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The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

PREVIEWS

LEGACY: DARK SHADOWS

SPACE QUEST PREQUELS

INTERVIEW

UBISOFT (C.S.I.)

REVIEW OF THE MONTH



POST MORTEM

REVIEWS

THE WATCHMAKER

MONKEY ISLAND III

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Prologue

First of all, let me apologize for the delay of the 6th issue,. Lots of mishaps, as well as changes in the layout forced this delay. But let's forget about that and get moving... 6th issue and The Inventory gets a new look, as you have probably already noticed from the cover. So from now on you will seem extra-cool when you read The Inventory on the bus, at a café, at school during your break or wherever else you hang out and read. Lots of good stuff in the sixth issue.

Let's start with the previews and miss Ren Silver, futuristic P.I. at your service, who is also adorning our cover this month. She and Jack Black are going to come to your computer screens next September, but until then, you can get a first view on how this adventure is going to look and play like in the 3-page preview. The fan developer scene hits home one more time with the prequels to the adventures of Roger Wilco. And a Wilco you will get to control, but not Roger. Learn more in the preview.

Gossip around The Longest Journey 2, Syberia 2, Tierra, The Dig, Black Mirror and many other adventures await you in our gossip section. The developers of an adventure that is expected to become a financial success, CSI, are here to share with us their experiences with developing the game version of the famous investigation series in our celebrity corner.

We have also reviews of 2 Gabriel Knight wannabes...but... aretheygonnabes? Post Mortem is the first of them, the 1st person adventure from the upcoming adventure empire, Microids. The second one is The Watchmaker, from Trecision, an adventure that wants to innovate. Yngvil gives us her opinions on one of the best adventures ever, Monkey Island 3. Did Guybrush Threepwood manage to win Yngvil's heart or will his bad luck with women continue to follow him even in The Inventory? Learn the answer in the review tribute.

And since we are already late to bring you this issue, I would better stop the blabla and get on moving. Enjoy your stay dear adventurer...

Dimitris Manos

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NAG (Nordic Adventure Guild)

LEGACY

DARK SHADOWS

Legacy: Dark Shadows is a 3rd person point and click adventure that has been in development for some time now by Razbor Studios. Razbor released the alpha version II last month to the public. Although the alpha version is very different from what the final version is going to look like and there were lots of things that remain to be polished up, it showed that this game is a very promising adventure in the style of Longest Journey and Syberia.

Let us start with the **plot** of the game, which according to Razbor Studios, is going to be its strongest point. The story is a blend of science fiction with horror, and spans a very long period of time. The saga of Legacy, starts at the battle of Stalingrad in 1942, where you take control of the first character, Jack Black.

Jack, born in 1903 in Washington DC, is the son of Ron, the best lawyer in Washington, and Judie Black, who died giving birth to him. Jack is now working as a reporter for the New York Times and he was working as a correspondent of New York Times during the battle in Stalingrad.

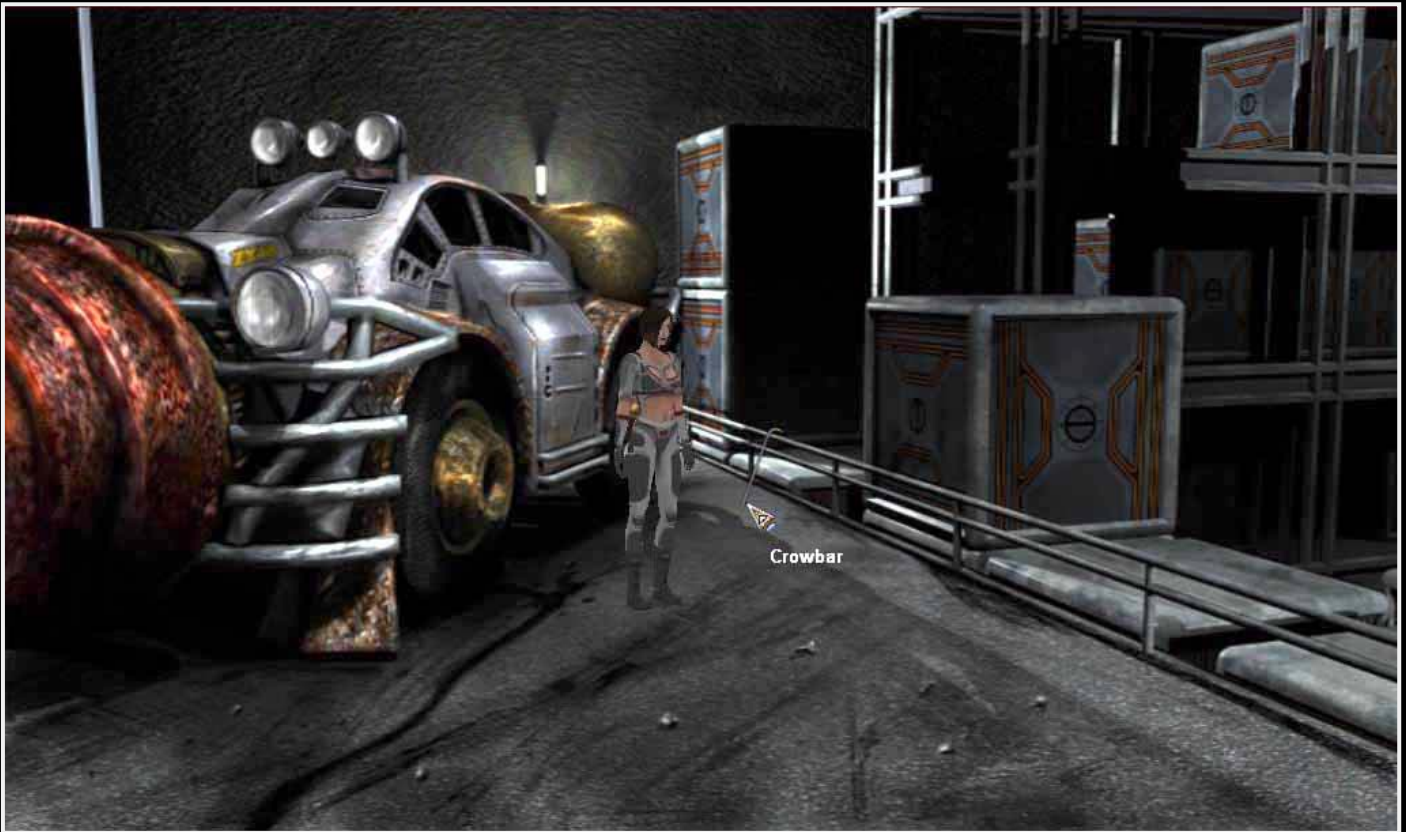
Something happens at this point in time that will change the future in a very peculiar way and suddenly the story jumps 196 years in the future, and more specifically, year 2138 where you get to control the second character of the game, the charming Ren Silver. Ren, who is working as a PI, was (or maybe 'will be' is more appropriate here) born in 2104.

Her father left Ren and her mother, Jane, when Ren was only 2 y.o. Jane was also a security agent and she had always been a source of inspiration for Ren. Sadly, she was murdered, only two days before Ren's graduation day in the investigators' academy.

Ren found eventually the killer two years after her death and spared his life. However, fate continued to bring sorrow in her life.

After being raped, her mental state became so bad that she was taken to a mental hospital. It took her two years to recover and when she did, she was not the same person anymore. Her strong charac-





ter made her one of the best agents for the company she is working for, Dawson and Steehlman, who also payed for her mental recovery.

The **graphics** of the game were very good in general terms. The 3D characters were very detailed (especially Ren). The animation is still a little bit stiff, but it is going to be reimplemented before the final release of the game. The developers are going to add lip-synching to the game as well. Most of the game is played in 3rd person perspective but there are



going to be a few parts in the game where you will also play from the 1st person perspective (like the screenshot on the left).

The **interface** was one of the best parts of the alpha release of Legacy. It is very similar to the interface of Longest Journey (probably the best interface ever used in an adventure). There were two different kinds of hotspots. Some of them

were only there so that Ren would look at them and give a description of them. With some other hotspots, Ren could interact with. When you click on these hotspots you get the familiar 3-icon interface where you can either do something with an object (take, push etc), talk to a person / robot, or look at the object/person and get a description by Ren.

Ren could not run in the alpha version, but according to Razbor, the characters will run in the final version of the game. There will be a dialogue log and a diary as well. Razbor is also



preparing some other innovations regarding the interface. All I can say is...**FINALLY**, someone who realized that The Longest Journey had a perfect interface, and decided to work on something similar.



Puzzles seemed pretty straightforward and the **gameplay** felt entertaining and comfortable. The developers have stated that they do not want to let the players bust their heads in front of the monitor which is very positive. The dialogue system will be non-linear and the one that is going to be used in the final version will be enhanced compared to the one in the alpha release. Legacy will include more than 15,000 lines of **dialogue!** So those who enjoy long dialogues in adventures (myself included) are probably going to have a great time with this game. Add to that the fact that it will include around a hundred locations and 14 chapters. It seems like the developers were serious when they said that this game is going to be even longer than The Longest Journey!

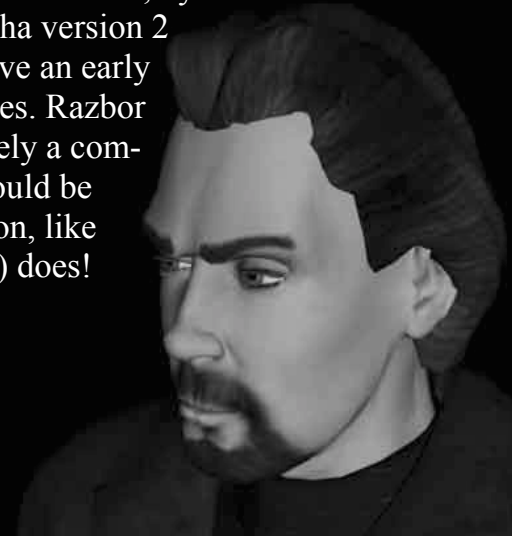


The **music** of the Legacy will remind you Blade Runner's soundtrack, while there are also a lot of ambient tracks that add a certain spooky flavour to the whole experience. The only downside was that the voice-overs were not really of a high standard however. Ren's voice-over sounded a bit exaggerated and it was badly recorded, while the rest were a bit dull. However Razbor Studios have stated that the voice-overs will be re-recorded in the future, while most of the actors are going to change. The voices in the alpha release were also recorded in low quality in order to keep the size of the downloadable file small.



Legacy: Dark Shadows is planned to be released on **September 2003** and is one of the most awaited adventures that will be ready after summer (along with Syberia 2 and Black Mirror).

If you want to learn more about the game you should visit <http://www.legacythegame.com> which is the official site of the game and download the Press Release on PDF that explains the story and the characters, and if you have a good connection, you should also download the alpha version 2 (146 MB) and have an early look for yourselves. Razbor Studios is definitely a company that you should be having your eye on, like Jack Black (right) does!





“Roger Wilco, who’s your daddy?” Roger Wilco is the famous hero from the Space Quest old series from Sierra. And I am sure that most of you already knew who Roger Wilco is, but there might be new kids on the block as well who read this magazine. In the Space Quest Prequels however you are not going to control Roger Wilco, but you will get to control his father, **Bob Wilco**, instead.

The first prequel, or if you prefer, Space Quest –2, takes place on the planet Xenon, which floats in the galaxy Earnon. The emperor of Xenon is Peter Yorba and he is the father of Frank Yorba and Roger Yorba. Frank Yorba is the oldest one, and so he is the rightful successor to the throne.

However, the emperor does not seem willing to be relieved of his duties just yet, and on top of that he is in favour of a democratic committee that will combine the reigning forces of the Earnon galaxy, thus making it even more difficult for Frank to rule Xenon as he wishes.

Frank is a greedy person and an egoist, who wants nothing but to control everything. His lust for power makes him go even as far as plotting the assassination of his own father. He joins forces with the Fraggers, an evil alien race, who agree to kill emperor Yorba if Frank impose some rules after he becomes the emperor, that would allow only Fraggers’ food, Quatz, to be sold in Xenon. Hence the name, the xenonian corruption!





This is where Bob Wilco comes in the story. Bob is the janitor of the imperial residence in Xenon City, and Roger's best friend. Bob one day happens to overhear a conversation between Frank and the Fraggers.

During this conversation a girl called Aria appears, and (guess what) Bob is in love with her but was never brave enough to tell her. Fraggers abduct Aria to their home planet and, it is up to Bob Wilco to save Aria, emperor Peter Yorba and Xenon.



The **interface** of the game will be similar to the interface of Space Quest 4 and 5. The game will be quite

long. It will have **speech** and the music will be in MP3 format. The developers use the AGAST engine to make the game. They also have developed a demo of the game, which is longer than the Space Quest 6 demo according to them. The reason for not having released the demo yet, is that they are waiting for a new AGAST release that would resolve some sound issues.

The name of the team behind this game is PeeCee (Prequels Collective) and it looks like

they are going to make a strong entrance in the fan-made adventures joining the path that Tierra Entertainment and Screen 7 Entertainment have already paved.

The team consists of Dee Blocks (Project Leader, Writer, Musician, Sketcher), Martin De Montfort (Artist), Frank Schreiber (Programmer, Co-Writer) and Alistair Gillet (QA, Co-writer, voice actor).

If you want more information about the game you can visit their **website** that you can find here: <http://sqprequels.web1000.com>. The website is going to be re-built soon and it will contain Flash content. You will also be able to play some small arcade games that will be also featured in the final version of the game, like Pacdromedan.



Adventure Gossip

Tierra released speech pack for King's Quest 2!

If you remember last month's gossip, it was mentioned that Tierra would make an interesting announcement in the not so distant future. Well, an interesting announcement it was indeed, and it also became one of the best April's fool jokes ever.

Tierra had finished the speech pack for some time now, but since the release of the speech pack was so close to April the 1st, they decided to play a little trick with us. So on April the 1st, Erpy, the official spokesman for Tierra, announced in their forums that Tierra would soon release the speech pack for King's Quest 2. Of course a lot of people (some of them were already in the whole plot, i.e. the Anonymous Game Developers or some other forum members previously warned by Erpy) rushed to doubt the news and call it an April's fool joke.

Most people fell for it and Erpy became the target of some booing in the Tierra forums. On April the second the speech pack was available for download from the download page of King's Quest 2, but Tierra didn't announce it just yet. They wanted to wait and see if someone would notice. And someone did eventually notice and then booing became applauding, sad faces turned into happy ones and the download servers went on fire!

If you have not downloaded the speech pack yet, do yourselves a favour and head over to <http://www.tierraentertainment.com/KQ2.htm> to download it. It is

Black Mirror worldwide release date

Rumour has it that the English version of Black Mirror will be released on June this summer. Black Mirror is one of the most anticipated point and click horror adventure games, that has gotten excellent reviews in Czech Republic where it has already been released. For more information on the game you can check the official website <http://www.futuregames.cz/poselsmrti/hlavni-Eng.html>

30 MB big and you will need to download the version 2 (43MB) of King's Quest 2 remake as well if you want the speech pack to work. It might take some time if you run on a modem, but it is worth every last second of it.

Josh Mandel is doing the voice of Graham of course and Richard Aronson who did Cedric in KQ5 does the voice-overs for Cedric and Caldaur. The result is a much more lively experience and a more entertaining outcome. One more big 'well done' goes out to this team of people who have revived the King's Quest series.

And if you are up for some good laughs, check out this thread in the Tierra forums <http://pub57.ezboard.com/froyalquestforumsfrm1.showMessage?topicID=1009.topic> which is the one where Erpy announced the speech pack.

Gossip around The Longest Journey 2

Ragnar Tornquist has recently shed some light on the next chapter of the Longest Journey saga in an interview with the divide (www.thedivide.org) and through his online journal (<http://www.ragnartornquist.com/thoughts.html>). Some of the most important details that he

mentioned were that the player will point with his mouse and click, but it will not be anything like any other point and click system seen before, there might be a second playable character in the game, the game will be shorter than the first one and the system requirements will not be that high.

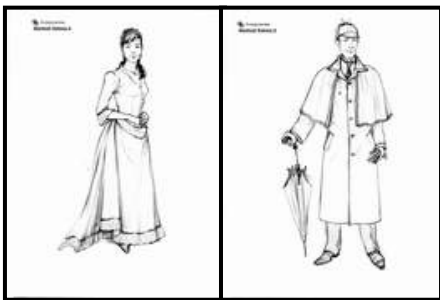
He stated that the game will still be long (something around 20 hours) but not as long as the first one. Locations will be fewer but they will be bigger and more detailed. They will also try to introduce puzzles that are more logical and more sense (no more rubber ducky – kind of puzzles as he said), and there might be quests that will not be necessary to carry out for completing the game but will be there as something extra. Nothing of this should be taken for granted though because the game is in very early development stages.

Last, but not least, it was mentioned that the first lucky ones who got a sneak peek of the upcoming TLJ chapter, were the Norwegian Telegram Bureau, an agency in Norway that gather and sell news to various media agencies. They visited Funcom's offices and Ragnar Tornquist let them into some big secrets, like the new character's name and

what will April's role be in the next chapter. When it is clear in which media agency will acquire that news, Ragnar Tornquist will let us know through his journal, so you might want to keep an eye over there.

2 new adventures from Frogwares

Frogwares has announced that they have already started developing two new adventure games. One of them is called Around the world in eighty days, and it will be based on the homonymous novel by Jules Verne. The other one is going to be called Case of Sherringford hall and is going to be inspired by Arthur Conan Doyle's work.



So Frogwares continues the strategy of production they have followed so far with one Sherlock Holmes and one Jules Verne – based adventure. Frogwares has already developed Sherlock Holmes: Mystery of the

Mummy and is developing right now Journey to the center of the Earth. If you want to learn more about their games you can visit their site (www.frogwares.com)

The Inventory already available in German, Italian and Korean

For all of you German, French and Italian people out there (or for those of you who want to practice another language) now you can read the latest adventure news in your native language.

In our effort to reach as more adventure gamers on the planet as possible and with the help of some dedicated adventure players around the world we have started to distribute the Inventory translated from the following sites:

www.adventure-treff.de

(German)

www.pollodigoma.net

(Italian)

<http://myst.cafe24.com>

(Korean)

A big thank you goes out to all the local editors, and translators of the localized versions and to the websites that are hosting our magazine.

The next languages to follow are Spanish, French and Greek. We will have more details for these localizations in our next issue.

Benoit Sokal talks about Syberia 2 - Secret Syberia track ???

In an interview with the online gaming zine, Armchair Empire (www.armchairempire.com), the creator of Syberia, Benoit Sokal revealed some new information about the sequel to the award winning adventure developed by Microïds.

According to the interview, Syberia 2 will feature more characters than the first one and it will seem much more lively. Benoit Sokal said that we should expect around 25 human characters and 10 animals (probably some of them will be mammoths).

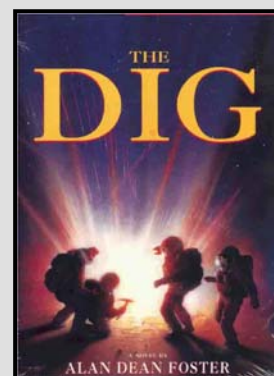
On another interesting fact, there is a Syberia song, which is never heard during the game, but those of you who have bought Post Mortem can find it on the game's sound folder in MP3 format.

The file is called music0.mp3 and it sounds like a remix of the track music0 from Syberia. Why

Dig – The missing character

All of you who read last month the interview with Bill Tiller already know that the initial version of The Dig had a fourth character that landed on the asteroid, that was eventually cut off from the final version. The fourth character was also going to appear in the box, on the far right side of the picture, but obviously he was taken out of the picture in the end (apart from his foot that stayed there because it looked like a stone!

Bill Tiller sent us one of the few images remaining till today that shows the fourth character as he was going to appear on the cover of The Dig. And the rest is history...



is this song on the Post Mortem CD and why is it never heard during Syberia is still a mystery. Could it maybe be a track from Syberia 2?

Ken Williams starts Sierra Gamers site

Ken Williams, the founder and for many years owner of Sierra on-line, the company that some years ago used to give us some of the best adventures ever, has started a new site called Sierra Gamers and you can visit it here: (<http://www.sierragamers.com>)

The site holds a discussion board where you can leave messages even to Ken Williams himself and at the moment there is also some material from the older Sierra days, that will make many of you who had the luck to play those games, nostalgic.

In the discussions, Ken has revealed some of his and Roberta's (his wife) plans for the future. He left the possibility of

making a new game open, but he ruled out the chance they would be starting up a new company. He also said that Al Lowe (Larry games) is thinking of working on games again.

He even mentioned that they thought about calling EA and asking them to co-operate for a new game but this has not happened yet. Be prepared to read a lot of things that are going to make you dislike the company that still bears the honorable name Sierra, but none of its past qualities, as well.

Razor Studios is looking for developers and beta testers



Razor Studios, the developers of the upcoming Legacy: Dark Shadows, is looking for talented people to join their developing team. So if you want to join the group that is working on one the most

promising adventures send an e-mail to info@razbor.net

They are also looking for beta testers. Those of you who would like to experience Ren's adventures before everybody else and get your names in the game's credits send them an e-mail at the same address.

The New Adventures of Zak McKracken and The Breakdown available for free downloads

2 new fan made point and click adventures are available for download free of charge. The first one is The New Adventures of Zak McKracken that you can download it for free here: http://www25.brinkster.com/luca_sfangames/#anchor5 and the other is The Breakdown that you can download also for free here: <http://thebreakdown.adventuredevelopers.com/>

The current version of The Breakdown that is available for download is not the final version, since the current version of the AGAST engine that the game is using, has some bugs, therefore the game has only one tune throughout the whole game and it does not loop perfect either. When the new version of AGAST is released the developers will release the final version of the game as well.

CSI no 3 in top 10 PC-games sales!!!

According to this article of the online gaming zine Gamespot (http://www.gamespot.com/pc/adventure/csicrimesceneinvestigation/news_6025228.html), CSI made an excellent debut in the US, as it was the 3rd best selling PC game for the week of March 30 to April 5, 2003.

It is interesting to see in the top 10, that CSI sold better than games like Sims and Battlefield 1942, which was voted as best game of the year by a certain magazine (no names mentioned because according to them adventures are dead, so guess what, they are dead for us as well).

Well, what do you say? A point and click adventure, a member of a dead genre, that someone can enjoy only in some godforsaken places in Europe by a bunch of crazy non-modern people, was the 3rd best selling PC title. It must be some kind of error (being sarcastic of course).



The Celebrity Corner

Some days ago CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, a first person adventure based on the famous TV-series was released in the US and in some countries of Europe and will soon be released in other countries as well. Tony Van, the executive producer of Ubisoft and co-designer of CSI, and Kirsten Forbes, associate producer at 369 Interactive that developed CSI, have come to our celebrity corner to answer our questions concerning their new adventure.

Interview with Ubisoft



- Could you tell us a little bit about yourselves?

TV: I'm Tony Van, Executive Producer at Ubi Soft, EP and co-designer of the game.

KF: I'm Kirsten Forbes, the Associate Producer at 369 Interactive, the developer for CSI.

- Do you play adventure games yourselves?

TV: Yeah, adventure games got me interested in computer gaming. I was the last official employee of Infocom, one of the original adventure game companies.

- If yes then which ones are your favourites?

TV: Suspended, from Infocom. It is the coolest game in the world. I also liked the Space Quest series from Sierra. Oh yeah, and Myst (wink, wink.)

- Have you worked in other adventures or other games before developing CSI?

TV: Yes at Infocom I worked on Circuit's Edge, at Lucasfilm I started the Monkey Island Sega CD port, and at two other companies I worked on adventure games that ultimately did not get published :(

CSI

- How did CBS react when you approached them and told them that you want to make an adventure game out of their TV-show?

TV: They loved it. They knew they had a great property that would make a great game. They told us they expected a game that was very authentic to the show. I think we delivered.

- Which members of the TV-show participate in the game?

TV: All of the cast, since they all did their voices. CBS Consumer Products helped interface with us and the show's creator, Anthony Zuiker. I hear he really likes the game too.

- Could you give us some insight on the plot of CSI without giving away spoilers?

TV: You are a intern CSI, freshly assigned to the Las Vegas night shift. Grissom welcomes you, and before you know it, you are off investigating a murder case! There are five cases, each one with a different CSI partner. You do all the work, of course!

- CSI includes five cases. Are these cases connected with each other?

KF: Since some reviews have already mentioned that they are connected, I don't feel bad giving it away. Yes, the cases weave together in interesting





ways which you'll only find out at the end.

- Is the character that we get to control a member of the TV CSI crew or is it a new character? Is he / she ever seen during the game (in cutscenes for example) or do we never get to see the character?

KF: The player character is a new member of the CSI crew who apprentices with the criminologists by doubling up with one of them on every case. We use a first person camera so the user character is never seen. After all, that person is really you!

- How many characters will there be in the game?

KF: In the game you will see and interact with all the CSI agents including Grissom, Catherine, Sarah, Nick and Warrick. Plus Brass, Al Robbins the Coroner and of course, Greg in the lab. Each case also has between three and five other characters who are



either victims, suspects, witnesses, etc.

- What kind of graphics engine does the game use and what is the highest resolution that it can be viewed at?

KF: The graphic engine is can be either DirectX or Open GL, depending on which you install. The highest resolution it can be viewed at is 800 x 600.

- What kind of technique did you use to create 3D models that resemble their live counterparts? Were the actors involved in the whole process and if yes then in what way?

KF: We did a great deal of study on reference material of the actors from all angles. The models were created in Maya by professional 3D modelers, one of whom is actually a professional sculptor as well. We then sent our models to CBS to get their approval.

- Why did you decide to make it in 1st person perspective?

KF: We made it in 1st person because we wanted to immerse the player in the game by not constricting

their view of who they were playing in the game by making the avatar male or female, of a particular race or color. We wanted the user to feel very distinctly that it was themselves in the game, being a CSI agent.

- A lot of people thought that the setting of the game would make a perfect Full Motion Video adventure. And since you have already hired the original cast to make the voice-overs for the game, many wondered why not spend a little bit more to use them in an FMV game instead. Why did you decide to make the game in 3D? Do you think the game would work well in FMV as well?

TV: Well, two reasons. First, the cast was currently filming their own series, and it is a LOT MORE WORK to do a video shoot than a voice over session. Second, and more importantly, I've worked on some FMV games before, and they just don't do the job of simulating reality. I think people will find they are more immersed in our 3D world than if they saw a bunch of clips.

- Could you describe to us how does the interface work?

KF: The interface is a user-oriented, single point and click, mouse driven interface. The purpose is to create powerful interaction between the player and the crime scene and the suspects. Tools and evidence are logically categorized to give you quick access. The evidence updates with informative case file entries telling you everything you've discovered about the item as you move through the game.

- What kind of puzzles will we get to solve in the game?



KF: Unraveling the means, motive and opportunity is the overarching puzzle in each case. There are many sub puzzles involving pieces of evidences or lab processes which also need to be solved in order to get a warrant and an arrest.

- One of the negative aspects of many adventure games is pixel hunting. Did you take any measures in order to avoid pixel hunting in CSI?

KF: We took great care in the staging of the crime scenes to make the relevant evidence in the art-world visually conspicuous. We are hoping that players will prefer to examine the crime scene and intelligently decide what is important.

- The game has already been released in the US and in some countries in Europe. The initial response from the public is that the game has good gameplay, an amazing story but it is also very short at the same time and they wished that it would be longer. This is a trend that has been noticed in several new adventures. Could you explain to us the reasons for this trend? Why are new adventures like CSI shorter compared to older ones?

TV: The length of gameplay is subjective. Some veteran players finish it really fast. But the new players who play very little take a lot longer. The game was built to appeal to everyone, but the bias was towards the new player. We built it specifically not to frustrate them, and to allow them to feel success. One of the strengths of our interface is we have taken out a lot of the drudgery and time-sucking parts of adventure games. It's pure

enjoyment, which I find much more satisfying. Would you prefer to spend 10 hours having total fun, or 20 hours, half of it frustrated or re-treading over old locations? This is the way most games “increase” their game time.



- Since the game is played out in cases many people who have already bought and played the game have expressed their opinion that CSI is probably the most appropriate adventure for an add-on that could include new cases and new characters and prolong the duration of the game. Is there any possibility that CSI will get an add-on like that in the future?

TV: As nice as that would be, it is simply not possible. This isn't Doom, where you just slap in a few more monsters, weapons and levels. No adventure game has ever had an “add-on.” Each case requires months of preparation, unique art, and more importantly, the voices of the cast members.

- People who have played the game also mention that the game is quite easy. This is also a trend in the latest adventure games and in some of them it has worked pretty well, in terms of attracting a non-adventure audience to the game and to the adventure genre as well. Why did you decide to make the game's puzzles easy?

TV: CSI was built to be like an episode of the series, which really moves, and is about finding things out, not being stuck. Every one of the casual players who are fans of the show say the game is perfect for them. In fact, a number of people have told me “I normally don't like that kind of game, but this one is different.” It's because we make you use your brain, but not in the traditional “stump you

for hours” way. If you are hardcore, there is the “rating” game mechanic, that let's you go back into the case and try to find 100% of the evidence. It's tough to do, in fact, some hardcore players complain about that!

- Will there be a sequel to CSI? If it is not decided yet then on what factors would such a decision depend upon?

TV: Let's see how the sales of this one do. I know Kirsten and I would love to do a sequel.

- If you were to start developing a sequel tomorrow what would you change on the sequel compared with the first one?

KF: Personally, I would like to see more interaction between the user and the evidence. In particular, the user would be more involved with evidence analysis in the lab, and also more involved with use of tools in the field.

TV: Yeah, definitely.

- Have any of the actors tried the game yet? (If yes) Do you know what did they think of it?

TV: I haven't heard anything yet, but I know a number of them are real gamers, so I don't doubt it. I know when I showed them the game in progress they all got a kick out of seeing themselves and their co-workers as video game characters!

- Is there anything more you would like to add about CSI?

TV: Like Grissom says “Let the evidence speak for itself.”



REVIEW OF THE MONTH



Post Mortem

"Baphomet was the deity worshipped by the Knights Templar, and in Black Magic as the source and creator of evil; the Satanic goat of the witches' Sabbath and one of the names adopted by Aleister Crowley."

-Dictionary of the occult and supernatural



Post Mortem was one of the most eagerly awaited adventures, since Microids, the developers of Post Mortem, had made everyone drooling with their first adventure Syberia. Some time ago they also released a trailer that has to be one of the most impressive trailers in adventures ever, and everybody was waiting Post Mortem as the Se7en of adventure games. All this hype around Post Mortem was probably the thing that hurt it the most. But let's take one thing at a time.

Story: You play the role of Gus McPherson, an ex-P.I. who has retired and now works as a painter in Paris. One night however, Gus



receives a visit from an attractive lady, called Sophia Blake, that will change the course of his life. There has been a murder in hotel Orphe, in Paris. Two American tourists were brutally murdered. Sophia Blake will pay Gus a large amount of money if he manages to find out who did it, and also find an object of value that the couple had in their possession and was stolen.

The beginning as you read, is very exciting and makes you wonder who is behind all this. But unfortunately the story has its ups and downs. First of all, the story is very short. Even for today's standards, it is too short to let the story develop, as it should have.



When I finished the game, I felt like I knew almost nothing about most of the characters, thus I was not so interested to what is going to happen to them. Gus feels more like a robot that is there to do his job and nothing more. You learn almost nothing about his personal life or about his past. The same goes for Sophia Blake (who I had high hopes for a character that

would become a milestone in adventure stories but unfortunately did not) and for many other characters, that could have been built in a much more interesting way. So the story felt somehow like a pasta without the sauce.



(***Spoiler***) You also get to play a second character in the game as well, but the duration that you get to do that is also way too short to talk about him as well. (***End of Spoiler***). I should also mention that I did not feel threatened as much as I expected I would, by the person who McPherson is after during the whole game. So Post Mortem failed a little bit on the eerie side as well.

The story has its good sides also though. There are some really exciting events throughout the game, that take place mostly during the cutscenes. During the middle of the game the story gets really interesting, when lots of questions start arising, due to McPherson's investigation results. Unfortunately the end(s) is (are) a bit disappointing.



The story is non-linear and there are different paths the plot can follow depending on your actions which is nice, but on the other hand maybe the developers focused too much on the non-linearity of the game, and did not bother to polish the main part of the story so much. This has been noticed in other non-linear adventures as well. The dialogues follow a strange logic, and the flow of the conversations gets really messed up quite often.

All in all, the story starts great and somewhere in the middle it becomes very interesting, but in the long run it suffers from poor implementation.



Graphics: The graphics of the game should be split into two categories when talking about Post Mortem. Cutscenes and in-game graphics. The cutscenes are amazing. Great direction and nice animation give a quite cinematic feeling while backgrounds seem quite lively as well. Leaves are flying through the air, items move, lighting effects change because of the weather or for other reasons etc...

In-game graphics on the other hand are mediocre. On one hand the backgrounds are nicely drawn and detailed, but at the same time they are as dead as a background can be. One place where this is quite striking is the Bistro Alambic. When you enter this bar, even the customers of the bar, who you cannot interact with, are sitting still like statues. When I played that part I remembered that Zelenhorm, which



was an FMV game had non-interactive characters who would move and go on doing their job while you were passing through. You do not get that feeling in Post Mortem.

Another negative aspect of the in-game graphics is that the viewing area, is only around 55 to 60% of the screen. Considering that it is a 1st person game, which tries to simulate human vision, and that the rectangle computer screen decreases the span of vision by default, this makes things even worse. It gives the feeling that Gus has all the time his eyes half-closed. One of the positive aspects of the graphics was the successful creation of a noir atmosphere.

Sound: The music of the game suits the place and the era that the game takes place. However it would be nice if there were some tracks in specific points of time that sounded more



suspense and that made the whole game sound more eerie. The tracks are not more than 4,5 and quite often they will get repetitive.

Most of the voice-overs are quite well performed. I thought McPherson's voice was quite all right, and Sophia Blake's voice over was very suitable for such a character. The 'bad guy' of the story however stands out as the worst performance from the whole cast. (***Spoiler***) At one point McPherson reads a piece of text, written by the 'bad guy' and you listen to the text narrated by the 'bad guy' himself. It sounded more like the voice-over for a 'bad guy' in a series for children. It totally ruined the atmosphere at that point. (***End of Spoiler***).

Post Mortem

Developer: **Microids**

Category: **Point and click**

Perspective: **1st person**

Difficulty: **Hard**

Site: **<http://www.postmortem-videogame.com/>**

Gameplay: As most of the previous categories the gameplay of Post Mortem is also good in some ways and bad in some others. Some of the puzzles of the game are very inventive and are really fun to solve. For instance you will have to find hidden patterns

from a painting and form another drawing using these patterns. A few of the puzzles even have multiple solutions.

There are three or four puzzles though that scream for a walkthrough and are incredibly difficult. (***Spoiler***) In one of them you have to draw the portrait of a suspect by listening to a



description of a witness and by choosing the right kind of eyes, ears, nose etc. The problem is that most of these options in each characteristic look very similar to each other and if for example the witness says big flat ears, there are about 3,4 that fit the description to choose from, and the same happens with the nose, the eyes, the moustache etc. When you are done drawing and give the drawing to the person who has to say if he's seen the suspect before, this person will just say 'no it's not him', and so does the witness. So if you have one mistake somewhere (nose, ears, eyes etc.) you have no idea where the mistake is.

Even worse than that though is the lock pick puzzle, where you get five lock picking tools that you can put in four different places in a keyhole and turn them in 2 different directions in each place. You do the maths and think how many possible combinations is that...and the worst of all... you get no hint at all which one might be right or wrong. And let us not mention the alchemy puzzle. (***End of Spoiler***)

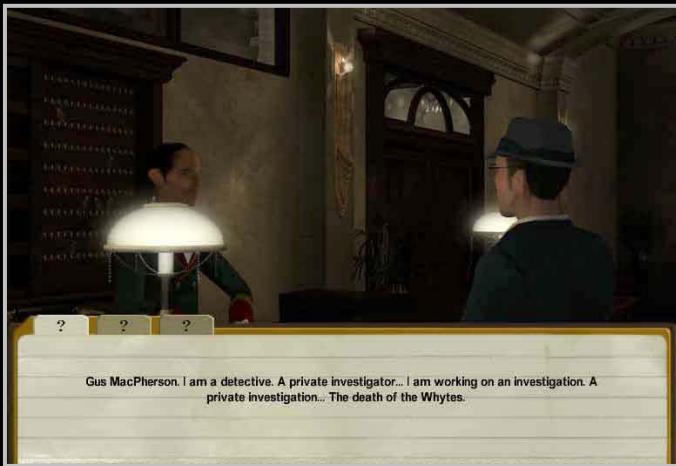
To sum it up with the puzzles, if you are new in adventures or if you do not like using walkthroughs, avoid Post Mortem at all costs.



If you are ok with the fact that you are going to use a walkthrough, or if you enjoy some hard puzzles then go ahead and buy that game. Otherwise you should better try something else.

The interface has some differences to the typical interfaces that you meet in 1st person adventures. The cursor is not fixed in the centre of the screen but you can move it freely. When it reaches one of the four edges of the screen your view will move towards that direction. Given that the viewing area is only around 60% of the screen, this feature makes it difficult to look for clues since you don't have enough space to move your cursor before your whole view starts spinning around. Fortunately, the pixel hunting in the game is minimal, since





most objects you will need are clearly identifiable on the screen.

The dialogue system was promoted a lot by Microïds as something revolutionary, but unfortunately it turned out to be one of the drawbacks of the game. The biggest problem with it is the order and organisation of the options. Sometimes you get options that refer to something that has not been mentioned yet. Instead of seeing all the options at the same time as most old good dialogue systems, the developers decided for some reason that the player should watch one option at a time, which is just cumbersome.

Other dialogue systems (for example Longest Journey) will expand like a tree, thus the player will get to talk about one topic at a time, while Post Mortem's dialogue system will throw some options at your disposal that will either stay there until you click them (even if you change topic in the meanwhile) or will disappear completely without giving you a



chance to ask an option if you didn't click on it while you could. To make things even worse, the game does not allow you to by-pass dialogues either. It does not make the game unplayable, and you get used to it after some time, but it is rather annoying.

All the documents Gus gathers, all the conversations he makes and the information he finds out about the suspects are all recorded automatically by the game and you can look them up at any time, through the menu, which was a nice touch. All the cutscenes can be replayed as well whenever you want through the main menu.

General Info: The game comes in 2 CDs contained in a DVD-case and the cover is rather impressive, showing Sophia Blake with one of her beautiful eyes covered by a knife stained with blood. The theme of the game revolves around a subject that quite a lot of adventures have taken up before, the Templars.



The myths surrounding the Templars are quite numerous and if you would like to learn more about them you could visit the site <http://www.templarhistory.com> or you could also visit <http://www.dagobertsrevenge.com>. Both sites contain a large amount of information around the Templars and the stories surrounding them from their beginning to their extinction (or did they really disappear?) If you

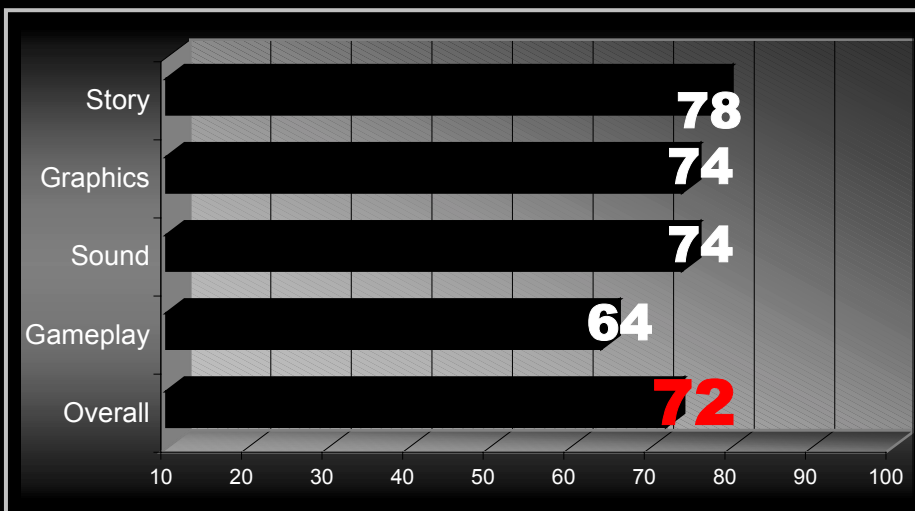


like this kind of stories you should definitely try Gabriel Knight 3, probably the best of the adventures that was concerned with fraternities. You will also notice a big similarity between Post Mortem's Hellouin and Gabriel Knight's John Wilkes...both physical and mental ones!

In a few words... Post Mortem will bring you mixed feelings while playing it. It will both entertain you at some times, and irritate you at others. Its biggest drawback, lies in the attempt to prolong its short story by getting the player

stuck in puzzles without giving him / her any clues / hints on how to solve them. Which is actually exactly the opposite to what Syberia did.

Hardcore puzzle fans might appreciate the game more, but I would not expect Post Mortem to appeal to a wide range of adventurers. Nevertheless, Gus McPherson's noir stories could turn into a great sequel, if the developers learn from their mistakes and produce a more polished and refined product in the future.



System Requirements:

- Win 98, ME, XP, 2000
- CPU 350 MHZ
- 64MB RAM
- 500MB HARD DISK
- DIRECT SOUND
SOUNDCARD
- 16 MB DIRECT 3D
VIDEO CARD
- *16X CD-ROM

The Watchmaker

The Watchmaker is a 3rd person (with some bits in 1st person) adventure made from Trecision and published in the UK and the Nordic Region by GMX Media. It uses a full 3D engine and it tries to be innovative in certain ways. Let's see if the outcome is a successful one.

Story: The story of the game starts in a legal office in London, where the two main characters of the game, Darrel Boone, a scientific investigator and an expert in the supernatural phenomena, and Victoria Conroy, a lawyer and expert in languages are invited by Norman & McGreen agency to perform a service for them.



They have to travel to Austria and a castle more specifically, owned by a company called the

Multinational. They must find a machine that is reportedly stolen by a group of religious fanatics, and which might be the cause of a global catastrophe if not stopped before 12 o'clock.

The story starts in a very cheesy way, and I do not know if it is the poor acting or the typical 'sect that wants to take over the world' theme, but the truth is that it does not convince the player and does not draw you in. However as the game progresses things get slightly better, and the characters of the castle are quite well developed. The playable characters however are 'empty'. They usually say exactly the same things and they seriously lack personality.

The history of the castle as well as the conspiracies that tie in with the plot, are nice additions that make the story quite entertaining at times.

Graphics: The 3D characters suffer from the usual problems that most 3D models usually suffer, i.e. stiff facial expressions, blocky body parts and robot-like movement. The backgrounds are much better though. Everything is very





detailed and the castle looks very glamorous. Lots of paintings, clocks (really lots of them), statues and other small details adorn every room of the castle that make the backgrounds seem very real.

The game could use a lot more cutscenes, since it uses cutscenes only sparsely and only for a matter of few seconds.

Sound: One of the worst parts of the game is its audio. The music is for the most part boring and does not suit the theme of the game at all. In most parts of the game you get to listen to cheap 'elevator music', destroying the suspense created by the story in some parts.

But even worse than the music are the voice-overs of the game. Some characters are bearable but with a few of them you feel that the actors / actresses were bored to do their job. Especially the voice-over of Henry the caretaker stands out as one of the worst performances in adventure games. The attempt to force the voice of an old man by a younger (apparently) actor is just abysmal to the ear.

Carla, the maid and Jude, the supervisor's wife were quite bad performances as well. There are some parts in the game that you would expect

characters to sound afraid or surprised and they still sound like they are reading a book! If better actors were used and if the game had a better musical score the experience would have been enhanced significantly.

Gameplay: If I had to put it down to one word....absurd. The interface is cumbersome and the puzzles are completely unreasonable for the most part. But let's take one thing at a time and let us start with the interface.

Trecision tried to be innovative with the interface used in the Watchmaker, but in doing so, they forgot the rule 'keep it nice and simple'. The interface uses a combination of mouse and keyboard controls. As stated earlier, you control two characters in the game, Darrel and Victoria.

By pressing F9 you switch from one player to the other. The problem is that the two characters hardly ever co-operate and it feels somehow

that you are just playing the game twice. What one of them can do, so can the other (in most cases). Even the dialogues with the other characters are the same and you get the same answer from

the most questions. All you get offered by that is twice the walking and twice the (same) talking. If they followed each other, so you didn't have to walk each character's shoes off,



The Watchmaker

Developer: **Trecision**

Category: **Point and click**

Perspective: **3rd / 1st person**

Difficulty: **Hard**

Site: **www.gmxmedia.net/watchmaker**

to get through with the game, or if they had to play in different parts of the castle it would have had some purpose but as it is now it is just a waste of time.

By left clicking on a hotspot, you get a description by the character, while by right clicking on it, the main characters will perform an action. If you left/right click on a part of the screen that there is no hotspot the character will hopefully move there. And I say hopefully because on many occasions you click somewhere in front of the character and he/she goes back instead. You click on the next room, and she/he goes in the next room and comes back (happened all the time in the dining room).

The puzzles of the game are mostly inventory-based and unfortunately for the most part illogical, especially after the middle of the game. I used a walkthrough at several places and the solutions just did not make any sense.



(*Spoilers*) In order to open a van door, you have to pick up a syringe and mix sulphuric acid with nitric acid so that you create a highly corrosive substance that would corrode the lock!!! Another ridiculous example, is that you find some blood in some part of the game, that under common sense could be used as evidence for criminal activity. But according to the developers, you should use the blood on a rose that stands on a tray, before the servant takes it to Jude, so that she will think it is a bad omen

and give you her medallion. And these are just some examples, the game is full of such nonsense. (*End of Spoilers*).



A lot of problems arise from the fact that the 3D environment is huge, and some of the objects you need to find are tiny and you have to switch too often to 1st person perspective to find them. Even so however, it is rather likely that you will miss lots of them, since they might be stored between books, they might be tiny cracks on walls that do not differ on anything from the rest of the background etc. In other words, prepare for some dead serious pixel hunting, the 'find a needle in a haystack' kind and definitely the worst I've experienced the last 3,4 years I have played adventures.



The situation gets even worse by the fact that most items in the castle are also hotspots. There are literally hundreds of them. Since you do not know from the beginning which one of them



might be something useful, prepare yourself to open loads of empty boxes, drawers and closets, and prepare to hear 'this is a normal washbasin', and 'there is nothing useful in here' thousands of times.

The game will probably take you ages to finish, that is, if you have the desire to do so. I am quite certain that if I did not have to write a review about it, this one would be an addition to my list of adventures I would never finish. The reason for it being so long, is that you have to do too much unnecessary walking, and you will walk through the same areas hundreds of times. If this game used a map, the playing time would definitely cut down to half, maybe even more.

You carry more than 15,20 items for the most part of the game, combined with literally several hundreds of hotspots, no map system and a huge area available from the beginning of the game till the end and you will be catching

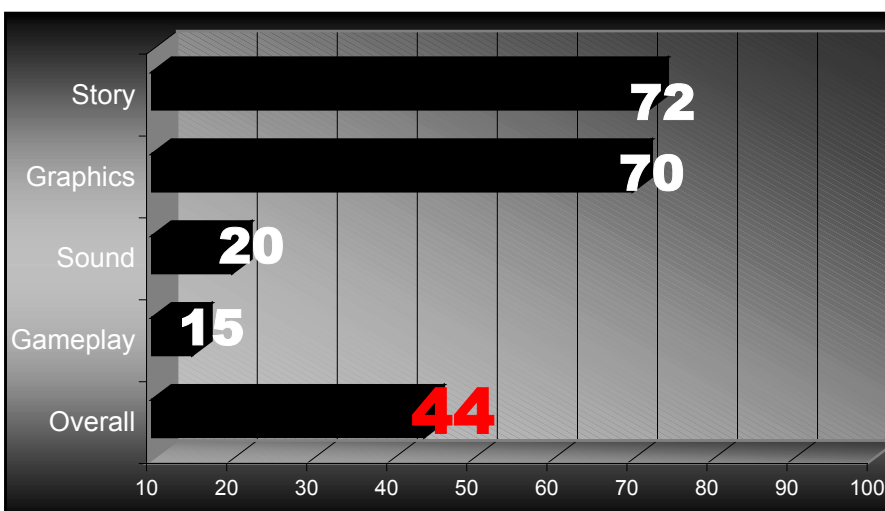


yourselves wasting your precious free time more often than you would like to.

General Info: The game comes in a DVD case that holds one CD and a manual. The cover shows Victoria and Darrel standing back to back and is quite simple.

There were no bugs encountered while I played the game. However, every time I inserted the CD it tried to install the game (although it was already installed). Menus are very simply designed.

In a few words: A very poor adventure by all means. This might be an adventure for you only if you have loads of free time and enjoy extreme pixel hunting. It tried to imitate the Gabriel Knight games in so many ways but with a horrible acting and completely illogical gameplay it did not even come close.



System Requirements:

- Win 98, ME, XP, 2000
- PENTIUM II 266 MHZ
- 64MB RAM
- 150MB HARD DISK
- DIRECT SOUND
- SOUNDCARD
- 8 MB DIRECTX VIDEO
- CARD
- *8X CD-ROM

The famous pirate and hero Guybrush Threepwood is out on a new adventure again...

A REVIEW TRIBUTE TO

The Curse of
MONKEY ISLAND

-by Yngvil Runde

Romance

Comedy

Conflicts



Such a comedy, such an adventure, *The Curse of Monkey Island* really impresses! It had really twisted but fantastic 2D graphics, Guybrush Threepwood really had gotten a make over, and the game came 6 years after the last Monkey Island game.

For those who don't know the story of these games too well, I will try to explain a bit about them. Guybrush Threepwood travels around in the Caribbean ocean, it is the 18th century, and the place is packed with pirates.

Guybrush seems to get into trouble with a specific, mighty and evil pirate, named Le Chuck, and his girlfriend Elaine is often involved in the conflicts. The games are full of humor and adventure, like typical Lucas Arts games, but *The Curse of Monkey Island* has a special twist.

Story: After escaping from Le Chuck's ship, Guybrush finds his way to the Shore of Plunder Island, where he meets his girlfriend Elaine.



Guybrush brings with him a giant diamond ring, which he stole from Le Chuck's treasure chamber. He proposes to Elaine, and

gives her the ring. Elaine puts it on, but suddenly a great pirate curse transforms Elaine into solid gold.

Guybrush stands helpless back watching his golden girlfriend, not knowing what to do to save her. He then leaves Elaine on the beach to find out what he must do to bring her back to normal. But after researching what might break the curse, Guybrush returns to the beach, and can't find the statue of Elaine, a terrible horde of pirates have stolen Elaine...



This is the conflict, it is now time for Guybrush to go on a new adventure, a quest to get his girlfriend back from the evil pirates, and break the curse that's put upon her, this doesn't look too easy...!

The world that Guybrush walks around in is pretty special, it is like a mix of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th century, it's a bit strange to find a deep fryer, cannons with satellites and an old record collection in what seems to be the start of the 18th century, but it is all done in a humoristic way, and it gives the game an own special "identity", so in the end it is just fun.

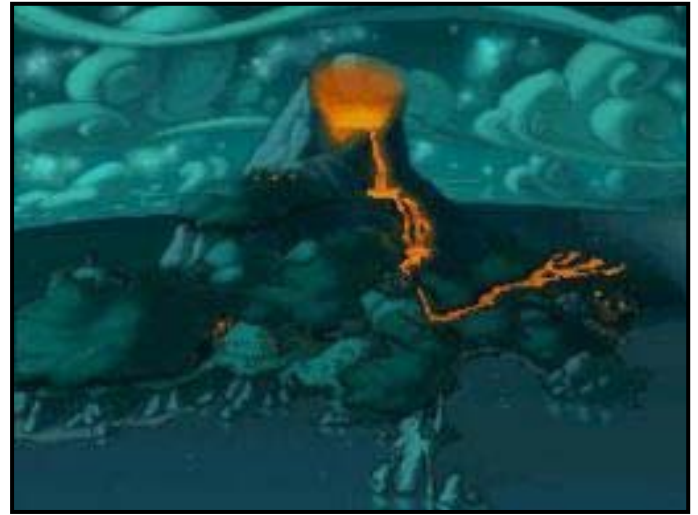
Overall, the story is fun, creative and special, and it's so easy to get addicted to this game!

The game may look a bit childish, but never say what's really beneath the



surface, and I can say, that this game fits everyone. I truly believe a 7 year old and a 30 year old could have just as much fun playing this game.

And by the way, we get to meet at least two known Lucas Arts characters; both of them are a bit pale... but yeah, look around when you play!



Graphics: CMI is in 2D; it was created in 1997, only years before most games started to dress up in 3D instead. It is really charming to play games in 2D. They become in a way much smoother, though one would not think so. CMI is in 3rd person view and it is a point and click adventure game.

with music and sound.

The music is very addictive, so I give you a warning, but for those who like having it on their brain, you can download all the mp3s at the fan web site listed at the bottom.

The Curse of Monkey Island has background pictures, which are so beautiful and softly made, and the best part is that it doesn't look like anything I have seen before, neither 2D games nor cartoons. The sky and the clouds are drawn so wonderfully, in every scene where they are. It is hard not to be spellbound by their soft, beautiful look! Overall, I find the graphics to be lovely, when characters move and talk, the edges are very smooth. For example the arms move really soft up and down.

Michael Land is CMI's music composer; he has also composed music for the other *Monkey Island* games. Land has worked at Lucasarts for many years; he has also composed the music for *The Dig* (review in Inv. 5), *Day of the Tentacle*, *Sam & Max Hit the Road* and *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*.

Sound: Now the music is great. Caribbean music flows through the air with different elements of more modern music. It is so light, so funny. It is just fitting very well to the games atmosphere.

Gameplay: Not much to complain about here! For some it may take some time to get used to push the right mouse button on things to find out how to speak, eat, push, pick up and view stuff. What's annoying too, is the menu in the beginning of the game. There should be options like "load" and "quit", but no, there isn't, and that's pretty irritating! But these are the only

Both the sound and the music are of high quality. It doesn't skip, it is never annoying, two very important things when we're dealing





things I can complain on in game play.

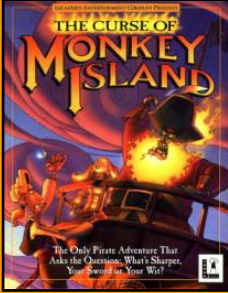
Guybrush easily walks around, and if you're tired of walking around, you can just double click wherever it is a red arrow, and woops, you're there. And there are also secret doors to go in and out if you're looking for short cuts.

It is really impossible to say if the puzzles are logical or not, but wow, they are fun! And I must say that the fun part really covers the maybe illogical part of the puzzles.

In part III, it is so much fun playing! There's singing, shooting, shopping and banjo dueling. The puzzles here are quite amazing, they involve almost no button pushing, but much conversation and things to be put together... a bit like *The Longest Journey's* puzzles and *Sam & Max Hit the Road's* puzzles.

**The Curse of
Monkey Island**

Developer: **Lucasarts**
 Category: **Point and click**
 Perspective: **3rd person**
 Difficulty: **Easy**
 Site: **N/A**
 Rec: **www.scumbar.com**




Apr 2003



and the colour totally OK to read.

I just have to mention leather jackets, because Guybrush really seems to like them, and so does Indiana Jones. At least the guys often ask people if they will buy leather jackets. So if you keep your eyes open, you will notice that Guybrush asks a lot of people about this, and that it pops up in other Lucas Arts games. The Lucas Arts people don't lack humoristic sense all right!

General Info: The box really shows the great action in the game, but they were exaggerating a bit I must say, because *The Curse of Monkey Island* turns out pretty sweet and very humoristic. But I really believe this too was meant in a humoristic way.

There are two CDs and you do not have to switch between the CDs more than one time.

The game has very low system requirements, since it is so old. It works on most computers, and it really does not take much space.



The Inventory

28

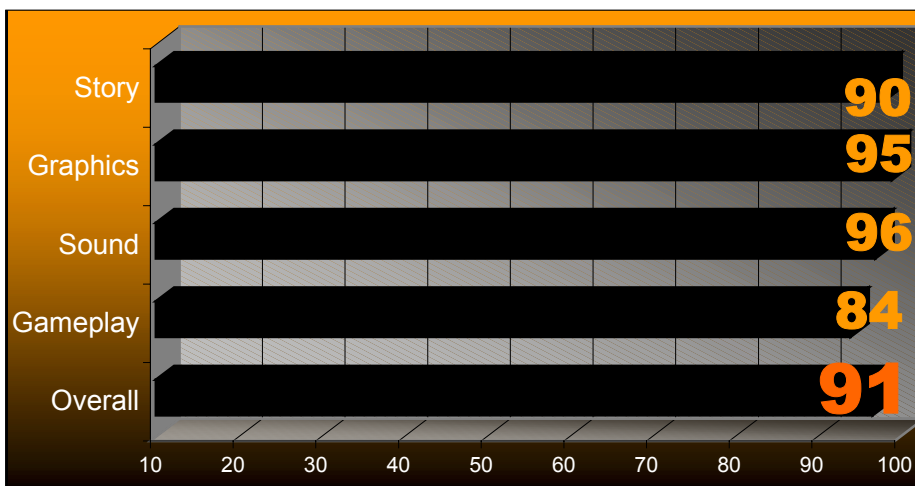


CMI won the "Best Adventure Game of the Year" award from Computer Gaming World.

To get you started: You find yourself in a little room in Le Chuck's mighty pirate ship. An old friend of yours stands by the cannon, shouting out humiliating words to the enemy. Talk to him (Wally). When Wally finally starts crying, use the cannon, and shoot all the small boats filled with undead pirates. Then look out the opening where the cannon points out.

In a few words... The Curse of Monkey Island is probably one of the most humoristic computer games ever created. We get to go on an adventure we will never forget, our companion is Guybrush Threepwood, I mighty pirate!

CMI is the most known of the games in the Monkey Island series, and maybe the favorite among the fans.



System Requirements:

Win 95
Pentium 90 MHZ
PCI Graphics Card
16mb Ram
4X CD-ROM
16 Bit Sound Card
Direct X 5
1.2 MB HARD DISK

Invento-mail

If you want to share with us your opinions around adventures, our magazine or anything else you can think of around adventures send us an e-mail and we will make our best that your voice gets heard in the Invento-mail.

Address: theinventory@yahoo.com

Hi, my name is Fady Tootoonjy I am an adventurer from Syria. First of all I would like to thank you for the precious treasure that you gave to us which is "The Inventory".

Adventure games have a strange effect on people, they make them search for each other and help each other. What I mean that Adventure games has created a soul of the cooperation between the gamers and we can notice that through the societies of adventure gamers which are becoming numerous all over the world. This means that adventure gamers are not deserted as some people think and The Inventory is a proof of that.

I would like to ask about the Inventory's opinion about the suggestion to consider adventure games as the new generation of literature. Are we really witnessing the birth of a new kind of literature which probably could be called an "interactive literature"? can we say that games like The Longest Journey would be The Illiad of the 21st century? This is everything I wanted to say and thank you very much.

The Inventory: Hello Fady and thank you for writing us. Interactive literature is a perfect term for adventure games. It is indeed a new form of literature since adventure games are a medium to tell a story. But they are not just telling a story, they require some actions from you, the player in order to proceed in the story, thus the term interactive.

I also want to congratulate you for the perfect parallel you brought between a gem from ancient times (The Iliad) and a gem from recent times (The Longest Journey). I am sure Ragnar Tornquist would be smiling right now if he were reading this, since you just called him the Homer of our times!

To summarize, I definitely agree with you that adventures are the natural evolution of story telling that has probably been as ancient as humanity itself. It is a pity that not everybody has gotten into this new form of literature yet but this is what we are striving for with this publication. Thank you for taking the time to write us.

Hi there! I am a hardcore fan of adventure games. These days, not many good adventures are made, so I decided to make my own. It's nothing special, but if you want, you can check it out at <http://www.geocities.com/veliaris>. My favourite adventure games of all time are the King's quest series, and I think they should get a tribute review (one for all, but a big one also). I am very happy to see that there are other King's quest fans that make remakes and sequels (Tierra and the KQIX team), and that their work is at Sierra-on-line's quality.

The inventory 5 was the best so far. The interview with Bill Tiller and The Dig review were the best parts. When I played the dig two or three years ago, I had the feeling that I was in another world, and that's why my second favourite adventure game is the dig.

I have played Runaway (yes, it was goddamn hard to get it) and I think it is one of the best adventure games ever. It has a very strong plot, excellent graphics, awesome soundtrack and the best point and Click interface I have seen (oh yes, and a very original inventory window). Hope you play it soon and review it.

I know that it is hard to do so much work every month, so have a summer break. But after that, increase the page number of the Inventory. I do not think that (file) size does matter. If an adventurer can download 3MB, he can also download 5 or 6 MB. See ya next month!

Velislav Ivanov

The Inventory: Hello Velislav. Yes, Tierra keeps surprising us with their dedication and their excellent work, and the KQIX team seem like they are putting a lot of work in their project as well.

I don't think we would like to increase the size of the file. Lots of people are still running on modems and they get irritated when they have to wait long in order to get The Inventory. So if we manage to include more pages without increasing the size maybe (if time allows it) we will add more in the future, but I wouldn't count on it right now. We will review Runaway either next month or in the first issue after summer, depending on its release. Thank you for writing to us.

I love adventures and all things adventure. I loved Syberia and TLJ, and whenever I can get my grubby little paws on a decent adventure, I'll play it and drool. However, there is one thing that troubles me about the adventure gaming public. Immobility. In your february issue, you included gossip about TLJ2, in which you told gamers not to be worried about a keyboard control scheme. I find the most worrying thing about keyboard control is that everyone is afraid of it. No wonder everyone thinks that adventure games are dead. If something cannot change, cannot be altered, and will not even attempt to revive itself through new techniques, its on its way out in my books. Don't fear your keyboard, it existed before your mouse, and its just as solid a controler.

*It may be because I'm a fairly young adventure gamer (I didn't start playing until '98) but I'm not afraid of change. MI4 and Grim Fandango will always have special places in my hear alongside Syberia and TLJ. I didn't even notice that I had to use a keyboard until I had to leave the computer and BOTH my hands were on the desk. If a story is solid and a game can entertain, who gives a s**t how you move around? Heed my warnings, adventure gamers. If you let yourself become an interface-nazi, you'll miss out on some of the best games out there. Just because its new doesn't mean its inferior. Even when playing MI 1 and 2, odds are that you, as I did, used the keyboard shortcuts for actions. It's been happening for longer than you realize, you're just now starting to notice. You're more used to it than you think, so don't be scared. Hop in, and start typing.*

By the way, great mag. Its good to know that there are more people like me out there. I've spent all of my Junior high and what has passed of my High school career converting my friends, trying to guarantee a future market for our beloved past time. If the adventure genre does go down, I'm going with it.

Peter Worthington

The Inventory: Hello Peter. It is actually a very interesting issue you brought up. I would like to start by addressing one thing you said. You said 'if a story is solid and a game can entertain who gives a s**t how you move around'. How you move around, is part of the interface, and the interface is a fundamental and essential part of the game as is graphics, story and music that in the end will be the decisive factors whether the game will entertain or not. If it weren't so important, companies would not spend money and time in order to come up with new innovative interfaces.

You said you loved MI4 and you have every right to do so. Ask however the MI fans, which MI was the worst of the series and you will see that MI4 will be the winner of such a question. Now let us go to the question point and click vs direct control. I will quote Bill Tiller (CMI, The Dig) from the interview he gave to us last month, because honestly I couldn't put it any better than he did:

"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

[...]

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."

-Bill Tiller

I agree wholeheartedly with Bill and as I said I couldn't have said it better myself. Apart from the fact that driving your character around everywhere is boring, it does not allow remote interaction. I.e. if I see an item I want to take on a table, I won't have to just click on it, I will have to lead my character first **continued->**

to the table, wait until the character turns his/her head, or until the item gets highlighted and then command my character to pick up the item. Is this more efficient or more user-friendly? I personally do not think so.

I do not consider adventure gamers 'afraid', as you stated it, of keyboards. But as any other customer on this planet we all want what is best for us and for the money we spend when we buy a game. You mentioned something very interesting in your mail. You said "Don't fear your keyboard, it existed before your mouse...". This is very accurate actually. The first adventure games were played with the keyboard. Eventually the biggest adventure companies jumped on to a mouse-driven interface because it was more efficient and user-friendly than the keyboard while playing adventure games.

Have you questioned yourself, why are some companies nowadays using a keyboard control driven interface? Is it because it is more efficient? Or is it because it would translate easier to a console version? Let's take an example of a game, let's call it X. Now X will have a sequel in the future. In a forum about adventure games, a player of X said that he liked the PS version of X but he thought the point and click interface was cumbersome in Playstation. A developer of X replied to that post and said that this is exactly why we are making the sequel in direct control. So their main reason for turning into direct control is to make console players feel more comfortable.

I totally agree that direct control is the best solution when it comes to consoles, since consoles do not support mice. But is that the case in PCs as well? Why should PC versions of adventures suffer from a console incapability? Aren't you, the PC customer, being mistreated by the company who try to sell their product to you, when it does not care about your own idiosyncrasies and desires, but adjusts the product instead to the desires of another part of the market? Shouldn't developers make the various versions with their own platform in focus? You also said, "Just because it's new doesn't mean its inferior". This is correct, but on the other hand it doesn't mean it is superior either. Adventures do need to change and evolve but the question here is not 'Should it change?' but 'How should it change?'. There is always a right way and a wrong way to do things. Is direct control the right way for adventures to change?

As for the term interface Nazis I consider it exaggerating. Under the same logic if I do not like soup and I never buy soup, that would make me a food nazi. We are all adventure gamers, and we want adventures to become as better and as more successful as possible. There is nothing wrong into stating what you like and what you don't like, even if it is about the graphics, the story, the interface, the dialogues or even the game boxes and the CD cases. You pay for all of that and you have the right to comment on them. And anyway, I didn't hear anybody saying direct control is dead. It was some other people who said that point and click is dead so I think the interface nazis term suit other people better...

There are a lot of sites out on the web that will endorse evolution of adventure games even if it goes against the pure adventure's fundamental ideas. Through The Inventory we want to keep everything under a purist perspective. We want our magazine to be directed to pure adventurers who certainly do not have much options nowadays. I hope you understand our point of view. I understand yours. I enjoyed reading your thoughts even though I do not agree with them and it was a very interesting topic to discuss. Thank you for taking the time to write us and I hope that you will continue enjoying the future issues of The Inventory, even though you might not agree with our perspective.

P.S. One last fact I thought you might find interesting to know. All the companies that are implementing direct control for their upcoming adventures right now are planning for console ports. All the companies that are making adventure games exclusively for the PC are using a point and click interface. All the fan-made games I've played so far use a point and click interface. I am not saying that creating a console port is a wrong thing to do, not at all. But why are all adventure companies who are developing adventures exclusively for PCs using point and click interfaces and not direct control ones if the direct control interface is better and more efficient?

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 invisible adventure genre that will just not die. This month the topic of the Hydra is:

Re-invent the genre or the market?

If you read the 'Adventure Gossip' section, you probably read that CSI was the 3rd best selling PC game in the US the first week it was released. The fact that I do not even remember when was the last time an adventure did that, shows the magnitude of Ubisoft's choice to market an adventure based on a TV-series. I want to emphasize here that the article is concerned with the marketing around CSI and not the game itself.

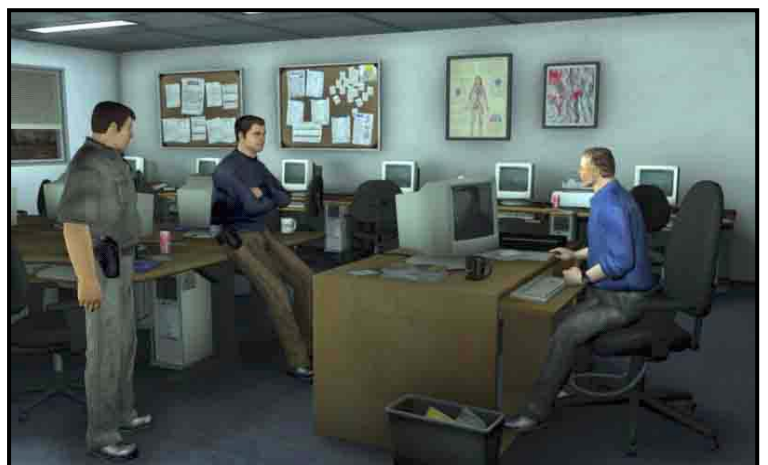


Some other companies that used to develop adventures in the past, have tried to re-invent the genre by adding action elements to their so-called adventures, changing the interface from point and click to direct control, focusing their games on the console players etc, etc... In most cases they have either changed their games so much that they are not even adventures anymore, or they did not change their adventures that much to appeal to a wider audience (which is the ultimate goal of their evolution).

The logic behind all this, is that charts nowadays usually show that the best selling titles focus on action, they are available on multiple platforms and offer a multiplayer capability. Since the last is difficult to implement in adventures the easiest way to reach the masses is to focus more on action and offer their games on a variety of consoles.

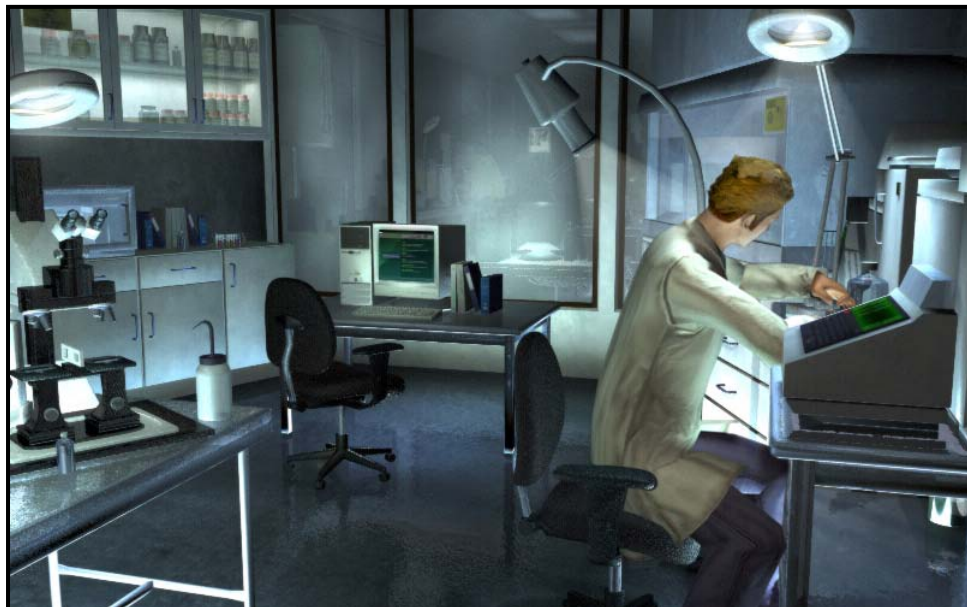
Let us study Ubisoft's marketing behind CSI. They did make an adventure with a point and click interface and focused on investigation and dialogue rather than action. Most games that would do that would never manage to reach the top 10 in sales of the gaming world. But what Ubisoft managed was to change the gaming world, hence change the market.

Those of you who have watched even one episode of the series, already know that CSI



is a series based on investigation and contains lots of dialogue. Therefore it is quite obvious that the fans of the series would like something similar in a computer game. Creating an adventure series based on such a TV programme was a marketing winner. It showed already from the first week. Whether it is going to continue selling good or not, remains to be seen, but the odds are that it will.

I read somewhere that in the US, during the show CSI, there was a commercial that mentioned the DVDs of the series as well as the game! Now when was the last time before that, that an adventure was advertised on TV like the Sims, FIFA 2003, Splinter Cell, or so many other non-adventure titles? Then people say that adventures don't have a mass appeal. How can they have one, when the masses hardly ever get to know about their existence? Would they sell 'bad' if they were promoted better and directed towards a more appropriate audience?



What are the lessons that can be learned from this? Is it really necessary for adventure developing companies to re-invent the genre, that is, change the basic elements of adventures so much that in effect they are not even adventures anymore, or should they re-invent the market, that is pull a non-traditional game audience into game stores? Should we change adventure so that they appeal to the mass, or should we change the mass so that it appeals to adventures?

'So what do you mean, should all adventures made from now on be based on a TV franchise' one might wonder. This is actually one of the many ways to pull new audience to adventure games, but it is not the only way. I will quote Cedric Orvoine, PR manager for Microids (Syberia, Post Mortem) from the interview on the 4th issue of The Inventory.

"The best way to reach them is to go as wide as possible in terms of marketing and publicity. Forget buying ads in PC Gamer, CGW or others. We must reach the mass. Movie previews, subway or buses advertising, major dailies, good PR... I think developing business partnership with non-gaming related companies also benefits the game."

-Cedric Orvoine (Interview with Microids, The Inventory 4)

So dear developers instead of spending hours on coming up with new weapons, new interfaces and new action elements for your adventure games, maybe you should spend these hours on coming up with new ways to promote your adventures and pull a new audience to your game. Feel free to send e-mails to theinventory@yahoo.com and state your opinion on the matter. We'll do our best to make your voice heard in the Invento-mail.

Epilogue

April is almost gone and we enter May, which will be the last month that we publish The Inventory before the summer break. It is kind of hard to believe with all the rain that is pouring on my window right now, but I will blame it on the Scandinavian crazy weather (in the morning it was snowing, while two days ago it was so hot that people were wearing T-shirts and shorts over here...go figure).

I want to thank Razbor Studios for all their help. Apart from the material that they provided us with for their upcoming game, they were also the main reason for the new look of The Inventory's cover. Razbor's designer sent me a suggestion cover, which I got really inspired from. I used some of the material directly from his suggestion (like the review of the month box) while some other parts I changed. I wish them all the best with their game and I cannot wait to play it.

I want also to tell how disappointed I am from GMX Media (publishers of Runaway for the UK and the Nordic Region). I had asked them if they wanted to participate in an interview with our magazine, they accepted, I sent the interview questions, they said they would reply as soon as possible, and then two days before the release of the magazine they sent an e-mail and said that they did not have time to complete the interview (which by the way they received about a month before the release). Apparently some people do not comprehend how important PR is nowadays but we cannot do anything about that.

As I said before, the next issue is the last before summer, so we will try to have some surprises for you. We will reveal to you a preview and the first screenshots of an adventure that has been in development for some time now (no can tell yet, sorry). We will do our best to have two interviews next month. As for reviews, we will probably feature reviews of CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, Thorgal's Quest and Amerzone but it all depends on whether they are going to be released over here in time for the next issue.

I apologise again for the delay, but since these are the baby steps of The Inventory you have to understand that there are going to be such transition stages now in the beginning. After the summer, The Inventory will have reached a more 'finalised' stage and things will be more organised. We hope that you enjoy our efforts to bring adventures news into every adventurer's house all around the world. And something to keep you baffled for the end... one of the three adventures that I have been talking about but could not say (check the Trinity in last month's Gossip) will be revealed soon by Just Adventure. It's big news...really big...

Dimitris Manos

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NAG (Nordic Adventure Guild)

The Inventory

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More local editions to follow soon...