Previews:
Project Joe
Salammbo

Interviews:
Bill Tiller
Dreamcatcher

Reviews:
Harvest
The Dig

REVIEW OF THE MONTH
THE MONTH
Shadow of Memories

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue

We have proudly reached the 5th issue of The Inventory and I have to admit that when we started I never thought everything would go so smooth. The past month has been quite hectic actually. In our efforts to reach and inspire as more adventurers as possible we go on even further and we are going to translate The Inventory into different languages and distribute it from several foreign sites.

We have already reached agreements for German (www.adventure-treff.de) and Italian and Dutch and Spanish (www.aventuraycia.com) and other languages are probably going to follow. If you are the owner of a foreign gaming/adventure site and would like to host the local Inventory or if you are someone who would like to help in the translation of a local version of The Inventory do not hesitate to contact us. The Inventory will become the voice of every true adventure gamer on the planet. When we started I said that this is only the beginning and I meant it, and this is still only the beginning.

Now on the 5th issue of our beloved Inventory you will have the chance to read two interviews of extreme interest. In the first interview, one of the biggest legends in adventure games, Bill Tiller of The Dig and Monkey Island 3 is here to enlighten us with his wise knowledge. We also feature a review tribute to The Dig, one of the biggest adventure productions ever, accompanying the interview. Bill Tiller is going to talk to us about The Dig, and he is going to give us his take on the state of adventure games.

The second interview is with the European branch of Dreamcatcher, the biggest publisher of adventure games in the world. The representatives of Dreamcatcher came in our celebrity corner to discuss everything around adventures, their future plans for Europe and their upcoming titles (Salammbo, Atlantis 4, Egypt III and Thorgal's Quest).

Travel back and forth in time in the review of the month of Shadow of Memories. Yngvil reviews the one-man-job Harvest. Since the future looks bright, we have previews of Joe, the bar owner with loads of troubles and Salammbo, the priestess of Tanith who is going to model in our monitors in the not so distant future.

And last but not least, from this issue and for the future issues as well you can just click on the links in the magazine and the websites will open up in your Internet browser. Enough with the prologue now…let's get on to the previews.

Dimitris Manos
theinventory@yahoo.com
NAG (Nordic Adventure Guild)

Previews

The Synthetix crew are looking forward to drop us on the floor laughing with their upcoming and still unnamed project Joe. Joe is a lowlife scum who lives in the unnamed City and is an owner of a joint called Crowbar. When Joe refuses to sell his place to Otto Bay, a wicked influential investor, Otto decides to find alternative ways to take him off the way to financial dominance.

Otto, who like all good old powerful investors rules government agencies like his own puppets, takes away the privilege of the bar's ownership by Joe. As if Otto was not already enough trouble for Joe, the local Mafia, who found the Crowbar a cosy place to carry out their proceedings and do not want to miss their good old hideout, demand from Joe to take care of the issue. The cherry on the whole cake is Jaguar, an English assassin with an attitude, hired by Otto to take care of things in a more …let's say …efficient way. And I thought I had troubles in my life!!!

The release date of this hilarious-looking adventure is … still unnamed. **[*entering sarcastic mode*]** Synthetix will give a new dimension to point and click controls with the addition of a very pretty mouse cursor that will make the player feel happy all the time. Add to that lots of stereo-type characters, useless discussions, a button that will allow you to turn off the music for those of you that have no taste in good music, multiplayer ability and a death match feature, 4D characters on pre-rendered 5D backgrounds, Dolby Surround sound that support 2 front speakers, 2 rear speakers, one central, one above you and one below you that will give you the sense of really being there with
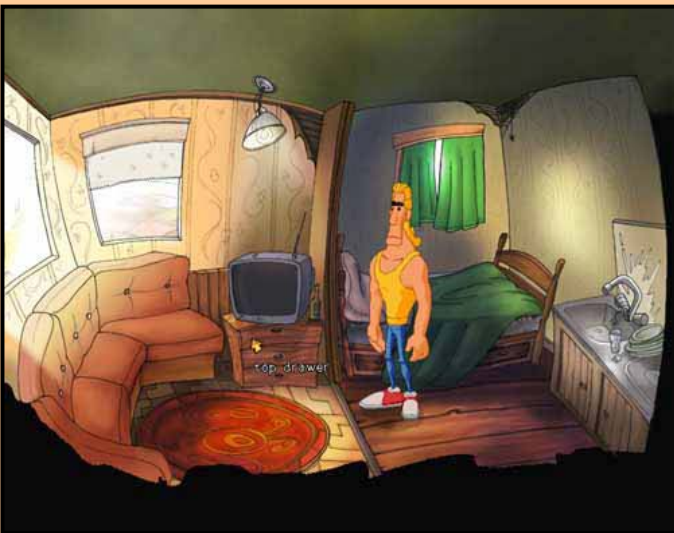
Joe and there you have it…the next generation of adventure gaming… adventures are dead, long live Project Joe. **[exiting sarcastic mode]**

But seriously now, this adventure will be a classic point and click adventure just the way we adventurers like it. The resolution will reach 1024x768 (was decided only recently) and it will have 32 bit colours. Just by visiting their site:

http://php.hku.nl/~jeroen16/synthetix/project_joe/ you will understand that these guys have an amazing sense of humour while a look in the screenshots is enough to realize their capabilities with graphics. While you are visiting their site do not forget to listen to the voices of the actors. It looks like some really professional job is going on in this unnamed project.

So it seems that this adventure has it all… a funny story, good looking graphics, a hero who is a bar owner / scum, a point and click interface, good voice-overs, the mafia …oh wait, there is still something missing. And this something is a second graphics artist. Synthetix is looking for an artist to help them with character animation especially so if you are looking for a great adventure to add your name in the credits maybe this is your chance. Go over to their website and contact the project leader Jeroen de Cloe for more information.

SALAMMBÔ

April Ryan and Kate Walker…beware. There is a new girl in the block and her name is Salammbô. Cryo and Dreamcatcher are preparing an adventure that will introduce the most attractive 3D model ever made (and believe me I feel awkward to say that but I think the screenshots speak for themselves).

The story of Salammbô is based on the novel by Gustave Flaubert and follows its theme but adapts also to the interactivity that is required by a game. The plot that takes place during the Punic wars in the history of Carthage revolves around the adventures of a slave called Spendius.

Cryo has already released a short playable demo of the game. The game starts in Spendius's cell and you have to find a way to escape.

During your efforts to win your freedom, Salammbô sneaks up on you and offers to help if you run an errand for her in return.

She is the daughter of the commander of the Carthaginian forces, Shophet Hamilcar. The mercenaries that had fought for Carthage against Rome have rebelled due to

the fact that they have not received payment yet for their services. Salammbô has fallen in love with the leader of the rebels, Mathŏ.

She met him during the wars against Rome and since that day she hasn't been able to stop thinking about him. Apart from daughter of Hamilcar, she is the grand priestess of Tanith and therefore she cannot abandon her temple. She asks Spendius to try and find Mathŏ and inform him of her love towards him. In return, she will help him to escape his imprisonment.

The game is seen from the 1ˢᵗ person perspective and it is being developed by the people who gave us Atlantis 3. Philippe Druillet is behind the artistic direction of the game. He

has worked as a cartoonist before, just like Benoit Sokal of the famous Syberia. The graphics are very detailed and the 3D models themselves … well… just take a look at Salammbô and you will understand. The only drawbacks of the graphics were the outdated transition during movement and the cursor, which will need some getting used to for its huge size.

The puzzles of the game seemed pretty straightforward and logical. The story itself sounded extremely interesting and I cannot wait to see what will happen with Spendius and Salammbô. Atlantis III was a game with perfect technical characteristics that failed on storytelling and puzzle logic. If they manage to produce similar technical characteristics with a compelling story and logical gameplay then this game will leave its mark as one of the best 1st person adventures ever.

Dreamcatcher and Cryo have released already a playable demo and a trailer that you can download from the main site of the game: http://salammbo.cryogame.com/ In the trailer you can see the introduction of the game in a cutscene with unparalleled graphics quality. In the playable demo however instead of a cutscene you see some comic strips (Gabriel Knight 1 style) explaining the story. So there was some kind of confusion on whether the game would feature cutscenes or not but if you read the interview with Dreamcatcher you will get the answer to that question.

Read the accompanying interview with Dreamcatcher Europe for more details into Salammbô. The grand priestess of Tanith will arrive in stores all around Europe soon.
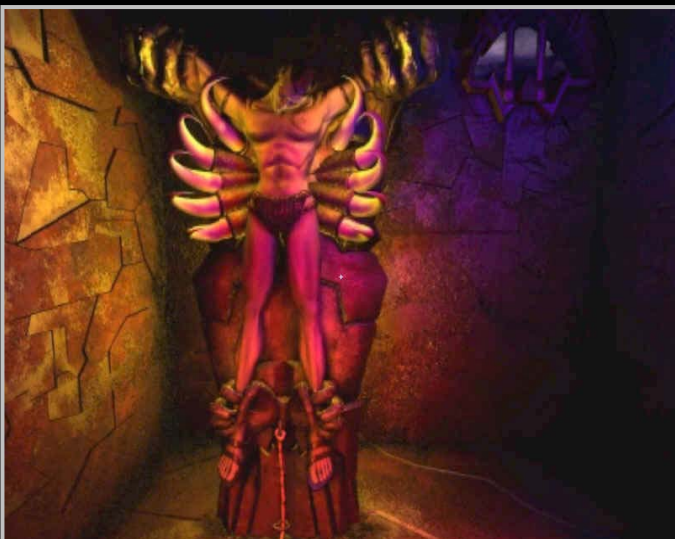
Adventure Gossip

The Journey goes on…

Earlier this month Funcom announced the beginning of the development of The Longest Journey 2. So those of you who miss the vague comments of Abnaxus and the comfortable chair of the Journeyman Inn prepare for some more shifts through the worlds. Ragnar Tornquist gave an interview to Randy Sluganski and Just Adventure on the day of the announcement. The most interesting part of the interview was this one:

The PC version will have a PC-friendly, mouse-driven interface, as well as higher resolution textures, models, and screen size. The console versions will have their own advantages, and be tailored to the TV screen and the individual controllers. Everybody wins.

So yes my friends you won't have to bump over walls and tables in TLJ2, but you will click your way through instead!!! Syberia 2 is being developed and now TLJ2 is being developed as well. Do you think this is good news? Well… it definitely is…but the good news are not over…

The trinity

If you think that Syberia 2 and The Longest Journey 2 are the only news around…think again. There are three more adventures in the early development stages that are going to make a big BOOM in the adventure community.

Unfortunately we are not allowed to give more information about these games yet but you can already be happy because they look as promising as it can get.

According to our sources they are all pure adventures and they are all point and click. You will get more news about these three adventures when we get the permission to say more about them.

New Fountain of Youth Screenshots

Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth is along with Quest for Glory 2 remake the most awaited fan made adventures. Screen 7 Entertainment, the developers of FOY have added some new screenshots on their web site and let me tell you they look G-O-O-D.

Those of you who miss the Sierra/Lucasarts golden days should warm up your mice again, because next year will have a lot of golden days for you my friends. You can find the new screenshots here: http://screen7.adventuredevelopers.com/foy

The Inventory goes global

The Inventory after the instant success it has become wants to widen its horizons even more. In an effort to bring adventure news to as more adventurers as possible we will offer The Inventory in different languages from foreign sites. The German version has already done its début and it is already available from www.adventure-treff.de The Spanish version will follow soon from www.aventuraycia.com

If you speak any non-English language and you would like to write for The Inventory or if you are an owner of a non-English site for adventures or general gaming with a lot of traffic and would like to host The Inentory send us an e-mail at theinventory@yahoo.com

Runaway and Watchmaker come to the Nordic Region!!!

Yes, the good news keep coming! Runaway arrives in the Nordic Region. Runaway: A Road Adventure is one of the most awaited point and click adventures that is critically acclaimed and have sold really well in the countries it has already been released. The release date is 7th of April and you can already pre-order it from Webhallen (www.webhallen.se) if you cannot find it in your local stores.

If you want more details about the game you can read our preview in The Inventory 2 or you can always visit the site of the game which you can find here: http://www.runaway-game.com/index.shtml

The game is being published by GMX Media. GMX media has shown a great interest in adventure games lately and they will also publish another 3rd person adventure called The Watchmaker. The Watchmaker will come to the Nordic Region on the 21st of March. This game is also available to pre-order from Webhallen.

You can find information about this game here: http://www.gmxmedia.net/watchmaker/

Something is going on in Tierra

There have been lots of rumours around Tierra lately. One 'inside source' said that we should take a look in their site (www.tierraentertainment.com) this month because there is going to be an interesting announcement.

There was some talk in the JA forums that Quest For Glory 2 remake is not going to be the next adventure from Tierra, although the inside source denied these rumours.

Apart from all that, it is known for some time now that Tierra is looking for an artist to join their team. You can visit their site for more details.

Legacy – Dark Shadows demo

Just some days before the release of The Inventory we got news from Razbor Studios that someday during the next week (starting Monday 17th of March) you will be able to download a playable demo of their upcoming 3rd person point and click adventure Legacy.

The picture on the right is a screenshot from the demo. So make sure to visit their site next week and download the demo of the adventures of Ren Silver and Jack Black.

Official Site:
http://www.legacythegame.com

The Celebrity Corner

Interview with Bill Tiller

One of the more talented artists, who ever worked on adventures, Bill Tiller is in our celebrity corner this month. He is here to discuss his work on one of the most atmospheric adventures ever made, Steven Spielberg's The Dig and also to talk about adventure games in general. You can also find a review – tribute of this amazing adventure in the very same issue.

Himself:

- Could you give us some background on yourself?

Bill: I am a Midwesterner at heart. I was born In Indiana and had a wonderful childhood in suburban Chicago. I have always been drawing and painting since I was two. My grandmother was a great landscape painter, and she passed her talent on to me. Disney movies like the *Jungle Book* and *Peter Pan* were big influences on me. And I was obsessed with Disneyland and Disneyworld. I had the album of the Haunted Mansion I used to listen to all the time. I just loved anything to do with monsters, science fiction or adventure.

When I got older I got obsessed with Star Wars, Dungeons and Dragons and Lord of the Rings. And luckily for me my family had a house next to 1000 acres of unspoiled forest and near farmland. My friends and I used to explore them, and play Star Wars and Tolkien in the every chance we got. I mention all this because all these experiences had a profound affect on my art and career.

When I was fifteen we moved to Westminster in Orange Country, California, which sucks- don't move there if you can help it- and I had a fairly horrible high school experience. My guitar and Apple II computer really helped me get through it all. Then I did a stint of two years at a junior college trying to figure out what career to follow. It turned out character animation and computer graphics were my favorite subjects. Then I went to art school at Cal Arts, and got a job at Lucas Arts after that.

- Which games have you worked on during your career?

Bill: Two versions of The Dig (2.0, and 3.0), Rebel Assault, Super Return of the Jedi, Indiana Jones and his Greatest Adventures, The Curse of Monkey Island, Indiana Jones and the Infernal machine, Jar Jar's Journey, Full Throttle 2, Arena Net game, EA's Lord of the rings: The Two Towers.

- What have you studied in order to become what you are today?

Bill: I drew all my life, studied lots of illustrators, and even programmed a bunch of my own computer games on my Apple II+. After High School I found a great art school called California Institute of the Arts, founded by Walt Disney, that accepted you to the school based only on your portfolio, not your grades. Good thing too. Because I spent more time playing D&D then doing schoolwork. I entered the Character Animation program in the School of Film and Video at Cal Arts. I meet a lot of soon to be great artists and was mentored by some of the animation industries best artists and animators. My teachers had a profound affect on my artistic abilities. I credit them for making me the artist I am today. As soon as I graduated, I hooked up with Lucas Arts to work on Steven Spielberg's The Dig.

- How did you end up drawing art for games?

Bill: Well I had a traditional character animation training- you know, the kind where you draw talking animals with paper and pencil. But our program at Cal Arts had just got in a lot of new Amiga computers and I went to town on them, mostly using Dpaint and Dpaint Animator. I also used a HAM paint program I think called Digipaint. And I messed around with Video Toaster and light wave a bit.

I didn't think I would work on games at all. In fact I showed my portfolio to Sierra On Line and they thought I sucked and passed on me. So I thought I'd end up being a background painter for some LA animation studio. But Lucas Arts and Broderbund came down to my school and thought my stuff was pretty good. Lucas wanted me to start pretty soon as an animator, and Broderbund wanted me to be a background painter and animator. But they couldn't hire me right away, so I ended up taking the Lucas job.

- Are you a fan of adventure games?

Bill: Yes I am, but I won't play any adventure game unless it gets a really good review. That is true of any game actually. I have no time for bad games anymore now that I am father of two.

- If yes then which adventures are your favorites?

Bill: In order of when I played them. Zork I, Leisure Suit Larry 1, the Dark Crystal, Goonies, Monkey Island 2, Monkey Island 1, Loom, Day of the Tentacle, Kyrandia 1 and 2, Full Throttle, The Dig, Curse of Monkey Island, Blade Runner, Grim Fandango, Syberia. On my list to play are the Longest Journey 1 and Gabriel Knight 3.

- What are you currently working with?

Bill: Hardware or software? Software I use Photoshop 5.5 and 7. I draw all my art first on paper then scan it in. Then I paint it in Photoshop. My computer is Dell XPS T600 with 300+ megs or ram, and a voodoo 2 card. I use a Wacom Artz II graphics tablet for painting and a little Canon scanner to scan in my art. I am also doing some Flash animation using Toon Boom Animation Studio.

The Dig:

- Was The Dig the first adventure you worked on Bill?

Bill: Yes, but I started off as an animator on the second version of the Dig (Dig 2.0), lead by Brian (Loom) Moriarty. But before that project was temporarily shelved, the Lead Artist had quit and the Lead Animator

had been reassigned to Indiana Jones and the Iron Phoenix (That game never got published), so in a way I was also Lead Artist on the version too, by default.

- It is well known that game's story comes from a Steven Spielberg concept. Did he make any other contribution to the game apart from the concept?

Bill: This is what I know he said. Steven Spielberg had an idea for one of the episodes of his *Amazing Stories TV* show. He wanted to combine the movies *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*, which is about three gold miners in Mexico trying to overcome greed and paranoia, with the movie *Forbidden Planet*, -which is a science fiction version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where a slightly mad scientist finds the remnants of an ancient alien race on a remote planet. This alien race developed technology light years ahead of ours, but for some mysterious reason the aliens are no where to be found, only their machines exist, and they are still running.

After thinking about how much it would cost to produce for televisions, Spielberg decided it might make a good adventure game. Now Spielberg loves games, especially Lucas Arts games, and it was habit for a long time to send him copies of all Lucas games. He even prided himself on being a sort of a beta tester. So he asked George if his company, Lucasfilm Games at the time, would like to make the game. Lucas obviously said yes.

Spielberg also contributed a lot of game ideas and puzzles, a lot of them included quite a bit of gore, which was surprising to me. At one point you had to scare away some space bats using the lens from an alien eel. The eel would shoot out a beam of green light that would stun the bat and cause it to fall into the water where the bats was then eaten. So you had to blow up the eel cut out the lens of his eye, slap it on the flash light and then go into cave where the bats where so concentrated you couldn't walk though. Then shine the light with the lens on it and scare the bats away.

I believe he also came up with the Brink hand stuck in the crack in the wall, but in his version the tide was moving into the cave and Brink had to have his hand cut off to save him from drowning.

Now these are all ideas for Brian's Dig (Dig 2.0). I don't know much about Noah Falstiens's Dig (Dig 1.0), other then the aliens in that version had four arms so in order to operate some of the machinery you would need four hands. Thus you would need to convince your reluctant and even hostile companions to help you out. I am not sure why that version got tossed, but I heard a rumour that the story was not working out and that some role playing elements, like having to feed your character, slowed the game down, and made it a bit too tedious. But you better ask Noah Falstien about that.

- Do you know if he happened to see the final version and what did he think of it?

Bill: Oh, yes, he saw it. He saw versions of it before it was done too. I think he liked it a lot. I don't think he was at all happy with the low-resolution look, which meant small characters, and I am sure he wasn't overwhelmed with the character designs we used in the cut scenes. Not too may of us were.

But he wrote a letter to each team member, thanking us for a job well done and congratulating us in our achievement. He loved the look of the backgrounds and really enjoyed the fact that the game was nice and long. Spielberg thought it was a hard game and joked about having to keep running to consult the hint book. Over all I think he was relieved it was finally done and happy with the outcome.

- The art of The Dig is one of the best ever produced for adventures games. Congratulations on a job well done Bill. One could easily wonder how did you come up with such images. Did you have any sources of inspiration or was everything creations of your pure imagination?

Bill: Bill (Indiana Jones and the Fate Atlantis) Eaken and Brain Moriarty really set the style for the game, with input from Spielberg. Ever since Spielberg's father took him to the desert to watch a meteor swarm as a kid, he has been enamored of shooting stars. So one of the things he really wanted was a planet that was constantly showered with shooting stars. He also wanted the planet to be perpetually at sunset, as if the planet didn't rotate.

Noah Falstien's version of the Dig, (The Dig 1.0), was set in a more jungle like setting, but when Brian Moriarty took over he wanted start over from scratch and not use any of the ideas or art from previous version. He and Bill Eaken then started to work out ideas for The Dig 2.0. Bill had done a sketch of giant rock pillars in an ocean, with lots of alien birds flying around it. Brain got really inspired by it, and that is where we got the idea for the spire islands. Also Brian told Bill he didn't want any plants in this version of the game. Bill was concerned that backgrounds with no foliage and that were just all rock might be too dull. So he came up with the idea to paint weird shaped rock formations with weird design carved in them, that could be either natural or sculpted or that blended in with each other. To make the rocks look even better he decided to paint them with intense colors and high contrast lighting. Though more realistic, an all 'earth toned' game would have been dull and repetitious.

Now I worked pretty close to Bill because I loved illustration and I wanted to get into doing background art someday, so I studied closely his methods and techniques. After he quit I felt I knew the style pretty well. But for the final version of the game (Dig 3.0 - Sean Clark's version, the one that actually shipped) I altered Bill's old backgrounds, and added to them quite a bit so that they would fit more with my art direction. In the end half the backgrounds in the game are mine and the other half are Bill Eaken's with some modification form myself.

I brought in fairly renowned California landscape painter, Adam (Out Laws, RTX Red Rocks) Shnitzer to paint the cut scene backgrounds. He did a great job and moved on to other Lucas games. As far as the question of inspiration is concerned, I was inspired by the work of the Hildebrandt brothers, Tim and Greg (The famous Star Wars poster, JRR Tolkien calendars). They have a wonderful sense of color and lighting, and I had studied them since I was kid. It was kind of ironic that the Hildebrandt Brothers came to Lucas Arts for a visit one day and I missed seeing them because I was in design meeting for the Dig. I was bummed.

I was also inspired by Peter (Day of the Tentacle, Full Throttle and Grim Fandango) Chan, a fellow Lucas Arts artist. He is the true king of the Lucas Arts adventure game art. I also referred to lots of photos in books on caves and canyons of the southwestern Untied States, and tons of National Geographic Magazines.

- Which backgrounds that you drew were you most satisfied with?

Bill: I am not that entirely satisfied with any of them, really. I look at them and see all the mistakes I made, and I think about how I could fix them or make them better now. But I guess I was learning, -'cutting my teeth' on that game, so to speak- so I shouldn't be too harsh. But if I had to pick a few I would say the cross road transition to the eel grotto, up to the library and to the first tram, the museum/ history display room, and the room where brink was making the crystal machine are pretty good. I also liked the waterfall diversion room and the opening cut scene image of the clouds, moon and radio telescope in Borneo, too.

- The theme of the game probably required some expertise knowledge on how certain things look (i.e. a space shuttle, an asteroid…). Did you have to do any research before creating art for The Dig?

Bill: The space shuttle was built by one of our 3d modellers, so I didn't have much to do with it, really. Though we had quite a few NASA books about in our reference library. The asteroid was painted by Bill Eaken, and was also modeled in 3d by Ron (Rebel Assault) Lucier, so I again I didn't' have much to do with it.

I didn't do much research because we were making most of the game up from scratch, but we did refer to a lot of NASA imagery to get certain things right, like how the NASA mission patches and space suites looked, what a radar telescope looked like, what the shuttle cockpit looked like, and other real life stuff. But when we did art for the planet Cocytus we didn't really need to research anything. We just made it up.

- How was your co-operation with Sean Clark?

Bill: So Sean was a bit leery of me at first. Why? I am not sure. While I was working on Brian's Dig (2.0) the artists and Brain had some conflict about the art schedule and the current production methods. Those issues were, unfortunately, never resolved. I was the only hold over from that art team, so Sean may have been worried about those problems recurring.

But as he got to know me and realized I only wanted to make good art and that I too wanted to make a great game - our common goal, - he began to trust me a lot more. Plus Sean and I went through quite a few battles together. The Dig was a very unpopular game inside the company because of how long it had been in production, which I understand because it had been in production for such a long time. And Sean and I had to defend our game quite often. Going through all those battles helped us bond and learn to respect each other, even if and when we disagreed.

- Some rumours say that initially there were four characters that were supposed to star in the game but finally the fourth one, a female Japanese physicist, never made it to the final version of the game.

Do you know if these rumours are true? And if you do, do you know why the fourth character was cut off from the final version?

Bill: Brian's version, (The Dig 2.0), had four characters- Judith, Brink, Boston, and Toshi. Judith's name was later change to Maggie because Sean and I were big fans of the TV show *Northern Exposure*. There was an actress in it whose character was named Maggie.

Toshi Olema was a Japanese businessman who financed the shuttle trip to the asteroid, because NASA's funding was at an all time low. I thought that was an odd idea, because if the Earth were in mortal danger wouldn't the entire world pony up the dough to pay for their salvation? Why would you need a Japanese businessman to cover the costs? I think there was a lot of fear of Japanese business might back then- they were buying up all the LA skyscrapers, Rockefeller center in New York, the Seattle Mariners baseball team- and like one of Brian's favorite writers, Michael (Rising Sun) Chriton, I think Brian too was trying to tap into that current feeling.
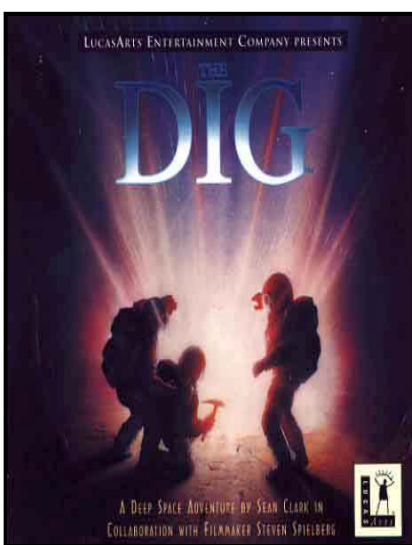
On The Dig 3.0, Sean changed that make up of the main characters for a few reasons. First, the inspiration for the game was the movie *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, and that had a three-character dynamic, not four. So Sean, rightly I think, tossed out Toshi. Plus it also saved money on the animation. All in all a good move. I tip my hat to Sean for that one. I didn't care for the character much because I didn't think he was needed and I didn't care for his name. Olema just isn't a Japanese name. Brian said he had a funny background story for it, but I never heard it.

Bill Eaken had painted the cover for Brian's Dig before he left the company, and it had Toshi on it originally – he was standing on the far right. You can still see his foot on the ground behind the lone figure on the right. Bill came in to paint Toshi out and he left Toshi's foot in because it looked like a rock. I think the Angel studio soundtrack CD still has Toshi on the cover.

- How much time did it take to develop The Dig?

Bill: Brian's Dig (2.0) was in production for about nineteen months before it was shelved for a year. And I think Sean's version (3.0) was in production for about that time too.

- How many copies has The Dig sold? Did Lucasarts consider it a success?

Bill: I don't know. For some reason I think it sold 400,000 units, but that could be wrong. And, no, Lucas Arts didn't consider it a success. I think the budget had run so high that it couldn't make its money back. But again I don't know for sure, management back then was very tight lipped about that sort of thing.

I think adventure gamers appreciated the good story line, the overall length of the game and the challenging puzzles. But the mainstream public, who was all excited about it - they called it an interactive movie by Spielberg and Lucas- was disappointed by the low resolution of the graphics, the hard puzzles, the lack of 3d and live action. They expect a movie, and they got a traditional Lucas Arts adventure game. The whole project had been way over hyped. I think Lucas Arts management thought it would make a 'bazillion' dollars, and when it sold a substantial amount less then a 'bazillion' dollars, they were disappointed.

I think we could have sold a 'bazillion' units if we had made the game in 640 x 480 graphics instead of 320 x 200. We could have made the characters bigger on screen and they would have looked much, much better.

I also think it really would have helped the game if we had gotten really good animators in the beginning and had received the full support from the employees of the company. I think then the game would have appealed more to the mainstream public.

We could have also shortened the game a lot and made the puzzles a lot easier. That would have pulled in many more gamers too, but that would have meant alienating our hard-core adventure game fans that wanted a long challenging game, something Sean didn't want to do. The Dig could have sold *Myst* like numbers if we had done that. That is why I think they didn't think it was a success. But they were also the ones who told us to use the old art, which was 320 x 200. So I think they have to share the responsibility for the disappointing sales of the game.

But the reviews were actually pretty good, and it did win a few 'adventure game of the year' awards. And it is thought of fondly by many members of the traditional adventure game fans. So in that sense it was a great success. For all the flaws it has I am still pretty damn proud of it. *Myst* be damned.

- Do you think there is any chance that we might see a sequel to The Dig someday?

Bill: No way! Lucas Arts wouldn't touch that with a ten-foot pole! Well it might happen, only if all the people who were around during those three tumultuous productions were no longer at Lucas, then somebody might foolishly attempt it.

Adventure games:

- Syberia has become one of the most successful adventures in the recent history of adventure gaming. Have you played it and if yes what is your opinion on it?

Bill: I like it a lot. The mood is great and the art is outstanding! I am still in the middle of it, but I am enjoying it thoroughly. It has a few problems, and I think the interface is too clumsy some times, but it is pretty much one of the best adventure games to come out in a long time. I can't wait for the sequel.

- Some time ago there was a myth going around that point and click adventures are a thing of the past. However all the latest hits in adventure games that have won press awards and thousands of fans worldwide, have been point and click adventures (*Syberia, The Longest Journey, Gabriel Knight 3, Curse of Monkey Island…*). Not only that, but we also have lots of classic point and click adventures in development (*TLJ2, Syberia 2, Runaway, Black Mirror, Journey to the Center of the Earth etc*). What is your opinion about this? Do you prefer direct control or point and click? And why?

Bill: Point and click is just simply the best way, in my humble opinion, of playing an adventure game. Drive around and walking everywhere is not fun! They cut that part out of movies and books for a reason. In movies they call it 'compression of time' which mean compressing the boring traveling done to a few editing cuts, and boom! Our protagonists are where the more interesting action is. When games make you drive your character around everywhere you are wasting valuable gaming time, and coming form a father of two kids under four years old, the times I get to sit down and actually play games have become rare.

So game time is really valuable to me and I don't want to waste it on endless cut scenes/ cinematics and driving a real time 3d character everywhere. I want all games to use a teleport map or double click exits to save time. Plus point and click games can allow artists to create background art in third person, the preferred perspective used in most movies and TV shows, - the perspective we are all used to. Plus if you have to navigate in 3rd person it is often hard to display the collision geometry and create interesting angles at the

same time. You often run into things and get stuck on corners. It so much easier if you can just point and click where you want to go, and let the computer navigate for you. Make the computer work for you don't do work for the computer. Point and click makes the computer work for you.

- Another myth that was going around was that if a game has to be successful it has to have 3D graphics even if this would mean blocky characters and emotionless graphics. Finally this myth starts to fade out as well with lots of 2D adventures being in production. Which graphic representation do you think suits adventures the most and why?

Bill: I think the style of the game and the genre should tell the designers and developers whether to do 2D or 3D. If one is developing a game based on a live action movie then I would think 3D would be a good choice, but not necessarily. The Batman movies and comics inspired the animated Batman TV show. But the developers of that show went with traditional 2d and created great art deco look that I think it works great and really captures the dark, mysterious atmosphere that we all associate with the Batman franchise.. But I could easily see a game based on Batman be 3d instead.

I think you have a bit more license to try unusual visual styles with 2d then 3d, but there is nothing to say 3D can't have a unique style too. I think it all depends of the aesthetic vision the developers have and whether or not it is appropriate to the subject matter.

On a practical side, if an adventure game were done in third person perspective, doing the animation, at least, in 3d would save a hell of a lot of production time. I think a 2D and 3D hybrid might look very good too. Movies like Disney's *Tarzan* and DreamWorks' *Spirit* did a masterful job of combing the two together. It could be easily done in adventure games too.

- Is the choice of graphical representation (2D/3D) usually made by the designers / artists or by the marketing staff? Are there times were the marketing staff will force the artists / designers to follow a certain path against their will?

Bill: When I was at Lucas the marketing department didn't have the power to tell the designers what to make, or whether or not to make it in 3D. Marketing would have probably have preferred if the company made only *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* games because they would have been really easy to market, especially if they were made for the console. I think marketing and odd 2d adventure games would have kept them up at nights!

I do think some project leaders/ directors definitely felt compelled to make games in 3d rather then in 2d for a number of reasons. First the sales figures of *Rebel Assault, X Wing and Dark Forces* were spectacular, which meant the project leaders/ directors might make more money and get more notoriety. Also each project had always tried to have the latest and greatest technology. When 3d on the PC became a reality,

programmers just naturally headed in that area. I think the drop in sales for adventure games also prompted many to make those games in 3d to increase sales and to look modern and up to date.

At Lucas management had a say whether a game got made, but very rarely actually told a project leader / director what game to make. But that has since changed a bit. I know for fact that some project leaders/ directors were pressured very heavily to make games based on the new Star Wars films and to make sequels to past adventure games, rather then create new properties. I can't say what other companies do, but I have heard that in some companies marketing rules the roost. Not a place I would like to work.

- 3rd person vs. 1st person viewpoint. What do you think?

Bill: 3rd person all the way! Unless you are making a 3d shooter. I hate 3rd person shooters. But in adventure games 3rd person allows a designer to use the language of film, a language that has been perfected over the past century. True some movies have been made in 1st person perspective, but not too many. You can't see the characters body or face in fist person, and we humans really rely on body language and facial expression to communicate feelings and emotions. Animals do too. To me adventure games are interactive movies, and to make one in 1st person perspective really kills any personal connection the player might have with their avatar. Some might think that if a game is in 1st person it makes the player feel like he is really there. Maybe. But when I play a game I don't want to be me. I want to be Guybrush Threepwood, mighty Pirate, or Ben Throttle, ass kicking biker, or Boston Low, space commander. In *Myst* whom do I play? Myself? No. I am guy playing a computer game. I don't buy into the supposed illusion I am this man trapped in another world. That is why I didn't care for that game. But in third person perspective you never mistake who you are playing, and we commonly suspend disbelief in movies and TV, which are in third person ,so it is natural to do the same in games. Movies are not shot in 1st person perspective for a reason, because it would be incredibly boring.

- We are currently experiencing the best year in adventures in the last 6,7 years with *Syberia* a point and click pure adventure being both a financial and critical success and loads of pure adventures in development. Do you forecast any changes in the adventure genre when it comes to its status and do you think that they can become a cornerstone of gaming as they used to be?

Bill: I think adventure games, like art films, will find their small niche, and do well there. But I don't think they will ever become mainstream again. Which means adventure game developers have to be careful how they spend their money. There are two ways to go with adventure game development. One way is to make the game short but high quality, so that the look of the game is up to par with other non-adventure games, and equal in quality with movies and TV. The other way is to spend a lot of money on the game and make it the 'must have' game of the year. And then count on massive sales to pay for the production costs and make a profit.

This last method didn't work for *Grim Fandango* but it worked for *Syberia*. Why? Don't know for sure but my guess is that the style of the game and subject matter was more appealing to a broader audience than *Grim Fandango*. Though I think it is a superior game than *Syberia*. *Grim* may have been a bit too eclectic for many people. Where as in *Syberia* you play someone much like ourselves that live in the modern world, a woman just out doing her job, when she slowly gets pulled in a mystery that takes her to fantastic and beautiful world. I think the combination of film noir and Mexican mythology of the dead wasn't as appealing.

What if Tim Shafer had done the *Han Solo Adventure Game* instead of *Grim Fandango*? Would this whole perception that adventure games are dead ever have surfaced? What if he had done *Full Throttle 2*? I am pretty sure that game would have out sold *Grim Fanda*ngo and other companies would have looked at that and said that adventure game where still viable.

It may sound like I am saying Grim Fandango killed adventure games. It did and it didn't. I think Grim actually elevated computer games into the realm of true art. Many cultural critics decry computer games as contributing nothing to the culture, and that they are not truly and art form. Well for the most part they are right. True, making a great game is challenging and there is 'an art' to it, but they really say nothing about the human experience other then we like to kills things and then get rewarded for it. Nor do they ponder the heavy question about what it means to be human. I think *Grim Fandango* was able to do that and I feel it is truly art.

Adventure games can and have the potential to elevate this great interactive medium we love out of the pop culture emptiness that it exists in now. But they can follow the same safe path mainstream games have trod. All we have now in the current state of games is the movie equivalent of the summer 'action blockbusters', but adventure games have the chance to be Citizen Kane. I think right now *Grim Fandango* is our industries *Citizen Kane*. Adventure games are probably going to occupy the same place that art films occupy now in the movie industry. They will make some money, not a ton, -though some may break out and be big hits- but they have the potential to be original, tell stories EA, Infogrames, and Konami would never tell. Have characters that games like Splinter Cell, Never Winter Nights, and Zelda would never dare to create. They can tackle subject matter that mainstream game companies would consider too taboo.

I think if adventure games are to survive they need to evolve beyond mainstream ideas and blaze a new trail into areas that many are afraid to go. I think that makes adventure games unique among all computer game genres; they have the ability to tell good stories about what it means to be human, but only if they chose to. "Oh no!" I can hear many readers moan. "He is advocating making of *Last Temptation of Christ* adventure game!" No, not at all, though that would be interesting. What I am saying is that we make something akin to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Wizard of Oz* or *Chinatown*. All those movies have great characters that go through major life changes and have stories about human struggle. Those movies help define what it is to be human. I think adventure games should and probably will go in that direction.

- Was Curse of Monkey Island or Escape from Monkey Island a bigger financial success? Do you know how many copies each one of them sold?

Bill: Don't know for sure. I think CMI sold over half a million units world wide, and I am not sure what EMI sold, but I think it had descent numbers on the PC. But the PSX2 numbers, I heard rumor of, were abysmal. I wouldn't look for anymore PSX2 adventure games from Lucas Arts anytime soon.

- CMI vs. The Dig. Which one did you enjoy working for the most?

Bill: Oh my God! CMI absolutely! It was like walking out of dark dreary cave and suddenly landing on a warm, sunny beach. You can see it in the change of my art style. On *The Dig* I was hidden in a dark corner where I got no direct sunlight. The whole Dig team was sort of banished out of our old and beloved B building, to an ugly boring office building a block away from the rest of the company. Don't think we didn't see the meaning in that. On CMI the whole company moved to a new location where I got a window seat with a south facing view. That really had a profound affect on my mood. Plus everyone in the company was sick of The Dig because it had been in production six years! But everyone at the company was excited that we were going back the most beloved Lucas Arts series of all. My training had been in cartoon animation, and so I was dying to get on a cartoon adventure game. I had to sit by and watch *Day Of the Tentacle, Full Throttle,* and *San n Max* get made; all the while I was on *The Dig* and *Rebel Assault*. And now, finally! With CMI I got my chance! I just hit the ground running! If I got the chance to do another Monkey island I would jump at it!

- If you made an adventure all by yourself and you could take all the choices you wanted freely, what kind of adventure would you make?

Bill: I'd make a funny, visually distinctive, adventure game that had plenty of fun things to do and humorous puzzles in them. I'd probably do some in 2d and some in 3d, depending on the subject matter. I do have a few serious games I would like to try but I am not a great writer. I am ok. To do a good serious game I really think you need a great writer. I can come up with jokes and gags, but serious writing that won't make you gag when you hear it is too tough for me right now.

- Bill apart from a great artist you are also being considered as a great teacher when it comes to developing adventures. Your tips for making an adventure game in the Adventure Developers site (www.adventuredevelopers.com) has become the adventure bible for many independent developers. Your influence has given birth to lots of adventure gems coming out of the fan community. Have you played any of these fan made adventures and if yes then which ones are your favourites and which upcoming ones are you looking most forward to?

Bill: I love your questions! They all seem to start by saying what a great artist I am! Keep this up and I won't have to take these little pink Prozac pills my shrink keeps pushing on me. ;) I am glad my tips for adventure game design were helpful. I didn't come up with them on my own. In fact Larry Ahern added

quite a bit to my descriptions. All those rules I learned from people like Brian Moriarty, Sean Clark, Hal Barwood, Tim Shafer, and Larry Ahern and Jonathan Ackley.

I am also glad to hear that those rules have helped spawn a bunch or new adventure games, and they can also be applied to other types of games as well, games like *Half Life* and *Splinter Cell* follow a lot of these rules too.

I haven't played any fan made adventure games yet. I barely have had time to play the professional ones. I still have The Longest Journey sitting in box next to my desk, staring at me. But I probably would as long as I hear some good reviews. And then play the ones that get the best reviews.

General:

- Will we have the honour of seeing your work Bill in another adventure game?

Bill: One of these days I hope. If not my own game, maybe Monkey Island 5. I'd love to do it.

- Would you like to share some of your future plans with us?

Bill: Yes, I'd like to but I can't at the moment. Sorry.

- Do you have any advices you would like to give to all the adventure artists / programmers – wannabes out there?

Bill: Study the foundations of art, and yes, draw bowls of fruit, and nudes. Learn by copying your favorite artists. Draw everyday. Keep a small sketchbook with you all the time and draw what you see when you can. Go to art school. Take tons of art classes. Hang out with other artists, especially if they are better then you. Learn from them. Get the Illusion of Life book, which explains all aspects of Disney feature film animation. This book covers more then you'll need to know for making good art for 2d and 3d adventure games.

Practice making your own game. Don't make a big game. Make a small game. It is better to finish something small then to half finish or never complete something huge. Take small steps in the right direction rather then huge leaps. Check out the web page www.arthistory.cc and look at all the fantasy artists. They can really inspire and teach you. Learn something about the world. Understand why things look the way they do in real life, because if you want to make up something without photo reference the only way to do that is to know how the visual world works.

Thank you for a great interview. I hope you'll stop by our celebrity corner in the future to talk about your new adventure games!

Interview with DreamCatcher Europe

DreamCatcher Interactive, is probably the biggest publisher of adventure games in the world. Their two brands are: 1) The Adventure Company (targeting both Adventure gamers and casual gamers), and 2) DreamCatcher (games outside the Adventure genre, including: strategy, action, sims, and RPG). They have recently entered the European market and launched their new site for the European branch at the address below:

(http://dreamcatcherinteractive.com/europe/site/TAC/TAC_uk/tac_uk.htm)

This month The Inventory welcomes DreamCatcher Europe to our celebrity corner to find out more about their plans for our beautiful continent. Matthieu Saint-Denis, DreamCatcher Europe Marketing Director answered to our questions, with the help of Simon Vivien, Brand Manager and Lorraine Lue, Product manager. So here we go:

Yourselves

- Can you give us some background on yourselves?

I am Director of Marketing at DreamCatcher Europe. I was previously a Product Manager at L'Oréal for a few years and chose to leave because I was looking for a new challenge. Thus, I became Brand Manager and then Editorial Manager at Cryo Interactive. I have been working in the videogame industry for 5 years, but I've been a hardcore gamer for more than 20 years.

- Can you tell us a little bit about the history of DreamCatcher?

DreamCatcher is a privately held company based in Toronto, Canada. It is recognized as one of the top 10 PC Game publishers in North America. The company publishes computer games for the PC, Sony Playstation, Nintendo GameBoy Advanced/GameCube and Microsoft Xbox. DreamCatcher Europe was recently established in Paris, France.

DreamCatcher launched its first title in 1996 and now publishes a range of games in a number of genres, experiencing particular success with its PC Adventure line-up. The company is recognized as the market leader in this category in North America, and publishes such titles under its Adventure Company brand.

The company has experienced sustained growth over the last 7 years, achieving an incredible growth rate of 10,490% from 1996-2001. DreamCatcher was also recently listed as Canada's 5th fastest growing company in Profit Magazine's 2002 issue.

- Do you play adventure games? If yes which ones are your favourite?

Sure! I am currently playing Salammbô. It's a pleasure because I'm a huge comic book fan. I also especially like inquiry games.

DreamCatcher Europe

- What was the main reason that made you decide to enter the European market?

The European market is a new world of opportunity. Our new division in Paris will give our North American based parent company a central base to concentrate on.

We are determined to maintain our aggressive growth strategy, particularly in the PC Adventure games market, thanks to our label The Adventure Company. Having greater control over the production, publishing and distribution process within Europe will allow us to more effectively duplicate the success that we have been experiencing in North America – there's great potential for us.

The DreamCatcher Europe office will contain sales, marketing, production, and administrative personnel, as well as an internal development studio. It is headed up by Olivier Pierre, who was previously CEO of the French publisher Wanadoo Edition.

- In which European countries are your games currently being distributed?

All countries either through full distribution deals or licensing agreements.

- Which countries do you plan to work with in the near future?

In March we will announce the countries in which we have signed deals.

- What about the Nordic Region (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark). Do you have any plans for this region yet?

Of course, it's an important territory for us. We are very close to announcing our plans for this region.

- There is a rumor among adventurers that adventures sell better in Europe than they do in the US. Are these rumors true?

Not at all. For example, The Adventure Company sold close to 500 000 units of The Crystal Key, a figure which can be compared to the sales of Atlantis in Europe. Some titles are exceptionally successful (Atlantis) and others perform very well, but not at the same level. Furthermore, sales are dependent upon subject matter and region. For example, Versailles is a huge success in Europe and the topic of Egypt is successful worldwide. The main objective for The Adventure Company label is to choose titles that will be successful worldwide.

- Would you be willing to co-operate with European developers in the future and will the European branch act as a communication link with them?

Our internal development studio in Paris is currently developing many games such as: Salammbô, Thorgal (PS2), Egypt 3 and Atlantis 4 for 2004 which will be a tremendous event. On the other hand DreamCatcher has always been involved in European development. For example, we are currently working with people from Avalon on Schizm 2, Galilea (Amenophis) and Painkiller (a FPS for the DreamCatcher Label) with People can Fly in Poland, among others.

- Is the European branch going to be independent from the US one? I mean, is there any possibility that there might be adventures published by the European branch that are not going to be published by the American one, or vice versa?

Primarily, the answer is no. The line-up will be common to both divisions, however DreamCatcher North America is also a distributor for Microïds and Wanadoo, therefore some titles will obviously be released only in North America.

- What about your shipping policies? Can someone from any European country order a game from your European site and will everybody have to pay the same amount for shipping or do different rules apply for different countries?

That is a great question. We are currently working on an online shopping model to service our European customers.

Games:

Salammbo
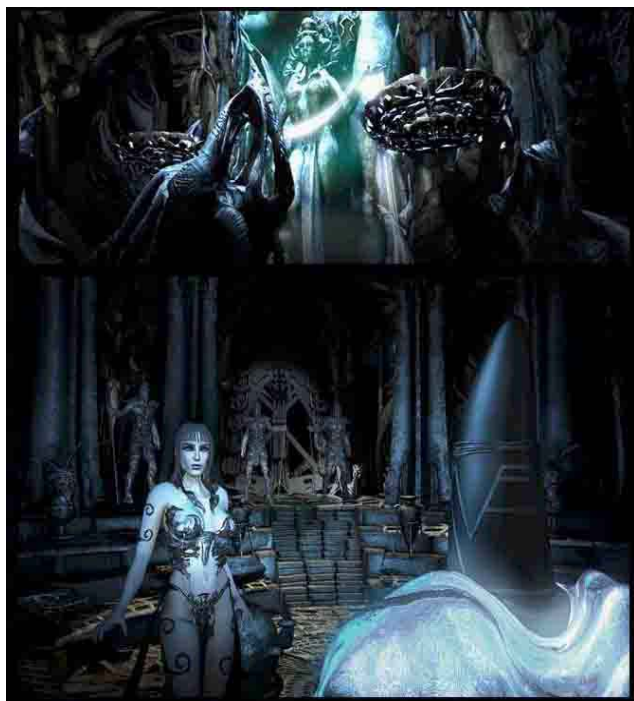
- Can you tell us a little bit about the story of Salammbo?

The story takes place in the third century bC, in the heart of the city of Carthage. Despite being supported by thousands of mercenaries, Carthage has just been overrun by its sworn enemy, the Romans, during the first Punic War. In the midst of the killing, Salammbo, the daughter of the commander of the Carthaginian forces, falls in love with the leader of the mercenaries, Matho, who is laying siege to the as he demands payment for his services.

You are Spendius, and have been enslaved by the Carthaginian guards. In order to escape, you will have to do a favour to Salammbo: go outside of the town and give a message to Matho. This is only the beginning of a magnificent and thrilling adventure, with amazing challenges and incredible graphic style…

- In the trailer available in the official site the introduction is an impressive video. On the playable demo however the introduction and cutscenes are being depicted through still images (Gabriel Knight 1 style). Will the final version include videos or will we get to see the story through images?

Over half an hour of high resolution cinematics will be available in the final version of the game. They were not included in the playable demo for self-understandable reasons of size. The comics cutscenes will also be included, as they are the direct result of the work of Philippe Druillet, one of the most famous comics drawer. We think the combination of high quality animated images and still, almost "comics" images will

give Salammbo's storyline a very inventive side. And trust us, as always, our cinematics will take the 3D world to a so-far unreached level…

- Will the game follow the storyline of the novel by Gustave Flaubert or will it have its own unique storyline influenced by the novel?

As you may have guessed from our first answer, although the time period, heroes and context have been directly taken from Flaubert's masterpiece, the reference book for Salammbo is the comics. Which is why the artistic direction and initial work of Philippe Druillet have been so useful in order for us to create the new reference in adventure gaming.

- Did the fact that behind the success of Syberia there was the artistic supervision and direction by a comic books author inspire you to give the artistic direction and supervision of Salammbo to another comic book author, Philippe Druillet?

As a matter of fact, our internal development studio can boast being the first who has used the tight links between comics and video game. A short list might help you get a better view of why we are considered the pioneers in that type of adapatation: our developers have worked on

- Ring (1999 – best seller) : artistic direction by Philippe Druillet
- Gift (2000) : hero and game supervised by Regis Loisel, who has recently been awarded a major comics price for his entire work as a major comics author.
- Black Moon Chronicles (2000): taken from the masterpiece of Froideval, with scenario and graphics directed by the latter
- Thorgal (2002): from the best selling comic Thorgal (6 million copies sold in Europe), the game's artistic director was Gregor Rosinski and the scenario was supervised by Jean Van Hamme (writer of the Thorgal aswell as XIII and Largo Winch scenarios).

Besides, many people from our artistic department have either a background or current projects in comics publishing. I guess this is what we call the French touch…

- When should we expect to see it in Europe and do you know what is the release date for the Nordic Region?

Salammbo will be released on PC on April 2003 in Europe (exact launch dates will depend on territories). The game should hit Nordic shelves at the same time.

Egypt III

- Is Tifet, the heroine of Egypt II, going to be back in the third installment of Egypt?

After her last exhausting and thrilling adventure, Tifet decided to rest. The female hero of Egypt 3 is a yet unseen although even more charming character: her name is Maia. Young and tall with dark hair and tanned skin, she is a young magician (as there were many during the era of Ramses II) and she is renowned in all Egypt for the special links she has with deities.

- What will the story be about this time? Will it have any connection to Egypt II?

Egypt III takes place in the era of Ramses II. At the age of 60, he is dying. But Amon Re, the Sun God, will give him a longer life if ever Ramses II builds the most magnificent and splendid temple ever found in Egypt. Of course, dedicated to Re's cult. Pharaoh places the building of the temple in the hands of his most entrusted architect, Paser. But soon after the first stones are placed, Paser is injured by an "accident". Maia, sent by Pharaoh, will then discover that the building site is cursed and will have to investigate on what could be the new plague of all Egypt…

- What kind of graphics engine will it use?

Egypt III's graphic engine will be our brand new engine, called A3 (Advanced Adventure Architecture),which combines both high quality, 360° pre-rendered graphics with 3D animated characters aswell as 3D environmental effects.

- 1st person adventures have sometimes weak stories / plots and focus on puzzles, however Egypt II had an amazing story and all the puzzles were well woven in the game. Will Egypt III also have a strong focus on story as the second one did?

The whole Egypt series was built using this paradigm: adventure players like puzzles, but don't like to get puzzled… For Egypt 3 this is taken to a new level, with a storyline which is very thrilling and detailed, while all the puzzles are directly linked to the adventure you are into.

At a moment, Maia has to open a door with a special key. Instead of just finding the key to open the door as in classic adventure games, Maia will have to pick the lock in a 3D view, this being a puzzle in itself, with various cylinders you have to align.

- When should we expect to see this one in stores here in Europe?

Egypt III will be released in October 2003 in Europe and North America.

Thorgal's Quest

- Is Thorgal's Quest a pure adventure or does it include action?

Thorgal is mainly an adventure game with some more action scenes.

- What is the story of Thorgal about and how is it connected to the Viking mythology?

Created in 1977 in Le journal de Tintin, the fantasy saga of Thorgal is an undeniable success due to the extraordinary symbiosis between the graphics of Grzegorz Rosinski and the fertile imagination of Jean Van Hamme. Set in the seventh century of our era, this adventure is an epic taking place in an imaginary world where magic spells and legends are daily fare for everyone, a world were men and gods still lived side by side. More than an adventure, the saga of Thorgal has become the apologia for the fight against the arbitrary and a hymn to freedom.

In the 7th century, far away at the very northern tip of Europe, fierce Viking warriors discover a child in a space capsule. One of them, Leif Haraldson, adopts the child and names him after his gods: Thorgal Aegirsson, son of Thor, the god of thunder, and Aegir, the master of the seas. As he grows to manhood, Thorgal, the child of the stars, becomes an upright, brave, strong but peaceful man. His only wish is to find a family, far from the pillaging and massacring, in short the everyday life of the barbarous Vikings. Alas, his quest for freedom seems to displease the Gods who continually set him ordeals to test him and make him confront cruel and bloodthirsty enemies …

SYNOPSIS: An old man enters a tavern, without hesitation, he walks towards Thorgal, sits down at his table and starts to speak… His name is Noral and he is a magician. He has come to the village to warn Thorgal that a great danger is lying in wait for him.

Using a magic mirror, in which he can see the future, he has witnessed a grievous scene. He invites Thorgal to discover what it is. The image is clear and distinct, Thorgal sees himself drawing his bow and letting fly an arrow. He howls with rage when his arrow strikes Jolan, his own son, who slumps to the ground. Thorgal turns to the old magician to ask why. Noral calmly states that the mirror cannot lie and what it shows happens unfailingly.

Thorgal decides to leave immediately. He asks the magician why he has taken the trouble to warn him; the old man avoids the question: he has a favor to ask Thorgal, but that can wait …

- Is it a point and click game?

No, it's a click and go game.

- The title in USA is Curse of Atlantis. Will the game have the same name in Europe?

No, in Europe the title is: THORGAL: Odin's Curse.

- And when will we have the opportunity to see this game on our shelves?

Thorgal will be available on March or April, in

Scandinavia, on PC, and will be released in September on PS2.

General / Marketing

- In last month's interview with Microids, Cedric Orvoine the PR Manager of Microids agreed with a statement of Jane Jensen, which said that the audience for adventure games is a non-traditional computer game audience. His suggestion was that adventure companies should try to reach this non traditional computer game audience by going as wide as possible in terms of marketing and publicity i.e. movie previews, subway advertisements and daily newspapers… What is your take on that? Do you have any suggestions to make, and does DreamCatcher have any plans on reaching a wider audience?

Adventure games appeal to both audiences: the hardcore adventure gamer and the casual gamer, also known as the general public consumer. Casual gamers tend not to focus on specialized press or Internet buzz. Therefore, they have to be targeted differently. Mass market publishing activity (i.e. books, music, and video), investment in general press advertising, and mass market partnership are ways to reach the casual gamer market. From our point of view, this target audience tends to make their purchasing decision at the retail level. Therefore, you have to have a strong trade marketing strategy to reach them.

- If someone takes a look in your products it is clearly visible that you favour 1st person adventures over 3rd person ones and the analogy of 1st person to 3rd person is about 6 to 1. Your latest hit however in the US, Syberia, was a 3rd person adventure. Do you plan to bring the analogy to a more equal level in the future or are you going to continue your preference to 1st person adventures?

The objective of The Adventure Company is to choose titles that will strengthen our brand, whether they are 1st person or 3rd person games.

- What about 2D adventure games? Some of the biggest hits in the history of adventures (even in the recent one) like The Longest Journey (more than 450,000 copies sold) and Curse of Monkey Island (more than 500,000 copies sold) were 2D adventure games. What is DreamCatcher's policy when it comes to dimensions? Would you be interested in 2D adventure games or do you consider them a thing of the past?

DreamCatcher does not have such a policy. We are looking for strong adventure games that will add value to The Adventure Company brand.

- Would you call adventure games a profitable market?

We would have to say yes. DreamCatcher recognized the demand for adventure games and successfully serviced that market in the U.S. Today we are one of the top 10 PC game publishers in North America, amongst the likes of Disney, Sony, and Vivendi. Value to the customer is what's most important. Choosing not only the right title, but also the positioning and price point, is what holds value in the customer's eye.

- How many copies does a game have to sell worldwide in order for you to say that this game sold well and that you are satisfied with it?

It depends on the title, but 100 000 units for an adventure game is fantastic.

- What do you think has to happen for adventure games to become a leading genre in the gaming industry?

I wouldn't say that adventure games will become leading genre for obvious reasons, however the genre will go stronger through diversity: diversity of technologies, synopsis, gameplay, features etc. It is not the genre but the creativity and the innovation put into each title that appeals to adventure game players.

- Why have you decided to support the adventure genre?

Because we love these games! Intriguing storylines, tremendous graphics, and challenging gameplay… It's also a genre that mature game players enjoy.

- What are the requirements that DreamCatcher has in order to take the decision and publish an adventure? What kind of qualities are you looking for and what makes you interested in forming a deal with a developer?

The main interest is the experience of the team and the level of involvement we have with the title. We want to work with people who are passionate about their product. We also believe in allowing our partners to develop the game fully (i.e. story, graphics, characters, etc.) and fine-tune the important details. We are also looking for a mid-range production level, in terms of time and money. We will gradually increase our project size as the company grows.

- Has Cryo gone bankrupt? Or are they still alive and kicking?

Yes Cryo was put on liquidation last October. In order to establish the best basis of our settlement in Europe, DreamCatcher chose to buy some of the former Cryo assets such as some employees, 4 upcoming titles under development and some back catalogue products.

- Would you like to share with us any more future plans of yours?

We are developing a new addition to the successful Atlantis series. It is not a new chapter, but a new start to the franchise. We will keep you all updated as we gear up for its launch!

Thank you for participating in this interview and for supporting our beloved genre. I wish you the best of luck with your company and I hope that we will see your games in the Nordic Region soon.

Shadow of Memories

The review of the month for The Inventory 5 is an unusual adventure from Konami. Shadow of Memories could have been one of the best adventures ever but unfortunately Konami did not take care to tailor Shadow of Memories for the capabilities of a PC. The amazing and original plot along with the superb graphics are reasons enough however to give this game a chance.

Shadow of Memories was recently released in the Nordic Region. In this adventure you take the role of Eike who is about to experience the most unusual day of his life. The game was first made for consoles and was only recently ported to PCs. If its developers were more experienced with developing PC games and were more aware of PC capabilities this game would be one of the ages. It is nevertheless quite unique and noteworthy. Let us start with the one of the best parts of the game.

Story: The game starts with the death of the main character Eike. He was mysteriously murdered while walking to the art museum. Eike wakes up in a strange place. A voice with no face and body talks to him and tells him that if he wants, he could have a second chance and he could return to life to prevent his own death. All he has to do is to try and stay alive. Eike after giving it some thought decides to accept the offer.

The voice gives Eike also a strange device called a digipad. By using this device Eike can travel back and forth in time. While doing so he has the ability to alter events that have taken place in the past, thus changing the course of events in the future as well. The story is exceptional and unique and is definitely something that was missing from the adventure stories so far.

It must have taken some time to plan a plot that spans such a wide time period. Events in the distant past are suitably connected with future incidents. It is quite original as well since we have not seen many games that have handled the issue of time travelling before. But the theme of the game is not concerning only time travelling. Shadow of Memories is also concerned with other interesting topics like alchemy and the philosopher's stone, all nicely intertwined with each other. Seeing how a village has changed through time gives a special feeling to the plot.

The story is non-linear and there are actually five different endings that the player can witness depending on choices that were taken during the game.

The only drawback of the story is its short length, which is probably a result of the non-linearity (something that was experienced in Blade Runner as well). It is actually one of the shortest adventures I have ever experienced since I finished it in approximately five and a half hours.

The main characters are very expressive and well developed and you end up caring for them. Some of the secondary characters could have been a bit more developed however and the game could use some more dialogues with them. The most part of the story is told through cutscenes and Shadow of Memories goes down to the adventure history as a candidate for best cutscenes ever along with TLJ, Syberia, Blade Runner and The Beast Within.

The saga of Eike has a lot of sad tones painted over it. SOM made me reflect on some choices I have made in my life and how would my life had been if I had chosen another path. Stimulating emotions and thoughts is always a great achievement. Add to that the fact that you get lots of information during the game that makes sense only in the end, or after replaying the game. When all the puzzle pieces come into place you will see the whole story through another perspective. Therefore despite its shortness and some lack of secondary character development the story of the game is a real treat.

Graphics: As you can see on the screenshots although the game is in 3D the characters are not blocky at all. Konami managed to translate the anime style of the game perfectly in 3D. The change of colours during the different points in time is very artistic and gives a nostalgic feeling for older days. If you go only some years back in

I may look little,
but I can do anything.

time then everything will have a black & white look, while if you move even further back in time everything takes a yellowish kind of colour. Only Eike remains in his natural colours, probably in order to show the contradiction between old and new.

What you cannot see in the pictures however are some other very important virtues of the graphics of SOM. And these are the characters' animation, the weather and lighting effects and the camera angles during the cutscenes. The animation of the characters is amazing. Every move feels very natural and realistic. The faces and the body movements are very expressive, indicating clearly and convincingly their feelings.

As stated before the cutscenes are an eye candy. The camera angles that cover the several events during cutscenes are very professional and they give a cinematic feeling to the game. The weather and lighting effects create an amazing atmosphere. Eike will get to walk through light rain, heavy snow and sun and everything looks natural. Walk in the snow and you will leave footprints behind you, while you will be able to see your warm breath in the cold air and snow will fall around you. During the night you will be charmed by the bright lampposts throughout the village while during dawn the sky will have a special colour and the streets will be empty.

Last but not least, the clothing of the characters. It has been paid large attention to create clothes that suit each time period and the clothes are drawn in great detail. All these small touches create an amazing atmosphere and gives you the impression that you part of an animated movie. There is however one drawback and this is that some character models are re-used during the game, either in another time period or in the same one, which is the only aspect of the graphics that look unrealistic.

No, no, no! Wait!!
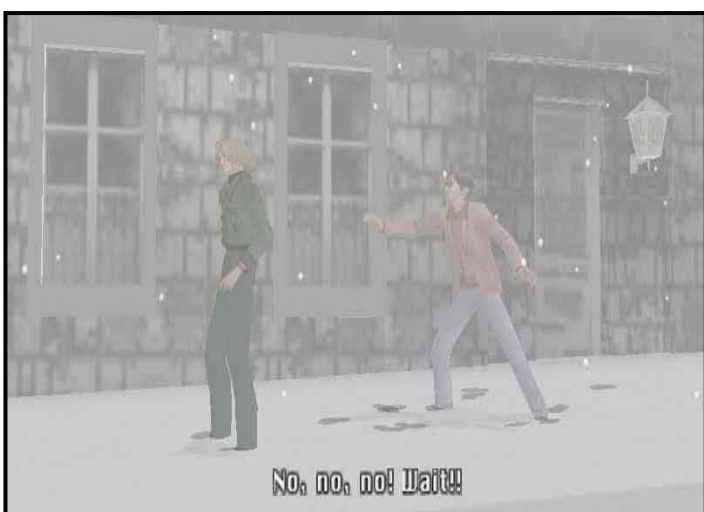
Shadow Of Memories

Developer: **Konami**
Category: **Direct Control**
Perspective: **3rd person**
Difficulty: **Easy**
Site: **http://www.konami.com/shadow/**

Where to buy it:
www.webhallen.se
www.gamesmix.com

Sound: The music of the game is quite nice but not something that will make you eager to go and buy the soundtrack. A few of the tracks are very good while there are some other tracks that you won't even notice. Nothing negative though. One track that stays in mind however is the one in the option screens in the beginning where the music reminds of fairy tales.

The voices are in general terms good but there are a couple of voice-overs that are annoying (i.e. Hugo). Eike, Margarette and Dana are very well performed. The sound effects are quite nice (hearing birds during dawn was a nice experience) and SOM supports surround sound. For example at one point of the game there is a fire in a building and you recognise where this is taking place by listening where the flame sounds originate. Having four speakers installed on your computer could be an asset in that.

Gameplay: …or as I like to call it in this case… how to take the game from the top 10 adventures ever, and throw it right out of there. If Konami paid attention to the interface of the game and how to tailor it for PCs SOM would be one of the best adventures ever. But unfortunately life's not always that pretty.

First of all let's mention the controls, which are downright awful, especially indoors. You control Eike with the keyboard. When outdoors, you also control the camera with the mouse, and you can turn your view either left or right in a 360 span around Eike in a third person view. When indoors you cannot control the camera anymore and you can only control Eike. Controlling Eike indoors has to be one of the worst and most cumbersome interfaces ever seen in adventure games. The camera angles are not focusing on Eike appropriately and you will inevitably bump into walls several times.

Outdoors things are quite better but not that better. Having to control both the camera and the movement of Eike becomes cumbersome as well and is not relaxing at all.

These of course are the console shortcomings that Konami didn't take care to take off in the PC version. But there are more of those console shortcomings. The

saving system for example is also poor. You can only 'officially' save the game after you complete each chapter, while the game also saves your game in a special slot each time you quit. So if you want to save the game somewhere in the middle of a chapter you have to end it, go out in the main menu and then reload. Efficient? Definitely not.

The puzzles are easy and logical which is a plus, but in the long run, there are not many things to do during the game. The puzzles are very few and sparse and the dialogues with the secondary characters are short and in many cases Eike doesn't even say a thing but just listen to an answer. You also have to run around and collect some energy units for your digipad to work which is not really a fun thing to do, and is more of a console king of thing.

One of the really few positive aspects of the gameplay is the indication of interactive objects with the use of a green spot on top of them. So the game manages to skip the unrealistic head turning of recent direct control games, but that's about it. If there were more essential things to do in the game it would be longer and more fun to play as well.

General info: The game comes in a DVD case and the box is not bad but nothing exciting either. They could have used a much more artistic cover than the one they used. The game run smoothly on my machine and was completely bug-free. The loading times were very fast as well. The concept of time travelling that the game is covering is a very interesting one that has puzzled great scientists (like Einstein and Hawkins) for years now. There are many theories surrounding the topic and many interesting enigmas like the 'grandfather paradox'.

Here is the definition of the grandfather paradox that Carl Sagan, astronomer and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, gave in an interview to Nova online on their website about time travel: "*The grandfather paradox is a very simple, science-fiction-based apparent inconsistency at the very heart of the idea of time travel into the past. It's very simply that you travel into the past and murder your own grandfather before he sires your mother or your father, and where does that then leave you? Do you instantly pop out of existence because you were never made? Or are you in a new causality scheme in which, since you are there you are there, and the events in the future leading to your adult*

Eeeek!

life are now very different? The heart of the paradox is the apparent existence of you, the murderer of your own grandfather, when the very act of you murdering your own grandfather eliminates the possibility of you ever coming into existence." For more information on time travelling you can check these web sites: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/time/ (Nova Online Time Travel Project) http://www.timetravelinstitute.com/ (Time Travel Institute).

In a few words… It is a shame that Konami did not pay attention to the gameplay details that would have made this adventure one of the best ever. It is certainly entertaining and the story is very unique and intriguing, but at the same time quite short. The graphics create a nice atmosphere as well and the cutscenes are absolutely amazing. Be prepared though to get irritated by the controls and by other aspects of the gameplay. If you think you can handle the gameplay then you should try Shadow of Memories, otherwise stay clear of it.

System Requirements:
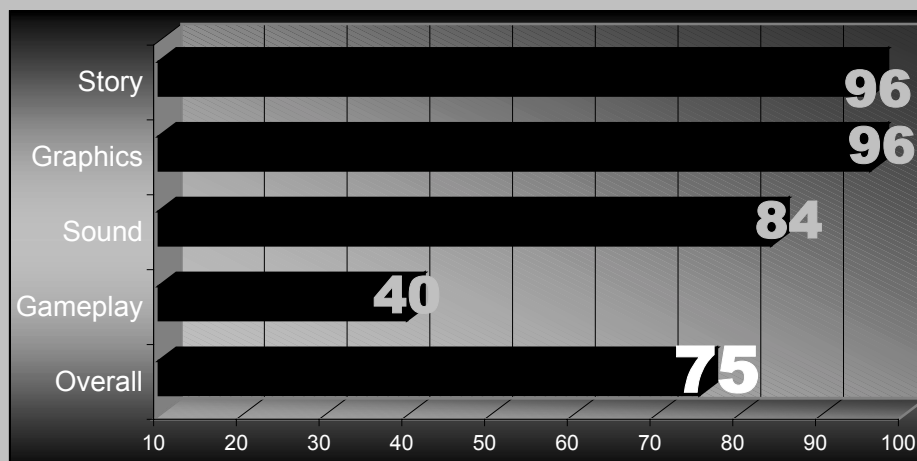
-Windows 95, 98, ME, XP, 2000

-Pentium III 450 MHZ

-64MB RAM

-700MB HARD DISK

-DIRECTX 8 SOUNDCARD

-16 MB DIRECTX 8 AGP VIDEO CARD

*CD-ROM

	Score
Story	96
Graphics	96
Sound	84
Gameplay	40
Overall	75

Harvest

Find your dog… Solve some puzzles… Save the world… No problem!!

"You are walking your dog in the park one summer evening when he pulls free and runs into the bushes and vanishes into thin air." This is how *Harvest* starts, an adventure game without a budget, and only one man behind, Michael B. Clark.

Story: Vance Webb, a bitter and crazy scientist, built an underground complex for him and his father, John. In the underground complex, Vance built a machine that turns rock into water, which he called the *Harvest* machine.

Vance's mother died in a car crash when Vance was 5, and this affected Vance in many ways. He thought that his father, John Webb, who recently died, hated him, and wished that Susan, his wife and Vance's mother, had survived the car crash instead of Vance…

It's quite tragic, and the best part of the game is when we get to read both John and Vance's journals, because out of what stands there, it is easy to understand why both father and son feel the way they do, and why Vance have chosen to poison the world's future water supply.

***Game play*:** Harvest is a 1st person view, point and click game, with a touch of Myst in the game play, also in the puzzles.

It is easy to move around and pick up things, but to find the way through the underground complex can sometimes be rather difficult, it is easy to get lost, and there are a lot of doors to walk in and out, which is very confusing. Using the inventory is simple. It is possible to look closer on things, but the inventory have a tendency to block the view sometimes, and that's a bit annoying.

***Graphics*:** The graphic quality varies a lot! Sometimes it's really hard to understand what an object is, and other times, some of the objects (like the bed in John Webb's bedroom), seem very real, and are very well made with a lot of pretty details. The graphics overall are nice, but only that.

Sound: The sound is average, not good, not bad. When others speak, it is quite hard to hear what they say; this could definitely be done much better. The same with the music, it fits to the games atmosphere, and it changes when we walk from one place to another, but it does not sound too good, I am sure this would be changed if Harvest had a budget.

Puzzles: A lot of buttons to press, things to pick up, large mazes and secret rooms, the puzzles of Harvest are great. They're all very creative and well made, none of them are illogical, and all of them must be solved to move on.

Allibaster, the lost dog...
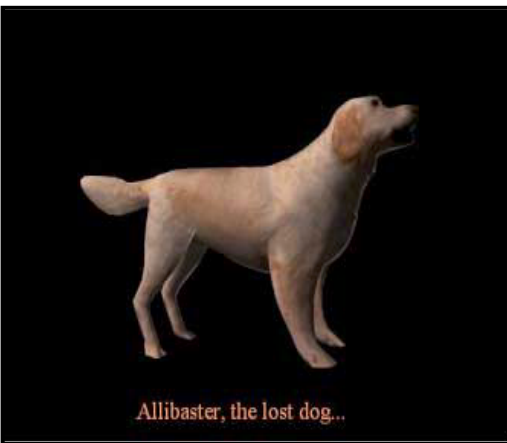
My favourite puzzle is a slider puzzle. The slider puzzle has a motive that seems familiar from another place in the game, so it is nice to have a good memory, also to have pen and paper by your side while playing.

The slider puzzle among many other similar puzzles, is pretty difficult, and that's just great, because the game has easy and moderate puzzles too, just like a good adventure game should be. Most of the puzzles are actually made by Vance Webb, to protect different things he finds precious, and that improves the experience of Harvest a lot.

General info: One man only, Michael B. Clark from USA, made Harvest. It is very well made for only one man to be, without a budget and no company backing him up, very impressive indeed. He sells the game for 14,99$, a price that almost answers to the games quality. If the game was slightly better, it would correspond better to the price of the game.


The games box looks pretty amateur, but also very charming, and it shows the games atmosphere clearly. A picture from a cornfield maze is at the front, also the tag line, which is rather amusing and very creative!

In a few words… Harvest gives a bad first impression, but after a while, the game really improves, and turns out to be quite good. There are a lot of surprising moments and the story is wonderful. I cannot guarantee that you won't jump in your chair every now and then!

Harvest's sound and music could be improved, but I'm pretty sure that if Michael B. Clark had a company behind him and a budget, Harvest would have a different sound. Michael B. Clark should definitely continue making adventure games.

Story	85
Graphics	71
Sound	30
Gameplay	65
Overall	66

10   30   50   70   90
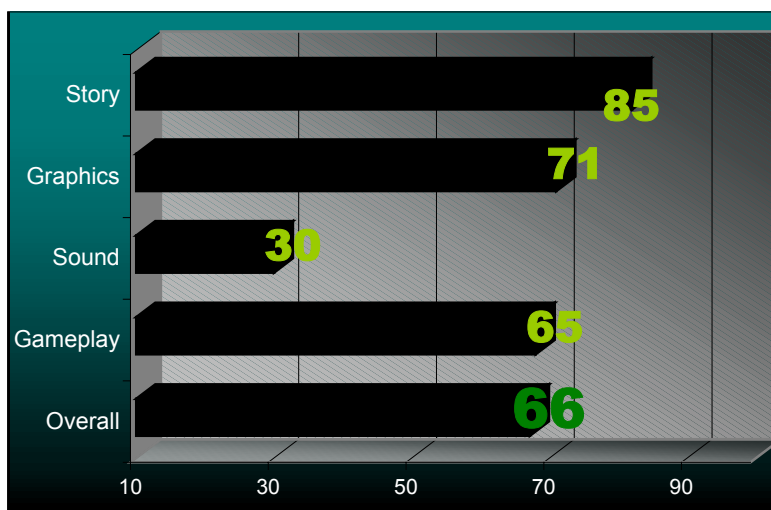
Harvest

Developer: Michael B. Clark
Category: Point and click
Perspective: 1st person
Difficulty: Hard
Site:
http://members.aol.com/harvestgame

Buy *Harvest* at:
http://www.kagi.com/

THE DIG

Have you ever wondered what it would feel like to get lost with no food and no water...
in a place where nothing makes sense...
where nobody is there to help you...
...and there is no way out?

The Dig is one of the biggest adventure productions in the history of adventure games. Based on a concept written by Steven Spielberg, featuring the voice of Robert Patrick (T-1000 in the movie Terminator 2) the artistic talent of the legend Bill Tiller and the ambient music of Michael Land, this adventure was meant to be a top title before it was even released.

The game was released in 1995 and its theme revolves around the random threat of an asteroid on a collision course with earth. So all of you who think that Armageddon (that was released in 1998) had an original concept…you'd better think again.

Story: The story starts in Borneo Deep Space Observatory a day that definitely could not be called 'another day in the office'. An asteroid the size of the moon is spotted and it is on a collision course with earth. The chances that it is going to hit earth are 99% percent and humanity has 3 weeks to attempt to avoid this catastrophe.

A team consisting of 5 persons is going to be human race's last hope. Three of them will first nuke the asteroid in order to change its course and then they will land on the asteroid in order to examine its surface. The landing team consists of Ludger Brink, a renowned geologist, who is also specialized in archaeology and is your typical know-it-all annoying scientist, Maggie Robbins, the most well known reporter on the world who also specializes in languages and has a charming character and the leader of the team, commander Boston Low, who has been a NASA veteran and is the one responsible for the security of the team.

The character that you control in the game is Boston Low and you take control of him just as soon as they go out in space in order to place the nukes on the asteroid. As soon as you land on the asteroid you will understand that things are not always what they seem at first and (as usually) not everything will go as planned. None of the members of the landing team was prepared for what is about to happen.

The story of the game is exceptional. Armageddon, the blockbuster movie that had a quite similar concept, pales in comparison. The characters, although they are your usual stereotypes (the tough military man, the irritating scientist and the independent woman with a career etc) are also very interesting and fun to listen to. The dialogues are witty and you get your casual pun here and there.

Graphics: If Jane Jensen is the queen of story-telling then Bill Tiller is one of the kings of graphics in adventures (along with B. Sokal). Perfection is the only word that comes to mind. The game was released 8 years ago but it still looks spectacular and you will find yourselves staring at your screen in awe quite often. I am actually glad that we are featuring an interview with Bill Tiller as well and I have the ability to post more screenshots because choosing screenshots from such a beautiful game is a very difficult process.

The game uses 2D graphics and is seen from the 3rd person perspective as most of the old Lucasarts adventure used to be. The backgrounds are excellent and the amount of detail given to each screen is creating one of the most immersive experiences ever. Presenting an alien world is definitely not an easy task. Nobody has ever witnessed an alien world so someone who wants to draw one can only turn to his / her imagination.

The alien world that you will be visiting is full of lights and colours. Most of your actions will result in some kind of spectacular effect. It shows how much important graphics are to an adventure, since solving puzzles and exploring the surroundings become much more fun when you are presented with beautiful sceneries and effects.

The animation is also well done and there is more animation in The Dig than in any of the other adventures Lucasarts had released before that. The only tiny complain somebody can have about Dig's graphics is the short cutscenes. Some of them could have been a little bit longer to give a more cinematic feeling to it.

The Dig

Developer: **Lucasarts**
Category: **Point and Click**
Perspective: **3rd person**
Difficulty: **Medium**
Site: **N/A**

Where to buy it:
www.webhallen.se
www.gamesmix.com

Sound: The sound of the game is also phenomenal. The soundtrack by Michael Land is a large collection of ambient tracks that set the mysterious and enigmatic tone of The Dig. The game could have used a bit less music though. In order to review The Dig I replayed the game and in the last time I played it I had played five hours straight. Then I noticed that there were none or almost none silent screens during the game so it became a bit heavy for the 'ears' after some time.


The voice-overs are remarkably performed. Robert Patrick did a very good job on Boston Low and he gave him the confident tone that his character would require. Mari Weiss also did a great job giving a charming dimension to her personality. Steven Blum was also good as Ludger Brink but not as excellent as the other two.

The game is also filled with sound effects, and lots of them have a lot to do with the sound created by water since there is quite a lot of water throughout the game. Walking sounds different underground than it does outdoors. It all suits very well with the music and the graphics and they create a magnificent atmosphere. You really feel like you are in another world.

Gameplay: The Dig uses the most simplified version of all the interfaces Lucasarts had incorporated in their old adventures. There were no icons to click at, you just move the cursor over your screen and if there is something of interest Low will either pick it up, or look at it or talk to someone, etc. It is actually simple and efficient. The dialogue system however is a bit vague and not updated all the time with the latest events taking place in the game.

The puzzles are for the most part logical but there are some that might keep you stuck for a considerable amount of time. There is a lot of shape-puzzles and adjusting machinery, which might not be everybody's cup of tea but it suits with the story of the game. Fortunately though most of the time your objectives are always clearly stated and you know what you have to do next in order to continue the story. There was only one part near the middle of the game that might let you 'hanging in the air' with no indication what to do next, but this should not be a big problem for most players.
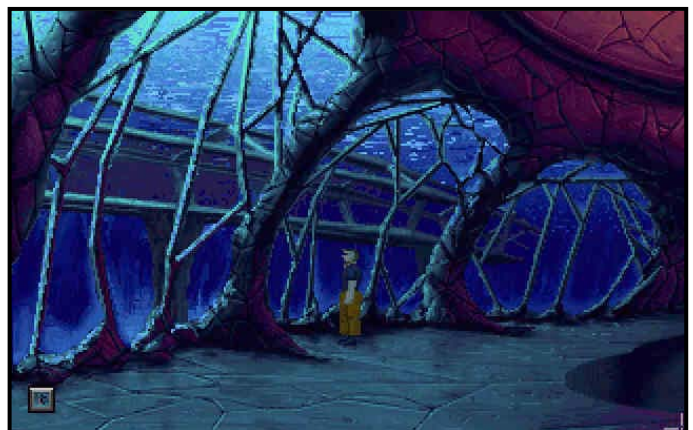
General info: If there ever was a TV trivia show about adventures The Dig would definitely be in the questions quite often. Steven Spielberg wrote the concept upon which The Dig is based (so don't wonder why there are so many references to Spielberg movies in the game). In the beginning the concept was going to be used as an episode of the series Amazing Stories but Spielberg decided that a short episode would not do justice to such a kind of story. A film based on the concept would cost way too much, so the next solution was a computer game.

Steven Spielberg is not the only celebrity who was involved with The Dig however. Robert Patrick who gave his voice to commander Low is the famous T-1000 from Terminator 2 (with Arnold Schwarzenegger) and has also starred in X-files. Mari Weiss who did the voice of Maggie Robbins, has also appeared in the X-files.

There are also several rumours surrounding the development of the game. One of the most interesting ones is that initially there was a fourth character who was supposed to land on the asteroid, a Japanese man. Read the interview with Bill Tiller in the current issue to learn more interesting info about The Dig, and if you still want more then you can visit this site http://dig.mixnmojo.com to learn everything you want to know about The Dig.

Now the game is not available as a single entity but it is being sold as a part of a collection of Lucasarts called Lucasarts Entertainment Pack, and it includes 3 more adventures: Full Throttle,

Sam n Max and Grim Fandango. Those of you that have the older version and cannot run the game under Windows 2000 / XP you should go to http://www.scummvm.org and download their emulator that will allow you to play the game in recent machines. Make sure to download ScummVM Quick and Easy as well if you want a user friendly interface.

In a few words...Those who have not played The Dig should not miss this unique experience. Even 8 years after its release the graphics will charm you and the whole atmosphere will get you lost in another world. Great music, a solid and original story and some good gameplay make the Dig one of the best adventures ever. It is a pity that Lucasarts has abandoned classic adventure games because they certainly used to create gems.

Category	Score
Story	91
Graphics	98
Sound	95
Gameplay	86
Overall	91
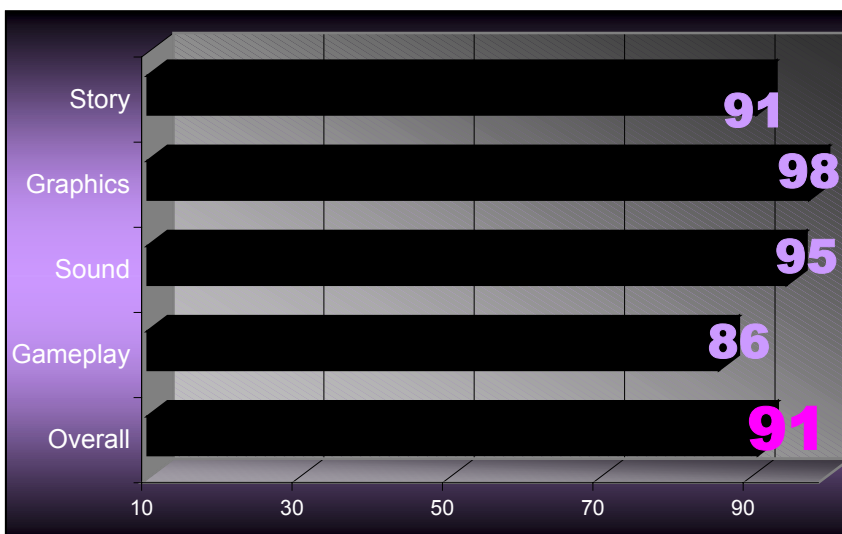
System Requirements:

-MS-DOS/WINDOWS 95/98
-WINDOWS 2000/XP
+ SCUMMVM
(for the old version)
-486 DX66
-8MB RAM
-2X CD ROM
-SOUNDBLASTER COMP.
-VGA CARD

Invento-mail

Hi. My name is Amitai and I'm an adventure gamer from Israel. I can't believe you mentioned the Sierra/Lucas adventure game in the same sentence with Syberia! Do you even remember these golden age games? What's the most important thing in adventure games after the story? THE PUZZLES!! "If I wanted puzzles I'd buy Scrabble"?! What is that?! You can't compare the unique inventory-based puzzles (what's your magazine's name again?) of the golden age to "Scrabble!"

The puzzles of Syberia is a degenerate form of puzzles, an excuse, so people can say that Syberia is an adventure game. Those golden age gems you're talking about contained highly sophisticated inventory-based puzzles, and that's why they're so great! Syberia looks great, but that's it! Why even talk about Syberia in such a manner? Because it sold many copies? What about The Longest Journey? Now THAT'S an adventure game worth comparing to the Sierra\Lucas generation!

Syberia could have been a great comic book, and that's the medium that Sokal should have staid in! He simply CAN'T create true adventure games, and I'm honestly afraid other developers will go in his steps and produce such adventure games! Don't you understand that all this hype and success of Syberia can cause a change in the adventure genre?

A change that might lock the golden age games in the far past? Aren't you afraid of that? I must mention The Longest Journey again as an example for how new age adventures are supposed to be - the same as the golden age games you love so much (or so you say), just with better graphics! I hope you'll print this e-mail in your magazine even though it seems you're a little too pro-Syberia. Maybe people will finally understand.

By the way - in The Inventory 4 letter column a reader named Bengt Andersson said something about the Tex Murphy "trilogy". It's not a trilogy! It has FIVE games! He probably doesn't know about Mean Streets and Martian Memorundum. You should have told him about that in your answer.

I just wanted to add that you have a great responsibility - many designers might see you as representatives of the adventure community and will come to a conclusion that the only adventure games worth making are Syberia-style adventure games. This will mean the end of this genre, this time for real, for Syberia is a degenerate form of the classic adventure games we all love, and if all adventure games will be in this style, than this means a new, less satisfying and less clever genre will take the place of true adventure games. Where is the satisfaction in a game with almost no puzzles (and the puzzles that ARE in the game are not too good, admit it)? Just take a moment and imagine Day of the Tentacle or Monkey Island 2 without the puzzles. Scary, isn't it?

Amitai
A concerned adventure gamer

The Inventory: **First of all on your question whether I remember the Sierra/Lucasarts games the answer is I certainly do, since I play them even nowadays. The most important thing in an adventure after the story in my opinion is gameplay, and one part (probably the most important) of the gameplay is puzzles. However gameplay is not only puzzles. If you re-read The Hydra you will see that I did not write this scrabble sentence, as I did not write the clickable movie sentence. I just said what those who are pro and against Syberia are claiming, which is a whole different thing than saying something myself and not only that but I said that I thought both sentences were exaggerating. I hope you understand that.**

It seems like you misunderstood the point of the article. You write in a way as I said that Syberia is way better than The Longest Journey or than the Lucasarts/Sierra classics. I invite you to re-read the article and try to find a sentence where I even imply something like that.

Since you refer to Lucasarts so much, I have to tell you that the puzzles of Monkey Island or Day of the tentacle are great for the kind of games that they were made for, that is cartoons/comedies. Syberia is not a cartoon/comedy game. The puzzles have to seem more realistic and not in the form of combine 6 different whacky items in order to make a super potato thrower. Both puzzle styles are excellent but in their own context. Monkey Island with Syberia's puzzles would feel boring and dull, while Syberia with Monkey Island's puzzles would feel ridiculous and illogical.

I am also wondering if you read the part of the article where I wrote that not all adventures should be made like Syberia but we definitely need more adventures like this one. The elitistic view of some adventure gamers, that all adventures should be cartoons with difficult puzzles will only lead us to adventures being visible only in museums. Adventures should offer a wide variety of story, graphics and gameplay styles.

You asked 'why talk about Syberia in such a manner'. Because a) It was a great adventure, b) a pure point and click one with no action elements, that c) finally got the attention of the public and will give a boost to development of pure point and click adventures. If you do not understand the importance of C then I will ask you to go out in your local stores and try to buy games like Runaway or Tony Tough. When you are not going to be able to even find these titles you will understand why it is so important. And we will not only talk about Syberia in such a manner but any other true / pure adventure that will bring adventures back in the spotlight.

You say that Syberia has no puzzles. I invite you to go to the Syberia forums (www.syberia.info) or in the forums of Dreamcatcher (www.adventuregamer.com) and check out how many people are stuck and ask for help. If there are no puzzles on Syberia where are these people stuck? On the dialogues?

Am I pro-Syberia. I definitely am. Am I pro-classics like Day of the Tentacle, Quest for Glory, Monkey Island etc, etc…. I definitely am as well. We need both styles of gameplay and I happen to enjoy both immensely. And it is actually not just me that enjoy both gameplay styles but thousands of people who have bought, played and enjoyed Syberia.

You seem to have enjoyed The Longest Journey but thought that Syberia was too easy. There are others who thought that The Longest Journey was also too easy and it was vary inferior to the old classics. What would you tell them? It is natural that different people require different levels of puzzle difficulty. But why should your opinion be right and the opinion of the person who likes easier puzzles be wrong? As to why did we write about Syberia in the article and not about The Longest Journey a) Everybody has his/her own favourite game but we have to choose one to write about b) TLJ was released 3 years ago while Syberia was recently released and the hype around it is still going on. In rhetoric it is called kairos, and what that means is that there is a right time to speak about everything. Example: If I wrote an article about the world in Iraq and an article about the war in Vietnam which one would be more interesting to you right now?

Your opinion is that Benoit Sokal cannot make adventures and he should have stayed in the comics business. Fortunately for the adventure genre the majority of adventurers have a different opinion on that and Benoit Sokal is one of the talented people, like Jane Jensen and Ragnar Tornquist that will lead adventures back where they should be and maybe even higher.

Although I disagree with your opinions I want to thank you for taking the time to write us.

G'day. I'd just like to say this is great publication - keep it up! Thanks for looking after us adventurers, as we are a deprived bunch of gamers in this day and age.

And thats it: WE ARE DEPRIVED AND IGNORED - we're tired of hearing that the adventure genre is 'dead' or 'dying'. It will never die. A bit of logic needs to be applied here. Remember the original King's Quest I - IV? On each of the covers in the bottom right hand corner Sierra boasted how manies copies the series had sold, starting at 300000 and reaching around 1000000 copies well before the fifth instalment. Where are these million or so people now.

Trust me they're not dead (maybe a tad older) and they have kept up with technology (usually these old skool gamers are well ahead of it). The problem is: the 'big' companies (god I hate microsoft) have swallowed the 'smaller' ones (goddamit i use to love sierra), destroying many creative partnerships between people that took us into an adventure world and made them so great and immersive. The instant adreneline rush of the other genres is an easy way to make dollars and these companies know it. Adreneline and hormones go hand in hand after all.

We adventurers are refined and far, far harder to please. And we will never apologise for that, afterall we are the connoissuers of the gaming world. These 'big' companies need to get it through their corporate ideaology that we don't waste money on crap and if they invest in solid creatitivy (ie. Gabriel Knight, Syberia, The Longest Journey) we will show them the cash. Otherwise we've got billions of books to choose from.

Once again thank you for a great read and I look forward to No. 5
Take care, Dave.

The Inventory: **I totally agree with you Dave. Now there are some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that unfortunately some adventure gamers are so blindly 'in love' with their favourite series that no matter what kind of crappy sequel is going to come out they are going to buy it just because it is a sequel. For example, think about how many copies MI4 would sell if it was not called Monkey Island and was a new game of its own instead or think about KQ8.**

The good news is that the tide is turning. TLJ 2, Syberia 2 and many more great adventures are being developed as we speak. Read this month's Hydra for more details about the good news. So we have started to be noticed again by the gaming industry. What you and all the other adventurers out there should do to help the situation even more, is to decide the fate of the gaming industry yourselves. How are you going to do that? It is very simple…the answer lies in your wallet. Unfortunately nowadays the only way to cast your vote is through your money.

Every time you buy a bad game, you endorse their developers/publishers to develop/publish more bad games. On the other hand every brilliant game you buy is one more little push in the gaming world to become better. All gamers should become more picky and more difficult to please. Before you buy a game, search for a demo, read reviews from different sources and read them in detail. Does this game seem to satisfy your needs? If yes then go ahead and reward the developers for their efforts.

Does this game try to cash in on pretty graphics and the latest dolby surround sound although it is presenting you with minimal plot and with horrible gameplay? In such a case I am sure you could find better uses for your money. Anyway nowadays most games offer impressive graphics and sound, so it wouldn't be difficult to find another one that is going to impress you and offer you a smart story and entertaining gameplay as well.

Thank you for taking the time to write us.

NAG Site

Finally the Nordic Adventure Guild gets a proper home. So all of you who want to get the latest news about the Nordic Adventure Guild, The Inventory and adventures in the Nordic Region can visit:

http://adventurepit.adventuredevelopers.com/theinventory/

The site is in a very early stage so there is not that much to see yet. You can however take a look at the details of each Inventory issue so far. Around the 10th of each month you will get to see a preview of the upcoming Inventory. The preview will include a screenshot of the cover as well as a description of the features of the upcoming Inventory.

There is also a news section that informs you about the latest releases in the Nordic Region as well as news about The Inventory. In the Downloads section you will be able to find some trailers from several adventures. Soon you will also be able to participate in discussions in the forums we are going to add.

One of the best features of our site at its current state is the links to other sites. You will find links to most of the official pages for adventures that either have been recently released or are in the development stages. The links are split into 3rd person adventures and 1st person adventures because we know that many people show preference to adventures of a specific perspective.

There are also links to several global adventure e-zines where you will be able to find the latest everyday news about adventures. Other links will lead you to European and American publishers of adventure games, so if you are looking for a publisher to help you get your game on the shelves you might want to take a look over there. Last but not least, you can find links for stores in the Nordic Region with a wide variety of adventure games in their shelves.

If someone of you want to contact us by other means than e-mail you can find our contact information in the site as well. Soon we will add more features to the site like the forums (as mentioned before), more links and also more downloads (i.e. patches / playable demos).

The site of course is not a fully blown mega site but right now the time and resources available has our hands 'tied' in a certain way. We are actually looking for someone to take care of the site, so if you come from the Nordic Region and if you enjoy adventures and have knowledge in web site development then send us an e-mail.

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. Last month The Hydra was talking about the Syberia phenomenon and its influence in the gaming world and adventures in general. This month the topic of the Hydra is:

THE BITCH JUST WON'T DIE

A couple of years ago adventures where considered a thing of the past and a dead genre. This is not a unique situation for gaming genres, RPGs had been down that path before. A lot of companies tried to revive the genre by copying the attributes of the best selling action games like using 3D graphics (although they were neither experienced in 3D graphics nor did they have the latest tools for them), including action elements in their games, or abandoning the point and click interface for other types of controls. Not even Gabriel Knight 3, which is indisputably one of the best adventures ever, could revive the old dog.

However 2 other adventure games that decided to go against the 'wave' and feature traditional adventure elements managed to bring adventures back to the spotlight, and these two adventures were The Longest Journey and Syberia. Now some time after their release the adventure genre seems stronger than ever before in the last 6-7 years with a line-up of upcoming adventures that would impress all sorts of adventurers.

First of all, the two gems that did the trick, Syberia and Longest Journey are already having sequels in development. Syberia 2 comes next October while The Longest Journey 2 is probably going to take a while longer. But let us mention adventures grouped into perspectives. For those who enjoy 3rd person adventures we will have:

- From the Czech Republic comes the 3rd person point and click horror adventure Black Mirror that has been getting rave reviews in each country. Rumours have it that it will be released worldwide in English this June.
- Runaway arrives in the Nordic Region in April and soon in most places around the globe. It has taken excellent reviews from the majority of the sites and that it has been reviewed.
- Legacy, a futuristic point and click adventure from Croatia and Razbor Studios.
- Our Still Unnamed Project Joe, a cartoon classic point and click adventure with amazing graphics from Holland.
- Journey to the Center of the Earth, by the Russian developers Frogwares.

- Quest for Glory 2 remake by Tierra.
- Indiana Jones and Fountain of Youth by Screen 7 Entertainment.
- The Unofficial King's Quest IX
- Moment of Silence, from the German company CDV.
- Thorgal's Quest is also ready to be released, developed by Cryo.
- Roger Foodbelly by the Norwegian company Adventure Pit.
- 3 more adventure that are in early development stages and that we are not allowed to give you information but you will be definitely glad when you get to learn about them.

Now let us go to the first person adventures that are being developed:

- CSI, based on the famous TV series is going to be released in April by the French Ubisoft.
- Law & Order 2 is also being developed by Legacy Interactive and Dreamcatcher will publish it.
- Sallambô, the priestess of Tanith is coming soon, developed by the French company Cryo
- Egypt 3, also published by Dreamcatcher.
- Atlantis 4 by Dreamcatcher
- The Omega Stone, sequel to Riddle of the Sphinx by Dreamcatcher as well.
- Dark Fall 2, the sequel to Jonathan Boakes successful horror adventure.
- Sherlock Holmes: Mystery of the Mummy by Frogwares.

I am more than certain that I am forgetting a lot of adventures but I think you get the point. More than 20 pure adventures are in development as we speak. Adventures are back. First of all we have sequels to TLJ and Syberia 2, from two companies that they have already proven that they aim for perfection. We have games based on TV-series that can translate into great adventures and bring new audience (the right kind of audience) in the genre. Law and Order might have not been the greatest adventure of all times but it was definitely entertaining and if they can fix a couple of issues in the sequel (like getting rid of the timer and using a better inventory system) it could turn into something great.

Add to that the great adventures coming out of the fans and the independent developers. Some of them are better than many of the commercial adventures (those of you who played King's Quest 2 know what I am talking about) and a few are even available for free.

It is probably a matter of time that more and more people start discovering gaming and that gaming has even more mature opportunities than Doom-games. When this is going to happen adventures might not be the best selling genre but this is not what we should strive as a genre either. Take movies for example. The best selling movies are action movies, however there are lots of movies who are focusing more on story-telling than body-counts and mini guns. What we should strive for is that adventures become a profitable genre that will reach a wider audience than it does now.

By achieving this goal we make sure that there is always going to be a market for quality stories. And then adventures will be the equivalents of movies like the Sixth Sense, Usual Suspects, Memento, The Ring, The Devil's Advocate, 12 Monkeys etc… where the audience prefers to watch and think than just watch. The adventure genre is … a bitch that just won't die!!!

Epilogue

Another Inventory reached its end. I hope that you have enjoyed the 5th issue. We provide this service to you for free so if you would like to do something for us in return then talk to your friends in real life or on the internet about The Inventory and adventure games.

Feel free also to send us e-mails and letters about adventures and you might see your e-mail in the Invento-mail. I have one request though. I ask you to be brief and not write too much so that we can fit more letters each month in the Invento-mail.

Next month we will feature Post Mortem, the first person adventure from Microids that has been released in the Nordic Region this month, as a review of the month. We will probably also feature a review of The Watchmaker that is going to be released in the Nordic Region during this month. As for a review tribute we will have to see. Actually it is not sure if we are going to feature a review tribute next month because there are other adventures as well on the market right now that we should review. We will see about that.

If you want to become a translator of The Inventory or if you are the owner of a site that is interested to host a localized version of The Inventory do not hesitate to contact us. If you are developers / publishers of adventures and you want your products featured in The Inventory do not hesitate to contact us either.

Right now there is a large number of adventures being in production so we cannot guarantee that your products will be featured in our magazine due to size limits (we try to keep the file size as small as possible) and time limits (we are students so we do not have much of it either).

I also have to announce that during the summer The Inventory is going to take a break of 2/3 months due to many reasons… a) adventures are definitely fun but nothing beats lying under the hot sun on a beach dehydrating yourself in a worry-free environment b) there are not so many adventures released in the summer anyway c) even if there were a lot of adventures released in the summer everybody needs a break and so do we.

But of course we will be back after the summer with more issues of The Inventory. Until summer however we have a lot of adventures to cover such as Runaway, CSI, Post Mortem, The Watchmaker and probably Sherlock Holmes: Mystery of the Mummy and The Omega Stone. I don't know if we will be able to fit all these games in 2 issues but we'll try our best.

Till next time…

*Dimitris Manos*
theinventory@yahoo.com
NAG (Nordic Adventure Guild)

The Nordic Adventure Guild in collaboration with Just Adventure presents

The Inventory

ADVENTURES ARE BACK ON PAPER!

Are you tired of all the paper magazines neglecting your favourite genre? Now adventures hit back with a magazine totally dedicated to them. So get home the latest adventure news and read them on your sofa in 4 single steps!
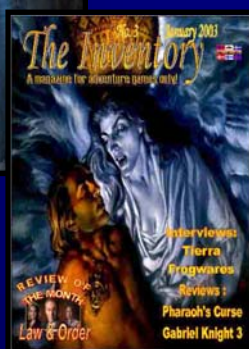
1) Download
2) Print
3) Bind
4) Read

The Inventory. Available for download every month from the front page of

Just Adventure +

The largest and most visited adventure site on the internet.

www.justadventure.com

N. A. G.