
 "Help me..."

The voice diminished as Madrick listened to it with worry. He never became so worried in his life, because his sense of hearing had also slowly faded away. His mind was the only part of him that showed response, yet he felt it losing its vitality. Madrick's mind slowly fell asleep like the rest of him. And then everything became still.

CHAPTER 2: FOX EYE

The sun started to ascend from the horizon and shine the quaint little kingdom of islands known as Silmaria. The forests and rocky areas on Marete, Hydra, Lymnos, Zante, Piperi, Spetsai, and even Delos brightened with the light of day. The former fortress of the Hesperian Mercenaries on the island of Sifnos showed its wear and tear in the light, losing its artistic quality over time. The same held true for the fortress on Minos. What the sun really sparkled was the beautiful and peaceful town of Silmaria on the large island of Marete. In one of the many apartments in Town Square, a man was tossing in bed with something constantly disturbing him. He suddenly woke up, sweating and feeling extremely hot. At the same time, he felt relief that he was only having a nightmare that seemed convincingly real. The man still had questions about what it meant. Madrick had a big and important day ahead of him. He got out of bed, made the bed, and changed his clothes. His stomach growled with hunger as Madrick got his sword and shield from his closet. He made sure that he had a few Drachmas in his pocket. The last thing Madrick did was to put on a chainmail suit and a Grecian helmet. Madrick left his apartment and smelled the fresh air of morning. He went down the stairs into Town Square where many friendly merchants were selling their wares. He greeted Wolfie, the Canine merchant specializing in pottery and art. Madrick also wished a good morning to Sarra, the Katta jewellery seller, and her lifemate Marrak, who sells food. Considering his craving for something to eat, Madrick stopped at Marrak's food stand.

"So, Madrick," said the friendly Marrak. "What would you like today?"
 "Well," answered Madrick. "I think I'll just have pepperoni pizza."
 "Excellent choice," said Marrak. "I've just prepared a few, and they are all very fresh. Its taste will easily satisfy your craving."

Madrack paid 15 Drachmas to Marrak, who gave him the juicy and delicious pepperoni pizza.

"By the way," said Marrak. "I wish you luck on getting that degree."
 "Oh, thank you," responded Madrick. "You're very kind to say that. And thank you very much for this scrumptious pizza."
 "And you are very welcome," said Marrak.

Madrack headed for the Docks of Silmaria while eating his pizza. He greeted the Centaur weapon seller Pholus with a smile, but the Centaur responded with a grunt. Andre, unlike Pholus, said hello to Madrick with a warm smile. Soon, Madrick finished eating and arrived in front of the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School for Heroes. He smiled at the fact that the current King of Silmaria once graduated from there, and that he would get the same chance to do so. He opened the door of the F.A.C.S. and stepped inside. He made sure not to trip over the books cluttered all over the floor. The Famous Adventurer, an old yet vibrant man, was at his desk writing a book about another past adventure of his. The old man looked up and smiled once he saw Madrick.

"Well, good morning to you," said the Famous Adventurer. "I hope you're all set for your Physical Aptitude Test for Fighters."
 "Yes, I am," said Madrick proudly. "I've been waiting for this day to come."
 "You know," said F.A. "Your father would be really proud of you if he were here today."
 "I do wish that sometimes," said Madrick gravely. "I miss him a lot."
 "I know the feeling. What's important is to have faith in those you love."
 "I'm trying to remember that. He did die for a cause, so I'm grateful."
 "Keep that in mind when you take this test," concluded F.A.
 "OK then," responded Madrick. "I feel that I can be a real Fighter."
 "Good," said F.A. "If you're ready, then let us go outside town to a clear area I've designated for your test."

Madrack and F.A. stepped through West Gate as the guard in the tower lifted it. They both waved goodbye to the guard as they walked towards the green grass of Marete. The calm, cool breeze blew into their faces and the grass beneath their feet. There was also the powerful, yet sweet, scent of the nearby Med Sea. The bright light of the sun illuminated the beautiful island with its brilliant shine. The few birds nearby sang their peaceful song to the world. Both Madrick and F.A. could hear their footsteps in the hard ground within the overall serenity of nature.

"So, F.A.," said Madrick. "What is the exact nature of my test?"

"Well," answered the Famous Adventurer. "It involves a series of exercises. The purpose is to responding quickly to any surprise. You'll see when we get there."

"I understand that," Madrick said confidently.

"OK," said F.A. "I will tell you that these exercises are mainly tests of specific combat skills and combining those skills. I have many men to help out with running the test."

"Who are these men?"

"Silmarian guards. There are plenty who love to volunteer with helping me run the test."

"Really?"

"Yes. Every time they help out with a test, they're always eager. It's because they love to see a new hero be born."

"Wow. How many exercises are there?"

"Well, there will be seven, and they're not too long. I chose the number seven because of the tradition of the Rites of Rulership."

"I see," said Madrick.

"Ah, here we are," said F.A., pointing to a large, wide area between two parallel natural walls of stone. Madrick unsheathed his long silver sword and held up his large, brass shield. He got himself in a ready stance. The Famous Adventurer smiled at him for being a quick learner at F.A.C.S.

"OK," said F.A. "You know that there are seven short exercises. I will be on top of one of these stone walls to observe and judge your abilities. I will also tell you what to do. Do exactly as I say. Remember, be on your feet, because the exercises get increasingly difficult and intense. And listen for my voice the whole time. Do you have any questions?"

"Not at all," Madrick said with a smile.

"In that case," said F.A. "Good luck."

F.A. walked behind one of the stone walls and eventually appeared at the top of it. He called out to Madrick, who looked up and acknowledged the F.A. position. With his ears wide open and in his ready stance, Madrick was ready for the test. It was the moment of truth.

"Your first task is to dodge only," said F.A. "Ready? Go!"

Madrack suddenly got his body alert and looked quickly all around. Nothing yet, but soon, he heard some footsteps. He turned around and saw a Silmarian guard in the normal brown outfit wielding a spear. The man charged towards Madrick, who stared at his opponent with a sharp eye. The guard thrust his spear at Madrick, who swerved to his left like the wind. As the guard ran past Madrick, he quickly turned around and stabbed downward. Madrick, who landed on his back, saw the pointy spearhead come down and rolled to his left. Once Madrick got onto his feet, he saw the guard twirl his spear a few times, and the guard swung his spear with both arms. Madrick jumped back, but then the guard froze still and Madrick's heart abruptly beated faster. At the same time, they both heard a roar behind Madrick. All of a sudden, a ferocious Bearman, with its sharp teeth, thin eyes, vicious roar, and agile body, charged towards Madrick and the guard with a face of rage and a long spear in both. Both the guard and Madrick were ready to attack it. They both knew that this was not part of the intended test. The guard lunged forward and struck the Bearman's chest. The Bearman vomited blood as the guard pulled out his spear. Madrick and the guard heard more screams of the guards hidden nearby. The F.A. on top of one of the walls hid himself behind a raised portion of the top part of the wall. Soon, Silmarian guards appeared on top of both walls with their spears ready in their hands.

Madrack was relieved that the guards weren't harmed, but there was still danger. Several more Bearmen emerged from concealment behind the stone walls. Even though there more to defend against, Madrick and the guard felt like dealing with just one. Despite that, Madrick had a little fear. Madrick immediately swung his sword at one of them, but it parried it with its spear. He lunged forward and then took a swift step to the side. The Bearman stepped back and nearly lost its footing. Without warning, Madrick dashed towards the Bearman and sliced across its chest, and it fell dead while bleeding in the dirt. After quickly looking around, Madrick almost felt like having a heart attack. A Bearman repeatedly stabbed the guard to death. Even with two other Bearmen with it, he ran in madness towards them and thrust his sword into the Bearman's stomach. As he pulled it out, the other two struck with their spears. Madrick crouched and shielded his face against the deadly spearheads. The next thing he saw were, from out of nowhere, two spears flying directly into the Bearmen's necks. Madrick heard the guards above him cheer.

But it was not over yet. Five more Bearmen far behind Madrick approached quickly, ready to fight to the death. This time, a rain of spears came from above the Bearmen. The spearhead met with three of the Bearmen's heads while the other two managed to dodge them. Madrick fought the two Bearmen with the same agility, strength, endurance, and skill he demonstrated while fighting the others. Spears continued to rain down from above. Madrick and the guards above hoped to finish the Bearmen off. The fighting raged on for a few minutes, with the spears and swords coming into contact with tremendous force. Before long, a spear from above landed in inch in front of the Bearmen's feet. They fell back, and Madrick didn't take any chances. He grinded his teeth and bellowed a loud roar as he ran forward with his sword raised high. The blade swung downward in two quick circular motions, each slicing a Bearman down its midline. The last two Bearmen fell flat on their faces. Madrick crouched on the ground in exhaustion, but at the same time, a great sense of pride filled him. He wiped the blood off his sword with one of the dead bodies and sheathed it. When he stood up, F.A. and the guards came towards him, giving him a grand applause. Madrick smiled.

"Good work," said F.A. enthusiastically. "I haven't seen really mean fighting in a long time."

"Thank you," said Madrick happily.

"You know what?" asked F.A. "I thought of a nickname for you: Fox Eye. Your eyes are as keen as a fox. From now on, you are Madrick "Fox Eye" Doomslayer."

Madrick had never been so thrilled in his life and thanked the Famous Adventurer once again. One guard suggested gathering the dead Bearmen and setting them on fire. Some of the guards put the bodies in a pile and searched each one. They only found a total of 58 Drachmas, yet they gave them to Madrick as a reward. At the same time, some other guards picked up the dead guard to give him a decent funeral. Madrick, the Famous Adventurer, and the Silmarian guards began to head back to Silmaria. Madrick "Fox Eye" Doomslayer really felt like a Hero.

CHAPTER 3: DOOMSLAYER LEGACY

The crimson blood of the Bearmen stained the stone walls and the clear space in between. There was the sound of crackling and the slight smell of smoke from there, because one of the guards lit a fire and burned the pile of dead Bearmen. The training area used to be tranquil and lovely with the magic of mother Nature; it became tainted with the blood and fire of Hell. There was a mixture of pride and grief among the men walking back to town. The lips of Madrick, the Famous Adventurer, and the Silmarian guards showed a slight upward smile, but their eyes looked as if they would profusely pour tears. All of them knew the risks of being warriors, and all of them knew that death was a consequence as likely as survival. They've all seen death at least a few times in their lives, so their sorrow was somewhat inhibited.

"I'm so sorry that he died," Madrick told one of the guards.

"I know," said one guard. "But all of us have vowed to die for the love of Silmaria."

"I do admit," said the Famous Adventurer. "That he seemed like a fit one."

"That's true," said Madrick. "By the way, F.A., do I have to take this test over again since we had that ambush?"

"Well," said F.A. "I've always judged based on the test itself without any interruptions." Madrick looked at F.A. with curiosity.

"And even if this isn't the same," continued F.A. "I'm willing to make an exception."

"What?" asked Madrick.

"You've done well," said F.A. "Fighting the Bearmen actually showed that you are very capable of being a Fighter. In fact, it pretty much tested the skills I had in mind."

"So what did you have in mind?" asked Madrick.

"The first exercise," answered F.A. "Involved just continuously dodging one opponent. The second one would start when I tell you to keep parrying. The third exercise would let you fight with your sword, so you would be mixing offense and defense."

"I see," said Madrick.

"The next three are the same as the first three in that you dodge, then parry, and then combine both with offense. The only twist would be that two more opponents would come in, one with a sword and one with a fine axe."

"That's what makes it harder," said Madrick. "What's the last one?"

"Surviving against anything thrown," said F.A. "We would have the several guards at the top of the walls throwing spears downward. You would continue to fight the three guards like a real Fighter while being alert for spears that could come down on you."

"Now I understand," said Madrick. "But out of curiosity, what if I got hurt?"

"Well," said F.A., taking out a leather bag. "This is some magic healing powder I got from Julanar. Sprinkling it on wounds would heal it instantly. Sadly, we didn't get it to the guard in time. He faced a quick death."

The F.A. paused, and Madrick waited for him to continue.

"What I was going to say," said F.A. "Was that fighting those Bearmen was similar to the test itself. It's safe to say that you've passed. Congratulations, Madrick."

Madrick showed excitement and shook the F.A.'s hand, thanking him for judging him worthy. The sadness after the battle immediately faded away. He was filled only with joy and anticipation for what he was striving to earn: the Herculean Degree for Fighters from the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School in Silmaria. It was a symbol of his courage, his manliness, and his honor. Madrick felt brave enough to take care of himself in any place. Since he was always eager to travel, he thought about how becoming a Fighter would allow him to see the world while defending against danger. He couldn't wait to see it all.

In no time, they all reached the West Gate of the town. One of the guards said that they would go to another area nearby to perform their private funeral. The F.A. explained to Madrick that funerals for guards were private to protect their identities in case a murderer wanted a specific one dead. As the guards left, Madrick and F.A. went through the gate and back to the F.A.C.S. Madrick was impatient for the expected highlight of his day. Madrick and F.A. went inside the disorganized and dusty room of the F.A.C.S. The Famous Adventurer immediately went to his desk and opened one of the drawers. Madrick stood still, wondering what was inside. As F.A. closed the drawer with one hand, his other hand lifted with something brown and rectangular in it. He turned it around, and Madrick saw the shiny plate of gold as he walked towards it. The gold plate was stenciled with a detailed figure of Hercules on the upper left corner of it. On the upper right corner was a sword and shield. In between the two pictures, there was some text in stamped cursive, and his name in the text was stenciled in printed capital letters. The entire body of the text was neatly centered on the plaque. Madrick read each word carefully. The plaque read, "Let it be known that a Fighter of Strength, Courage, and Honor is born on this day. The demonstration of the necessary skills

and abilities has greatly proven this individual's worth and excellence as a warrior. By the name of Hercules and all who followed, I now pronounce you, MADRICK DOOMSLAYER, with the title of Fighter and the proud designation of Graduate from the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School. From this day forth, this Herculean Degree for Fighters shall forever symbolize the eminence of this newly-born Fighter." The Famous Adventurer's stamped signature and current date were at the bottom of the plaque below it.

"This is for you," said F.A. with a smile. "You absolutely deserve this. I believed that you would pass, so I already stenciled today's date."

"Thank you," said Madrick joyously as he held his degree for the first time.

"You've proven yourself," said F.A. "And your father would be most proud. Don't forget that your grandfather is, too. Sorry about forgetting to mention him before."

Madrick suddenly remembered his grandfather, who was currently living in the retirement home above the Silmaria Adventurer's Guild. He couldn't wait to show his grandfather his degree.

"Thank you so much for instructing me," said Madrick as he shook F.A.'s hand. "Take care."

"You too, son," said F.A. "I'm very proud of you."

Both of them smiled, and Madrick then left the F.A.C.S. with total self-satisfaction. He started to run quickly along the sea and up the hill towards the Adventurer's Guild. Madrick held the plaque high in the air and looked as if he could fly high in the air. Madrick entered the Adventurer's Guild and walked quickly up to Toro the Guildmaster.

"Toro," said Madrick. "Could you open the grate? I want to see my grandfather."

"Okey-dokey," said the Minotaur. "Toro open grate for you." Toro walked up to the locked metal grate nearby the guild entrance. He saw Madrick's plaque as he held up a key.

"You graduate," said Toro. "Good for you. Grandfather be happy."

Madrick smiled. Toro unlocked the grate and gestured Madrick to enter. As Madrick went up the stairs, Toro told him to be quiet since many men were sleeping. Madrick entered a large room filled with many beds and nightstands as well as chests besides them. Most of the beds were occupied with tired-looking old men snoring. There was a doorway leading to another room to bathe. A moment later, a familiar old, yet happy-looking face, emerged from the other room.

"Madrick?" said the old man. "Madrick!" The old man ran up to Madrick and both hugged each other. Madrick held up his degree, and the old man's eyes lit up. The old man then read the words on the plaque carefully. Afterwards, he looked up at his grandson.

"I am very proud of you," said the grandfather. "And your father in Hades, I believe he feels the same as he watches you."

"This is the best day of my life, and I'm happy to hear that he is watching," said Madrick.

"You have becoming a man, Madrick. I know you will continue the Doomslayer family line, because you have your father's persistence."

"Thank you, grandfather. You know, I've always waited for this day."

"And you deserve it very much. Ah, I want you to have something."

The old man walked to a large chest next to an empty, presumably his. He opened it, and took out a large, circular blue shield with a gold flame in the center of it. He also took out a long, silver, double-edge sword with a thick handle. The old man handed both items to Madrick.

"This was your father's sword and shield," said the old man. "Actually, it also belonged to me, my father, my grandfather, and so on."

"Huh?" said Madrick with a puzzled look.

"This sword is called Fireblade. It's no ordinary sword. It's a Paladin sword that has existed for many centuries and passed down in the Doomslayer line. This shield is known as Soulshield, also passed down many generations."

"And I'm next in the line of the Doomslayer Paladins?"

"That's right. In time, you will learn the true meaning of Honor and good. In other words, being a warrior is mainly about helping others, not proving that you can simply kill tough monsters."

"My father has always told me that."

"And I know you are capable of knowing."

"I have a question," said Madrick. "Have you ever learned about the conditions of where we escaped from? There were wars there, and I don't know if things are getting better there."

"Well," said his grandfather. "I don't really know. Many people have said that there's very little progress in rebuilding. All of them really love their new homes, whether it's here in Silmaria or someplace else."

"I see," said Madrick. "Thank you for this sword and shield, grandfather."

"You're very welcome," said grandfather. "What will you do now?"

"I think I want to travel," replied Madrick. "I've always wanted to go to Mariunia. It's a paradise there."

"Great place," agreed grandfather. "I hope you have fun there."

"Thank you," said Madrick as he and his grandfather embraced. "I'm going now, so I thank you once again for this legacy."

"Make me proud," said his grandfather. "Goodbye."

"Bye," said Madrick as he started to leave.

THE HYDRA

The Hydra was a fearsome monster in ancient Greek mythology with many heads. If somebody cut one of its heads two more would grow out of its place. The Hydra represents the adventure genre that simply will not die no matter how much it is being fought.



The Hydra will be a column where you will be able to read thoughts and opinions on the current proceedings in our genre. This month the topic of the Hydra is the year that passed and the year that comes in terms of adventures.

DISAPPOINTMENT AND HOPE

2003 was a year that saw many adventures returning at game stores. Companies like The Adventure Company, Microïds, Ubisoft and Tri Synergy have managed to bring products of our genre back on the shelves. Thus, lots of people around the globe got the chance to play adventures like Runaway, Post Mortem, CSI, The Black Mirror, URU, Law and Order 2, Salamambo, Thorgal etc. This is great news indeed, but on the other hand can we say that adventures are back both in quantity and **quality**?

Unfortunately, 2003 won in terms of quantity but lost in terms of quality. Many of these adventures had a lot to offer in certain areas. I.e. the Black Mirror offered an innovative and easy to use interface and a good length for its price. Runaway had incredible in-game cartoon graphics. CSI had amazing voice-overs. URU was a marvel of technological breakthroughs both in graphics and sound. All those games however had also areas where they lacked originality and suffered from sloppy production values.

The Black Mirror suffered from horrible voice-overs and from a few uninspired and illogical puzzles. So did Runaway as well, and Runaway bothered players with extreme pixel hunting on top of that. One could finish Thorgal's Quest in less time than it takes to play one chapter of The Longest Journey. Salamambo spinned you around with its flawed navigational system and the most often puzzles you had to solve is where did I come from and where am I now? Some of Post Mortem's puzzles were insanely illogical and time consuming. URU presents puzzles and gives no feedback whatsoever to the players. It also featured a cumbersome interface and a poor save system. The list could go on and on and on, but I think you get the general idea.

I am saddened to look back at this year and see that I did not grant any adventures with a grade even near to 90. Since I might have not explained that before, I should add here that a game that receives over 90 in The Inventory corresponds to the title 'classic'. A title that, in my opinion, no 2003 adventure is worthy of. But why does this happen? Why do so many games fail to deliver? Because unfortunately, many developers in our genre lack the vision and the imagination that classic titles require. I could imagine the following conversation when two developers, A and B produce an adventure for company C.

A: Hmmm, my calculations say that the game will last only about 6 hours. How could we make it longer?

B: Hmmm, yeah that's a head scratcher. Oh...I know. Let's put a slider puzzle. This will take the players 15 to 30 minutes to solve.

A: Excellent idea.

B: And you know what else we can do?

A: What??

B: You know the door to the library....

A: Yeah...

B: We could say that it is locked instead and require from the player to go all the way to the other end of the building to pick up a newspaper and then have him pick up a pen as well, so that they can do the push the key to the newspaper incredible trick!

A: Alright, this should give us some more time. Maybe we could also not give them an option of bypassing dialogues so that they can't skip them and so the game will last longer whether they want it or not!

It might seem like fiction and that I am exaggerating but after playing so many adventures this year I am afraid I can totally picture such a conversation going on. I would personally rather play a short good adventure than play a prolonged product full of tasks that are there evidently to waste my so precious time. It is beyond me why would developers bother and spend time to create something uninspired and without vision, without anything new to offer. And it is not only puzzle design that suffers but stories as well. But why do developers do that? The 'why', we do not know. We cannot know.

But the 'what'? What is the difference between the so called classics and the ... OK adventures we had this year? The magic word is **details**. Tiny details that play a decisive factor on whether you are experiencing something on your screen that will stigmatise you forever and will make you go to bed satisfied and entertained, or whether it will leave you with a sour taste in the mouth, wishing that something was different, thinking that it could have been so much more but it wasn't. Classic adventures come with excellent graphics, with professional voice-overs, logical puzzles that are there not to prolong the gameplay but they are there because it serves the story and because it makes sense to be there. And the stories... the stories pull you in like a hurricane, stories that you never wanted them to finish. The characters you meet emanate life from their very last pixels. Unfortunately many developers nowadays seem eager to bypass a couple of those details. So, should we be worried? Should we be worried that the future of adventures involve a mass of mediocre titles? Fortunately, I would have to speculate that the answer is no. Taking a look at 2004 and the 'presents' it bears puts a smile in my face. We have three adventures in development due to be released in 2004 whose developers have recently released top class titles.

The first of them is Syberia by Microïds, due to be released in Spring already. The second is Project Jane Jensen. Jane has produced exclusively classic titles and I have a feeling she won't disappoint her fans this time either. The third adventure that is 'probably' going to be out in 2004 and is expected to be a classic title is the Quest for Glory 2 remake by AGDInteractive. All these developers have proven that detail is something they pay close attention to before they release a title. But these are not the only candidates for top class titles. Many of the companies that produced some of the adventures we saw this year were entering the international adventure scene for the first time. Unknown Identity, Pendulo, Frogwares and Legacy Interactive were all rookies and of course one can expect them to become much better as time passes by and they gain more experiences. The fan scene as well is preparing three major productions for release in 2004. The first one is King's Quest IX, the second one is Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth and the third one is Shadowplay.

It is also very promising to see developers like Philippe Gaudè of Jack the Ripper and Felix Drott of Shadowplay to distance themselves from the preconception that an adventure **MUST** have puzzles. It is this kind of preconceptions that make developers place slider puzzles before you can enter a cabin, just because we play an adventure game. If the puzzle is part of the story and it has some relevance to the environment then it is quite logical and appropriate to have puzzles, but to include puzzles just for the sake of them is a mood killer. It was rather interesting actually, that someone who is apparently thinking of developing a new adventure posted in the JA forums today the following regarding ways to make his game longer:

"The length of the game could be increased by throwing in Myst type slider and mechanical puzzles to open locked door or safes, as is the trend in newer games.. but I dont think thats a good idea. Is it?"

Well the guy did not say he would do that and by the end of the sentence it seems like he didn't think it was a good idea (although he had his doubts). But honestly this sentence depicts perfectly the way of thinking that many developers adopt out there and it is sad to say the least. So all we can do is hope. Hope to see wonders from Jane Jensen, from Benoit Sokal, from the AGDs and from all the rest of the developers that will strive to change the sorry state we witnessed in 2003. Hope that they will provide our genre with new ideas, new puzzles and new storytelling techniques. Hope that in 2004 they will develop games that will make us smile, that will make us wonder, that will make us sit on the edge of our seat. May 2004 be the best adventuring year for all of us adventurers around the globe.

- Dimitris Manos

Epilogue

Bye bye 2003, bring on 2004! One of the e-mails we received this last month but has not been published in the Invento-mail yet (we will do that in a future issue) proposed that we started a mailing list and that we sent out a newsletter with all the latest information about our magazine (i.e. when is it going to be released). While the idea is interesting I have had some experience with group mailing that resulted in tiresome procedures.

So instead of starting a mailing list I decided to start an online diary that you can read here: <http://dimidimidi.blogspot.com> Don't worry, I will try to keep the news concerning my laundry, my love life and my daily diet to a minimum and keep the content related to The Inventory at most times. So if you want to learn the latest news about our magazine, our game in development or our future plans regarding adventure coverage feel free to visit the aforementioned web page.

Short after new year's day and when JA opens up again we will publish also an extra PDF booklet called The Inventory awards 2003. I have to say though that this booklet will not be available for free but we are thinking of selling those PDF booklets for 1.00 \$ each. Do not worry, the normal version of The Inventory will continue to be available as a free download. We are happy that we are able to provide this service to adventurers around the world. But you see, we spend an amazing amount of time creating The Inventory and maybe you could show us your support by buying this extra booklet as a reward for our efforts. The booklet will be around (or maybe even over) 20 pages long and it will include awards on several different categories. We hope that you will find it interesting enough to purchase it and keep it as a collective item.

As far as the game we develop goes, I am very happy with the applications we got till last month. The only position that we did not receive applications for were graphics artists. So if you have skills in creating graphics, concept art sketches, 3D models or anything else related to graphics and you would like to be a part of our development team, please let us know by mailing us at theinventory@yahoo.com . If you do develop your own game and you want it to be covered in The Inventory feel free to e-mail us about it as well.

If you read our magazine for the first time and you would like to read some of our past issues you can download all of them at <http://www.justadventure.com/TheInventory/TheInventory.shtml> and keep yourself busy during the holidays!

That's all for now, we hope that you enjoy your holidays and we wish you all a happy new year.

Dimitris Manos
Editor

Puzzle Page Answers:
Rose, Fawn, Shalo, Shablee
A "Lowe" Blow
1-B 2-B 3-D

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