

No. 4

February 2003

The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only!



**Mega-Interview
with Microids**

**Reviews:
Ozzie
Myst III**

**Everything you want
to know about...**

**REVIEW OF
*THE MONTH***



BLADE RUNNER

Syberia 2

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Prologue

Do we have news for you? You bet we do. The Inventory is proud to offer you the most detailed insight you can get on the sequel to the award-winning Syberia and most awaited adventure for the year 2003, Syberia 2. But who would be better to tell you about it, than the very people that are making it themselves?

Therefore we thought of inviting them to our celebrity corner and they kindly accepted our invitation. So if you are eager to know what Syberia 2 holds in store for you then jump right on to our celebrity corner where Benoît Sokal, Patrik Méthé and Cedric Orvoine are waiting for you to talk about Syberia 2, Syberia 1, themselves, Microids and other topics.

Now on the shadow of this amazing interview you will also find some more shining news. Yngvil Runde comes back with a review tribute to one of the most controversial puzzle-adventures ever, Myst III.

In the review of the month we will take you on a journey to the future where 'replicants' are posing a threat to the human society, and you, the Blade Runner, have to stop this threat before it is too late. We also have a review of one more gem coming out from the independent scene's 'treasure chest', and this gem is called Ozzie and the Quantum Playwright.

If Syberia 2 is not enough future news for you, then you could also check out two very promising adventures in our preview section. These two adventures are CSI, which is a 1st person adventure based on the famous TV-series and Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth, which is based on the adventures of the most renowned archaeologist in the world and will remind you of the last Indy adventure, Fate of Atlantis. The future looks bright indeed. Both previews contain exclusive screenshots.

From this month we open up a communication channel with our readers, and this channel is the Invento-mail where we will be answering your questions / comments / suggestions / crazy ideas / and everything else you want to share with us! So if you want to write us, send us a mail to either theinventory@yahoo.com or ithill_anorien@hotmail.com and maybe next month your letter will be featured in the Invento-mail!

Enough with the prologue now...let's get down to business!

Dimitris Manos

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NAG (Nordic Adventure Guild)

Previews



Last month we reviewed Law and Order, an adventure based on a famous TV-series. Now only short after the release of Law and Order another adventure based on a famous TV-series is ready to hit the store shelves. CSI: Crime Scene Investigation is the new 1st person adventure by Ubisoft Entertainment where you are going to take the role of a CSI agent.

You will get to work alongside all the famous members of the CSI team like Grissom and Catherine and you will have the chance to question witnesses, examine crime scenes, interrogate suspects and analyse evidence utilizing the latest forensic equipment.

Tony Key, the vice president of marketing for Ubisoft said: *The CSI computer game showcases the key elements that have catapulted the show to number one status: the characters, the investigation, the forensic science, and crime-solving challenge. Can you handle a crime scene of your own? Become a part of the CSI team and find out.*





The award winning author, Max Allan Collins, who writes the TV series script and has also written three CSI novels, has written the script for the cases in the game, while the cast includes the voice talents of the entire cast from William Petersen to Jorja Fox. The music will also include the soundtrack from the TV show.

The gameplay will include five crimes that you will have to investigate and as a CSI agent you will have access to a variety of forensics and lab equipment including fingerprint dusters, UV lights and casting kits. I asked Tyrone Miller, the PR manager of Ubisoft who handles CSI, whether CSI will include a timer like Law and Order did. Well I am happy to report that Tyrone replied the following: *there will not be a clock in this game - players can complete each case at their own pace.*

The Ubisoft developers seem to follow the Microids paradigm by producing a quite easy adventure. The use of the tools mentioned before will be quite simplified and the interface will guide the player to the hotspots by indicating clearly where there are interesting things to interact with. Add to that the fact that in most scenes there is going to be another CSI agent present to guide you and help you and it seems like we have another new generation adventure that focuses mostly in the story and uses puzzles in order to progress it and not to prolong it.

As you can see already in the screenshots the graphics are jaw dropping. The detail given to the 3D models seem to surpass even those of Law and Order. The similarities with their real counterparts are more than striking while the lighting effects also seem impressive.





It has to be noted here that CSI is one of the most successful TV-series right now worldwide. In the USA only it airs every week to an average of 28.7 million viewers. Therefore CSI is an upcoming adventure full of promises.

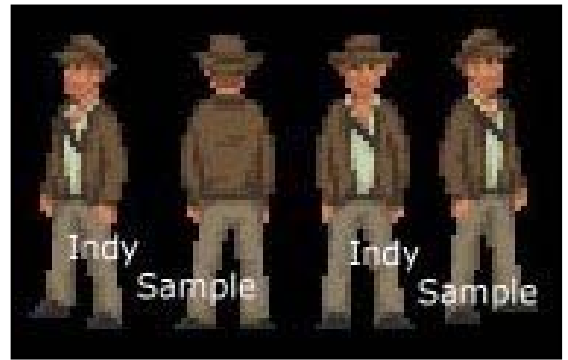
It bears the name of a famous TV-series with public that could be easily enchanted by the magic of adventures, the graphics of the game looks excellent as you can see for yourselves, it is written by a professional writer, it will feature a professional soundtrack similar to the series and the gameplay sounds exciting. The release date that is set for the Nordic Region is 24th of April. One thing is for sure, that we can't wait. For more information you can visit the site of the game:

<http://www.ubi.com/US/Games/csi/>



INDIANA JONES AND THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

The most famous archaeologist in the world is finally coming back. Screen 7 Entertainment is the team behind this fan made adventure of Indiana Jones that will bring back one of the most beloved heroes of the adventure genre. Last time we saw him, he saved the earth after taking a long trip to the legendary Atlantis. His new adventure will look and feel like Fate of Atlantis, so those of you who were fans of FOA, and I am sure there were a lot, will probably enjoy thoroughly the Fountain of Youth.



However this is not just a sequel to FOA. Screen 7 Entertainment's artists are creating brand new characters and backgrounds. The game engine that is used is Adventure Game Studio. The team that is working FOY consists of Mark Lovegrove and Shawn Guzzo (game designers), Alan Rodrigues (character artist) and Misja van Laatum (background artist).

The story takes us back to 1939 when a German colonel is determined to find and turn into a deadly weapon the legendary fountain of youth, which would grant eternal life to those that would bathe in and drink water from. You take the role of Indy, in his attempt to stop the German colonel.

In order to do that you will have to travel all around the world to countries like USA, England, Africa and Syria. The game will feature more than 50 locations and more than 20 characters. The soundtrack of FOY will be more than 1 hour long. Indiana Jones FOY is still in the early development stages and the developers are estimating sometime in 2004 as the release date, though nothing is sure yet. To open up your appetite here are two screens from the introduction of this upcoming 3rd person point and click adventure. For more information you can visit Screen 7 Entertainment's main site for the game: <http://screen7.adventuredevelopers.com/foy/index.htm>

Indy is coming back! Now I will leave you drooling over the screenshots because I have to go and find my whip and my fedora. They will probably come in handy soon...



Adventure Gossip

Latest gossip about The Longest Journey 2

Ragnar Tornquist has been giving a lot of feedback on the progress of planning a sequel for The Longest Journey through his journal. He has already revealed that April Ryan will not be the main character of TLJ2 but the lead will still be female. April Ryan will however return as a secondary character that you will not be able to control. Ragnar Tornquist also hinted at the use of a 3D environment and a direct control. After polls on forums and e-mails sent to him worrying for the latter, Ragnar cleared out that what he meant is not the direct control most people think about when they hear the words direct control (Monkey Island 4), and that the PC version of TLJ2 will probably be mouse controlled.

He stated also that even though these are his current thoughts, nothing is decided for the future of the game and that it is even uncertain whether there is ever going to be a TLJ2. Even if there was one made it would take at least 2 years to be developed, so judging by these estimations I find it impossible that we are going to be walking again through the streets of Arcadia before 2006 at least. We can only hope for now that FUNCOM will listen to the desires of their fans for a sequel and that we will get to talk again with the likes of Abnaxus and Flipper Burns! Those of you interested to learn more can visit his journal:

<http://www.ragnartornquist.com/thoughts.html>

Dreamcatcher enters the European market!

Great news for all us European adventurers. The biggest adventure publisher in the US, Dreamcatcher, decided to enter the European gaming market. They have already opened an office in Paris and have started negotiations with a number of key European distributors. They expect to publish their games in UK, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal by the end of February 2003.

This is another positive event, in the series of positive events taking place lately in the adventure community. If someone bears in mind that Europe has traditionally been the friendliest market for adventure games, then it is easy to understand what kind of outcome such a move can bring.

There is no indication of what will happen in the Nordic Region, but the truth is that Webhallen has already brought, and plans to bring, games provided by Dreamcatcher.

Sherlock Holmes comes to the Nordic Region

The upcoming 1st person adventure Sherlock Holmes: The Mystery of The Mummy of Frogwares (that we featured an interview with, last month) comes to the Nordic Region and Webhallen on the 2nd quarter of 2003. It is one more title that is being brought to us from the Adventure Company. For more info:

<http://www.frogwares.com/sherlock/index.htm>

Zelenhgorm launches new site

Zelenhgorm, the FMV adventure produced by the Swedish developer Moloto has launched a new site which is very enhanced and provides much more information and screenshots than the last one. Feel free to visit it and take a look in the streets and people of Senava. Those of you who find it interesting can also read the interview with Michi Lantz and the review of Zelenhgorm in The Inventory issues 1 & 2.

<http://www.zelenhgorm.com>

The Celebrity Corner

“Syberia game brings back adventure genre”
-CNN

INTERVIEW WITH MICROIDS

In December 2002 The Inventory awarded Syberia with the ‘Best Adventure Award’ for the year 2002. This month the celebrity corner of The Inventory is more than proud to welcome the people that have made the world talk about adventures again. **Benoît Sokal**, the author/art director of Syberia and creator of Kate Walker, **Patrik Méthé**, the game designer of Syberia and **Cedric Orvoine**, the PR manager of Microids are all here to answer the burning questions that we have.

It is a great honour to interview the people that have produced one of the best adventures ever. Congratulations for your work and thank you for participating. Now let us go to the questions:

YOURSELVES

- Could you give us some background on yourselves?

Benoît Sokal: *Comic books author for over 25 years. Jumped in the VG industry with Amerzone in the late 90s. I live in France and travel to Montreal, Canada, every month to supervise Syberia’s development.*

Patrick Méthé: *Game Designer for Microïds – I’ve studied in literature and cinema, played D&D games and other RPGs for over 20 years. I think what helped me the most is my literature and cinema experience, two close aspects of Benoît’s work.*

Cédric Orvoine: *PR Manager, Microïds. I’ve been in the PR business for the last 6 years and in the VG industry since 2001.*

- Do you play adventure games yourselves?

BS: *Of course.*

PM: *Among other genres yes. My favorite type of game is mostly “horror-survival” type of games.*

CO: *Among other genres, yes.*



SYBERIA 1

Story:

- Let us start with the main heroine of Syberia, Kate. Why did you decide to choose a female lead?

BS: *This is probably the question we get asked the most... Simply put, I believe that choosing a female character was the best avenue to communicate Syberia's story to the players. I also wanted to build a strong character reflecting the reality of the 21st century for women – something we barely see in the actual gaming industry.*

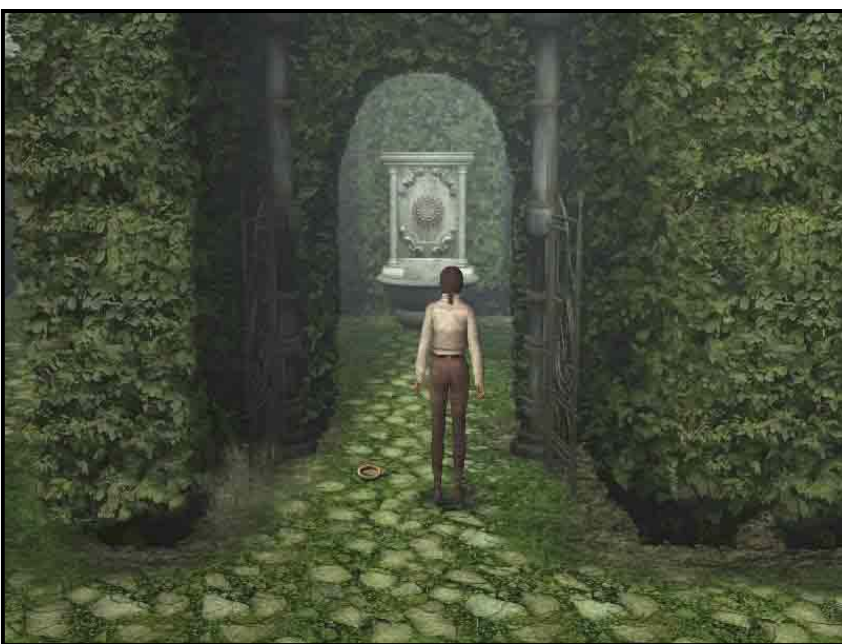
For once, we have a character built around her personality traits instead of her physical attributes.

- Kate is sometimes egoistic and she has a 'high-nose' attitude, especially in the beginning of the game and towards Momo. Why did you decide to give her these characteristics?

BS: *I'm not sure 'high-nose' is the proper description of Kate's attitude at the beginning. Valadilene is a much different world than where she's coming from. Kate is an ambitious woman. Much of her attention has been directed towards her career and that's what we wanted to reflect in her attitude.*

Remember she's in Valadilene on a business purpose. It is supposed to be quick. Time is money and she's under pressure from her bosses. No time for sentiments on this mission...

- Did you have any inspirations while creating Kate? Some women you have met in your life maybe? What about her appearance? Did you draw Kate having someone in mind?



BS: *No, Kate hasn't been inspired by anybody in particular. I've been inspired by actual females in general. Building the personality of Kate Walker has been one of our main challenges in the development of this game. We wanted to make sure she was the kind of character you'd expect to find tangled up in such a wild adventure and to make sure she had the moxy that a main character needs to be believable.*

As for her appearance, I didn't draw her with anyone in mind. It's all imagination...

- Syberia's story is definitely one of the most original ones, not only in computer games, but also in any story-telling medium. How did you come up with the concepts of automatons and mammoths?

BS: *It's really hard to say...It has been a very very long creation process. The automaton technology has been very important in Europe in the early 1900s and there was a huge expertise developed around that technology, most notably around the French and Swiss Alps. It's a big chunk of the evolution that brought us to where we are today with the robots...*

As for the mammoths...I have always been inspired by animals. If you read my Comic Book series Canardo, you'll see all the characters are animal-inspired. Amerzone was also a story about birds...

I've read about mammoths somewhere a few years ago. Some traces were found on an island north of Russia. Since then, I've been interested in building a story where these "forgottens" animal had a role in the plot.

-What are the major differences between creating a comic book and creating an adventure game? Which is more fun to do and why?

BS: *There is mainly one big difference: Team Work. I've been working alone for 25 years. Suddenly I have to share the work with 35 young people knowing better than me how to use computers and artist software. It has been a learning experience to say the least.*

- A lot of people on the several forums about games on the Internet have admitted that they cried while playing Syberia. How did you manage to pass so strong emotions across your audience?

BS: *Knowing that people cried at the end of Syberia is a recognition of the quality of the work we accomplished. And I'm proud and touched by the reception Syberia had from those who played it and enjoyed it.*

As I said often, before being a game, Syberia is most notably a story. To express Kate Walker's adventures through a medium such as a Video Game allowed us to explore a totally new artistic expression, particularly in the relationship that has been developed between the player and the story. This relationship has revealed itself as being very intimate and it is something we want to make sure to keep with Syberia II.



I think the quality of the graphics, the music, the strength of the characters and the storyline have all contributed to the way we were able to communicate these emotions.

- What were your favourite characters from Syberia?

BS: *Hans & Kate.*

Graphics / Sound

- Most adventure companies nowadays jump on the 3D bandwagon thinking that the 3D graphics by themselves are going to make their games great and successful. Syberia that is the most successful adventure of the last 2 years, although it did feature 3D characters, used 2D backgrounds. Why did you choose not to go full 3D?

BS: *We chose not to go full 3D for a few reasons. The first being that by using pre-rendered 2D environments we were able to reach an unprecedented graphic quality and a level of details easily bypassing what we could have done by choosing to go full 3D.*

3D graphics also necessitate 3D acceleration cards and high performance machines and we wanted to make sure that everybody (or so) could play Syberia.

- Your adventures before Syberia were all 1st person adventures. Why did you decide to choose 3rd person for Syberia?

BS: *Well, I had only made one game, Amerzone... We decided to go third person with Syberia because we wanted to keep a constant level of graphic quality. When you go first person you often lose some quality and/or performance because you have to add some polygons to your characters to make them prettier, then it gets heavier on the machine... We also didn't want to have warps environments.*

Gameplay / Interface:

- Although some of the puzzles of Syberia seemed difficult at first sight (the image of levers and a big maze-that-was-not-finally-a-maze probably caused a heart attack to many adventure gamers when they first saw them) they proved to be straightforward, easy and fun in the end. By reading the forums on Syberia's site, it turns out that this easy gameplay style has introduced a new breed of players in the adventure genre. Why did you decide to use easy puzzles?

BS & PM: *We built the puzzles with two specific ideas in mind. At first, we wanted to make sure that the puzzles were well integrated in the plot. It was important for us to not have puzzles coming out of nowhere or to notch up the difficulty of these puzzles just to make the game longer. Secondly, while developing Syberia we made a commitment to the story and we didn't want the puzzles to interfere with the development of the story for the players. Difficult puzzles are appreciated by experienced adventure gamers but are a pain for some others. We tried to please as much people as possible while keeping Syberia's story at the heart of our preoccupations.*

- There are some individuals who believe that point and click games are a thing of the past. However Syberia was a point and click game and it was a success. What is your opinion about the point and click interface?

BS: *You know everyone has opinions on a variety of things. Some say the adventure genre is dead. Now it's the point & click interface that's a thing of the past? Syberia II will be a point & click game so we will stay true to the decision we made to go with this type of interface.*

Promotion

- How many copies has Syberia sold so far?

CO: *No official figures have been announced yet but we can safely say that we've sold over 225,000 copies of Syberia.*

- Many adventure-developing companies face big troubles when negotiating with publishers concerning publishing of their titles. Some of them never even make it to the game stores. Syberia however except from the fact that it reached almost every game store in most corners of the earth, it also got a place among the best selling titles in the shelves. What was your trick? What did you do right, that the rest of the companies do wrong? What would be your advice to the rest of the companies producing adventures?

CO: *That's a tricky question... I'm not sure we're in a position where we can give advice on what to do or not to do to other developers... Don't forget Microïds is publishing its own game in almost every country of Europe and Canada. That's a first step. Also, let's just say that Syberia isn't the first game we release, we have over 15 years of international experience in the gaming industry.*



- Is there any chance that we might see a DVD-version of Syberia sometime in the future and if yes then do you know what extras could it include?

CO: *A DVD version has already been released in Europe. It includes the Making Of the game. If the demand is strong enough in North America there is a possibility that a DVD version becomes available here.*

SYBERIA 2

Story

- While the majority of players loved the story of Syberia, many of them found it short and wished that the game was longer. Is Syberia 2 going to be longer than its predecessor? How much time do you think an average gamer will need to finish it?

BS: *It is still too early to estimate the playing time of Syberia II. We've heard the complaints of those stating the game was too short. We'll work on that. But one thing is sure; we won't make the game longer just for the sake of making it longer. We're not going to add some walking or toughen up the puzzles just to make the gaming experience longer.*

- In the end of Syberia 1 Kate, Oscar and Hans were on the train so I assume that they will all come back in Syberia 2. Will we get to meet any other characters from the first part in Syberia 2?

BS: *Syberia II will begin exactly where the first chapter left the players, with Kate, Hans and Oscar traveling to an undisclosed destination. Apart from that we're not going to give the scoops right now regarding the chance of meeting other characters from Kate's journey's first episode.*

- Will Kate get to travel in different locations around the world again?

BS: *To put it simply. Kate's trip will continue. Syberia's story is all about traveling. As mentioned, it will continue.*



- Will it be possible for someone who has not played Syberia 1 to start with Syberia 2 and not miss out on the whole story?

BS: *It is important for us that Syberia II becomes a standalone game. A player who hadn't previously played the first episode will be able to play the game easily. Obviously, the best thing is to play both games.*

- Is there any chance that we will see another Syberia after the second one or will the Syberia story end with the second part?

BS: *No chance at all...Syberia II will be the second and last episode of Kate Walker's adventures with Hans Voralberg. Doesn't mean though it will be Kate Walker's last adventures...*

Graphics / Sound

- Will Syberia 2 use the same graphics engine, as Syberia 1, or will there be enhancements?

BS: *Yes we will use the same graphic engine but some enhancements will be brought upon to make sure we raise the bar once again in terms of quality. Let's mention these additions: Dynamic Graphics and Lighting details such as glass reflections, ice texture, uniform fabric, and decals, Real time snowfall and footsteps marks, Dynamic lighting and shadows, Animated fog and finally, Enhanced in-game animation*

- Approximately how many music tracks will Syberia 2 contain and how much time will the soundtrack last?

BS: *It is way too early to talk about the music at this stage of the development process. The music hasn't been composed yet. It hasn't been determined yet the number of tracks and the length of the soundtrack. It's clear though that we consider the music as one of the most important aspect of the game so there will be a lot of work invested in it.*



- Is Syberia 2 going to include a large number of cutscenes as the first one did?

BS: *Yes... And more. Our animation team works really hard on creating cutscenes and animated sequences that surpassed the ones created in the first episode of Syberia. These cinematics are little gifts for the players.*

- Are the same actors going to do the voice-overs for the characters from the first part of Syberia?

BS: *It hasn't been determined yet. It all depends on their availability and on the evaluation we made of the work done in the first episode.*

Gameplay / Interface:

- Are you going to use the same interface with Syberia 1, or are you going to change it? If you are going to change it, then in what way? What are the major differences between the old and the new interface going to be?

BS: *The exactly same interface will be used in Syberia II.*

- Some players of Syberia 1 thought that the interface could be a little bit more 'interactive' and missed the ability to 'look' at certain objects in the game and get some feedback from Kate about them. Will the interface of Syberia 2 address this issue?

BS: *It's not that we didn't listen to these people but it is impossible to please everyone. As mentioned in the previous question, the interface will be the same as in Syberia I.*

- Is Syberia 2 going to have the same level of difficulty as the first one?

BS: *About the same level of difficulty yes.*

- Are the puzzles of the second one going to be different in some way from Syberia 1, and if yes in what way?

BS: *We're working hard to better integrate the puzzles in the story once again. They have to be logical to the players. Some of the puzzles will be a bit tougher also.*

- What about the dialogue system? Is it going to be altered?

BS: *The conversations will be generated by an evolutionary dialog system, which will be a bit different from the one we had previously. We want to bring a little bit more of dynamism in the dialogues.*

- Will Kate still use her mobile phone in Syberia 2?

BS: *Yes she will but less. As she shut the door on most of her past, people who used to call her will have more and more difficulty to reach her... The cell phone will take a lesser importance in Syberia II.*

Promotion

- Is everything going as planned so far? Does it look like the game will be ready on October 2003 as it has been announced, and will it have the same release date worldwide?

CO: *Everything is going as planned. We will respect the Gold date fixed as October 2003 and we are working on making sure we will have an international simultaneous release date. We're confident we'll accomplish that.*

- When releasing a sequel it is quite often that companies follow a variety of methods in order not to discourage new customers from the possible fact that they might not have played the first one (i.e. giving a sequel a whole new name instead for using the same name and adding a 2). Are you going to follow such methods?

CO: *No. The definitive title might not be Syberia II. There might be a new tag line or something added to Syberia II. It's not definitive yet.*

- Have you thought of any ways that could make Syberia 2 even more popular than Syberia 1?

CO: *1) Make sure it's a better game. 2) Make sure we build a bigger hype around it. It is all about marketing and PR... Obviously, we will not share our strategic marketing approach ;)*



MICROIDS

- Can you tell us a little bit about Microïds?

CO: *Microïds was founded in 1985 in France, Microïds develops, publishes and distributes PC and Console video game software throughout the world. With R&D studios in Paris and Montreal, and distribution entities in Canada, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, Microïds currently employs over 200 people, 105 of which are based in Montreal. (www.microïds.com)*

- Why have you chosen to support the adventure genre so much?

CO: *Over the years, we have developed an expertise regarding the adventure genre. Our work with Benoît Sokal also brought us closer to the genre. It's not that we support the genre. Once again, it's all about the story...*

We also think that the adventure genre is not dead as some keep saying. It's a different public yes, so we try to build different games.

- There have been rumors over the net that Microïds is planning to produce approximately two adventures per year. Of course as you can understand these rumors were sweet music to the ears of all adventurers. Are these rumors true?

CO: *Rumours are rumours... These rumours are coming from the fact that 2002 has seen us releasing Syberia and Post Mortem. 2003 will only see one adventure game coming out of Microïds studios, Syberia II.*

No we haven't committed to that type of planning.

- What should we expect to see after Syberia 2? Any more adventures that you have already planned making?

CO: *Syberia II will be followed by other games, some adventure some not. Some Action/Adventure, some purely adventure, some sport simulations...But to be clear, we are definitively planning to develop more adventure games in the future.*

- Benoît will we have the honour of seeing more adventures made by you in the future? And what about you Patrik? Would you like to design more adventures?

BS: *I think it's safe to say that I will be working on other adventure projects after Syberia II. What these projects will be, it's still too early to tell...*

PM: *I'd sure like to work on other adventure games in the future but as Benoît said, it is way too early to tell.*

- Do you plan to base your productions on 3rd person adventures like Syberia, on 1st person adventures like Post Mortem, or will you offer a variety of options?

BS: *I think every options will be evaluated when the designs of the games will be chosen. The decision on going with a first or third person perspective depends on every project. There is no point in taking a decision like that before even knowing the story plot of a game...*

- Do you want to talk about any other future plans of Microids?

CO: *I think we covered plenty...*

GENERAL

- What do you think has to happen for adventures to come back to the forefront of gaming?

BS: *Quality games, quality story ...*



- Some people believe that adventures are being marketed towards the wrong audiences. They believe that adventures should not be placed in game stores that are populated by young teenagers who have a tendency for action games, but instead they should be placed in bookstores or DVD/Video stores instead. I will also quote Jane Jensen, creator of considered by many the best adventure series, from an interview she had with Randy Sluganski on Just Adventure.

“Randy Sluganski: Gabriel Knight 3 was a bestseller for the first month of its release and then the bottom dropped out. Once the core adventure game audience has shown their support, where do we go to drive more sales?”

Jane Jensen: If I knew, I'd have a lot more money. :-) I tried to encourage Sierra to advertise in untraditional media such as mystery magazines, *Fortean Times* magazine, etc., but that just never happened. [...] I think that the audience for these kinds of games is a non-traditional computer game audience. **How do we reach them?** I have no idea. It may just be a matter of time, waiting for the technology to get pervasive enough that everyone has access to it as a matter of course.”

What is your opinion on the matter? Do you think that the audience for adventures is a non-traditional computer game audience? And if so, then how do we reach them?

CO: *I would tend to partially agree with Jane. I also think the audience for adventure games is a non-traditional computer game audience and that we have to find other channels to reach them. But still, adventure games must be placed into gaming stores.*

The publishers must work on developing new distribution channel like libraries, CD/DVD stores among others.

The best way to reach them is to go as wide as possible in terms of marketing and publicity. Forget buying ads in PC Gamer, CGW or others. We must reach the mass. Movie previews, subway or buses advertising, major dailies, good PR... I think developing business partnership with non-gaming related companies also benefits the game. Anyway, I can't tell you all of our secrets ;)



- In the recent years several companies producing adventures (as they called them) have tried to give a boost on their sales by including action elements to their games, or leaving the point and click interface for other methods of control like keyboard and joypad. Most of them if not all, failed miserably to produce a positive outcome.

Syberia however that has been the biggest success in adventures

the last 2 years instead of ‘jumping’ on the mainstream bandwagon, decided to use a point and click interface, 2D backgrounds, a 3rd person viewpoint and focused more on story and less on puzzle-solving. The adventure that was the biggest success before Syberia was The Longest Journey, that also used a point and click interface, 3rd person viewpoint with 2D backgrounds and also focused heavily on story. Do you think these facts tell us something?

CO: *I’m not sure it says a lot more than the fact that adventure gamers aren’t action/adventure gamers...*

- Do you think that it would be profitable for an adventure company to put a commercial of their product on television? Do you think that the income based on such an action, would cover the cost of it?

CO: *It all depends... Buying an advertising spot on a national channel is so costly... You’d have to be sure of your shot. But I think that if your message is well directed and that you aim the right audience, it can be pretty successful.*

My opinion on publicity and advertising is that the one thing you can not do is put all your eggs in the same basket. If you put all your marketing money in one commercial on TV, you’ll get screwed. You need some frequency (people must see your image often), and you need different sources for your messages (Prints, TV, Radio, Web + Previews, reviews, Interviews, Trade shows). People must forge their opinion from different sources.



- Is there anything else you would like to add?

BS, PM, CO: *Thanks for the opportunity to discuss Syberia II with you!*

It has been a great joy to hear from the people that have resurrected the adventure genre. I wish you good luck with Syberia 2 and all your efforts to bring back adventure games to the forefront of gaming.

REVIEW OF THE MONTH



BLADE RUNNER™

Early in the 21st century, the Tyrell Corporation advanced Robot evolution into the Nexus phase – a being visually identical to a human – known as a Replicant. The NEXUS 6 Replicants were superior in strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the generic engineers who created them.

Replicants were used Off-World as slave labor in the hazardous exploration and colonization of other planets. After a bloody mutiny by a NEXUS 6 combat team in an Off-World colony, Replicants were declared illegal on earth – under penalty of death. Special police squads – BLADE RUNNER UNITS – had orders to shoot to kill upon detection any trespassing Replicant.

This was not called execution.

It was called retirement...

Blade runner was one of the most beloved science fiction movies in the 80s. The love of its fans towards it, is evident even nowadays with several Internet sites dedicated to the movie. Westwood decided a couple of years ago to transfer the world of the movie Blade Runner into an adventure. Although it is not one of the top adventures of all times, Blade Runner is a game that everybody should experience, especially because of its unique atmosphere that has inspired other movies and computer games like The Longest Journey.



Story: The story of Blade Runner takes place in Los Angeles in the year 2019. As the story starts you get to see an impressive introduction. A girl is asking from her employer in an animal sales store to get a break from work, but he refuses her to do so. At that point two men enter the store, threaten the storekeeper and without any apparent reason kill all the animals. From that moment you take control of the blade runner agent McCoy. You are being called to investigate the animal sales store and discover who committed this crime and what are the motives behind it.

Blade Runner does not feature a linear story like most adventures do. The story can follow a variety of branches depending on some choices you will have to take while playing it. The actions that you are going to take will be decisive in the finale, where the ending can be very different according to what you have chosen. This feature adds to the replay value of the game, since it is interesting to experience all the different endings, but at the same time it seems like the developers focused too much on that issue in expense of the story. The duration of the whole game is quite short, and this is probably also an outcome of the different paths that you can take during the game because in a sense there are different games to be played in one.



BLADE RUNNER

Developer: **Westwood Studios**

Category: **Point and click**

Perspective: **3rd person**

Difficulty: **Easy/Medium**

Site: **N/A**

Where to buy it:

www.gamesmix.com

The first time I finished the game it seemed like some questions were left unanswered and as the game was somehow rushed during the end. The story however is quite entertaining and it keeps your interest high in the most parts of the game. The game borrows many concepts, events and some characters from the movie but it has its own scenario.

The characters are very distinctive, 'colorful' and memorable. I liked almost all the replicants in the game and I found them to have a much more natural behaviour than human, as crazy as that might sound.



Graphics: Blade Runner has some of the most impressive cutscenes ever seen in adventures. They give the feeling of a movie to the whole game. It also features some of the best lighting effects I have seen in a game. They are really amazing and they play a big role in forming the futuristic atmosphere that dominates in the whole game. The several backgrounds are very detailed. Some of the locations of the game are very original when it comes to adventures. You will visit nightclubs, underground metros, bars, arcades and weapon shops. Some of the locations are also taken from the film.

One complaint I had when it comes to the graphics, was that the in-game camera was very distant. Sometimes the character is not even clearly visible on screen. And especially during dialogues some close-ups would be more than welcome. Apart from that, the in-game graphics are quite pixelated also, but this is understandable bearing in mind that Blade Runner has not been released recently. Even the menus have a futuristic design. In a few words, the graphics create an amazing atmosphere throughout the game that will capture the eyes of every science fiction fan.



Sound: The strongest point of Blade Runner is its audio. Apart from the fact that it borrows some tracks from the great soundtrack of the movie it also features professional and convincing voice-overs. The acting ranks among the best experienced in adventures. I cannot remember a single actor throughout the game that I didn't enjoy listening to. Blade Runner is definitely a seminar for acting in a game. I enjoyed thoroughly as well the songs playing in the nightclubs and bars that you get to visit.





Gameplay: Unfortunately like some other games we have reviewed lately, Blade Runner's gameplay did not reach the standards of its audio and visual counterparts. It tried to be innovative by introducing a new inventory system. You have the ability to pick up items and store them but they are there mostly for reference or for opening a new dialogue option with a suspect that was not available before. You cannot use any of the items you gather in any other way. Add to that that you gather too many items that your character never gets rid of and you get an inventory that is badly organised and that you actually have no use of.

The fact that the in-game camera is usually too distant leads often to pixel-hunting and sometimes you have to really scan your screen carefully if you want to proceed in the story which can become quite annoying. Since you are not able to use items in the game world, the game uses some untraditional puzzles. Some of them were quite fun, for example (*spoilers*) you are tied on a chair and you had to find a way to cut the ropes or you came in a room where there was someone tied, a bomb would explode soon, and you had to release the person and make it out in time (*end of spoilers*).

Another original puzzle that tied in well with the story was the ESPER unit that is also taken from the movie. The purpose of ESPER is to zoom in and enhance photos that will help you identify suspects, or take a closer look at other helpful clues. There is also some action in the game where you have to shoot at enemies but in most cases it is a matter of choice whether you want to shoot or co-operate and communicate. BR is by no means an action/adventure, it is a pure adventure.

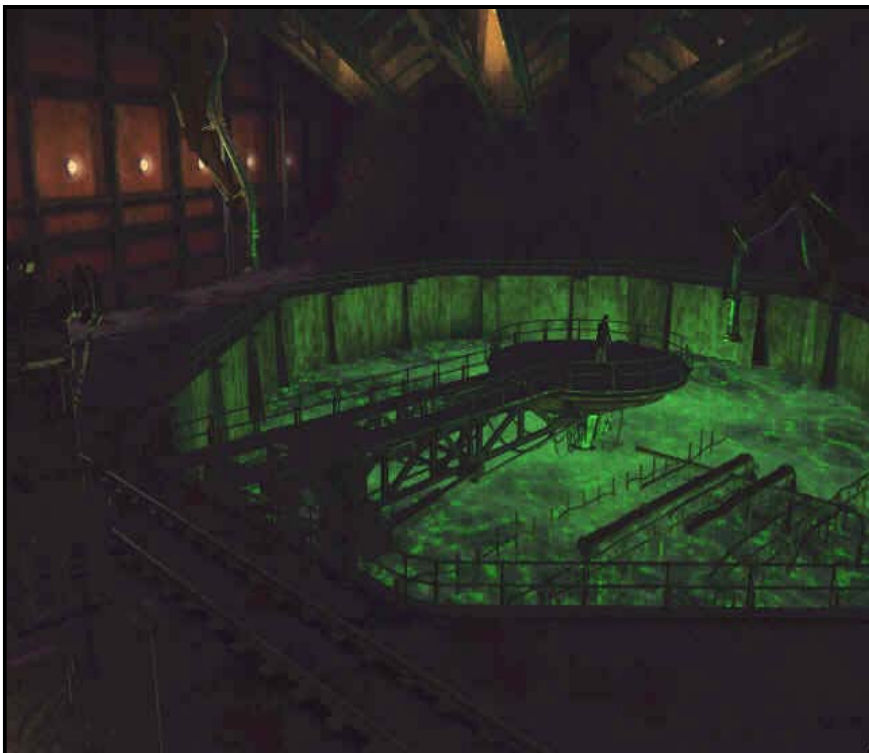


There are a couple of moments throughout the game that it is not quite clear what you have to do next in order to proceed with the story which is also a minus. Another annoying issue concerning gameplay was that you could not skip the dialogues or comments from McCoy. So if you looked at an object where McCoy gave a 6-sentences description and you had heard it before, there would be nothing you could do to skip it. Last but not least, there is no possibility to have subtitles, which was another negative aspect of BR, especially for the characters that spoke with foreign accents.



General info: I was happy to receive Blade Runner in its original box and not in a budget version box, although it is being sold for just 80 SEK (around 8\$). The box that is sold in the Nordic Region contains the 4 CDs of the game and a manual translated in Swedish, Norwegian, Finish and Danish. I encountered no bugs while playing the game and it run flawlessly under Windows 2000. The movie Blade Runner was released 21 years ago (1982) and the main actor was Harrison Ford. If you are a sci-fi fan then it is highly recommended that you watch the film. It has been one of the most influential movies in the recent film history and its concepts have been copied several times.

The movie itself is based on the book Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep, written by Philip Kindred Dick in 1968. If you do watch the movie before playing the game then you are bound to appreciate the game even more because it has absolutely succeeded in transferring the atmosphere of the film. If you want more information about the movie Blade Runner and everything else surrounding it you should pay a visit to <http://www.brmovie.com> where you will find lots of details.



System Requirements:

Windows 95

Pentium 90 MHZ

16 MB RAM

150MB HARD DISK

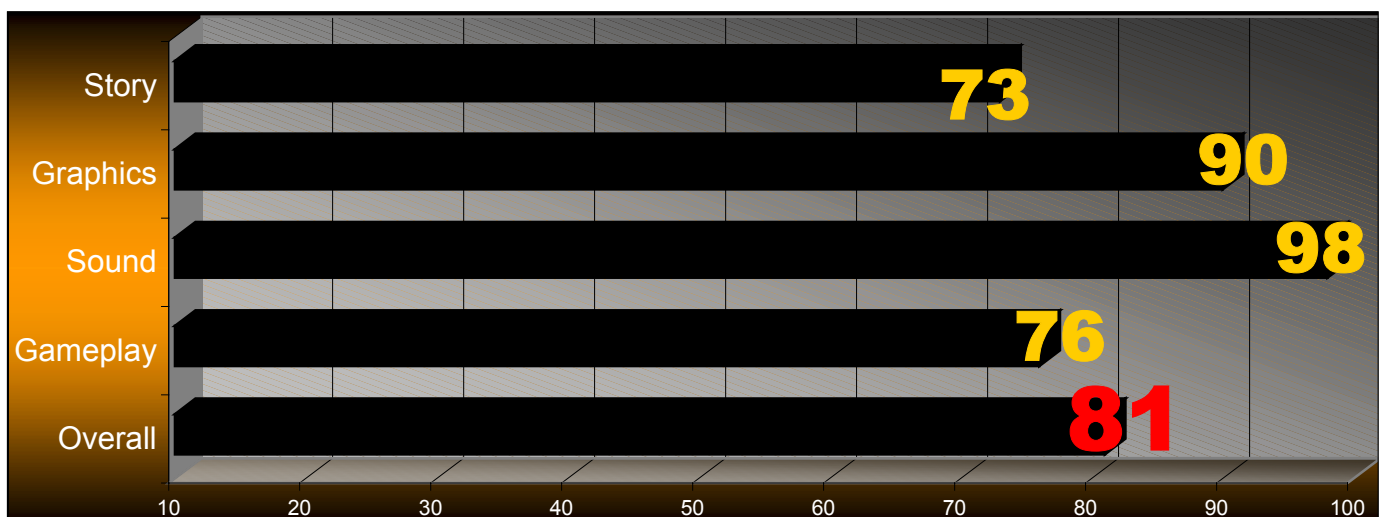
DIRECTX SOUNDCARD

DIRECTX VIDEO CARD

4X CD-ROM



In a few words... Blade Runner is a game that nobody should miss, mostly for its unique atmosphere and its cult theme. Especially now that it costs as much as a taxi fare it is a must buy for those that enjoy science fiction stories. It features one of the best audio experiences gained from games, excellent cutscenes and some innovative puzzles but unfortunately some plot holes and poor game design steal away the characterisation of a classic from Blade Runner. It is still nevertheless thoroughly entertaining.





OZZIE AND THE QUANTUM PLAYWRIGHT



START



Two months ago we reviewed Tierra's amazing King's Quest 2 remake. Now it is time for one more fan made game to highlight the great potential of independent developers. This adventure is called Ozzie and the Quantum Playwright and it was developed by Six Demon Bag Productions. The game is available for download free of charge from the main site of Six Demon Bag. One thing that the fan made projects have proven so far is that when games are being made with passion and from people that know about adventures then they are much more likely to produce a positive outcome. Ozzie is one more of these proofs.



Story: For those of you who are tired of travelling to Atlantis and to Egypt, Ozzie can be a great escape to a more original environment (at least when it comes to adventures). Ozzie is your average college guy who has a girlfriend called Rose and all that he wants is to have a nice time with her. They are both studying at the University of Greater Rockford (UGR) and life just goes by, until one day the president of UGR, Dr. Kauffman, takes a decision that is going to change the future of Ozzie

OZZIE

AND THE QUANTUM PLAYWRIGHT

Developer: **Six Demon Bag**

Category: **Point and click**

Perspective: **3rd person**

Difficulty: **Easy**

Site:

<http://ozzie.adventuredevelopers.com/page2.html>

Free Download

and Rose once and for all. Dr. Kauffman has given orders to close down the theatre department by the end of the year and build a library for accountants in its place. This means that Rose who studies in the theatre building will have to move far away from Rockford and this would bring an end in the relationship between Rose and Ozzie. Ozzie on the other hand seems like he is determined to do anything possible to keep his girlfriend in UGR. You take control of Ozzie and try to help him in his attempt to cancel Dr. Kauffman's orders.

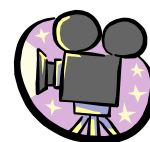


Ozzie's adventure is full of puns and witty moments that will make you laugh quite often. It was a long time since I last played a humoristic adventure actually so Ozzie was a nice breeze of change in all the sci-fi / fantasy adventures that dominate the market. It really brings back memories of older Lucasarts and Sierra adventures where humour was lurking in every corner of the games.

Unfortunately the length of the story is quite short and probably this is why some of the characters seemed quite stale since lots of them only say a couple of lines throughout the whole game. Apparently the developers are big fans of Lucasarts older adventures. Ozzie wears a Sam n Max T-shirt. When you enter the theatre building you see a Lucasarts statuette on the shelves while the robot head seen in the engineering building is reminiscent of Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis. Reference is also being made to several movies like Back To The Future and James Cameron's The



Thing. All these references add a lot to the atmosphere of the game. You also get the help of William Shakespeare. What does William Shakespeare have to do with our age you ask? Well in Ozzie's adventure everything is possible!



Graphics: Ozzie uses 2D cartoon graphics and the result is something more than impressive as you can probably see for yourselves. Both backgrounds and characters are drawn in great



detail. The cutscenes are also impressive and they reminded me a lot of some spiderman comics I used to read when I was younger. The colours are usually very bright and warm and they enhance the whole comic feeling of the game. Animation is not that good though. The characters some times forget to lift their feet from the ground while walking, which looks strange and unnatural. The characters also appear in strange places sometime (i.e. William Shakespeare might appear on top of tables or inside walls) through a glitch in the graphics. Last but not least, the change of colours during day and night was a rather neat effect.



Sound: Here Ozzie could do a lot better. There is no speech but this is not considered as a flaw since it is a fan made adventure. The first impression that you get for the music is that it very well made since the first two-three tracks are nice rock ballads that suit the college theme of Ozzie. But the repetition of the same kind of music throughout the whole game becomes tiring to the ear after a while. Furthermore the absence of sound effects is inevitable not to notice as the fact that you only listen to music makes you feel like you are playing a game that you have muted and listening to the radio instead. The rock ballads are very well performed but there should have been a bigger variety of themes, supported by use of sound effects.





Gameplay: This is the part that most fan made adventures do it as it is supposed to be done! And yes one more time a fan made adventure has a very entertaining and rewarding gameplay. All the puzzles are logical and quite easy and all tie in with the story of the game (with the exception of one where you have to stop a construction from their work, which felt somehow out of place).

The interface used is very similar to games like Curse of Monkey Island and The Longest Journey. By left clicking somewhere Ozzie will walk there, while when you right click on a hot spot you will get the option of looking, talking or touching the item/person you clicked on. By moving the mouse on the top of the screen you take a look in your inventory items. The only aspect of the gameplay that was not top notch as the rest of it, was the repetition of dialogues, that is to say, if you had talked to someone in the beginning of the game you could have the exact same dialogue with that person during the end, if the person was still there.

I am also happy to report that there was no pixel hunting necessary as all of the items that you need to interact with, are clearly visible on the screen. The developers took care also of letting the player know exactly what they have to do next in order to proceed with the game. Commercial companies would have a LOT to learn from fan made adventures like Ozzie.



General info: The game had no bugs at all on the tested system and run flawlessly from beginning to the end. The game is available to download for **free** from the main site of Six Demon Bag. It is split into 11 rar files, so you need WinRar to unzip it. The first ten files are 5.72MB while the last one is 3.12MB. So what are you waiting for? Head over to:

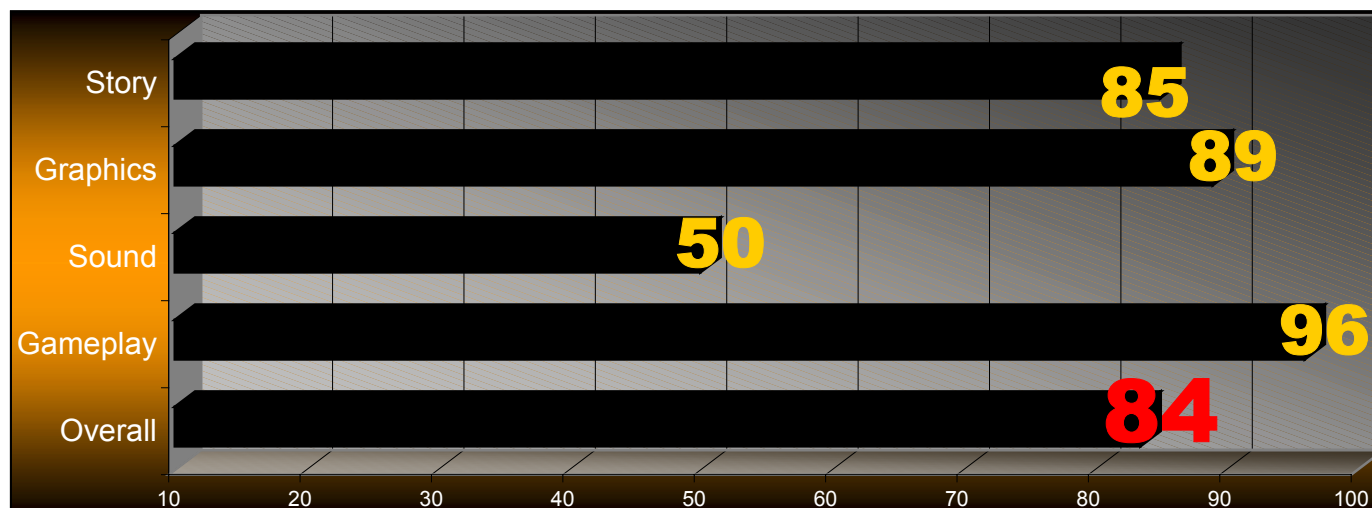
<http://ozzie.adventuredevelopers.com/page2.html>

and download this great game.



In a few words... If there are any people who know how to make adventures then these people are the fans themselves. The independent developers revolution has started and who knows where this revolution can reach. All we know until now is that it has become a gem-producer lately.

Ozzie and the Quantum Playwright is a highly recommended game for all fans of point and click adventures. It is quite likely that it will bring nostalgia to the older ones, and that it will make you laugh on several occasions. Apart from the short length of the story, some minor graphics glitches and the repetitive soundtrack everything else is top notch. Six Demon Bag productions made a hit with their first shot, so I am very eager to see their future work. If it is better than Ozzie then Tierra will have finally found a worthy competitor for the throne of the independent developers' kingdom.





"It's coming back to me now. Why I came to these worlds. How long I have been waiting. I remember who I am and who my enemies are."

"Your sons, Atrus, Sirrus and Achenar."

"Do you know what they did?"



The perfect place to plan revenge



Myst 3:

Exile

A review - tribute

-By Yngvil Runde-

ithill_anorien@hotmail.com

“Fans won’t be disappointed.”

These are the words of Time Magazine, from their *Myst 3: Exile* review. I totally agree. The world has never seen adventure games like the *Myst* games, they are so well made and unique, nobody can help being impressed after playing them. The adventure game world wouldn’t be the same without them.

Cyan produced *Myst* and *Riven*, but Presto Studios made *Myst 3: Exile*, without spoiling a thing. They have used the style from *Riven*, and a bit from *Myst* to create this great game. I can’t believe that there is a fan who does not like the way they made the third *Myst* game. Over 10 million copies of *Myst* and *Riven* are sold (together), so *Exile* really had something to live up to, and they made it.

Myst and its sequel *Riven* did not disappoint anyone, neither does *Myst 3: Exile*, it is in the same style, with many improvements here and there. Let’s begin with the story of this fabulous game.



Story: As I open my eyes, I see a clear, blue sky, large, red rocks, and eagles flying around far above. A woman starts talking, as I turn around, I see her, she’s carrying a baby girl in her arms.

She’s walking around on a beautiful veranda, with two green glass doors, and lots of tall, green bushes. The woman’s name is Catherine, she’s the wife of Atrus, a character with a central role throughout this game.

She tells me that Atrus is out, and that he will soon be back and meet me here. This age is called Tomahna. Catherine sits down on a bench, with the baby names Yeesha in her arms; she says that I can wait in Atrus’ study.

This is how we are introduced to *Myst 3: Exile* and the age of Tomahna (it’s called ages and not worlds in the game). Tomahna is where Atrus lives with his wife Catherine and his child Yeesha. Atrus writes worlds, or ages, and after the books are finished, it’s possible to travel into the different ages, they are called linking books.

A linking book is what you use to get from one age to another. In the ages, there are different people with different cultures, but the list of inhabitants has grown small. This is the story of this game, the people of the different ages are lost, with a few exceptions. One of these exceptions we get to meet early and his name is Saavedro.

Saavedro is the main character in this game. He is a middle-aged man who looks weather-beaten and frantic. Saavedro is full of hate, and he has lost his loved ones. He is after Atrus’ two sons, Sirrus and Achenar, apparently, because they have misled the people of the different ages, and Saavedro now seeks revenge.





Atrus has written all the ages. He has created them himself, but they live their own life and it has been hard for Atrus to control them. His sons have taken advantage of this.

Atrus is writing a book, a new age. He tells about it when we meet him in the study. It's called Releeshahn, and Atrus wants me to go there. Releeshahn is created for the D'ni people, whose age was crushed by hatred. This is going to be a new start for them.

Atrus wants his daughter to lead the D'ni people in the new age, but his plans are ruined. Saavedro shows up in the study, and he steals

Releeshahn. So, we have got it going. Our purpose is to find Saavedro, take Releeshahn back, and make the future of the D'ni brighter.

The story is really fantastic, and it reveals all these small hidden details all the time as I get further in the game. It truly is mysterious, and sometimes it is even scary, the mix of the great graphics, the music, and the story, makes this so real. You feel bits of it physically, like strange noises that can make you shiver, and sudden movements in the game that can make you jump from your chair, but let's get back to this later.



Sound: The award winning soundtrack of *Myst 3 Exile* is maybe the best computer game soundtrack ever made.

The songs really put you in the right mood, a bit dark and lonely, and with the feeling that there are elements of the lost cultures of the different ages. This is almost the best part of the game.

In Jnanin, the most central one of the ages, the sound is just so special. It gives you this intense feeling of sorrow and loneliness, especially when we walk down some metal ladders, and we are getting closer to this little glass house that's at the bottom of the tall tower.



The sound editor of the game, has used only original sounds that he has created himself, so you won't think "Hey, that sounds from *Magic Carpet!*", or other games, commercials or films. This is great, and it really gives the ages their own identity.



Graphics: The best part of the game is absolutely the graphics! With breathtaking landscape, living people as actors, smooth rolling waves and so well animated animals, that looks like they can jump right out of your screen, *Myst 3* have so brilliant graphics that it is really hard to not get impressed by them.



It is in 1st person perspective, and it is a sort of point and click game, with its own revolutionary style (that came with *Myst*). It is really special that you can look around 360 degrees almost wherever you are, the exceptions is the FMV sequences that appears when you link from one age to another through the linking book, and often when you talk to people, or when things move.

The FMV sequences quality is excellent, plus that you see things from 1st person perspective, so you can see things different in the FMV's, and it feels so real, impressive!



The actors: They all play good, but it is easy to see that it is all done with blue screen, and that they really would act better if they were in the true environment, and if their costumes weren't so low budget!

Brad Dourif is the character of Saavedro, and I must say that Dourif is almost as good here as in *The Two Towers*, a fantastic movie directed by Peter Jackson, based on J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy, where Dourif plays the deceiving Grima Wormtounge, his most famous role so far. Dourif will also appear in the trilogy's last film, *The Return of the King*, with it's world premier the 19th December. Dourif is Oscar nominated, so it is both great and weird that he appears here in *Myst 3: Exile*.

Rand Miller is still Atrus, and he maybe knows Atrus best, since he has been producer and executive producer of the *Myst* series. This gives me the feeling of authenticity, and it raises my hope that maybe these worlds exists, somewhere over the rainbow...

Since Miller has not done anything with this game, it is great that he said yes to be Atrus. Sheila Goad who was Catherine in *Riven*, is now replaced by Maria Galante, she does a very good job. Little Audrey Uhler is the baby girl Yeesha.



Gameplay: The game play is in its right place, for a *Myst* game to be. It is almost perfect. What I wish could be different, was the mouse pointer.

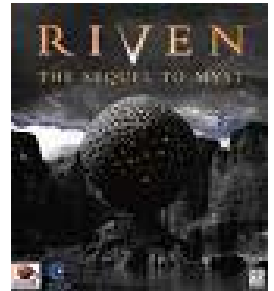
It is really annoying when it is locked in the middle of the screen, but it is possible to change that if you press the right mouse button. That however should be unnecessary, and in the right mouse button mode, it is hard to hit the right spot where you are pointing and clicking. But this is the only complaint, the rest is perfect. It is easy to move here and there, and it is easy to take a look around.



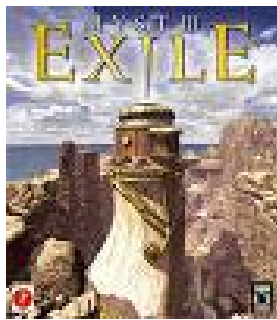
The puzzles are not as hard as in *Riven*, but maybe a bit less creative. But still, many have declared their love for the *Exile* puzzles. The difficulty of the puzzles varies, like they should in a good adventure game, with one or two major puzzles in every age.

This game has only a small inventory, with a few items. We receive a book from Atrus in the beginning. Inside it he has written stuff from when he wrote *Releeshahn*. This becomes useful, and it helps us understand more of the story. Later, a journal kept by Saavedro, is in our hands, but many pages are missing. As we enter new ages we find more pages and learn more about Saavedro and what he has been through... and most important of all, his plans for revenge. In both these books, we also find information that becomes handy under puzzle solutions.

General info: The box is so beautiful, with the tower from Jnanin on the cover, with the blue sky and the grey rocks surrounding it, it is breathtaking and irresistible.



Almost as beautiful and mystic as the *Riven* box, but that box is perfect, and since the rest of the game is not too bad, I can't find this big enough to be a negative thing.



It was a great challenge for Presto Studios to fulfil the high expectations that millions of fans had for the third one in the row. It is easy to see that they have put so much work into it, also in the music and sounds (it is all original).

The result could not be better, with help from the Miller brothers and other people who have worked on *Myst* and *Riven*, Presto Studios managed the job so fine, that they won a lot of awards (list at the end of the review) and the fans were pleased.

To get you started: You find yourself in Tomahna, Catherine talks, after she's finished, open the large glass door in front of you. Look at *Releeshahn* who lies inside a glass cover. When you zoom out from it, Atrus enters the room. Saavedro appears after a while, and grabs *Releeshahn* and enter the Jnanin age through the linking book for that age. Go after him into Jnanin. You have arrived in Jnanin. Don't follow Saavedro, he will just escape and lock himself up in the tower.

In a few words: Maybe the best adventure game of all time? with its brilliant storyline, dazzling graphics and original sound, *Myst 3: Exile* is destined to become a classic, and probably is on the top 5 of many adventure gamers.



Myst 3: Exile

Developer: Presto Studios

Category: Point and click

Perspective: 1st person

Difficulty: Hard

Site: www.myst3.com

Where to buy it:

www.webhallen.com

www.gamesmix.com

www.amazon.com

Awards:

-2001 Emma award winner for best Sound and 3D Media.

-Gamespot's Best of 2001: -Best Adventure Game.

-CGM – 11th Annual Computer games Awards:
Best Adventure Game of the Year.
Best Acting to Brad Dourif.
Best Art Direction.

-GamePen: Best PC Adventure Game of 2001.

-BonusWeb: Editor's Choice Award.

PC Requirements:

233MHz Pentium II or faster.

Windows 95/98/ME/XP.

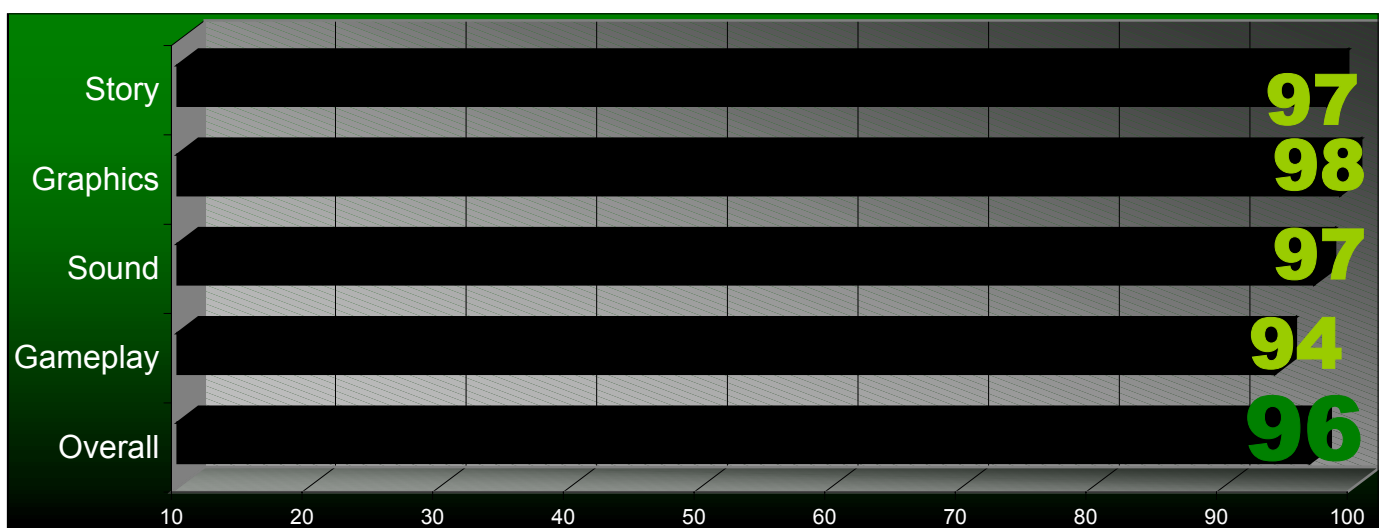
64 MB RAM.

200 MB available Hard Disk Space.

4X CD-ROM drive or faster.

Supports Optional 3D Hardware
Acceleration.

Recommended 8MB Video card.



Invento-mail



Address: theinventory@yahoo.com

Law and Order

I saw that Law & Order was featured in the Inventory. Anyways Law & Order is one of my favorite shows, I don't miss a show. I can't believe that after all the stability issues, your mag would continue to endorse this game. The format was awesome, the story was awesome, the game was awesome, at least up to the trial part.

See I'll never know because for some reason it is PERMANENTLY locked up when I try to go to trial. I have rebooted numerous times. I have ALL the patches, the latest JVM, I even uninstalled and reinstalled. So I ask you WHY WOULD I BUY ANOTHER PRODUCT from Legacy? I have NEVER played such an unstable game in my life. So I was just wondering why junk would get high reviews?

Best regards,
Mike Reeves

The Inventory: Hello Mike. You have to bear in mind that when I write a review I can only state my opinion based on the performance of the reviewed game on the system that it is tested. If I took points off every adventure that had bugs and problems in other systems then I do not think I would grant any game with more than 50% because in all the time I have played adventures, I have never encountered one that was bug-free in all systems tested. If it is buggy on the system tested then I will cut off points of course.

If I spot complaints on the net about a certain game being buggy then I will report it in the review (which I did also in the case of L&O) but this is as far as I can go. I did encounter one or two bugs myself (like the screen going black and being forced to reboot) but they happened only a couple of times that did not ruin the whole experience. What ruined the experience was the time limit of the unpatched version and I think I made it clear that it did, by giving two separate grades for the two versions.

I can understand your position and how angry you must feel for not being able to get what you paid for and I am really sorry that this happened to you, but I hope you understand also my reasons for giving a good grade to the patched version of Law and Order. As you said it had an awesome story and the game was good. And this is the reason why I endorsed Law and Order for those that are willing to download the patch.

What I would suggest to you though is to visit the Law and Order forums that you can find here: <http://www.legacvinteractive.com/cgi-bin/Ultimate.cgi> and mention your problem over there to the Legacy technicians. From my experience, I have to say that they are very helpful and they reply quite fast. I hope that your problem will be resolved and that you will get to finish Law and Order.

Hi, my name is Bengt Andersson. I'm 34 (at least till the mid February when it's all over) and I live in Karlskrona, Blekinge, Sweden. I really would like to join the NAG society, so I guess that's why I bother you with this long boring e-mail. I must say that I'm so happy to see that there's a magazine out there just for the adventure genre. I've printed both issues at my work with our new colour laser and it's great to have something to look forward to once in a month again.

Just one request: I'm a big fan of two trilogies and one of them is Gabriel Knight, which I guess I'm not alone to support. The other one that I think is almost as good, in its own way, is the stories of Tex Murphy. I really hope that you share this with me and maybe tribute that one as well in the near future;-).

I've recently finished both Syberia and TLJ and I must say that the voiceovers are brilliant, especially the April character! Therefore it concerns me that, in the second issue of The Inventory, you reviewed the main character, of Zelenhgorm, as one of the worst parts of the game regarding the voiceovers. If the series should be a success I guess they have to redo that one with a different actors voice. Maybe even a voice repack to download for the first episode as well ;-). Just a humble opinion.

Yours Sincerely
Bengt Andersson

The Inventory: Hi Bengt and welcome to NAG. I will see what I can do with the tributes. They are certainly going to be reviewed but I am not sure when. We decide which game to review each month based on several factors (like whether do we own it already, if it suits the rest of the mag etc). I agree that the actor for Zelenhgorm should change but nevertheless it is a game that is quite entertaining. Thank you for the kind comments happy birthday and... ha det så bra i Karlskrona!

Hi, I'm from Turkey. And i'm looking for your new issues every early days of each months on JA homepage. You're doing a great job. God bless you! Please don't stop and go on...

Sincerely,
Alper

The Inventory: Well my friend Alper, I don't really know whether a higher being exists or not but if he / she / it does then he / she / it is more than welcome to bless me. I will still go on with The Inventory as long as adventures exist (loooong time). Thank you for the kind comments and I hope that you will enjoy the future issues of The Inventory also!

Hi, I've recently come across your web page while surfing the net. I'm so glad that there is a site for people who love adventure games like myself. A lot of people find them a bore and out dated. I've been playing adventure games since my younger days when we had the commodore 64 and just loved them, it's nice to disappear into another world away from the one we live in.

I would just like to congratulate you on such a wonderful website. I have downloaded your new magazine both November and December and now awaiting for the January edition. I love to relax reading it in front of the fire with a cup of coffee.

Keep up the good work!
Shirley (United Kingdom)

The Inventory: Hi Shirley and thanks for the comments, though the credit for the site should go to Randy Sluganski and not me, I am just writing the magazine. It gives me pleasure to know that people are having a good time reading The Inventory. I hope the future issues will provide you with some more relaxing moments in front of the fire with a cup of coffee.

The Hydra

Starting from this month The Inventory will feature a new column, which is going to be called 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 will represent the adventure genre that simply will not die no matter how much it is being fought. And even when one company decides to abandon it, two more will come in its place.



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 Hydra will be concerned with one of the most controversial issues in adventure discussions lately and this is the impact that Syberia has had on the adventure community. So The Hydra's topic this month is...

The Syberia Phenomenon

Close your eyes and take yourselves 10 - 15 years back in time. Sierra and Lucasarts...the golden age of adventure gaming. An age where these two companies were producing adventure after adventure after adventure and each one of them was becoming a bigger success than the last one. The adventure genre was strong and famous and a new adventure was always big news in the worldwide gaming industry. Now come back to our age.

Our age is one that you can hardly see an adventure game in the local gaming stores. Some of them even go unnoticed by the gaming press. The last three years only one adventure has gotten the attention of all game stores and gaming / non-gaming press. This adventure is Syberia. Microïds' new gem has won numerous awards.

It has received the best adventure of the year award from Gamespot, Gamespy, PC Gamer, Computer Gaming World, Computer Games Magazine, IGN.COM and The Inventory. Gamespot also awarded Syberia with the Best Graphics (Artistic) award. CNN called it the game that brought back the adventure genre. It has appeared on several top selling charts around the world.

Apart from all these official awards, Syberia has also managed to introduce a new breed of players in the adventure genre. I visit several adventure forums everyday and you cannot imagine how many times I have encountered posts similar to the following one:



“Hi, I'm new in adventures. I played and finished Syberia recently and loved it. I would like to know if there are any other games like this one. So could you give me any suggestions?”

What was so special with Syberia though? Why did it receive such a great attention from the public?

- More focus on story / characters

Unfortunately many adventure developers seem to forget to include a story in their games and instead produce only a series of puzzles where one puzzle leads you to the next. An average adventurer would probably spend 2 hours per day playing an adventure game and he/she does that with the purpose of being entertained. If the player spends these 2 hours busting his/her head to find a way to solve one single puzzle, then in the most cases this player is not going to be entertained. In some cases the player might even abandon the game irritated. Stats by game companies nowadays reveal that a lot of gamers never complete several adventure games or in most cases they do it with the use of a walkthrough.

Syberia however escaped this frame, and instead offered a more entertaining approach to its audience. It invites the player to relax and sit comfortable in their chair, no need for walkthroughs, no need for pulling-your-hair, hitting your head on the wall situations... Forget your every day worries and prepare to embark in a world full of exciting incidents and peculiar characters that will linger in your memory for times to come.



- Unparalleled technical aspects

Jaw dropping graphics and emotional music always set the mood for an entertaining experience. Syberia's graphics has won the admiration even of those who were not the game's biggest fans. Walking away from the awards of one of the biggest gaming sites in the world (Gamespot) with a Best Graphics Award is certainly not a small thing to achieve. Syberia also avoided the 'blocky-character disease' that most new games suffer from and featured non-static backgrounds as well, that gave a more immersive feeling to the whole experience. Last but not least it featured a third person perspective. 3rd person adventures are missing from the market, while 1st person ones follow one shortly the other. Unfortunately many of them are not offering a big variety of concepts, but instead use a similar interface, graphics engine and gameplay.

- Golden-age kind of magic...

The biggest reason that Syberia became such a big success was that it felt like Microids pulled it out of the Golden Age of adventure games. A 3rd person perspective, the most suitable one for its narrative form, a strong focus on story with interesting characters, great graphics and music, and a point and click 'grab-your-mouse-and-start-instantly-playing' interface.

"-Are you saying that Syberia was perfect? " one could argue... No. The interface had its faults (no ability to get feedback from Kate, lots of empty screens, mediocre dialogue system) and the story was quite short. So it was not perfect. But it was certainly close to it. And it was certainly the most

innovative adventure in the last years. Innovative not in the ‘let’s enter the console market, make everything 3D because Doom IV does, and use direct control because that is what X-box dictates’ as many do nowadays. It was innovative in aspects that matter more in an adventure game...story, characters, emotions, gameplay. And these aspects are the ones that when taken care of, are going to attract the right kind of audience in our genre.

Of course there were also some people that did not like Syberia. Some of them are roaming the several adventure forums expressing their anger with the success Syberia has had, bashing each and every aspect of the game. A common (and definitely exaggerating) complaint they have is that Syberia is mostly a clickable-movie and a common argument they use is ‘if I wanted to watch a movie I would go and rent one’. The Syberia supporters usually reply ‘And if I wanted to play a puzzle game I would go and buy scrabble.’ (also an exaggeration) Both are right and both are wrong, but the point is that the Syberia supporters have not had many adventures of their liking (strong focus on story) to play so Syberia is a proof that there is a big market out there for this kind of adventures.

Others have said that Syberia is more art and not a game. Now let’s take the definition of art by Aristotle.

“Art is any set of productive principles or practices.”

Any game I can think of falls under this definition so all adventures are already art (that is, if you accept Aristotle’s definition). But then again, are adventure nowadays really games? Does the term game really characterize and suit best adventures or is it just a word that we inherited from the early days of adventures? Do you play adventures or do you experience them? Did you play Gabriel Knight or did you experience Gabriel Knight? I am not going to try and answer this question here and now because **a)** it would take too much space that is not available for this issue and **b)** it is a very personal concept... others might see adventures as games and others might see adventures as an experience.



“-Are you saying that all adventures should be similar with Syberia?” No. Not all. A considerable portion of the adventure community desires harder puzzles and more interaction. But we definitely need many more adventures like Syberia in the market. An adventure made to tell a story, made to entertain and give you the chance of escaping your everyday routine.

Help for developers

This month we continue the guidelines list we started in The Inventory 3 for the developers that are reading our magazine.

***Gameplay/puzzles**

Most adventure gamers do not desire to play a character that is a moving garbage bin. In some adventures (examples: Jack Orlando, Blade Runner, Law and Order) the character gets so many items that the inventory becomes a 'strategy game' of its own. This is completely annoying for most adventurers. You should take care so that the game gets rid of items that will not be necessary in the future, because apart from the fact that it seems unnatural to carry more than a library could hold, it is also very tiring when you have to solve puzzles, to think of all the combinations that these items could have. Make sure that the inventory items are not too many and that the inventory is neat and easy to use.

***Story**

We love Egypt and its history and we know that the Templars have a great and influential past. Atlantis also is one of the greatest mysteries in the world, no doubt about that. But it would be really nice if we had some adventures with new concepts instead of new releases that are just recycling old ideas.

There are so many intriguing themes that adventures have not touched yet...terrorism, drugs, racism, relationships, law, wars. Law and Order is a great example of how wide the perspective of an adventure can get. Going in the court room and being a lawyer was very original and very immersive and I hope others will follow this paradigm as well. The sense of adventure games has no boundaries.

You could play the role of a negotiator where you have to speak with terrorists while they threaten to blow up a building. You could play the role of a diplomat and try to prevent an imminent war. You could play the role of a psychiatrist trying to help a mentally disturbed person or a drug addict. You could play the role of a student having serious troubles in his / her life. You could be a bodyguard of a celebrity that is being threatened by a fan.

The meaning of adventures is to escape in another world, live another life and see other things than what you see everyday. It is a pity to confine the variety of these worlds in four or five subjects, like Templars, Atlantis and Egypt. So next time you will start planning your story, don't think about what has been done before, but think about what has not been done before.

Epilogue

It has been a great experience to write The Inventory 4 and I hope that it has been a great experience for you to read it. I would like to thank Benoît Sokal, Patrik Méthé and Cedric Orvoine for doing such a great job and spending so much time on the interview. I would also like to thank both Tyrone Miller, PR Manager of Ubisoft Entertainment and Lene Hovej from Ubisoft Nordic in Denmark for providing The Inventory with all the information and screenshots for CSI.

Special thanks goes also to Yngvil Runde for writing one more excellent review, and to Sara Deltè (member of NAG) for informing the visitors of her Swedish adventure site for the new issues of The Inventory. Sara has started translating her reviews to English so even those that do not understand Swedish would probably find some interesting topics. Her adventure site is here: <http://hem.bredband.net/sardel/>

Last but not least I want to thank Mark Lovegrove, main developer of Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth for giving us insight on this exciting new adventure of Indy. This game will sure be one of the most awaited ones for the year 2004.

Since Post Mortem got delayed once more in Webhallen we will probably feature reviews of Shadows of Memories and Harvest as well as a tribute to one more gem from our adventure treasure chest. If you are a developer of an adventure game, and you want your game featured in the Inventory, do not hesitate to contact us.

All of you, who collect The Inventory, don't forget to download the enhanced versions of the first three issues. The enhanced versions fix some compatibility issues with version 3.00 of Acrobat Reader, have all screenshots bordered and in the case of The Inventory 1 there is a whole new set of Gabriel Knight 2 screenshots that look way much better than the last ones (no interlacing lines). You can find the older issues of The Inventory here: <http://www.justadventure.com/TheInventory/TheInventory.shtm>

Those of you who have suggestions, questions, comments or critique to make then feel free to e-mail us, and you might even be a part of the next Inventory in the Invento-mail. I am also glad to say that I have done a lot of progress with NAG's new site and in the next Inventory you will get to know which is the address of our new website. If you live in the Nordic region and want to join NAG then just send an e-mail to us. Membership is of course for free. That's all for February. Till next month...

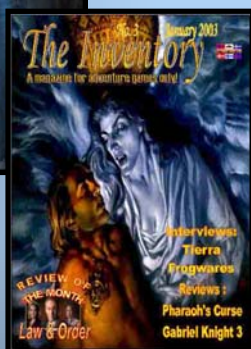
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