The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

PREVIEWS
KING'S QUEST IX
LAW & ORDER II

INTERVIEWS
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THE MYSTERY
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REVIEW OF
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C.S.I.

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Prologue

Before I start talking about the current issue, I should mention some mistakes of the last issue. In the Space Quest Preview I wrote that the project leader's name is Dee Blocks, when actually it is Dee Bloks. And I forgot to mention Chris Meining who is the co-writer and sketch artist. Last but not least the address of the site for the Italian edition of the Inventory is http://www.pollodigomma.net/~theinventory/ and not www.pollodigoma.net as I wrote in the last issue.

With these issues straightened out, let me introduce you to the last issue of The Inventory before the summer break. And since it is the last issue I made sure that there is enough interesting stuff in this issue to make you reading The Inventory no 7 again and again until we come back with no 8.

The Inventory pulls the curtains and uncovers for you King's Quest IX: Every Cloak Has A Silver Lining, probably the most ambitious fan project so far. We reveal the first in-game screenshots of the game and those of you who have waited patiently so long time to see what this game will look like, trust me…it was definitely worth the wait.

In the previews section you will also find a preview of Law and Order II, the sequel to the first person adventure based on the famous TV series. The developers in Legacy Interactive seem to be good listeners, so we are looking forward to their sequel.

KQ9 is not the only game we uncover this month. The developers of an upcoming adventure that will shake the waters of the adventure community sent us the first concept art sketches of the game and we reveal them to you in our gossip area.

The celebrity corner this month is hot and full of great news! Razbor Studios, developers of Legacy: Dark Shadows and Future Games, developers of The Black Mirror are here to talk to us about their games and their plans for the future in two extensive interviews. Both games have impressed us so far in the previews and in the playable demos and they both look like they are going to be exceptional point and click adventures.

CSI, the game based on the investigation TV series, is the review of the month. But as Grissom says, let the evidence (review) speak for itself. Benoit Sokal's Amerzone and Sherlock Holmes: Mystery of the Mummy by Frogwares is also under The Inventory's 'microscope' in this last issue before the summer. Enough bla bla so let me introduce to you the most ambitious fan project of all…
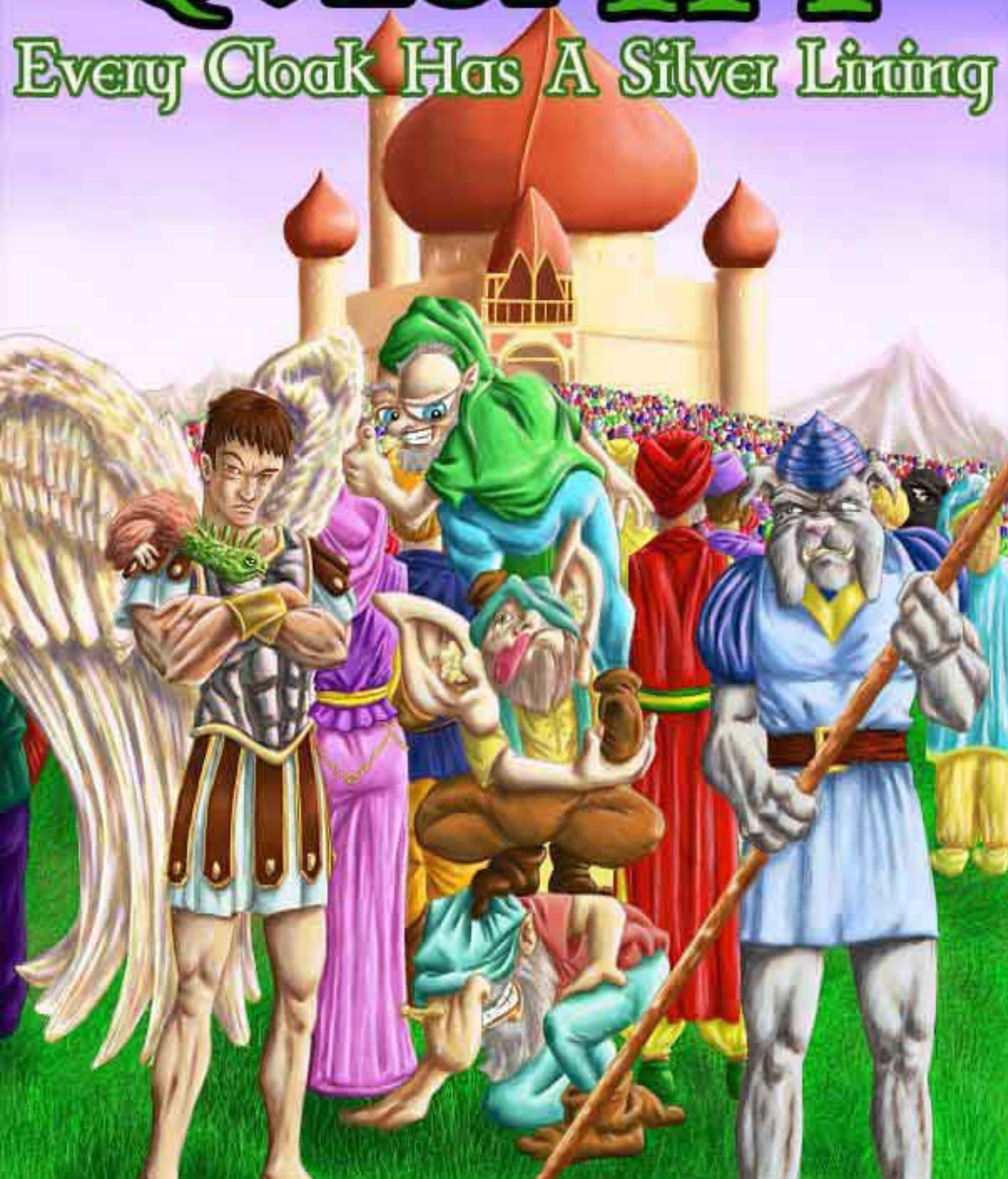
Dimitris Manos
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NAG (Nordic Adventure Guild)

KING'S QUEST IX
Every Cloak Has A Silver Lining

Stop reading right now, check out all the screenshots of the preview and then come back here to continue reading. I have to do that so that you do not think I am exaggerating. Ok now that you have seen the screenshots let us continue with the preview. King's Quest IX is made by a group of dedicated adventure fans and is going to be distributed as a free download!

Before I continue praising these people, I will tell you everything there is to know about *'King's Quest IX: Every Cloak Has A Silver Lining'* right now. King's Quest IX continues the story first told in the classic King's Quest games from Sierra On-Line, in an attempt to bring the series to a finale, by tying up the loose ends and revealing some of the most twisting and shocking secrets ever heard in the King's Quest universe.

The **story** revolves around an ancient prophecy dating hundreds of years before the existence of the Daventry royals; a prophecy that binds some of the characters intrinsically to it, and will involve them in the most dangerous battle against evil ever seen in a King's Quest chapter. Past secrets of some of the Royal Family members will be revealed, turning the story in 180 degree angles throughout every chapter. One thing that is already evident about King's Quest IX is that it will tell a much darker story than its predecessors. This seems to be the right direction for the King's Quest series. It is another thing to present a game in an EGA screen like the early King's Quest games and another thing to present a game in today's standards. And as for us, the fans of the first King's Quest games, we have become older and we have changed, so a more mature theme seems much more appropriate than a soft-inclined King's Quest.

The game will be divided into 9 chapters, where the player will assume **control of three main characters** during the game: King Graham and

his twin children, King Alexander and Princess Rosella. However, the developers of King's Quest IX did not forget the rest of the family and gave them key roles as highly interactive Non Playable Characters. Even Connor, savior of Daventry, will play a part. According to the developers, King's Quest IX will focus much more on character development and story telling than the previous King's Quest games did.

You will get to travel to eight different lands in King's Quest IX, including older lands seen in previous King's Quest games as well as brand new and exciting ones for you to explore. The game opens in the Land of the Green Isles, bringing a sense of familiarity and nostalgia back to the player as his quest to discover the identity of a mysterious cloaked individual begins. From that point, the journey will take the adventurers to fantastic lands including The Dreamworld, The Endless Forest, Astratos, and Dreoria, among others. The player will also get to explore a place many have long wanted to see, the great Castle of Daventry itself.

The most revolutionary component of the game, bearing in mind that it is a fan made project, is the **graphics**. King's Quest IX is probably the first fan made adventure that incorporates full 3D graphics. The truth is that I was a bit worried about how would a fan made 3D game would look like when I first read some months ago that King's Quest IX would be in full 3D. I

thought that the characters would look blocky and doll-like. You cannot imagine how surprised I was when I received the first in-game screenshots from the developers of King's Quest IX. I could not believe in my own eyes. The outcome is totally impressive and brings commercial companies (like Lucasarts and their new 'Jay Leno meets Elvis – looking' Ben 3D model from Full Throttle II) in shame and embarrassment.

The game's graphics are built on the open source Crystal Space Engine which is already the base for many fan projects on the internet. Graphics will make use of static cameras mixed with predetermined camera movements, allowing developers to use the dynamics of 3D, while still keeping the look and feel of the past King's Quest games.

We have to mention here that the screenshots

you are seeing in our preview are preliminary screens. The same screens will look much more polished in the final version of the game. For example on the screenshot with the boat (on the first page of the preview) there are plans to add boatmen, Graham will be walking through fog, the water will be animated and the textures will be re-mapped. Graham's 3D model will get polished as well and his body parts will look more naturally connected to each other.

The sound of the game will go hand in hand with the rest of the game's components in terms of quality. A complete orchestrated soundtrack including a duet to be sung by the royal twins of Daventry will be featured.

The developers sent The Inventory over half an hour of demo music that is going to be used in KQ IX and the tunes varied from epic themes to eerie tunes and calm serenades. It all felt great to the ear and I could imagine the great events taking place during the game.

A full add-on speech pack is also in the works, bringing the adventure to life. The Genesis Repertory Ensemble, a theatre company from New York city, has already mentioned interest in participating in the game's voice recording. An open audition is also being considered, to be held in New York City, where fans with talent and experience in acting and theatre could try out for a part in the game. Further details on this will become available when recording of the voice pack begins.

There are not so many details given out concerning the **interface** yet but what is known already is that it is going to be **point and click.** In the chat held some days ago, in the official

site of KQ9 for the celebration of 1 year since the beginning of the project, it was also mentioned that the interface will be similar to King's Quest 6. You can find a transcrip of the char here: www.kq9.org/kqix.txt The interface will also introduce the first magic system ever used in the King's Quest series and it will also allow you to switch between different characters.

Being able to save one's adventure has always been an important part of any quest game. King's Quest IX's save feature will be reminiscent of the classic Sierra saving method, not limiting itself to the traditional 20 game slots but expanding on this for those compulsive adventurer's who can't help but save every 2 minutes.

There will be some occasions in the game where the player can die but this is by no means an action/adventure. It is a pure adventure and the occasions where the player faces the danger to die, will be handled in the same way that old Sierra adventures used to handle such situations.

A continue feature is also being built in, allowing the player to return to the last safe point in the game, thus diminishing the pain of dying and realizing that one had not saved recently. A feature that will probably be thoroughly appreciated by the adventurers who are not fond of moments where the player can die.

But who are the dedicated fans behind this game? The development team consists of more than 30 members split into 5 departments (writing, art, programming, music and public relations). They are actually looking for more members to join their team, and they are especially looking for programmers, 2d sketchers and 3d artists. If you want to take a more detailed look on the project or if you want to join this fabulous team all you have to do is visit their official site, www.kq9.org where you can also watch an impressive flash intro.

First it was Tierra, then Screen 7 entertainment and now the KQIX development team. The fans have opened Pandora's box but there are no evils coming out of it, only gems that are going to shine forever. As for KQIX, I think it is obvious that it brings a whole new dimension to the term fan-made project. Who knows what we will see next from such dedicated fans?

LAW & ORDER II

PREPARE TO GO BACK **II** TO THE COURTROOM

The first Law and Order game was a great concept, based on a famous TV-series, and probably the first adventure that lets you control a lawyer in a courtroom, that however suffered from a few flaws (introducing a dreadful short time limit being the biggest one). Legacy Interactive comes back in the adventure scene, by producing a sequel to Law and Order, called 'Double or Nothing' that will hopefully avoid the mistakes of the first one and present a ground-breaking TV series conversion.

Well… let me start by stating the best news. There is going to be **no time limit** in the sequel. Just this piece of information will probably make most of the people that played the first one to eagerly await the sequel.

Apparently the parts that were done right in the first game, are still there in the sequel. The game will feature 3 of the show's actors (Jerry Orbach, L. Epatha Merkerson, and Elisabeth Rohm that were also featured in the first episode) and the story will be written by a Law & Order TV professional writer.

The **story** is about a well-known scientist who is found shot in his car in Midtown Manhattan. The plot will revolve around financial improprieties, love affairs and most importantly the scientist's secret project. The story will still be split in investigation / court room like in the first one. So in the first half of the game you will try to find the murdered while on the second part you will try to convict him / her for
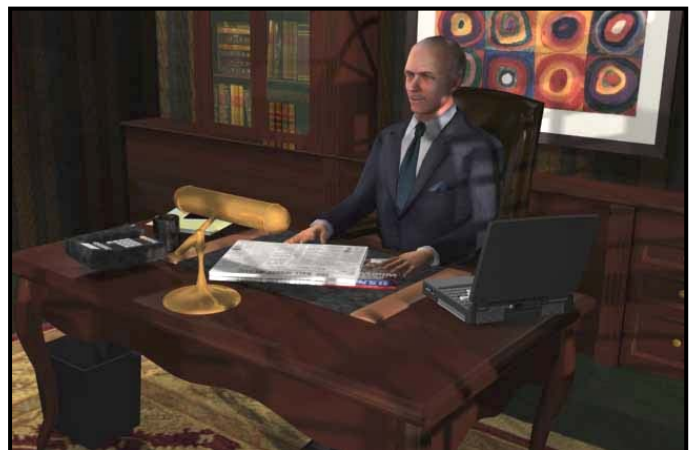
his / her crime. Since they are using a professional writer from the TV series again, odds are that the story will be of high standard.

According to the information we received from Legacy Interactive, it seems like the **interface** will be more or less the same with the first part. In the lower part of the screen there will be options for Map, Case File, Cell Phone and Main menu. The map will be used to travel around the city, the cell phone wll be used to receive messages from colleagues and the main menu will be used to do the usual save,load etc.

The case file, as you remember from the first one, will be used to gather evidence (lab tests, witness testimonies, records, reports) and forms that will help you build up your case against the suspect. According to Legacy Interactive, there will be additional space in the case file so that the player can hold more evidence, which is probably the only negative part of the features described so far.

The case file held too many items in the first part, and after a while the inventory (because this is what the case file really is) became a mess with so many papers and objects lying around alltogether under one screen. If they manage to organise the case file better (i.e. create different sections for lab tests, witness testimonies, and items gathered) this could work well, otherwise it could be even more cumbersome than it was in the first one with more items gathered under one section. A

feature of the sequel that is going to be improved is the ability to re-interview witnesses if the player is not satisfied with the outcome of the interview. This was a drawback of Law and Order I, and the fact that they are fixing it (as well as taking out the time limit) shows in a way that they are listening to feedback. Furthermore the players will be able to pause defense questioning movies, during the trials and you will also get more time to object.

The **puzzles** will come more often this time around. Some puzzle examples that were mentioned in the press release were an encryption puzzle and the use of a crane magnet at a metal scrap yard to find the hidden murder weapon. Law and Order II will introduce a new skill in place of the efficiency one, called case organisation skill, which will give the player the ability to know which pieces of evidence to use in order to get warrants and issue subpoenas.

Graphics are supposed to have improved animation quality through the use of motion capture and better lighting effects, while the voice overs are going to be amazing if they are anywhere close the voice overs of the first one.

It looks like Legacy Interactive pays close attention to the feedback that they received the first time around. Having already taken out the biggest flaw of the first game, the time limit, and hopefully keeping the good parts as well as getting rid of the bugs of the first one, they are expected to produce a top class product. Law & Order II comes in stores next September.

The Queen is back on her throne!!!

Some days ago Just Adventure confirmed the rumours that had Jane Jensen (King's Quest VI, Gabriel Knight series) working on a new adventure. Not only that, but according to the press release Jane Jensen, the undisputable queen of adventure gaming, has co-founded her own company, which is called **Odyssey Digital Entertainment** (and keep this name in mind, because it will probably be connected with great titles in the near future). The press released mentioned a few details about Jane's new game.

The story will involve a young female student that will be thrown in a world of telepathy and clairvoyance and the plot will revolce around mind-altering experiments of a reclusive doctor.

Some other details mentioned in the press release was that the game will be a 3rd person one and that it is expected to be on shelves on the fourth quarter of 2004. This is definitely the best news in the adventure community in the last 3 years.

Finally Jane Jensen is back and on top of that, she is now able to do what she feels like doing, without Sierra or anybody else telling her what to do or how to do it. Her work has been terribly missed. We can only hope that more great adventure developers from the past will follow her example and return to game development from new companies.Actually we know one that will but we are not saying! You can read the whole press release here:

http://www.justadventure.com/Press_Releases/May13_03JaneJensenTAC.shtm

Ken Williams gives an in-depth interview to Adventure-Treff

Adventure Treff, a German adventure site, which is also the host for the German edition of our magazine, conducted a long and detailed interview with the founder of the old adventure empire Sierra Online, Ken Williams.

You will get to read lots of information around Ken's life, Sierra's rise and fall, adventure games and even how he met Roberta Williams, his meeting and with Bill Gates and its outcome and his opinion on Lucasarts and other competitors.

The most interesting point of the interview has to be Ken's opinion on the state of adventure games. According to Williams, the solution to the enigma 'how
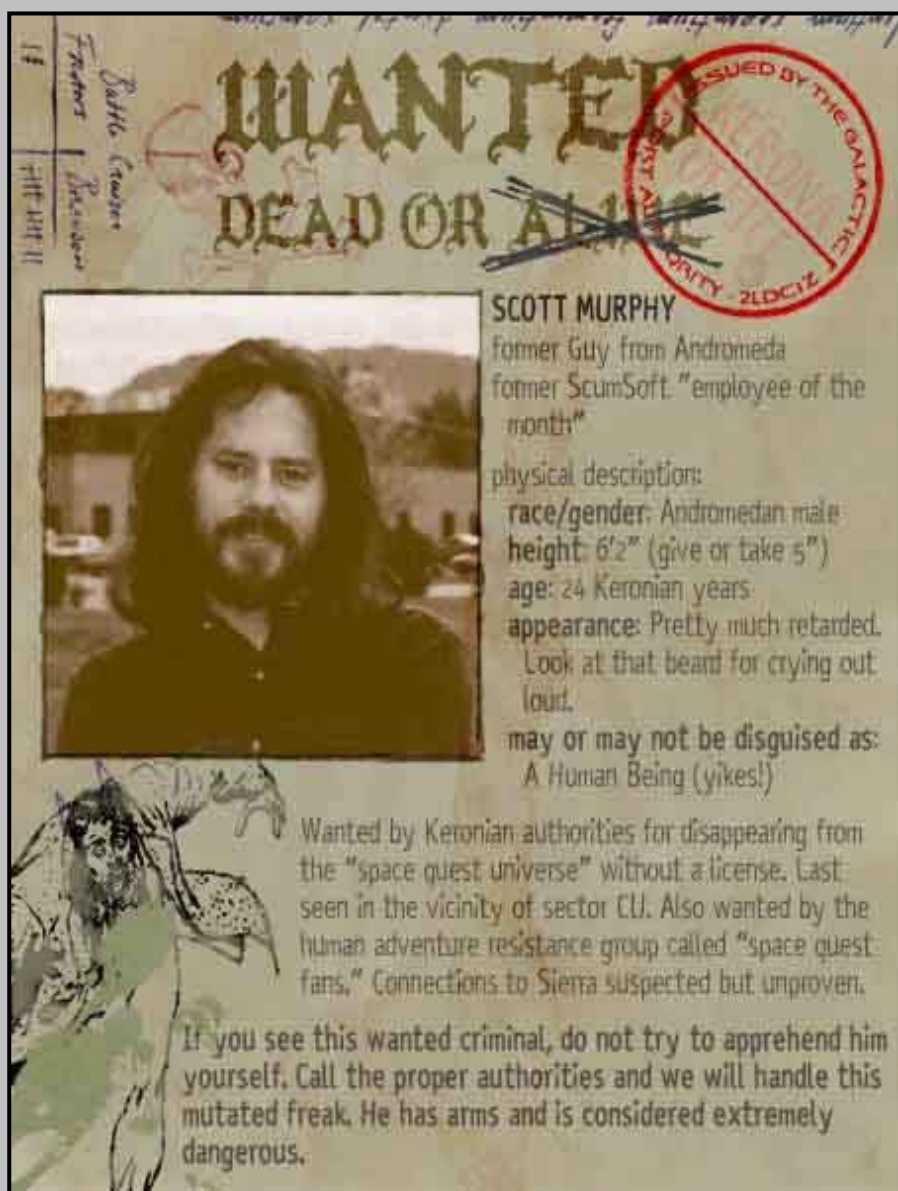
For more information visit http://www.spacequest.net

New adventure game in early development stages

Great news for us adventurers. A newly founded company made up from people who have worked in big companies of the gaming industry is currently developing a next generation futuristic / detective 3rd person adventure game.

The developers were kind enough and provided us with a couple of concept art sketches portraying some of the characters that are going to appear in the game. We also had the chance to take a glance in the storyline and what we saw was impressive and definitely original. The game is in a very early development stage so we cannot give much more information right now. It will be available for PCs and X-box consoles and we will let you know more about it as soon as we have more information.

will adventure games reach the post they once had' is not action nor puzzles, but more focus on story and character development. Wise words, told by someone who knows the industry better than most people out there right now.

You can read the whole interview in English here:

The End of The Journey?

The Norwegian newspaper VG, held an interview with the developer of The Longest Journey, Ragnar Tornquist and Jørgen Tharaldsen, where they discussed the upcoming sequel. Unfortunately the interview cannot be considered positive for us adventure fans.

According to this interview the new TLJ, will be an action/adventure and that the time for point and click games is over. This last interview, totally contradicts what has been said before by Ragnar Tornquist in previous interviews with The Divide and Just Adventure.

Ragnar Tornquist however, a couple of days after the rumours spread over the Internet, stated through his online journal that The Longest Journey 2 will be an adventure and not an action game.

Here is exactly what he said: "*Oh,and regarding that whole*

"action-adventure" thing:it will be an adventure game, not an action game-but there will be a wider variety of interactions and puzzles-including some action. Some. Anything you hear and read about it now is likely to change. Including the name!"

Since we have gotten messages that contradict each other and since nothing is sure yet, The Inventory will continue covering the game until things clear up. If however it turns out that the sequel to The Longest Journey is an action / adventure we will stop covering it.

For those of you who can read Norwegian here is the link to the interview:

http://www.vg.no/pub/vgart.hbs?artid=59612

PC Gameworld promotes adventures

The online gaming magazine PC Gameworld featured an article, called Quest for adventure and written by Michelle Whicker, that promotes adventure games to the public and declares adventures alive and kicking.

Unlike other mainstream sites authors, Michelle Whicker showed a genuine interest in the genre, and was also aware of some of the most awaited upcoming pure adventures like Syberia 2, Legacy and Dark Fall 2. Her attitude towards the genre was very positive and her writing felt like an oasis among the desert (majority of mainstream sites and their attitude towards adventures). You can read the article here:

http://www.pcgameworld.com/article.php/id/101/

We will be looking forward to more articles from Michelle Whicker and congratulations go to her and the site of PC Gameworld for their efforts.

Fatman on the rescue

Socko Entertainment, a new company developing classic point and click adventures in retro style, have recently released The Adventures of Fatman. This point and click 2D adventure, is

as you can see yourselves from the screenshot a parody of the famous comics hero, Batman.

The game features old Lucasarts-kind of graphics, in 2D, 3rd person perspective and 320x200 resolution. You get to visit more than 30 locations and meet over 20 characters. Socko Entertainment sent us a review copy, which we received only 2 days before the release of the magazine, so we did not have time to review the game. We will do that however after the summer when The Inventory comes back from holidays.

Until then you can take a look on fatman yourselves by downloading a demo from the site of Socko Entertainment that you can find here:

http://socko.adventuredevelopers.com

Microids files for protection against bankruptcy

In all this hurricane of good news we have had recently (Jane Jensen working on a new game, King's Quest IX and the new adventure in development) there was also an article by Just Adventure that made us all worried.

According to this article that you can read in its entirety here: http://www.justadventure.com/articles/MicroidsChap11/MicroidsChap11.shtm Microids has filed for protection under chapter 11 for bankruptcy. In case you are not familiar with the term, do not worry, it does not mean that Microids has gone bankrupt.

Filing for chapter 11, is a prevention method that helps a company avoid the state of bankruptcy. According to chapter 11, Microids will be protected by the French government for the next 6 months.

This of course means that Syberia 2 is going to arrive at our local stores as planned and we will get to continue Kate Walker's journey towards Syberia. The Inventory wishes the best of luck to Microids, and we hope to review many more gems coming to us from their side. The adventure community would be poor without the presence of Microids. Kate Walker… keep walking.

Interview with Razbor Studios

Last month we featured a preview of one of the most awaited point and click adventures, Legacy: Dark Shadows. This month, we invited the developers of Legacy to discuss everything around their upcoming adventure and their newly founded company with us.

If you want to learn more about Legacy, you can read the preview in our previous issue and also visit the official website (www.legacythegame.com) and download the press release (there is a lot of background regarding the game's story and characters) as well as the alpha release where you will get a first look at the gameplay of Legacy. Now, let's welcome Razbor Studios to our celebrity corner.

- Could you give us some background on yourselves?
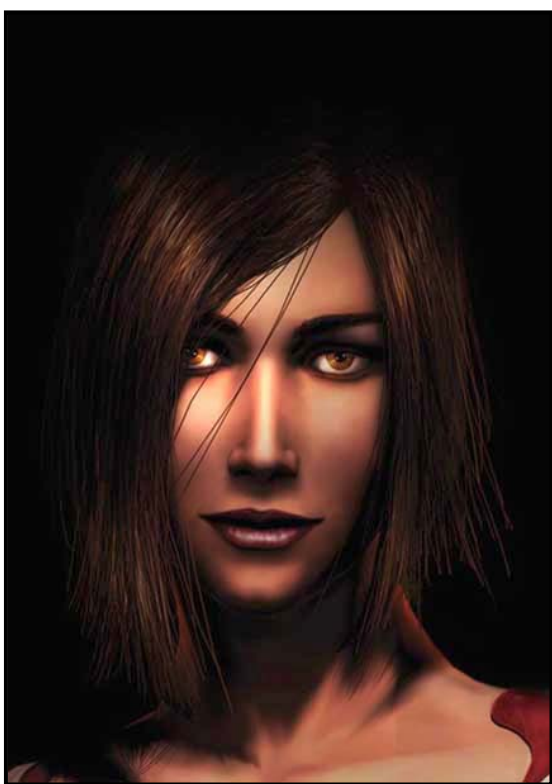
We're a small team who came together from a wide range of previous jobs. Our programmers and 3D artists came from Fragile Bits (makers of The Ward), the 2D artists came from the comic-book branch, and they've worked on some comics for Dark Horse and others. I came from the writing branch with some books published. We gathered under very odd circumstance. We were all members of a team that wanted to develop FPS games and soon we decided that we would like to do something with our knowledge that isn't an FPS. The rest is history, which can be found in our first PR.

- Do you play adventure games yourselves, and if you do could you mention some of your favourite ones?

I just finished 'Guilty' last week, for the second time, getting anxious to put my fingers on 'The Ripper' and 'Bureau 13' for the second time. Otherwise, enjoyed 'GK', 'TLJ', 'Black Dahlia', 'Sanitarium' … you name it, I've probably played it. ☺

Legacy: Dark Shadows

Story:

- You have stated several times that Legacy's story will be the strongest point of the game and that you do not want to give too much away right now. We completely understand that so I will try to keep my questions regarding the story as spoiler-free as possible. And let's start with the characters.

Although the game will have two playable characters, Ren Silver and Jack Black, it seems that you focus more on Ren Silver. Will Jack Black play an important role in the story? Will we get to control him for a long time, or will his story be more of a prologue for the main part?

I don't want to spoil the story. However, you'll be able to control Jack in the prologue and in some Intermezzo chapters (not included in list of 14). So, you're probably asking what Intermezzo chapters are? Let me answer that for you. **(*Major Spoiler*)** The main villain in the game is Jack Black. He's over 200 years old (and then again: no aliens, no cloning, no time travel, no hibernation, no parallel universe, no elixir of youth… etc. story) and you'll be able to witness his transformation to a mean guy through some periods of time during those 2 centuries.

There are 3 Intermezzo chapters after Stalingrad, set in 1952, 2001 millennium celebration and 2048. So we have to build 4 different worlds just to show Jack's character thru time. Now you're probably wondering if he's immortal. He isn't. How can he be over 200 years old? Wait for the full game and chapter 13 and you'll know. **(*End of Major Spoiler*)**

- According to the press release, Ren's previous experiences with men have turned her into a man hater and have influenced her sexual preferences. This is probably the first time an adventure game features a homosexual lead. Will the story contain other controversial issues?

Wow. I'm impressed. We released that information months ago and you're the first one that asked about it. I don't see what's so controversial in this matter, and yes, the story will be controversial in many other aspects.

- You said that the story is a mix of science fiction and horror. Does this mean that Legacy's plot will be an adult oriented one? What do you think the recommended minimum age will be?

We tried to put in as much sex, blood and killing as we can. ☺ Nope, plot won't have much blood and similar stuff from previous sentence. The main deal is that we tried to create a real world. So if you talk to a character he's not going to say 'Bloody Teddy bear'. He's going to use some other words like the B word in Alpha II. ☺ Minimum age? I don't know. Maybe we'll put a language or blood filter in the menu.

- You claimed that the game will include more than 15,000 lines of dialogue, it will feature 14 chapters, 500 scenes on nearly 100 locations and it will be even longer than The Longest Journey! Could you estimate roughly, how many hours a player would need to finish it?

Let's see. When we released Alpha II it came with some 2 hours of game play, slightly less if you had a walkthrough. So let's say 14 chapters + 3 Intermezzos, it's 17 * 2. I'd say about 40+ hours. At least. Yep, it's going to be a very, very long game. However, that number is just produced by simple mathematics but there are chapters that will have more then a few hours to play. So the real game playing time should be around 70+ hours.

- How many characters will there be in the game and with how many of them will we be able to interact with?

Enough and you'll be able to interact and talk with over 50. And everyone has his story and his own perspective on the world of Legacy.

- Does the story leave a possibility for a sequel open?

Story: nope. Character: yes. But if you take a better look at some horror movies, then you're aware that you can't kill the good characters in every movie. For example, Freddy, Jason, Michael, Pinhead… they just keep coming back in every new sequel. So, my answer is. Who knows? Maybe?

Graphics:

- The game will be mainly in 3rd person but there are going to be also some parts in 1st person. How will the engine be like then? Will the player 'teleport' from one static standpoint to another like in most Myst-clones, or will it use a full 3D environment where you can roam freely everywhere?

I'd say it'll be like in the first Myst game. You point and click and you're there with some stuff to do in the meantime.

- Will the game change to 1st person view often, and for which reasons did you decide to use a 1st person view as well?

Not too often, after all, it's a 3rd person adventure game. And for the decision I think it's the programmers' fault. They built something wrong in the engine and we liked the result, so we said: 'Let's put some parts of the game in a 1st person perspective. It just looks cool.' You can see one part in the teaser movie.

- The press release states that the game will have both 2D and 3D characters. Will these two blend in a natural way with each other?

There are some problems with mixing those two worlds. For example we can't create as much movement with 2D characters (to keep the files smaller) like we can with 3D characters. For an example: look at the Alpha II and the couple in the Metro. They are 2D characters. We don't like that so we're going to replace them. In fact we're going to replace every 2D character that we build. First version of engine was created using only 2D characters, then we switched to 3D characters and we want them to stay that way through the whole game.

- Cutscenes usually give a cinematic feeling in the games. How much time of cutscenes should we expect in Legacy approximately?

Don't worry, quite enough. There will be opening movie, between chapters, within the chapters and of course a small ending movie and lines 'You saved the world. Thanks for playing.' Exactly what players love? Especially small ending movie. Right? ☺

- In the first alpha version you released featuring Jack Black, the graphics were in black and white colors, apparently for artistic reasons. Will the whole part in Stalingrad be in black and white?

Whole playing part with Jack Black will have different colors representing time. We decided to render Stalingrad in black and white when we started to research the Battle of Stalingrad. Everything was black and white and it gives a nice sense of atmosphere when playing.

<u>Sound:</u>
- How much time of music should we expect?

Full soundtrack and even more. We are currently working with 3 musicians who are composing the soundtrack for the game. You can hear what type of music we're considering for the final version if you download the 2 tunes from the official site. There will be more for download in the near future.

- You said that most of the voice-overs will change for the final version. Do you co-operate with some agency or are you looking for individual actors yourselves?

Of course we're going to change them. You didn't think that we're going to make the game with that crap? We put the cheapest version with different sample rates and quality in Alpha II so we can test how they're working with written dialogues, how they work on different sound systems and later for Lip Sync. We have made some contacts with some actors that will lend their talents (voices) in full version.

Gameplay:
- In the alpha release Ren could only walk. Will she be able to run in the final version?

Come to beer and you can see how fast and nice she can run. ☺

- What kind of puzzles will the game feature? Many companies implement easier puzzles recently in adventures in order to pull a new audience to the genre. Will Legacy's puzzles be easy or hard for the most part?
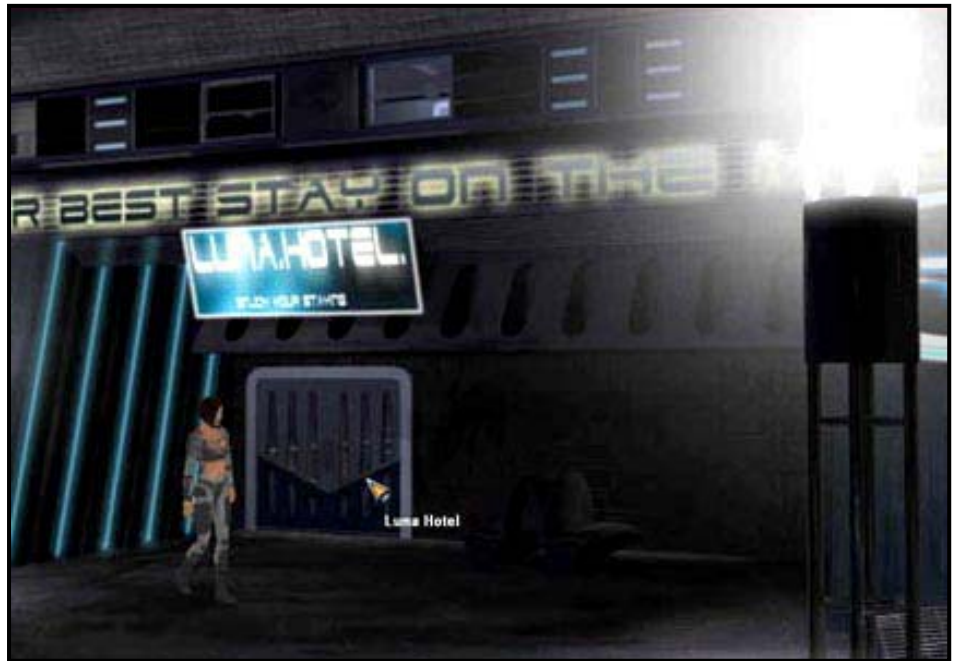
One thing they won't be: illogical. If a player has a crowbar and a door and he tries to open the door with paper instead with the crowbar then it's a hard puzzle.

- The interface of Legacy reminded to many players the interface of The Longest Journey, considered by many the best interface ever used in adventures. However you have also

mentioned that you plan to innovate this certain interface even further, especially regarding the use of inventory items. Could you describe to us the innovations you are preparing regarding the interface?

How can I answer this without telling more then anyone should know? Let's see, the main thing about anything used in the inventory will be focused on the inventory itself. Ren's inventory is her Personal Teleportation Device and her Personal Digital Assistance. There will be some things that you can expect from the PDA. It can store items, it has a camera to take pictures, it can record dialogues, it allows the player to record some notes about the mission, Ren's diary, it can be connected to the World Database… etc. So, the player won't have to click on the Main Menu and then choose Dialogue Log, instead, it's all inside the game where it should be. Wait for the final release and you'll see. Including the inventory, there's going to be some new mouse usage. Let's say it's going to evolve and introduce some things that should be around for centuries. ☺

- You said that the dialogue engine that was used in the alpha release will be revamped. Could you describe to us the main differences between the dialogue engine in the alpha release and the dialogue engine used in the final version?

Like we said Alpha II is made for pure testing. In that amount of testing is the famous Dialogue Engine. For example: Marshall and James had a different dialogue tree with different returning points. For the Marshall it works just fine. With James you should always return back to the first dialogue option. It's the stuff that kills playability until you find a correct dialogue to advance to the next stage. Marshall, however, is the correct answer to the dialogue question. In the final version the dialogues will be similar to Marshall. But with marking dialogues that are already heard. Anyway, something like that. You should see for yourself to know what I'm talking about.

- It is also mentioned in the press release that Legacy will have both linear and non-linear dialogues. Does this mean that the player will affect the story's progress by the choices he / she is going to make during some dialogues? Will the game have different endings depending on the choices made?

There are a few points in the game where you (Ren) will have to choose. Depending on that choice the game will lead to a different ending. I'm not going to say where those points are, as I don't want to give any spoiler or clues about the ending.

General

- Are the plans for a release in September still on?

If we manage to find some more people who are willing to do some 3D art. If not, let's say put it a month or two beyond the deadline.

- Were you inspired by a movie / game / book when you decided to make Legacy?

When creating the world of Legacy I was inspired by forgotten legends from the past including Elder Gods, Atlantis, Celts, Grail, Excalibur, Stonehenge, Leviathan, war among the Angels, the Second Coming, Armageddon, Ancient Ones, Necronomicon... Considering the story something from above is right, try to guess what. ☺

- If somebody made a movie based on Legacy which actress would you use for Ren Silver and which actor would you use for Jack Black.

Interesting question: Ren Silver: Mila Jovovich, Angelina Jolie like the team wants but I prefer Kate Beckinsale, and Jack Black: definitively Alan Ruckman but we're thinking about Gary Oldman. ☺

- Since you released the alpha release in public you must have gotten lots of feedback from gamers. What did they like the most about the game?

Graphics, Ren, lots of dialogues, puzzle with alcohol, how you can click on almost everything and get a brief description, the humor and of course Ren's tattoos.

- What did they not like and how are you planning to work on these issues?

Walking issues and voiceovers are the most talk about. We already manage to fix some things about walking and considering voiceovers they're waiting until we make the good Lip Sync.
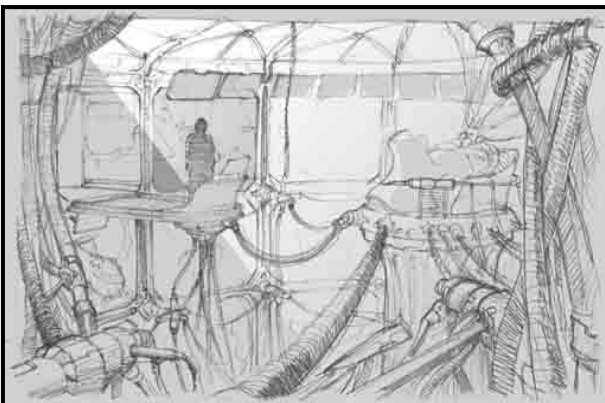
- What is your opinion on the state of adventure games? What do you think has to happen for adventures to become more popular?

They're here. They'll always be here. I'm sick of: "Adventures are dead" talk. That is one of the main reasons why we decided to create an adventure. However, they'll have to evolve and make use of the new generations of accelerators with some new gameplay issues. We're considering how to recreate
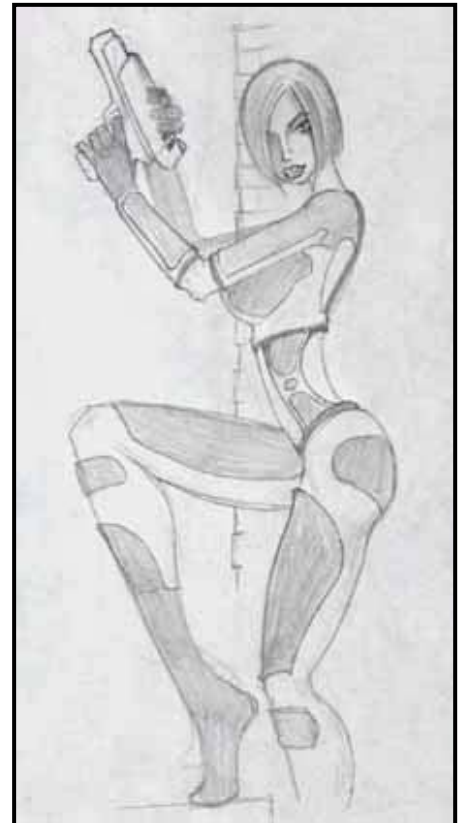
the genre and to keep everyone satisfied. We have some ideas, but ask me that in a year, when we start to develop our third adventure, which will have some new and fresh ideas considering genre and gameplay.

- Have you found a publisher for your game yet?

Working on it.

Razbor Studios

- Could you give us some background on your company? (When was it founded, how many people are working for you right now, etc…)?

We were founded in February 2002 by 4 guys who wanted to create a game. Now, a year later, there are about 15 people that are working for us on an upcoming game on 24/7 working hours.

- Is Legacy your first game?

As a game, yes, it is. However, we have created some other software. Let me just mention our children's coloring book on CD-ROM as well as applications for some companies.

- We have heard that you are already planning more adventures apart from Legacy. Could you give us some information on those other adventures?

Let me just give you some artwork.
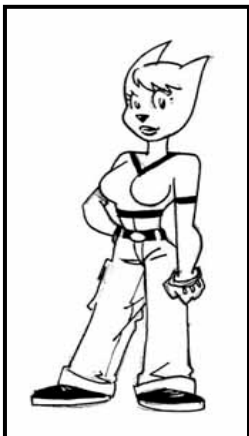
- Would you like to add anything more?

I would. Any single female who are willing… nope… if you have any money… nope… if you want to give… nope… beer pay… nope… ☺ Thanks for the questions and keep up the good work. For all the readers: if you are bored drop us a note on the official forum or just send us e-mail. We like that stuff.

Interview with Future Games / Unknown Identity

There have been many thrillers in the adventure genre that have written history with the amazing eerie experiences they have offered to adventurers. The Gabriel Knight games, Shadow of the Comet, Prisoner of Ice, Sanitarium, Phantasmagoria are only a few that come to mind instantly. The last good adventure thriller however was Gabriel Knight III, and this was 4 years ago! Two companies from the Czech Republic, called Future Games and Unknown Identity come to save the day, and fill the void of thrillers in the adventure community with the upcoming 'The Black Mirror'. The screenshots and the playable demo released some time ago from the official website of the game (http://www.futuregames.cz/poselsmrti/hlavni-Eng.html) has left everybody totally impressed and everyone is eagerly waiting for the game's release (it has already been released in the Czech Republic but not in the rest of the world yet).

This month, Zdenek Houb, designer of The Black Mirror from Unknown Identity and Marcel Speta, co-producer from Future Games pass by our celebrity corner to give us all the latest news around The Black Mirror, their company and their other point and click adventure game called Ron Loo. So let's turn to our honourable guests!

- Could you give us some background on yourselves?

Marcel Speta: Future Games company was founded in 1994 and released several PC games. All of them were released only in Czech and Slovak Republics. In 1996 we started our co-operation with a few young, talented guys (who call themselves Unknown Identity). In 1997 we released their first adventure game – The Messenger of The Gods. The game was inspired by E. Daniken books (it is comparable to Fate of Atlantis for example) and soon it became one of the most famous Czech adventure games. The Unknown Identity team then started with Black Mirror.

- Do you play adventure games yourselves, and if you do could you mention some of your favourite ones?

MS: Of course we all play adventure games. For us its part of our business (you have to watch your competitors carefully ...), but also a pleasure. On the other hand there is less time nowadays than in the past for playing games. Favourite games - The Hook, The Curse of Enchantia, Broken Sword, Phantasmagoria, Pandora Directive and surely lots of other ones ...

The Black Mirror

- Could you describe to us in short the plot of the game, without giving away spoilers?

Zdenek Houb: The story begins with the arrival of count Samuel Gordon to his family castle Black Mirror. After the sudden death of the owner of the castle, William Gordon is forced after twelve years once again to challenge his black past. Slowly he figures out that shadows around the death of his relative are deeper than he thought.

- Could you give us some background on the main character of Black Mirror, Samuel Gordon?

ZH: Samuel was like all his blood relatives born in the castle Black Mirror. But faith interrupted this family tradition. After all William started to be like a father to him - his real father died when Samuel was a child - and also his friend. Death of William was the reason for arrival of the lost son of the castle Black Mirror. Samuel is desperate to find out the reason why William died.

- How many characters will we get to meet in the game and how many locations will we get to visit?

ZH: In the game you can meet 23 characters, you can talk with them and do various actions with them. Number of locations in the game is bigger than 150.

- How much time do you think it would take an average adventurer to finish it?

ZH: Before releasing the game we approximately counted that time 15-30 hours. But buyers who play the game are talking about 20-40 hours. The reviewers in many magazines agree also with 20-40 hours. On the other hand definitively there are some exceptions = players who were able to finish the game in mentioned 15 hours...

- Is there a possibility that there is going to be a Black Mirror 2 in the future?

ZH & FG: It depends on selling numbers ... We have already discussed it and there is a possibility that there will be a sequel (or prequel) to our Black Mirror game. But, to be honest our next project will not be BLACK MIRROR 2.

- Is the story linear or non-linear?

ZH: We chose a linear story. Except for some points where you can influence the behavior of Samuel when he is lying or truthful. We prefer a linear story, because we think that one strong and great story line is better than many weak. But this is only one of the several different reasons we made that choice.

- Would you like to describe to us the graphics engine used in The Black Mirror?

ZH: The game makes use of the engine AGDS, Advanced Graphic Development System, basically 2D graphic system which offers all possibilities necessary for creating a game like Black Mirror. During development of our game, we developed also that system (and it was one of the most crucial parts of Black Mirror's development). There are some effects for dark atmosphere of the story like for example rain, fog, lighting or spotlighting of a person. You see, there is still possibility to push 2D graphics far.

- Why did you decide to use a 3rd person perspective?

ZH: Main reason is, that player can identify with the main character. Much better than with the first person perspective. Of course it costs much more time and sweat because of the increasing number of animations and noises. But we know, that the players will appreciate this.

- How much time approximately of cutscenes will there be in the game?

ZH: Cutscenes don't cost you much time. They are following the player through the game and show him the main horror moments. The final number of cutscenes is around 20 and for your information intro and outro got around 5 minutes.

- Have you already hired actors to do the voice-overs for the English version of the game? (If yes) Have they worked on games before?

MS: No, we want to do it together with the UK or US publisher and we are still in negotiations with potential ones.

- How many music tracks will there be in the game and how long will the soundtrack last?

ZH: Music is composed for classical orchestra. In the game there is music included in places where there is some thrill like in vaults, church and we can hear the music also during reading of chronicles and during the riddles. Outside during a day we chose realistic noises from background only. TBM use more than 1000 noises, so music can be heard similarly like in cinema during mostly suspense. TBM has got approximately 30 tracks and the duration of the soundtrack is around 30 minutes.

- Could you describe to us what kind of puzzles will Black Mirror have and whether they are going to be easy or difficult for gamers to solve? Could you give us an example of a puzzle (without giving the solution away).

ZH: In the game there are 15 of the 'riddles' kind of puzzles. Difficulty is increasing as the player proceeds during the game. An easy puzzle is for example putting together pieces of a brief that was torn apart or installation of planets around the sun on the mechanical globe. Difficult ones could be the chess puzzle or collecting of zodiac around a stone altar.

- The interface you implemented in Black Mirror has a feature that is considered by many revolutionary. Once you have done what is necessary with a hotspot, it does not remain as a hotspot anymore. Why did you decide to proceed in such a move and what kind of benefit does it have towards gameplay?

ZH: Yes, it's a new way on the field of adventure games. Our task was not to bore players, push them to try again and again each thing for many times. So we chose that way, even if we know that it shortens playing time at the end. But for us is most important to offer players a good time and fast story.

How will the dialogue system work like? Could you describe it to us and is it similar to any other adventure?

ZH: Dialogue system is similar to the famous Broken Sword. It means - icons are in bottom line of screen. Also we don't like sentences in the middle of the screen, which mainly attacks the design of a game. The text of dialogues has 220 pages and contains more than 200 possible selections of questions or topics.

Have you found publishers for countries outside the Czech Republic yet? Did publishers seem interested when you told them that you want to publish an adventure?

MS: We are surprised by the interest from the potential foreign partners in our Black Mirror game. It has exceeded our expectations. On the other hand it means a lot of work in terms of negotiations, reviewing conditions etc.

- There is a rumour going on that the English version of the game will be ready in June. Would you like to provide us with release dates for several regions that you have a release date already planned?

MS: Unfortunately not at the moment. With most partners we are in a different stages of release preparations and we are unable at the moment to mention the release dates and / or our partners names. But as soon as it will be possible we will issue a release date statement, so hopefully all players will be able to find the release date for their region ...

- The game has already been released in the Czech Republic. What kind of grades has the game received from adventure and gaming press so far?

ZH & MS: It is a real pleasure for us because Black Mirror is receiving pretty high rating (mainly in between 80 to 90 %) from all renowned computer games magazines (both web and paper ones) in Czech Republic. Two of the Czech biggest paper game mags ranked Black Mirror as the best Czech adventure game ever! Rumours are saying that in Czech Republic we also can aspire to BEST adventure game for year 2003.

- Has sales been satisfactory in the Czech Republic so far?

MS: We are out couple of weeks only, but so far yes. It is in-line with our estimates.

How many years did it take to develop The Black Mirror?

ZH: We started our work on the game in January 2000, so the development took more than 2,5 years. On the other hand we are not a big team, so the time corresponds to how many people worked on the game.

Were you inspired by another adventure / movie / book when you were making The Black Mirror?

ZH: Mainly asking question. We refuse the possibility to be inspired by another adventure or book from the early beginning of our work. In those cases the well known ideas push creators to work with material everybody knows and has his own expectations. From the beginning we were desperate to develop our own story with fresh ideas.

General

What do you think has to happen for adventures to become more popular?

MS: We think it is really simple. A few good adventure games could revive the adventure genre back – higher sales will encourage the developers and publishers. On the other hand it is completely clear that nowadays the developers must count with higher standards in terms of visual performance, story, overall atmosphere, etc.

- Point and click versus direct control. Which interface do you think suits adventures better and why?

ZH: For adventure games it is point and click at the moment, but we think, that it will change in the future and there will be adventure (or action adventure) games using direct control soon.

- You also have another adventure featured in your website, called Ron Loo (http://peregrius.cz/index.php?Gstr=13_r_hra&Gjaz=en). Is this game going to be available worldwide and if yes then do you know when approximately will it be released?

MS: Yes, that´s correct. Ron Loo is another adventure project, but it is prepared by another team (Peregrius) under the "Future Games wings". If everything goes OK, the game will be released in Czech and Slovak Republics at the end of this year. We are counting with worldwide distribution, but it will depend how will the game finally be.

- What is the story of Ron Loo about?

MS: Ron Loo is q dark fantasy adventure game and it´s a story of a young aristocrat, Ron Loo. As an Arekan Kingdom Emissary he comes to the Borean Kingdom to live a peaceful life at the Arekan Embassy. But destiny made him to play different role in a game of life ...

** /If you want you can find more about the Ron Loo story in English at http://www.peregrius.cz/index.php?Gstr=13_r_pribeh /.

- Is it a point and click 3rd person adventure like Black Mirror?

MS: Yes, it is a point and click, 3rd person adventure like Black Mirror. Despite the fact that Ron Loo is made by a different team than Black Mirror, it uses the same game engine.

- Do you want to add anything else concerning Ron Loo?

MS: Not at the moment.

Is the adventure genre going strong in the Czech Republic right now?

MS: The adventure genre is quite popular in the Czech Republic, but as everywhere adventure games cannot compete with typical 3D shooters ...

Future Games

- When was the company founded and how many people are working for Future Games nowadays?

MS: See our first answer. Currently there are 16 people working for Future Games.

- Could you share with us some of your promotion strategies around your games? How do you plan to pull gamers to your games (apart from the quality of the product itself).

MS: Worldwide it depends mostly on our partners, so our goal is to find strong enough ones. Regarding our activities in Czech and Slovak Republics I don´t think we can tell you something surprising ... Focus on media which covers our target audience, strong relationship with the important journalists, inventive advertising campaign ...

- Do you plan to release more adventure games in the future? Do you have any other adventures in development right now? (If yes) Would you like to tell us something about them?

MS: Yes, at least our next two games will be adventure games (Ron Loo and Unknown Identity's new project). We also have several plans for the near future, but our next move is closely connected to Black Mirror's success worldwide. As everything, also game development is about money.

- Was Black Mirror the first game you developed?

ZH & MS: No, Unknown Identity team's first game was Messenger of Gods (we already mentioned it), and Future Games made several local projects before The Black Mirror as well.

- Thank you for participating in this interview. I wish you all the best with your new adventure and I hope that you will come by our celebrity corner again in the future to discuss even more adventures of yours!

ZH & MS: The pleasure was ours. We wish you a lot of satisfied readers and hopefully we will be able to talk in a future again.

- Grissom: *Repeat after me.*
  Silk, silk, silk.
- Nick: *Silk, silk, silk.*
- Grissom: *What do cows drink?*
- Nick: *Milk?*
- Grissom: *No…cows produce*
  milk…they drink water.

"Concentrate on
what cannot lie…
the evidence."
                    - Grissom

CSI:
CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION™

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation is a first person adventure by Ubisoft based on the famous TV-series. I did not use to watch the series until some months ago I learned that an adventure game would be made based on it. Then I just had to watch it for myself to see what kind of adventure game we would be talking about. Since that time, I am totally hooked on the series, and I could not wait to get my hands on CSI, since it sounded similar to Law & Order, another adventure game based on a TV series, which I would enjoy much more if it wasn't for the time limit. Since there was no time limit incorporated in CSI, my hopes were really high.

The game was published about a month ago in the US, and some people in adventure forums did not seem that excited about it, so I started becoming skeptical. Well, CSI was not the excellent game I was expecting in the beginning but it was not as bad as some people described it either. But let's go to the evidence, shall we?

Story: You are a CSI intern and you are being put to the test in 5 different cases that you are going to examine with the help of the familiar from TV CSI agents. Each case is a standalone story…or is that really true? Well you will have to find out about that yourselves.

The story in general throughout the game is outstanding. There are many twists and things really are not as they seem. Especially the last two cases will have you thinking for a while. The problem is that all cases are not equally interesting. In some parts (for example the whole second case), the plot is quite simple and do not contain a lot of characters, or any excitement as a matter of fact. On the contrary the last two cases are amazing, from beginning to end. Their plot is constantly playing mind-games with you and the story becomes more complex as it progresses.

Now another issue, that I honestly cannot understand at all. We have had three adventures so far that were based on TV franchises. These were The X-Files, Law & Order and CSI. I cannot comprehend why none of them let you take control of a member of the TV-cast. And at least X-Files featured a character, even if he was not Mulder or Scully there was someone you could identify in the story. In Law & Order and CSI you never see or hear the character you are controlling.

According to Kirsten Forbes' statement in the interview we had last month with the developers of CSI, the reason for that is that

they do not want to constrict the view of the players of who they are playing in the game by making the avatar male or female, of a particular race or color. As far as I know players in general do not feel constrained when playing a certain character and I would gladly prefer someone even if this person was man/woman, black, white, Asian, etc. than a nobody with no voice and face.

The bottom line is that the plotline is interesting and especially in the last cases it even rivals some of the TV episodes, but in a couple of cases there could have been many more characters (including a main one!!!), more things to do and more interaction with the CSI cast. For example during the TV shows there are small tidbits where there is some character development and the personal life of the characters (even if this is limited due to their busy schedule) is given some (even minor) focus. This character development and focus on character's backgrounds is totally non-existent in the game CSI. It would have increased the entertainment level somewhat.

Graphics: C.S.I. is really lacking in the graphics aspect. The in-game view gives you the feeling that you look the world from the inside of a crystal ball. The sides of the screen look very blurry for some reason. The 3D

C.S.I.

Developer: **Ubisoft**
Category: **Point and click**
Perspective: **1st person**
Difficulty: **Easy**
Site:
http://www.csigame.net

models themselves are quite detailed but for the largest part, they do not move an inch from the point they are standing on each screen. It feels quite awkward when throughout five different cases agents sit in the exact same position all the time and perform more or less similar movements. Their lip-synching is usually asynchronous as well.

To top it off, you usually do not get to move at all in the locations you get to visit. In almost all of the crime scenes you stand in the middle of the room and you can only look around you. You cannot even look up or down. In the CSI headquarters you do not even get to look around. You can only look straight on a fixed view. This gives you the feeling that all the CSI agents have glue on their shoes and can only

teleport from place to place.

Having the character constrained all the time is definitely annoying and degrading of the whole experience. Cutscenes are nothing exciting but they do their job. Some of them will remind you the TV show, with the camera traveling you inside bodies of victims, tracing the cause and process of death, or with the crime being recreated in front of your very own eyes, while an agent narrates the whole thing. The game could have used many more cutscenes, and they should not be constrained only to recreations, but they should have contained other events in the game.

Sound: Well, you cannot go wrong in the sound department when you have acquired the voices of some of the most famous actors in the world. Truly magnificent voice-overs. The fact is that the actors have a different tone sometimes than what they usually have on TV, probably because they are reading, and not acting on camera, but still the casting is way beyond most games out there. Listening to Grissom giving you your evaluation report is just awesome.

Music is also in good levels coinciding the kind of music you get to listen in the TV-series with some ambient tunes and some trip-hop music, especially on the end of each case.

Gameplay: The interface is similar to the Law & Order one but better organized and more intuitive. There is a bar on the bottom of the screen split into three tags. On the first one you can choose the location you want to visit (the only way of navigating in the game, since you cannot move otherwise). On the second tag, you can see the tools you can use to detect and collect pieces of evidence. On the third tag you

see the evidence you have gathered thus far.

On the bottom right corner of your screen you can also check your case file, where you can see the description of the main characters (victims and suspects) in each case and information that you find about them during your investigation.

There are not any puzzles in the game in the classic puzzle term. The gameplay consists of looking for evidence and processing the evidence in the right way, either by asking the help of an expert or by using the computer and the microscope in the lab. The first cases are very easy to accomplish and you will be through them without the slightest hindrance, but as you progress in the game the cases will get tougher. That is, if you do not use the assistance of the CSI agent that is going to be with you, cause in such a case you will probably have no problem in the later cases either.

If you do that, then you will loose points from your final evaluation. If you achieve 100% in all cases then you will get access to bonus material. The last cases become a tad more difficult than the first ones, and the last one could be considered as a medium level of difficulty. Actually the most of that difficulty lies in locating some tiny pieces of evidence that is spread around the locations.

The dialogues are all linear and you cannot go wrong with your choices (as it happened in Law & Order) so there are no dead ends in the game.

The biggest problem of the gameplay is actually intertwined with the graphics of the game, that is, you do not get to move anywhere so the actual gameplay is in most parts, looking around you on a circle for evidence.

The tools in your disposal are rather fun to use. But most of them are only used once or twice throughout the whole game (i.e. the UV light and the heat detector.). Some irritating issues were the inability to by-pass dialogues and the inability to save anywhere you want (your session is saved automatically each time you quit).

General: The game comes in a DVD case which includes a small manual and 3CDs. There was a strange bug when the game was loading. Each time I started CSI, screen just paused and stayed black. When I clicked ctrl+alt+del and then clicked cancel to go back, the game would go on without any problems. Strange indeed, but since it was easy to by-pass I did not get

bothered by it. Ubisoft has released a patch that fixes a problem when the player tries to receive full points in all cases. You can download the patch from the game's official website. Since CSI has already got publicity by default, because of the TV series, the first weeks that it was released sold better than most adventures have done recently. Let us hope that this will stimulate the developers to make a sequel.

In a few words… CSI is definitely not the great game we were expecting but it is nevertheless fun, especially for newcomers and for those who prefer slightly easier puzzles. Judging by the initial sales of the game, it is quite probable that we will see a sequel and in this case the developers should try to improve much on the graphics of the game and make the story longer and more detailed.

Category	Score
Story	81
Graphics	38
Sound	89
Gameplay	78
Overall	74
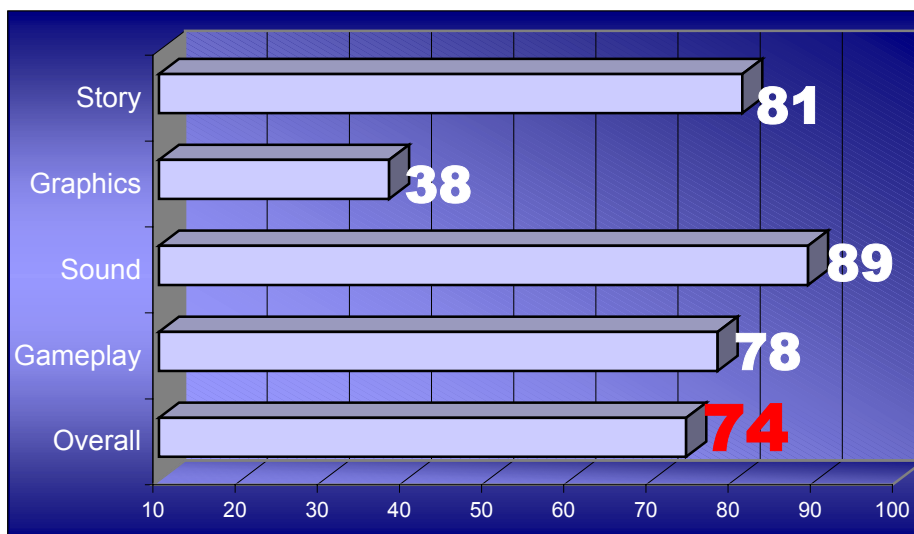
System Requirements:

-Win 98, ME, XP, 2000
-PII 300 / AMD K6III 450
-128 MB RAM
-517 MB HARD DISK
-DIRECTX 8.1 SOUNDCARD
-8MB DIRECTX8.1 VIDEO CARD
-4X CD-ROM

Amerzone: The explorer's legacy

Amerzone: The Explorer's Legacy is a 1st person adventure by our well-known Microids. It was the first adventure that brought with it the signature of Benoit Sokal, creator of the award-winning adventure, Syberia. The game had been released originally in 1999, but it has recently been re-released in Europe, after the great success of Sokal's Syberia. There are quite many similarities in the two games but each has it own unique gameplay style.

Story: Alexander Valembois was a doctor in zoology. His dream was to discover the white birds of the Amerzone, an unusual and legendary bird species that has no legs and they are constantly flying around a volcano. Valembois was also an inventor and he had designed many strange mechanical devices. Most people believed that the existence of this species was just a fairy tale made up by the natives of Amerzone. Unlike them, Valembois had faith in the existence of the white birds. After his own adventurous expedition in Amerzone he returned to France with the white egg, the only one that held the next breed of the white birds.

Scholars did not approve of the egg as a legitimate proof for the existence of the white birds. Not only Valembois failed to prove his theory, he endangered in this way the survival and existence of the white birds of the Amerzone.

You enter his castle and find Valembois in his dying hours. His last wish is that you return the egg to the volcano, and undo the crime he committed to nature. In order to achieve your goal you will have to trace back Valembois journey to the Amerzone and follow his footsteps to the volcano.

As you can see the similarities with Syberia are already evident. In both games you have to follow the footsteps of a great inventor and make use of this inventor's gadgets. Amerzone

story is also a well-told story but it is lacking in more places compared to Syberia.

All the characters that you get to meet in the game could probably be counted on the fingers of one of your hands. Most of the story of the game is being told through several documents that you find on your journey. The story is quite short as well, shorter than Syberia actually.

Despite these shortcomings though, Amerzone's story will 'leave a sweat taste in your mouth when you finish it'. There are some melancholic undertones also as there were in Syberia. Most of the contraptions you will get to use in the game and the unusual, factitious animal species are proofs of Benoit Sokal's creative imagination. The animals especially are phenomenal. I expected to meet more than you get to meet, but the ones you do see are extremely impressive. The story's flow goes on a steady pace, since the puzzles for the most
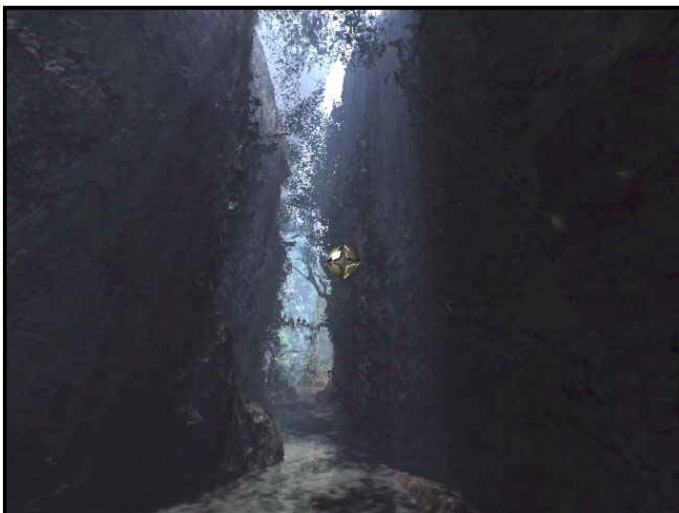
part do not usually stand in the way.

Graphics: Bearing in mind that the game was first released in 99, the graphics of the game are satisfactory. The game is seen from the 1st person perspective and uses the outdated system of teleporting between standing points seen in many 1st person adventures.

The colours are rather gloomy in the beginning and they become brighter and brighter as you proceed in the game. The direction during the cutscenes is excellent and the game will remind you of a movie during the cinematics, but the 3D models of the characters (the few that there are in the game) are poorly designed. Time has taken its toll on Amerzone and some of the cutscenes will seem rather pixelated.

The backgrounds, although they are static for the most part, are quite beautiful and especially the parts in nature are quite often jaw-dropping.

Especially the parts in nature are overwhelming. You will get to walk between incredible wild life and get amazed at the detailed sceneries.

A problem with the graphics is that a lot of locations are way too dark, even when you increase the brightness on your screen. It is well known that this is done in order to add to the atmosphere of the game, but developers should also remember that it is a game and the player is supposed to be able to look at the surroundings, especially when looking for useful items.

Sound: Music is used sparsely and usually only during cutscenes. When it is used however it is of a high standard and the (extremely short) score is a mix of classical music and French –style tunes.

The voice overs are very bad performed and most of the times it is not even clear what the characters are saying. Dialogues are not that long so you will not have to listen to voice-overs that often.

The sound effects though are amazing. Sounds of animals will surround you as you will enter the jungle, you will walk next to the sea and the waves will make you want to jump in the water.

Gameplay: The gameplay in general terms is satisfactory. There are however some annoying

issues concerning gameplay. In a couple of occasions you will need to resort to pixel hunting, although not in an extreme way. Another annoying issue is that you cannot by-pass practically anything.

You will have to watch all videos and listen to whole dialogues and you can do nothing about it. Furthermore there are no subtitles, which is rather cumbersome in combination with the bad performed voice-overs. Last but not least the game allows only a few save slots.

On the other hand, the puzzles are usually logical and will not stand in your way long enough to irritate you. This is a 'lonely' adventure with quite a few mechanical puzzles so if you are not into this kind of gameplay, Amerzone might not be for you. The mechanical puzzles though, are not difficult to comprehend and it doesn't require an Einstein to solve them, so even if you are not used to this kind of puzzles, chances are that you are going to enjoy overall Amerzone.

Amerzone

Developer: **Microids**
Category: **Point and click**
Perspective: **1st person**
Difficulty: **Easy**
Site: **http://www.amerzone.com/**

A lot of the puzzles involve the vessel that you are using throughout the game. You will have to find the appropriate use of this contraption in order to proceed the journey. The interface of the game is very reminiscent of the two Dracula games.

General: The game comes in a DVD-case with 4 CDs and no hard manual (but anyway, you are probably not going to need one since the interface is rather simple). After you are done playing with each CD you will not need it again for the rest of the game. There were no bugs encountered.

In a few words... Amerzone: The Explorer's Legacy is by no means an unforgettable adventure, but it is definitely a pleasant experience. You will feel like taking a ride on a virtual journey. The 'ride' will last only for a short while but when you are done you will feel entertained.

Story	78
Graphics	75
Sound	40
Gameplay	75
Overall	70

10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
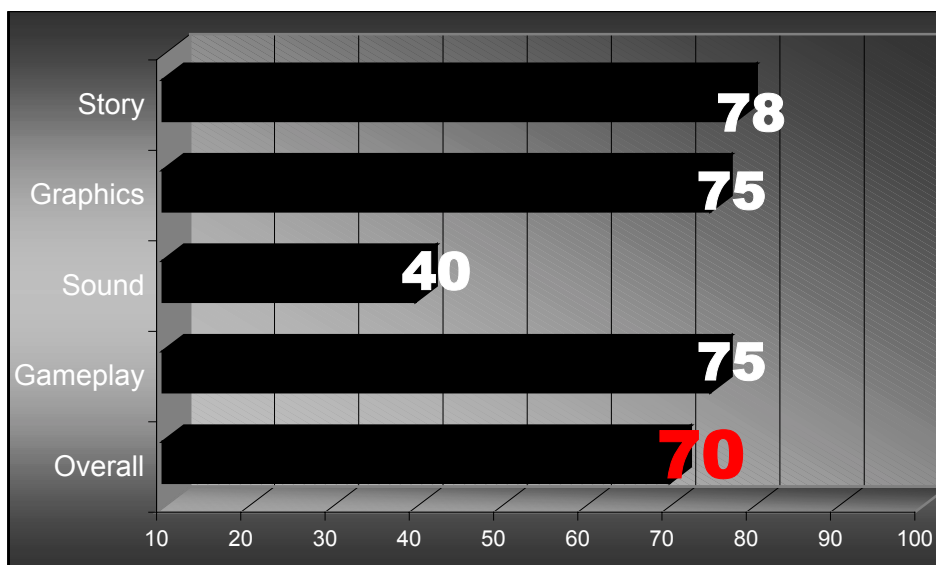
System Requirements:

-Win 95, 98, ME, XP, 2000
-PENTIUM 166 MHZ
-32MB RAM
-100MB HARD DISK
-DIRECT SOUND SOUNDCARD
-4 MB DIRECTX8 3D VIDEO CARD
-16X CD-ROM

Sherlock Holmes

THE MYSTERY OF THE MUMMY

The stories of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes have often been the subject for adventure games. Frogwares, a new company who are also the developers of the upcoming Journey to the Center of the Earth were also inspired by the writing of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, and decided to make a 1st person adventure based on him. Unfortunately the result was not that good.

Story: The story starts with Sherlock arriving on the manor of an Egyptian archaeologist. His daughter, Elizabeth Montcalfe, who is also going to marry a distant cousin of Sherlock, has requested from you to investigate the disappearance of her father, Lord Montcalfe.

The story plays a rather minimal role in the game, since Mystery of the Mummy is a 'solve a puzzle so that you can solve more puzzles' kind of game. Most of the story-telling, the little that exists, is being done through letters and documents that lie around waiting for Sherlock to pick them up. As for the interesting characters to interact with that is written on the back side of the game's box…they probably confused it with another game. There are only

but a few characters that you see for a very short time near the end.

In general terms, the story reminds nothing of a Sherlock Holmes adventure. There have been other Sherlock Holmes adventure in the past (i.e. Case of the Rose Tattoo and The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes) that really managed to transfer the world of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on the computer screen. On the contrary, Mystery of the Mummy failed by all means.

Even Sherlock himself, does not remind of the brilliant detective that most people know. The comments that he often makes in the game are

rather silly. The absence of his partner, Watson is also felt and makes the plot even more distant to what someone would expect from a Sherlock Holmes adventure.

Graphics: The game uses the familiar outdated teleport from standing point to standing point graphics engine that apparently will haunt adventures for some more time. The backgrounds are quite detailed and the 3D models are satisfactory during the cutscenes. Cutscenes however are sparse and short.

Sound: The music of the game is quite pleasant at sometimes and boring at others. The problem in the 'boring parts' is that the music just loops until you finish each level.

The voice overs are very average, with Sherlock exaggerating on many occasions. Sound effects are minimal.

Gameplay: The worst part of the game is definitely its gameplay. First of all, this game

Mystery of the Mummy

Developer: **Frogwares**
Category: **Point and click**
Perspective: **1st person**
Difficulty: **Hard**
Site:
http://www.frogwares.com/sherlock

and The Watchmaker (review in The Inventory 6) could compete in which one of them is worst in pixel hunting. The pixel-hunting in Sherlock Holmes is phenomenal. It feels more like a hide-and-seek game than an adventure one. Books hidden behind pillars, hammers between barrels and rags in the darkness…most of these items are not visible, but you just notice the cursor changing (that is if you are lucky to pass your cursor from that spot with no reason or if you have to finish the game and start hunting those poor pixels of your screen) and you understand that there is something there. Such a gameplay brings adventures years back.

But pixel-hunting is not only necessary for the collection of items. The hot-spotting of the game is very messy in general. There is a closet at some point that I was checking if it could be opened. So I passed my cursor on top of it and nothing. I left, got stuck eventually, checked a walkthrough and it said that I had to open the closet to get an item from inside. I went to the closet again and passed my cursor on top…nothing again. I got stumped. I crossed my cursor throughout the closet surface, and the cursor changed to the open command for some reason when I crossed it on a certain spot of the top part of the closet

The puzzles of the game would be the first entries in the book 'Puzzles that have been done to death in adventure games' like sliders and put a piece of paper under a locked door with the key on the other side, so that you can push the

key, the key will drop and you will pull the piece of paper and get the key.

General: The game comes in the familiar Adventure Company, cardboard box. The box contains the CD of the game and a small manual inside the CD case. There were no bugs encountered throughout the whole game.

In a few words... A rather boring and uninspired adventure with nothing new to offer in the adventure community. Frogwares seem to be very positive in the idea of creating adventures, and that is why I hope and wish that their future efforts, starting with the Journey to the Center of the Earth are going to be much better accomplished than Mystery of the Mummy.

Category	Score
Story	34
Graphics	68
Sound	60
Gameplay	20
Overall	39
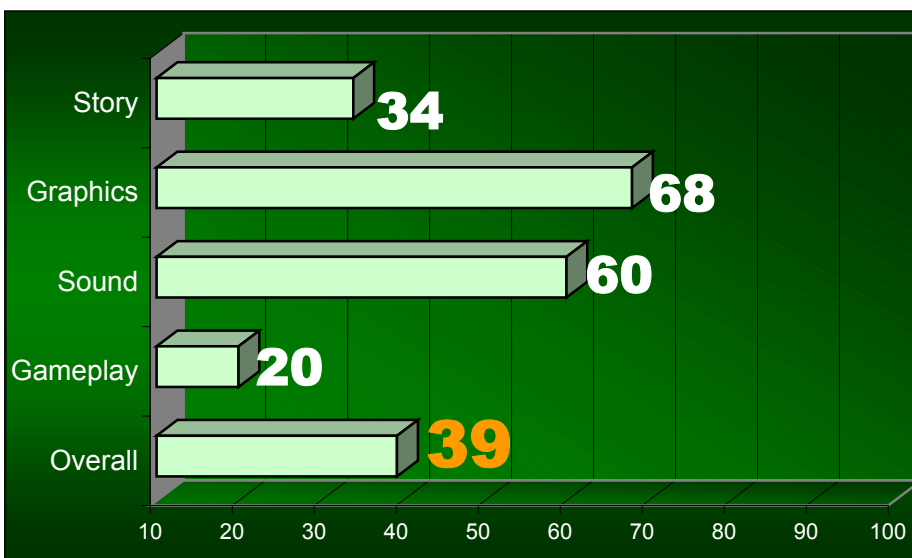
System Requirements:

-Win 98, ME, XP, 2000
-PENTIUM II 300 MHZ
-64MB RAM
-130MB HARD DISK
-DIRECTX SOUNDCARD
-8MB DIRECTX8 3D VIDEO CARD
-12X CD-ROM

Invento-mail

Hi,
I've just completed The Longest Journey. After reading your reviews in your magazines and all the comments about this game I just had to live the adventure for myself!

Oh Boy, was I impressed. I always thought that the Monkey Island and Gabriel Knight series were never to be beat, but now Im most certain that TLJ is at the top of my list, dare I say that I'm also playing on Syberia even though Syberia is an excellent game, it lacks the magical scenery and characters of TLJ. I.e Crow, man did I love this bird he is so comical and many times I have laughed so much at his smart ass comments that I had tears in my eyes, Flipper Burns was another funny likable character also.

The Game play was excellent and even though some of the puzzles I found were hard, they were addictive and you just had to keep trying until you got them right. I loved all the different places you could visit and their people, It was like a giant fairy tale come to life and I loved every minute I played on the game.

The game itself took me about a month to finish, as it was so addictive, I spent anywhere between 2 - 5hrs on the game at any one time, even my 2 yr old daughter loved the colourful graphics, to her it was like a giant story being watched on TV.

Glad to hear there is a TLJ2, but 2006!!!!

Shirley Turner (England)

The Inventory: Hi Shirley and thank you for taking the time to write us. I agree with you, The Longest Journey is one of the best adventures ever. It is a masterpiece that stands the test of time, and even though its graphics might seem a bit dated as time passes by, it still beats many of the adventures that come out nowadays. Another correspondent last month described it as the Iliad of our times, and I totally agree with him.

Flipper Burns was definitely my favourite character from the game. I cannot remember myself laughing more with any other character on any other adventure.

It is a game that if someone has not played yet, the best thing you could do is go out and get it while you can. I am glad to know that we helped you find out this adventure-gem but I am also sad to tell you that the next instalment of The Longest Journey might not be an adventure game after all.

It is not clear yet, whether it is going to be an adventure or an action/adventure but according to the latest interview the news are not that good. If it is a pure adventure it is certainly big news for all of us. If it is not, it is rather sad, but no need to worry. There are many other adventures in the works right now worth looking forward to and we are here to tell you all about them. Thank you again for writing us and sharing your experiences with this magnificent game.

Dimitris, first of all I'd like to start by saying you're doing a wonderful job with The Inventory. I've been reading the magazine since last November, which means right from the start. I'm thirty-two years old and I've been playing adventures for eighteen years now (since 1985).

Two things I wanted to discuss here with you: The first is your plans regarding the future of The Inventory. It would seem that as time goes by, The Inventory is becoming more and more popular all around the world. On the other hand, and I hope you won't mind me saying this (and I don't mean it in any negative way whatsoever), The Inventory is currently a pretty amateurish magazine (which is perfectly understandable considering the fact that it is a one man job, or maybe two, working on their spare time).

Now as it is, I really miss that old feeling when I was younger and I used to sit with the newest copy of the "Computer Gaming World" magazine, the colorful chromo pages, the various reviewers, the various familiar and awaited columns and even the rich advertisements of recently released or upcoming games. I do print The Inventory and read it much as you recommended but it's not really the same. So I wanted to ask if you have any plans for going commercial with the magazine sometime in the future. I must say I would gladly pay for a yearly subscription to that kind of a new incarnation of The Inventory.

It would be great to have such a professionally executed magazine for our beloved adventure games only. Of course such a thing means you will have to start doing it full time job and hiring a full staff to deal with the various aspects of running a real magazine. But it really is an empty niche at the moment and it could turn up to be very profitable. Maybe such a thing could be done in partnership with Randy, he already has the perfect men and women for the job.

Imagine the exposure things like "Just Adventure - Now A Printed Monthly Magazine" or "The Inventory - Now On Press" would get on the front page of justadventure...Have I mentioned I'm a dreamer...? Maybe you can start a thread at the JA forums. I saw you hang around pretty heavily over there. If you do, drop me a line cause I don't visit the forums every day. I would like to but unfortunately I lack the time.

The second thing I wanted to discuss is regarding NAG. I realize The Inventory started as a magazine for the Nordic region but it has since evolved into a greater thing. I'm not from the Nordic region myself and I must say that I find it somewhat alienating when you treat the Nordic region better than the rest of the world. It makes me feel as if I'm reading something that was not really meant for me, and the only reason I'm reading it is because there is no other alternative. The Inventory is a global phenomenon now and I think you should start treating it as such. Believe me, adventurers from the US, the UK, France and all over the world really, might find it a bit alienating, just as I find it, when you pay special attention to where a game can be purchased in the Nordic region and when you ask people in the celebrity corner when some game or another will be published in the Nordic region.

I feel kind of left out. A second rate reader, if you will. If you decide to write about release dates or where a game might be purchased, I think you should start doing it on a global basis. The special info for the Nordic region could be placed in the new web site you created for NAG. I have nothing against the Nordic region, mind you, on the contrary, it seems like a nice place to live in but I'd love to be able to feel more at home with The Inventory and to get the feeling it really WAS meant for me just as it was meant for every other adventurer all over the world.

Thanks a lot for your time and keep doing a great job,
Daniel Vierna

The Inventory: Hi Daniel. That is an interesting idea you have there. I am also a dreamer and yes releasing a commercial magazine exclusively for adventures has crossed my mind. However, you have to bear in mind that in order to build something big you need to establish strong foundations first. As it is right now….hmmm how should I put it…let's just say that I'm not driving a Ferrari to go to the university every morning.

You have to be able to invest some capital if you want to go commercial with a magazine, and I certainly do not have the capital required (at least for the time being). If someone else was willing to back me up and sponsor me I would gladly proceed to such a move.

As for plans in general… I have loads of them. But I prefer trying to accomplish them than talk about them. After all, as Al Pacino said in the movie-masterpiece, The Devil's Advocate: "*You've got to never let them see you coming. That's the gaff my friend."*

For the time being though, I am trying to make The Inventory look as more professional as possible and adventures to reach as more people as possible. I guess you have noticed yourself that The Inventory has changed layout quite often since the beginning. All these changes came through feedback from the readers. If you want The Inventory to look better, you can always help by sending us your opinions about it, whether the opinion is positive or negative.

If you have any comments on the screenshots, in the content (reviews, previews, etc), what you want to see more, what you want to see less…tell us about it and we will see what can be done. I had similar experiences with you when I was younger, and I was going to buy a magazine called PC-Master, every month to check out all the latest news about adventures, to see what Sierra and Lucasarts had in store for us.

I know it is not exactly the same with The Inventory, since you do not get the glamorous paper of a commercial magazine, but it is as close as it can get with the tight budget (about 0 dollars…which is about 0 euros ☺) we are running on right now.

But as I said we will become better by time. This is a promise. And you will see even more improvements on the magazine after the summer when we come back. What kind of improvements? What kind of a surprise would it be if I told?

Concerning NAG now, you have probably noticed yourself that the latest issues of The Inventory do not feature any 'local' news anymore. This change was inevitable since The Inventory has become a much more global phenomenon than when it began. I can understand that some of you might have felt left out so from now on The Inventory will have a global perspective instead.

The local versions however (French, Spanish, Italian, German etc…) will become more and more specialized on their own region as time passes by. The several editors and translators are doing an amazing job right now reaching more and more adventurers that are not that good in English or quite simply prefer their own language.

Some time in the future, The Inventory will become the 'magazine that you used to buy every month to see all the latest adventure news'.

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:

Churches, the fan revolution and Adventure/Adventure.

When Just Adventure announced officially that Jane Jensen would be working on her own new game I thought that everybody would see this as the best news ever. I visited the Gabriel Knight forums and to my surprise, instead of seeing people being satisfied that Jane is finally coming back to game development, a few of them were disappointed that is was not a new Gabriel Knight game (completely understandable) however there were some others that were disappointed that it was not a Sierra game. Someone actually thought that it would not be appropriate to discuss Jane's new game over there because these were Sierra's forums!!! Hopefully Creel, the moderator over there in the Gabriel Knight forums, who is doing a superb job keeping that community alive, said that this is not going to happen and that he would allow all discussions around Gabriel Knight and his **creator.**

Well let me start by saying that I was Sierra's biggest fan during its heyday. I would anxiously wait for all their new games to come and I thought they were the best thing that ever happened to gaming. But unfortunately Sierra is not the Sierra we used to know anymore. Almost none of the people that worked there and gave us these great games, continue to work there nowadays. The people behind their new games are not the people that gave us the King's Quests, the Quest for Glories, the Gabriel Knights or the Larry Laffers.

The same applies for Lucasarts. I think most of you have seen already the screenshots of Full Throttle 2 and read the press release. How many of you seriously think that the game will be anything close to the first one?

Use shiny disk with odd statuette

Walk to | Look at | Options
Pick up | Use | Save
Move | Talk to | Load

Don't you think it is time for all of us to leave the Sierra and Lucasarts churches and put aside the blind love towards them? The 'priests' (developers) that used to preach over there have already left the temple.

Would you rather see Jane Jensen work on a new action / adventure with Gabriel running around jumping and shooting zombies on a 3D survivor/horror theme? Or would you rather see her in her new game handling the supernatural and delving into aspects of psychology and religious questioning? Well in my case, give me the second option any time, any day. The Gabriel Knight series is my all-time favourite adventure series, and Gabriel Knight II is in my opinion the best thing that ever happened in electronic entertainment, but even so I would rather never see a Gabriel Knight 4 than to see one that totally ruins the series.

And big congratulations to Jane Jensen one more time. Instead of staying with Sierra, and starting working on something that 'would appeal in a wider audience' and forget about us, the 'niche market' of gaming as we have been called over and over again, she decided to start her own thing. In the gaming industry, like in all other industries, there are followers and there are leaders. Followers look what all the others do and follow. Leaders do what they want to do, and let the others follow them. Jane Jensen is definitely a leader.

> *"Innovation doesn't come from market research. I hated market research driven product development. For instance: Surveys that would show that "action shooters" are hot. This means everyone rushes an action shooter into development. I would instead look to see what was hot at the movies, in books, on TV."*

-**Ken Williams**, founder of Sierra, Interview with www.adventure-treff.de

Does anybody still wonder why did this guy own the leading company in game development for almost two decades? I am very optimistic about Jane's new company, Odyssey Digital Entertainment, because she seems to be following the same strategy regarding product development.

Some other people that apparently do not tend to follow the wave, but instead do their own thing, are the fans themselves. Those of you who have not played Tierra's remakes yet, are missing out on one of the best entertainment given the last 4,5 years in the adventure community. As for the future of fan made development, the KQIX development team (www.kq9.org) with the massive King's Quest

9 project that even incorporates full 3D graphics, Screen 7 Entertainment (http://screen7.adventuredevelopers.com/foy/) with their upcoming Indiana Jones and the Fountain of Youth that have left us all die in anticipation, Tierra again (http://www.tierraentertainment.com) with the remake of one of the best adventures ever that came from Sierra, Quest for Glory II, PeeCee (http://sqprequels.web1000.com/index.htm) with the sweet looking prequel to Space Quest, and many others are giving promises for big things to come and epic days of adventuring ahead of us.

So dear adventurers, if you want a 'church' to follow, these are the ones. And just imagine that these are still the baby steps of independent projects. Who knows how many of these independent developers will float on the surface of the adventure community to surprise us.

The situation nowadays with action/adventures and adventures remind me very much of an episode of the TV-series Mad About You. Paul and Jamie Buchman, the couple from Mad About You, went into a video store where they hadn't been for a long time to rent a movie. This conversation followed (more or less… I have it memorized but I do not remember everything by heart):

P: I can't believe they have made so many
categories over films right now, it's too difficult
even too choose one.
J: Really?
P: Yes look at this…comedy/action,comedy/horror
comedy/drama, comedy/romance… and look at
that… comedy/comedy.
J: You are kidding me!
P: No I'm not, come and take a look for yourself.
J: You are right…comedy/comedy. I can't believe
this. I mean, what is the difference between a
comedy/comedy and a normal comedy?
P: It's funnier!

Unfortunately we have reached such a stage that we have to say adventure/adventure to define what is the genre we love to the mass public. But even so, we all know what pure adventures are, and we will see them prosper even if we have to call them adventure/adventure/adventure in the future. A future that looks brighter than ever before, with adventure developing companies jumping out in the open from all over the world.

And apart from that and Jane's big comeback, we are also aware of another great developer that has given us classics in the past, who is working on his own adventure. We cannot tell yet who is this developer or what he is working on, but we think and hope that next September when we come back we will be able to tell you all about it.

Epilogue

Phew… this is the end…for now. Because we will be back after summer to give you more Inventories to read. It has been a fun time writing all The Inventory issues and I hope you also had fun reading them.

After the summer we hold more surprises for you in store. But until then I will stay as far as possible from computers and any other form of civilization and go somewhere to rellaaaaaaxxxxx…. If you know what I mean. I will probably be checking e-mails now and then however, so feel free to send your e-mails concerning The Inventory or adventures and I will make sure that you either get a reply or that you get posted in the next Invento-mail.

But if you really want my advice… turn off the computers as well, and enjoy the sun. Adventures are fun but so is life! I don't really know what you are going to do but I am going to follow Brian's example (from the screenshot below) and take it really easy.

Have a nice summer everybody!

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

" I'LL BE BACK "