The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

MEGA-INTERVIEW WITH THE CREATORS OF THE AWARD-WINNING FLASH SERIES & UPCOMING ADVENTURE GAME

BROKEN SAINTS

The Inventory

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Other Editions

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Prologue

One issue before we complete 1 year with The Inventory and the adventure genre is going stronger than ever before in the last 5 years. In this 9th issue you will have the chance to read 3 hot interviews, reviews, previews, gossips (you know the story) and a new puzzle page, called *Solve It*, which is created by the new kid in the block, Justin Peeples. We hired Justin some weeks ago, and from now on he is going to write reviews and previews for our magazine as well as the *Solve It* page, for you adventurers to do something with The Inventory during your leisure time.

In the previews section, Carla Melloni lets you in on the latest information regarding Ubisoft's eagerly awaited *URU: Ages Beyond Myst* which is going to introduce a whole new kind of gameplay to the Myst fans out there. While at the previews section, you might want to have a look in the Journey to the Center of the Earth adventure by Frogwares, which might be the first case of a Syberia-clone.

This issue is a Broken Saints special! What is Broken Saints? You can find out in the article-tribute to Broken Saints, right after the latest adventure gossip by Carla. And when you do get to know what Broken Saints really is then feel free to move on to our Lounge and read what the creators of Broken Saints have to say about this award winning flash series which will be the base for their upcoming adventure game! Oh yes, they talk about the game as well ☺ … and they let us in on everything that is possible to know about the game in this early stage of development.

But if you thought that the creators of Broken Saints were the only guests of our Lounge this month, you'd better think again. The Lounge is packed this month! Eric Viennot passed by as well. Who's Eric Viennot you ask? He is the man behind the upcoming (or just released if you live in Europe) *In Memoriam*, a game that uses the Internet, Full Motion Video and gaming to create a unique interactive experience that makes you think the game takes place in the real world. Will this game become the Blair Witch Project of adventure games? Only time will tell, but in the meanwhile go to the Lounge and see what Eric has to say.

Last but definitely not least, Lori Cole, the creator of the amazing Quest for Glory series and Mishell Baker, the author who is going to co-write the upcoming Quest for Glory novels with Lori, are here to talk all about heroes, novels, former Sierra and adventure games! A Quest for Glory review tribute is also featured in this issue to accompany the interview with the legendary developer Lori Cole. Other reviews include my view on Thorgal: Odin's Curse and Justin's view on the first chapter of the new episodic adventure Agon.

Al Lowe is here again as well, to cheer you up with his hilarious jokes in The Al Lowe show. If you have never played an Al Lowe game, then maybe you should check this month's gossip and look up a title called Freddy Pharkas. Unfortunately we have no comic strip for this month, because our contact in Emerald City Games has disappeared! We hope that they will come in contact with us soon so that we can feature a comic strip in the next month's issue. Now, let the reading begin…

Dimitris Manos
Editor
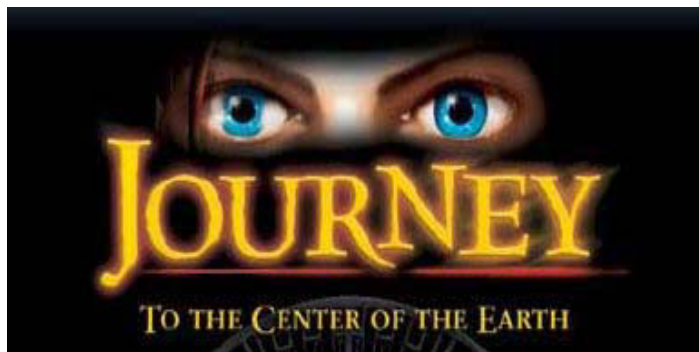
Journey to the Center of the Earth is the second adventure game from the new gaming company Frogwares. It is based on the homonymous famous novel by Jules Verne, although the game uses its own unique storyline. While you are reading this preview, the game is already available in some parts of the globe published by Viva (formerly known as Tivola). Only some days ago, Frogwares released a playable demo of the JTTCOTE (that is probably the longest abbreviation of an adventure game ever) on the game's official website which is: www.journey-earth.com and we will give you our first impressions from this demo.

The comparison of JTTCOTE with Syberia is inevitable. Both games feature a female career-driven protagonist who is undertaking a journey through fictitious worlds. Both adventures will require you to solve mechanical puzzles in order to proceed with the story. Ariane, the lead of JTTCOTE, even sounds a little bit like Kate Walker (Syberia's lead) and she runs at the same slow speed! So do not be surprised if we compare the two games bit by bit in this preview.

We held an interview with the developers of JTTCOTE in The Inventory 3, and here is what they said about the storyline of the game: "**Ariane, a young photographer, working for a big travel magazine,**

'That's one small step for Ariane; one giant leap for adventurers.'

takes pictures from a bird's-eye view of Iceland. The helicopter flies upon volcano Sneffles, a heavy whirlwind shakes it: Ariane falls down from the machine, before the latter shatters on the surface about ten meters further. The young woman rolls and lands in a torrent that plunges into the crack in the earth. Arian is carried away with the stream, she faints…She comes to her senses lying on a beach, in the "Centre of the Earth". She will discover a lost world where two civilizations, once very developed, are striving to survive. This incredibly beautiful universe hides a terrible secret, which Ariane will discover very soon…" They also claimed that you will get to meet more than 30 characters in the game.

As far as the demo goes, it does not really give us a chance to even pre-judge the **story** of the game, because the length of the demo is considerably short for doing something like that. But the demo shows that the game will feature some unique and surreal incidents like the ones found in the Jules Verne novels.

Ariane's facial details are well designed.

From the screenshots of the game and what we saw in the playable demo, the **graphics** of the game are of high quality. JTTCOTE is seen from the 3rd person perspective. Players can view the game in a resolution up to 1280x960 in 32 bit colours. Ariane's 3D model is very detailed and I have to mention that one is easily impressed by her jeans! And yes that was not a typo. Ariane's jeans look incredibly real. Her animation is quite smooth as well while facial features are also well designed. Something that was a bit degrading of the whole experience was that the rest of the characters (not Ariane) seemed quite static. That is, they did move their arms for example when Ariane was speaking to them, but otherwise they remained where they were

standing as if they were statues. However, we cannot say for sure if this will happen during the whole game, but if it does, then it is something that makes the game look a bit less realistic. The dynamic shadows cast by Ariane depending on the source of lighting was a nice touch as well.

The backgrounds might not have the extravagant look and the fascinating details of Benoit Sokal's artistry but they are however quite pleasant to the eye. A slight problem with the graphics is that the camera view seems very far away sometimes from the actual scene, and it is difficult from time to time to discern some small items that Ariane will need to pick up. But this is probably not something that will bother you much. The amount of cutscenes will add up to 15 minutes in total as stated in the interview in The Inventory 3. During the demo we got the chance to witness one of those cutscenes and the result was quite satisfying.

Outside the 'big brother' town.

The **sound** of the game comes as a big surprise. Ariane's voice is well performed (not to mention that it sounds remarkably similar to Kate Walker's voice) and the music tracks that are heard in the demo make up for a nice audio experience. The rest of the voice-overs are not really Oscar-winning performances but they are not irritating either.

And now let's go to the feature of the game that is going to play a decisive role on how well will JTTCOTE be received by the adventure community, and that is the **gameplay**. As I said before the demo was rather short so this is just a first taste of what is about to come. But from what we have seen so far we can say that if you did not enjoy Syberia you will probably not be the biggest fan of JTTCOTE either. Those of you who were really bothered by Kate's slow

Will you look at those jeans???

pace and by some 'empty screens', get prepared to encounter such screens and a similar slow pace in this game as well. On the other hand if these issues did not bother you that much then JTTCOTE might be able to fill in the void that Syberia 2's push back left in your 'fun things to do during the holidays' list. The game uses a user-friendly point and click interface, and you will be able to navigate Ariane in a matter of seconds. Single clicking somewhere on the screen results in Ariane walking there, while double clicking somewhere orders Ariane to run to the selected spot…and with that being said do not expect Ariane to run like Roberto Carlos from Real Madrid does, because if you do you are probably in for a disappointment.

When you right click, the inventory comes up as a small bar on the bottom part of the screen, where it also stays until you right click a second time. Some objects can be used in a certain way by Ariane, and if this is possible

Magnificent mushrooms will catch your attention.

So…how about I take you out for a date on my new pterosaur?

then the action will be written next to the title of the object. I.e. if Ariane has a pair of gloves in her inventory, and then you cross your cursor on top of them, the title of the item will come up (i.e. gloves) and beside it the action that Ariane can perform with the certain object (i.e. use). But only certain objects have this special action-ability and the rest can only be used for interaction with the environments that Ariane will be exploring.

The game does not feature the traditional 'look' option found in the classic Sierra/Lucasarts adventures so Ariane does not give many comments on her surroundings. But she does say something here and there when she encounters a person, a place or an incident that she finds interesting. As for the game's puzzles, the first showings indicate that the puzzles will in general be easy. Although the demo featured one big exception to the above statement, where Ariane had to open a door by placing some symbols in a certain order. The puzzle is not just difficult it is also poorly designed because the hints that the players get are extremely vague. The game seemed rather linear and there were

not any different paths Ariane would take to make her way through the demo.

To sum up, although Journey to the Center of the Earth might not be the most original adventure ever created and might not break any new ground, it looks like it is going to be a pleasant experience as long as there are not many puzzles like the 'door puzzle' encountered in the demo and as long as the story is exciting and well written.

For what it's worth, JTTCOTE seems to be miles ahead of Frogwares' first adventure, Sherlock Holmes, and if they continue improving with this rate then the adventure community will have much to gain from this company since they seem very positive towards the adventure genre. We will be featuring a review of JTTCOTE in The Inventory as soon as we receive a copy, but on the meanwhile you can visit the game's official site (http://www.journey-earth.com) and get a taste for yourselves of the world Ariane is about to visit, by downloading and playing the demo available there.

- Dimitris Manos

Ten years ago there was a game that almost redefined PC gaming –whether you like it or not, this is a fact-. The game was MYST, a title that would be imitated, -even cloned- though rarely equalled, not even by the game's creators. While Riven and MYST III came and went, the developers at Cyan, and later, Presto Studios, were never able to match what MYST accomplished. With Uru: Ages Beyond MYST, though, they are going to try…again.

What is Uru? This is what the Cyan people say themselves: "*It is both a compelling single-player game and a persistent online multi-player experience that carries on the breathtaking atmosphere, challenging puzzles and intriguing storylines of the Myst series, using a real-time 3D engine that puts the player in the fantastic worlds of Myst like never before.*"

This is what the Cyan team had to say about the etymology of the word Uru: "*Historically, Uru (pronounced Oo-roo – rhymes with "guru") is one of the first written words in early Sumerian cuneiform. In Mesopotamia, the cradle of civilization, it meant 'deep' and 'city.' Sumerian myth mentions it as an 'Underworld Paradise.' It is the name of the native people who lived on the floating islands of Titicaca, supposedly descendents from Atlantis. It refers to a*

Character interaction will play an important role in the online version.

Mesoamerican earth-deity, and a tribe/clan of peoples in Central America connected to the Incans. The oldest known name of Jerusalem was actually Urusalem, 'uru' meaning, 'lay the foundation' or 'establish.'" Uru is also the Japanese verb 'to obtain' or 'to acquire.'

But more importantly, it's the word that the D'ni (pronounced dunny – rhymes with 'sunny') – an ancient and presumably extinct civilization that lived in a great city in a vast cavern below the Earth's surface – used to explain to the early humans in Mesopotamia the community from which they came. In D'ni it translates to 'large gathering of people' or 'grand community' - a concept unfamiliar to the early humans. They adopted the word and used it when they began to gather into cities." Rand Miller, the leader of the team which created Myst, calls Uru a sequel "**truer to our Myst roots than anything we've done to date.**"

Mush-URU-ms

"*Myst was the introduction of a small piece of the D'ni civilization. URU takes it all to the ultimate extreme.*" Miller explains. "*In URU, we point out that D'ni culture was part of the Earth, and lived underground and died hundreds of years ago, so they are still there. Several explorations have uncovered a long dead underground city, and people are starting to go there to explore and uncover even more.*"

But let's now move on to the game. While not as complex as Riven, Uru will offer an intricate experience. As with previous games, there isn't much of a "backstory" to get you started. Hardcore fans of the MYST series, especially those who have read the novels and completed the previous games, will start with a better sense of what is going on. The world of Uru begins in your own time – in the first years of the 21st

century. You have been asked to help in the exploration and restoration of the ruins of an ancient civilization, an archaeological marvel recently discovered by the D'ni Restoration Council (DRC).

As in Myst, players will just "come out of the blue" at the beginning of this game. For the first time, however, players will be able to see and design an onscreen avatar -- even if they plan to stay in the single-player world. This avatar is necessary because this time players will explore the world of MYST in the third-person (a first-person option is under consideration, but the team feels that a third-person view is the way Uru is meant to be experienced). This feature is, probably, one of the biggest adjustments that fans will have to make. The development team is plenty confident **"It gives a sense of things around you,"** they emphasized, **"and it also provides a sense of scale."**

The gameplay has also changed a bit. While there won't be action sequences or gunplay, players can expect the addition of some physical puzzles where you have to move objects or complete tasks in a certain amount of time. The other big change is that the gaming environment begins in the middle of a desert instead of the verdant islands of previous journeys.

Myst-ifying architecture.

Uru starts the player in the middle of the desert with little in the way of introduction – only through exploration does the environment and story reveal itself. In a break from earlier games, this Myst game does make specific references to places. The game is happening here and now, so you might notice details like a New Mexico license plate.

The essence of the Myst games is interactively exploring detailed environments, and Uru (off-the-shelf) will offer

A bridge from the Garden Age.

a single player experience that is the next game in the Myst series. Of course, what truly sets Uru apart from other Myst games is the existence of Uru Online. In addition to the offline game, for an additional fee, players will be able to join a persistent, social world with regularly updated content and new ages to explore. The biggest difference this time is that players will be able to enjoy not only the "off-the-shelf" game, but can continue the adventure online and experience Uru with thousands of other players. Uru won't be another massively multiplayer world where levelling up is the main goal, though. Instead, Uru is a game of easy exploration for many similar to the way the original MYST was a dreamy journey.

Players will be able to chose whom they want for companion, thus freeing themselves from companions they might not like. The game is designed to be a continuous adventure for small groups of people who will always have new places to go and new things to see. As you meet other players, you can create a neighbourhood, or join a neighbourhood. The

An impressive staircase

The 3D environment gives a chance to the developers to use different camera angles.

neighbourhood serves a function similar to that of guilds in other games – it creates a space where you can meet with friendly folks. It may also contain activities itself, such as mini-games you can play with other denizens. Neighbourhoods may even serve as the basis for communal activities, such as a massive D'ni device that needs regular calibration. Calibration then becomes a group activity, and that service to the community can be tracked on a neighbourhood level, encouraging group participation.

Visitors to your dwelling are by invitation only, and even ages that you might visit in Uru Online are private and will only be visited by people you invite or are invited by. If you are not feeling friendly, you will be able to play Uru Online as if it were a single-player game with instalment content. You could create a neighbourhood solely for yourself, and even ages that may have group activities could be explored alone to unearth more elements of the ongoing story. That said, they are trying to encourage social behaviour by adding some puzzles that may require you to get the aid of other players. Ages might even be competitive in nature

– one such age might include "fugitive" elements in which one player is trying to trigger a series of events while avoiding the pursuit of another group of players.

According to URU's team, an ancient civilization called the D'ni created different worlds thousands of years ago, including MYST, but they have long since vanished. As Uru begins, you have apparently discovered an entrance to one of their underground cities, and you get the chance to explore it at your own pace. The D'ni mastered an almost magical technology called the "art of writing," and this is how incredible places like MYST and Riven were created. The "linking books" (items that have become the centerpieces of the MYST series) are used to travel to and from these different ages. At some time in the past, the D'ni made a journey to New Mexico, creating a linking book to our world.

This linking book and the New Mexico location will serve as the hub that allows you to access various worlds. Journeying to other worlds and ages will let players bring items back and leave them in the house

and yard to showcase where they've been and what they've accomplished. Your house will have a library that begins with a modest shelf and virtually no reading material. As players head to different ages and solve various puzzles, they'll get new linking books that can be placed on the shelves. When they go online, the number of books that can be found grows even greater. Once a player secures a book, the age becomes "theirs," and is semi-customisable by the person who claims it, by altering the details in their linking book. Tricky, isn't it?

A picture taken from the Garden Age.

Multiple players will have linking books to the same age, but the age visited will be the customized version of that linking book's owner. Thus, a group of players could have different experiences exploring the same age, just using different people's books. In a way, Uru could really be described as the first "massively single-player game."

Many upcoming games are pushing 3D graphics to a

Definitely not something you would expect in a Myst game.

'Come on, take a seat and help us solve this puzzle'

new level, and Uru is no exception. The whole game is rendered in 3D, with varied environments from the vast expanse of desert to the underground D'ni city. Along with 3D graphics, the game is designed to be played in third-person mode, so you can see your own avatar. That makes this the first Myst game in which you can see yourself. As in many games, the avatar is plenty customisable so that you can make it look like yourself – or someone totally different. Third-person views allow the design team to create cinematic effects and events by manipulating the camera, and your avatar lends a sense of perspective and size to the scenery.

Of course, with the third-person perspective come puzzles of a new sort (for the Myst series) – physical puzzles! Solving certain dilemmas or exploring particular ages may require simple activities like jumping over, pushing or pulling objects. Some of these activities will have to be completed within a time limit. Cyan Worlds know their audience, so while there will be physical puzzles, they are taking care to make sure that these challenges are not twitchy and can be surmounted by players of all skill levels, including those of us who are lazy and slow.

Probably the biggest difference from the original MYST, though, is that URU is not pushing system requirements at all. But it must be said, Uru does not have the kinds of visual effects that require the latest and greatest hardware. Uru: Ages Beyond Myst should be released this November, so you will soon be able to explore more Ages and an Ancient D'ni city. What makes this game remarkable is the addition of the online component. New content, together with voice chat, will make the social experience an interesting one.

- Carla Melloni

ADVENTURE GOSSIP

Download Freddy Pharkas free of charge!
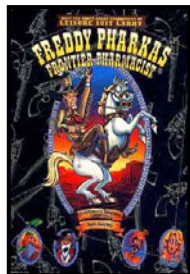
"Welcome to the premier source of information on one of the greatest graphic adventure games ever made!" This is the warm welcome Al Lowe, one of the most ingenious adventure game creators -and currently writing an hilarious column in this humble magazine- gives when you visit the Freddy Pharkas website. The classic game, that brought the adventure platform to a new level, is now available for download free of charge at:
 http://www.freddypharkas.com.

Besides tough puzzles, the game features some of the funniest graphics ever made. Along with the music, characters, and Lowe's humour, Freddy Pharkas became a must play game for all adventurers.

Syberia 2 site up and running

Microids has launched the official site for Syberia II that you can find here http://www.syberia2.info The website offers the Syberian community awesome screenshots, and lot of information about the upcoming sequel to the Adventure Game of the Year 2002. You'll find previews, wallpapers, characters' profiles and backgrounds, game synopsis, contact support, and much more -including information about the author-. There's also a Forum for the Syberian fans to share their opinions. Probably the most interesting feature in the site is the Syberia II Club, where registered users will receive a Syberia II newsletter with every site updates - demo or trailer announcements, press releases, news, etc. The page is available in English, French and Italian.

Apprentice, new fan made adventure available for download

Apprentice began as small college project during the latter half of spring semester 2003. In this game, you play the unlikely hero Mortimer "Pib" Pibsworth. This game is right up there with the best Adventure Game Studio adventures. Compared to Pleurgburgh -Dark Ages- on occasion this game has the perfect blend of humour, puzzles, gameplay and graphics.

The graphics and background textures are cartoonish and fun. Although not a particularly long adventure game, Apprentice hits all the right buttons with amazing accuracy, making this one of the hottest Adventure Game Studio games out there. Apprentice: The Continuation is the second chapter in the Apprentice series, and begins where the original left off. Tentative release date is Christmas this year. As Pib's apprenticeship makes him vulnerable to military draft, attaining wizarhood will become imperative.

From ocean diving to winning at the races, this adventure explores the land of Willowbean that lies beyond the Wizard's hill. It will have new puzzles, and be twice as long as the original, with an estimated 14 new rooms ... And a wonderful news for those of you who have already played the original. Apprentice: The Continuation will introduce real spells. Download the original at http://www.sonic.net/~schlae/herculeaneffort/apprentice.html and stay tuned for more news about the sequel.

Great news coming before the end of the year

Do you remember the three upcoming adventures we were talking about some months ago that we also reffered to as The Trinity? The first one was Jane Jensen's adventure, the second one was the adventure we featured a comic strip for last month…but what about the third one?

Well, from what we have heard the third adventure we were talking about (and which is a point and click adventure made by someone who has a great name in the industry) will probably be unveiled before the end of the year (most probably December).

One thing you should definitely be is excited. More news about the game to come soon.

Legacy Interactive turns ER in an adventure game

Warner Bros. has granted the license to its top series "ER" to Legacy Interactive, in order to create the first computer game based on the show. The player will take the role of an intern whose goal is to grow his or her career while participating in the ongoing dramas unfolding in the emergency room. The game will focus on the thrills, ethical dilemmas, life and death decisions, and of course the romance that take place in the popular TV series, created by the best selling author Michael Crichton ("Jurassic Park").

The game will also feature the likeness and voice talents of actors from the show. Legacy Interactive, known for its expertise in developing entertaining simulation games and the successful launch of the first "Law & Order" game, will allow fans of "ER" and gamers alike to experience first hand the excitement of life in the emergency room. The game will be co-published by Take 2 Interactive, and is scheduled to release in fall 2004 to coincide with the 10th season premiere of the television series. For more information visit Legacy Interactive's official website at: www.legacyinteractive.com

Broken Saints turns into an adventure game

"Broken Saints is an online graphic novel that uses Macromedia's Flash to tell a creepy and thought-provoking story. The creators felt that there was lots of 'entertainment' on the web, but nothing that really compelled viewers to become involved with the direction of a tale or its characters." say the creators in their website, giving a perfect description of what Broken Saints really is -and tells-

Within a short span, Broken Saints has developed a very strong cult following, excelling at underground marketing and being found through word of mouth. It has gone on to be featured on many high profile areas and win an award at the Sundance film festival.

Written and directed by Brooke Burgess, illustrated by Andrew West and designed and programmed by Ian Kirby, it tells the dark, unsettling but ultimately compelling story of four characters 'from the quiet corners of the globe' who are brought together by shared experiences, dark visions and hardships to face a terrifying threat. The story has similarities to "The Longest Journey". Four people from different parts of the world come together to save the world (that's all I can say not to spoil the mystery).

Broken Saints is, basically, an animated graphic novel. It's unique. It's thrilling. And it's for free. You can download the chapters, or view them online at http://www.brokensaints.com . The story is told in twenty-four chapters. The intellectual property of Broken Saints is now working towards production as a next generation console title. With the combination of writing, art, audio and cinematography, the Broken Saints game looks to reinvent the genre of 3rd person adventure games.

Runaway wins 'Best PC game of the year' award in Digital Awards.

The hard work behind Runaway was recognized in an event organized by Samsung. Here is the information Pendulo sent us about it:

"This acknowledgment has come as a nice surprise after that of the public, journalists and video game professionals. Runaway, created by the Spanish studio known as Pendulo, was chosen Best PC Game of the Year during the Digital Awards evening arranged in conjunction with the Samsung World Cyber Games Championship. The jury was made up of journalists from the specialized press, members of the multimedia producers association (APOM), Bertrand Amar of Canal J and Jean Claude Larue, president of SELL.

The adventure therefore continues for Runaway, which has turned into the big surprise among games in the year of 2003 and has gone down a rarely seen path in France, thanks to an army of happy players."
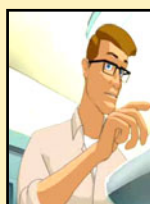
Peter Gabriel creates music for URU

Peter Gabriel, the famous artist who is known for his unique and inventive music videos will contribute a song to the upcoming adventure by Ubisoft, URU: Ages Beyond Myst. The title of the song will be 'Burn You Up, Burn You Down', while Gabriel is going to create a composition for the upcoming sequel of the Myst series as well, which is still in very early development stages.

- **Carla Melloni**

BROKEN SAINTS

The award winning flash series Broken Saints is turning into an adventure. To celebrate the news we feature an article/tribute to one of the most chilling stories ever told from any storytelling medium. Learn what the Saints mania that has reached more than 2 million people worldwide is all about! 'What would you give to know the truth?'

Broken Saints interview and article in this month's *The Inventory* issue. Many of you are probably wondering 'what is the big deal with this Broken Saints anyway'. I think the best answer is given by the flash series itself, which you can watch for free in www.brokensaints.com (and yes that was right, absolutely free). But for those of you who are a bit more difficult to convince, we will give you plenty of reasons for taking the time and visiting the website.

Before we do that, I want you to ask yourselves some questions first. Was it a long time ago since you watched or read a story that made you question your current beliefs and everything you see and hear around you? Would you like to witness a plot development that makes most of the recent Hollywood movies look like cheap soap operas? Did you enjoy the Gabriel Knight games' complex storyline that blends facts with fiction and would you like to experience something similar? Are you interested in politics, history, philosophy, mythologies or conspiracy theories? Do you crave for an experience that will make you stand on the edge of your seat because of excitement and suspense? Well if you answered yes to any of the above questions, then you have a very good reason to watch Broken Saints.

'But why are you writing about a flash series in The Inventory?' some of you might wonder. The answer is: **a)** It was recently announced that Broken Saints would be turned in an adventure game **b)** the story is so good that we would write about Broken Saints even if our magazine was about football or gardening **c)** it's for free anyway. So dear adventurers, bear with us and be sure that in the end of this article you will not regret reading it!

So what is exactly a flash series? The developers themselves describe Broken Saints as graphic literature and this is a very precise definition actually. You can think of it as a 'living' comic album where the pages

turn by themselves, the characters are able to move within the pages and incredible music plays in the background. So all you have to do is a couple of clicks!

The **story** of Broken Saints takes place in our age and it is split into 24 different chapters. Each chapter's duration ranges from 8 minutes to 1 and a half hour! You can either watch the episodes online or download them on your computer and watch them without worrying about a possible connection problem. The story starts quite slow and you will probably not understand a thing in the first 7 or 8 episodes. You get to witness four different sub-stories about four diverse characters from four distant parts of the world.

The first character is Shandala, an 18-year-old girl who lives in an uncharted island in Fiji among a tribe of pagan worshipers. The second character is Oran, a mercenary from Iraq who is also a strong follower of muslim beliefs. The third character is Raimi, a 24-year-old hacker from Canada who is working for a big conglomerate in the USA. The fourth and last character is Kamimura, a Shinto priest from Japan. How on earth are all these people connected to each other? Well this is something that you will definitely not find out from this article! We would not want to spoil one of the best parts of the plot. You can call these first chapters of the

series the 'puzzle throwing part' where the story gives you little bits and pieces of information that make no sense at that exact time. However there is a certain mystery and something unique about it that will make you want to continue on this journey of images and sounds.

After chapter 9 the little bits and pieces will start coming together and the story will begin making sense as the puzzle pieces are slowly but at the same time strategically connected with each other. It won't be long before you are caught up in a hurricane of events that builds up one of the most complex sagas of the 21st century. The story involves religious matters, historical incidents, philosophical questioning and even moments when your adrenaline will be pumping like it hasn't done in a long time (that is, unless you are a skydiver…). Even humour has its place in the story, especially in the first chapters of the series. It is not an exaggeration to say that if Broken Saints turned into a movie it would make The Matrix look like an amateur work!

The **graphics** of the series have an evident manga influence in them. Colours and shapes are intertwined in a way to give Broken Saints the feeling of a living dream. In a few places there are only two colours used (with black being one of them most of the times) in the whole picture to create a surreal effect, but during the

biggest portion of the series there is a wide variety of colours used in each scene. Do not expect any 3D graphics in the series. All that you will see is 2D sketches, which look more stylish than any 3D image could.

One suggestion here for all of you, who are going to watch Broken Saints, is to decrease your screen resolution to 640x480 so that the visible window looks much bigger on your screen. Otherwise the scene will look too small. And one more little advice (although most of you would probably do that already) is to turn off the lights while watching it.

Probably one of the most awesome features of Broken Saints is its **audio**. The music is just astounding! Ambient and trip-hop tracks set the 'underground' tone of the series, while progressive trance music gives certain action scenes the intense feeling of the moment. You can listen to some of the audio tracks in the website, while the Broken Saints developers have already released soundtrack CDs which you can also purchase from their website as well. The series does not feature any voice-overs. The developers have mentioned in their website that they would never hire non-professional actors to do the voice-overs and on the other hand they could not afford hiring professional ones either. So the best solution in the long run was to not feature voice-overs at all, and let each viewer's imagination make up their own voices for each

character of the series. It is after all, graphic **literature**.

The last chapter alone could easily be compared to any movie, spanning 82 minutes of top class storytelling! The ending gives answers to lots of questions raised during the series, but also gives birth to new questions, which we are not going to reveal for you here of course. The magnitude of the series was not ignored by the Sundance Film Festival 2003 where Broken Saints won the Audience Award for Online Animation. It has also been identified as one of the creepiest experiences someone can receive from a visual form of storytelling by major publications like CNN, USA Today, Tech TV, The Guardian and Entertainment Weekly.

When you finally watch all the episodes of the series you will understand why we are so excited about the upcoming adventure Broken Saints. To get a first glimpse of what the game will look like, you can download the teaser that was released less than a month ago from the official Broken Saints website. The video shows the four main characters of the game in familiar locations.

You can learn more about the game in www.gnosisgames.com - Gnosis is the company developing the Broken Saints game. Some interesting pieces of information found there are:

"Diehard series fans and hardcore gamers alike will not only witness the epic "saga of the saints" they will determine its outcome. A third-person adventure/action title, Broken Saints builds on exploration and communication-oriented gameplay found in classic adventure games like Myst and the King's Quest series, while introducing chilling mature themes and action found in such groundbreaking titles as Resident Evil and Eternal Darkness. Players will control the four protagonists from the original online story, a Buddhist priest, a Muslim

mercenary, a Catholic programmer, and a mysterious Fijian orphan, as they use their special gifts to explore lush landscapes, terrifying dreamscapes, and the chilling web of techno-spiritual intrigue that could change the fate of the entire world."

Overcome increasingly difficult puzzles and obstacles with surreal action interfaces and character-based skill dynamics! Harness the profound and mystical abilities of the cult heroes of Broken Saints: stealth and hacking, empathic projection, hyper-awareness, and psychic combat!"

Although some of the information might make adventurers worried that the game will focus too much on action, Brooke Burgess, creator, writer and director of the Broken Saints series as well as executive producer of the upcoming adventure, has good news for us in the Lounge this month.

The BS creators want to expand their audience even further than games however. An animated or live action TV series and a printed comic novel are listed in their plans found on the official website. So now we come to the end of this article tribute and I hope that I have given you enough reasons to watch this magnificent piece of art.

One last advice I have to give to you, is to not give up on the series in the beginning if you do not understand too much. You are actually not supposed to understand a lot at that point of time! Give it some time, let the story flow naturally and it will all come to you in good time. Think of everything as little puzzle pieces. You will probably think it was better that way the end! Enough from our part though, it is time to move over to our Lounge where the creators of Broken Saints are waiting there to answer our questions about the flash series and the upcoming adventure game.

- Dimitris Manos

Interview with the creators of Broken Saints

Broken Saints is a 24-chapter serial graphic novel that can be experienced online through Flash videos (www.brokensaints.com) . The series has won numerous awards, among them even the Audience Award for Online Animation in the Sundance Festival 2003, and has received appraisal from online and printed press publications. The news that the Broken Saints flash series would be turned into an adventure game, is probably the best news adventurers have heard since the announcement of the new Jane Jensen game.

The Inventory is proud to introduce to you, the creators of Broken Saints in an extensive interview covering issues around their upcoming game and the flash series itself. If you want more information on the series and the game, then read our accompanying article on Broken Saints and visit the official site, where you can also download all the episodes of the series free of charge. But let's turn our attention now to the people who know Broken Saints better than anybody else…

Yourselves

- **Could you tell us a little bit about yourselves?**

BROOKE BURGESS (creator/writer/director) – after four years of university in the arts field, I moved to the West Coast of Canada to pursue a career in theatre and film. During this 'starving artist' period, I paid the bills by managing a small local videogame specialty shop. This was a wonderful opportunity to immerse myself in my favourite hobby, and get 'educated' on what made certain games outstanding in the areas of design and gameplay. A little luck and synchronicity led to a meeting with an Executive Producer at Electronic Arts Canada, and after several heated discussions on the past and future of gaming (he had been designing games since the Atari 2600 days!), he offered me a job at EA. I spent nearly 4 years in the 'cubicle barnyard', honing production, design, scripting, and management skills…before leaving the nest and embarking on the incredibly daunting but ultimately satisfying journey Broken Saints in the summer of 2000. Today, I'm working on expanding the BS universe to other mediums (graphic novel, television…and yes, a game!), while teaching interactive design and film theory at the Art Institute of Vancouver.

IAN KIRBY (technical director) – I had been teaching myself software like Maya, Photoshop, and Illustrator since the age of 12, hoping to eventually get into the field of visual effects. Back in early 2000, I was playing

around with Flash just before I was hired at a respected design firm in Vancouver as their Creative Director. BS kinda fell into place soon afterwards, and the following three years produced what you see and love now ☺ Currently, I'm creating interactive menus for DVDs and brushing up on high-end editing and effects software for Brooke's eventual film debut!

ANDREW WEST (artistic director) – I'm a huge fan of anime and manga, and have been drawing and painting stuff inspired by it since I was really young. When Brooke came to me with the idea for Broken Saints, I jumped at the opportunity to pursue my dream of original character design and detailed painting. After learning Photoshop and Corel Painter (no easy task for me – I couldn't even turn on a computer until a few years ago) and getting the hang of a Wacom artist tablet, I can't look back. Right now, I'm pursuing work in comics and hope to someday design original game characters and work on professional movie storyboards.

- How did you all meet with each other? How did the Broken Saints project start?

BROOKE – As mentioned above, I ran a funky gaming shop in North Vancouver between 1993 and 1996. It was during this time that I struck a fast friendship with Andrew, and we'd spend endless hours comparing notes and debating our favourite games, television, comics, and animation. We even talked about self-publishing a comic together someday. I stayed in touch with Drew when I moved on to EA, and kept him updated on the ups and downs of the game industry.

When I left the company in the Spring of 2000, and after a soul-searching trip overseas to the South Pacific, I returned to North Vancouver and had originally hoped to write a novel on the clash of technology and spiritualism in modern society. I wasn't exactly sure where to start, or whether I wanted it to be so autobiographical, until I ran into Andrew. I bounced some ideas off of him, and we began discussing the possibility of pitching a graphic novel to an established comic company. I had thought about even doing a teaser of it on the Web…and that's when Andrew introduced me to his friend Ian.

Ian had been playing around with Flash, and after a demonstration of the technology and some research on what other people were doing with it, it just seemed like a natural fit to adapt my story to this cool new medium. I even had a huge back-catalogue of incredibly cool/creepy music from my cousin who works for an offshoot of Cirque De Soleil in Berlin. Ian suggested that I pitch the idea to the design firm that he worked at (www.switchinteractive.com), as they were hoping to establish themselves as a home for interactive narratives and edgy design. After a successful pitch, they agreed to support us for the first six chapters – we created those between Oct 2000 and May 2001 – and then we went on our own from there.

- Do you play adventure games yourselves? If so, could you mention some of your favourites?

BROOKE – Since I grew up with a C64 and friends with fledgling PCs, I'm probably more of the adventure game stalwart. Everything from the Infocom text adventures to various instalments of the Quest series got my love and attention. I particularly enjoyed the King's Quest series and parts of the Monkey Island titles. Of course, I also jumped on the Myst bandwagon for the sheer beauty and novelty of it, and I also really dig the current stuff from Dreamcatcher (Syberia and Broken Sword). As well, my tastes for adventure have also been surprisingly shaped by a handful of innovative console titles including Shadowrun (SNES), Snatcher (Sega CD), and most recently Eternal Darkness (Gamecube).

- Brooke, we read in the Gnosis Games website (www.gnosisgames.com) that you have an extensive experience in game development and that your game development history includes even Electronic Arts. Could you mention some of the games you have worked for in the past?

I've worked on the following titles as a producer at and contract creator for Electronic Arts Canada:

- Need for Speed III
- Beetle Adventure Racing
- Need for Speed: Porsche Challenge
- 007 Racing
- Kessen
- SSX Tricky

My goal was to eventually branch into the storytelling genres (RPG, adventure, historical strategy). Working on the Broken Saints series allowed me to take my production, management, marketing, and direction skills and really put them to the test in establishing an original property. Now, if the planets align as hoped, I'll finally be able to return to the fully interactive arena and create something intriguing, challenging, and truly unique!

I'M AWAKE NOW.

Broken Saints – The Flash Series

- **How much time did it take you to create all the chapters of Broken Saints?**

We began pre-production on Broken Saints in the summer of 2000, and completed the series with a 7-part 90-minute finale in July 2003. Right now, that three years feels like a blurry dream…

- **You must have answered this question a bazillion times, but for the sake of those who have not read the answer before… why did you do this for free?**

Quite simply, we were telling a story rich with political, cultural, and spiritual themes…and I couldn't imagine that it would be taken seriously if we had major corporate sponsors or adult content banners all over the site. It was a case of practicing what we preached, and if we were asking people in the story to question their choices in life and to examine the effects of technology, economy, and morality, then it just seemed right to provide a 'safe' (FREE) place for them to do it.

celebrate the narratives, visual, and musical styles that shaped my sensibilities.

As listed in the FAQ of our site, here are some of the works/creators that definitely had an effect on Broken Saints:

MOVIES – Terry Gilliam's *TIME BANDITS, BRAZIL,* and *THE ADVENTURES of BARON MUNCHAUSEN.* David Lynch's *ELEPHANT MAN, ERASERHEAD, BLUE VELVET,* and *LOST HIGHWAY.* David Cronenberg's *NAKED LUNCH.* Atom Egoyan's *EXOTICA* and *THE SWEET HEREAFTER.* Bergman's *THE SEVENTH SEAL.* Oh yeah…and *AKIRA, GHOST in the SHELL,* and *STREET FIGHTER.*

"I didn't want to worry about the possibilities of content censorship or suggestions of dumbing-down for the mass audience."

And, of course, I didn't want to worry about the possibilities of content censorship or suggestions of dumbing-down for the mass audience. Broken Saints contains some very mature moments – portrayed through language, sexual imagery, and scenes of violence – that have horrified some unprepared viewers/readers. If we had to answer to sponsors to stay alive, we might not have been able to make as much of an emotional impact on our fans.

- **There are lots of references to various books, movies and songs in Broken Saints (i.e. Fight Club, John Milton's Paradise Lost, Donnie Darko, Rage Against the Machine, Alice in Wonderland, Radiohead, etc…). Did all these expressions of art influence or inspire you while creating Broken Saints?**

I think that any personal artistic endeavour is littered with the artist's influences. Because we were working in a relatively new and unique medium, I wanted to

TV – *THE PRISONER, THE TOMORROW PEOPLE, DOCTOR WHO, BATTLE of the PLANETS, ROBOTECH, STRANGE PARADISE, X-FILES, THE MAXX*…and the untouchable, irreplaceable, life-altering world of David Lynch's *TWIN PEAKS.*

COMICS – *DARK KNIGHT RETURNS, WATCHMEN, V for VENDETTA, SANDMAN, THE INVISIBLES, THE SPECTRE, GREEN LANTERN, ARKHAM ASYLUM, CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS, THE MAXX,* and countless other series, one-shots, and trade paperbacks.

MUSIC – *PINK FLOYD, RADIOHEAD, RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE, YES, PETER GABRIEL, GODSPEED YOU BLACK EMPEROR, PHILIP GLASS, ANGELO BADALAMENTI,* and *TOBIAS TINKER.*

- **The series also includes a lot of history facts and religious issues. How much research did you have to carry out for the needs of the story?**

Quite a bit! I wanted to be as accurate as possible, especially when dealing with issues of science, culture, and global religion. Everything from quantum wave mechanics and superstring theory to low frequency

transmissions and cellular transistors - from Taoism and Islam to Buddhism and Norse mythology – all wrapped up in the collective unconscious works of Jung, the musings of Niche and Plato, and the rants of Chomsky and Baudrillard. Everything that possibly could be included WAS included…as long as it served the story in the end.

- Broken Saints criticises the lifestyle of the western world (i.e. materialism, unhealthy way of living etc), delves into religious and philosophical aspects and even comments on recent war events and conglomerates. Was there any particular message you wanted to carry across your audience, or did you just think all these remarks would fit well in the overall story?

There was definitely an intended 'message' in the series, but I didn't want to spend too much time and energy being preachy and didactic (though I certainly had my moments). I just think that the global nature of the story – and of the Web itself – demands themes that can be related to and will inspire a global audience. Right now, with current social, political, and economic conditions in most of the world looking fairly grim, someone needs to hold a light up to the darker corners and remind people not to be ignorant of the problems. And if there was one dominant theme I wanted to convey with the narrative, it was age-old philosophy that we're 'all in this together' – that actions and events ripple out and can touch the smallest of us in profound ways – and that it's our responsibility to find the selfless place in our hearts that can reach others and give them hope. Whether you're Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or Hindu – we all have essentially the same dreams, fears, and underlying 'truth' to our realities.

- Which one of the four main characters is your favourite, Raimi, Shandala, Oran or Kamimura and why?

Honestly…that's like asking a proud parent which child

will get the best Xmas present! In all honesty, each of the protagonists in BS is actually a facet of my personal experience – a projection of a hope, belief, frustration, or fear that's manifested in some way in my life. I can relate to Raimi's cynicism, his addictions, and somewhat to his wasted intellect. I have trouble reconciling my spiritual beliefs with my leanings towards jealousy, anger, and judgement – just like Oran. I often seclude myself from the world and get lost in my thoughts and memories, as Kamimura does in the series. And yes…Shandala definitely represents my feminine side, and the desperate need to express all aspects of the emotional spectrum in a very extreme way – in order to heal oneself, and others.

- Despite the story's serious tone, there are lots of times that the humour in the dialogues will just bring your audience on the floor laughing (i.e. Raimi's comments on modern life and the dialogue of the egg merchant with Kamimura). How difficult is it to incorporate humor in this kind of stories?

There's humour in everyday life, and I wanted Broken Saints to feel like the dreamier aspects of life 'amplified'. So it just makes sense to create these moments of relief and light-heartedness amidst the downward spiral. It reminds readers/viewers that the situation is a HUMAN one – that it's something we can all relate to. And I've also found through some of my influences (like Twin Peaks or Sandman) that the most chilling stories use humour to give the audience a point of reference – the place where the story is at its most uplifting is like the top of the roller coaster…which makes the coming descent that much more thrilling!

- How many people have watched the series so far?

We don't have numbers on exactly how many people watched each chapter, as many have been downloaded and shared or featured on other sites. However, we can be sure of one thing – the site has been visited by nearly 2.5 million people since launching 3 years ago.

- Is there any chance that there is going to be a Broken Saints 2 in the future?

Perhaps…but probably not online. I do have a story that's pretty compelling, but I think it would work best as a novel, a comic…or maybe another adventure game ;)

- How did Switch Interactive support you all this time and how did you accomplish this co-operation?

As mentioned earlier, Ian originally worked as a designer at Switch and secured the chance for me to pitch BS to them in the Spring of 2000. They agreed to pay bandwidth and basic production costs for the first 6 chapters, which really helped us as we were getting started. After we decided to part amicably, Switch has continued to spread the good word about BS, and we will continue to thank them for their kind support on future incarnations of the property – we couldn't have done it without them!

- Broken Saints won the Audience Award for Online Animation in the Sundance Festival 2003, and it has also been praised from popular online and printed publications like USA Today, Time.com and TechTV.com. Did you think that Broken Saints would become so successful when you first started developing it?

Not a clue. I originally thought we'd do 6-12 parts and then move on to something else when interest died down. It's been amazing to feel and witness the popular and media groundswell for the project, and every day that we receive kudos from the press or kind words from a fan reminds us how far we've come.

- Are there any behind-the-scenes stories you would like to share with our readers? Characters or events that were changed in the last minute before a chapter went online, or something that got cut off from the final version of a video?

Hmm…well, most of the stories we have are documented in various places on the site. We have a 'behind the scenes' section (BTS), a pretty beefy FAQ, some editorials, and a really comprehensive Forum with lots disclosures about the process. We even have a section from our fundraising concerts that shows us making asses of ourselves by trying to be rock stars ;)

But that stuff aside, I think the most touching story from our run on the series was a correspondence with a man from Detroit, USA – he contacted us around chapter 3 (Spring 2001) and begged us to finish the series as soon as possible, as he was dying of cancer. We were all moved beyond belief that this complete stranger, who should obviously have more pressing concerns, was so touched by our work. After his first few mails, we didn't hear from him again…and assumed the worst – until late July of this year when he dropped us a short thank-you note. That's when it really struck home for us…we've been keeping people from all age groups and walks of life from around the world involved in our little Internet tale for a LONG time. It really put things into perspective.

As for things that got cut from BS…well, we rarely produced more work than was necessary, as there were only three of us doing it. I would give Andrew a shot-list of all the necessary artwork, and we would do a storyboard together to cover the scenes and how they'd hopefully flow together. Not much was wasted over the years – though the odd leftover can be found in our online gallery.
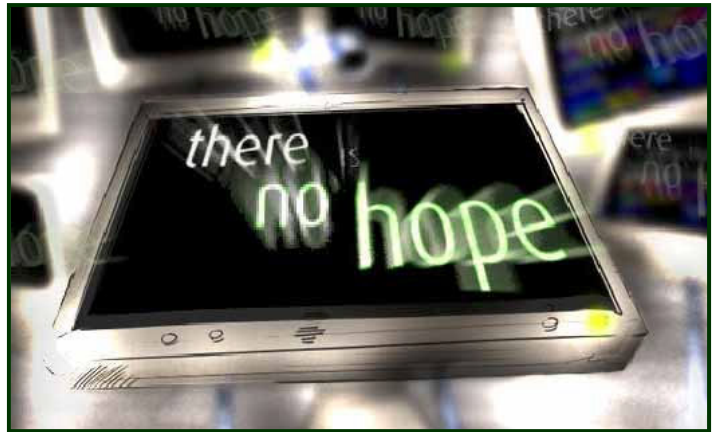
- What did the fans like the most about the Broken Saints series, and what was the most usual complaint you got (if you got any)?

We had different 'factions' of fans – some dug the artwork the most, or the Flash effects, or the storyline and character development. But if I had to choose one thing, it would be our use of music and sound. People seemed to really appreciate the audio design of Broken Saints – particularly Tobias' soundtrack work. The compliments came so fast and furious that we decided to launch a series of soundtracks for sale as part of our fundraising efforts – and they were big hits! Three volumes are currently available (www.brokensaints.com/shop), and the fourth and final volume will be available by the end of November.

What was the most common complaint? Well…some people didn't like having to READ the series – they would've preferred voices, even though we stressed that Broken Saints was graphic LITERATURE – others thought the story was a little slow in the beginning, but I feel that that's how most interesting epics begin…carefully – but mostly, people got frustrated that our long movies didn't have a PAUSE feature! So, we'll be sure to make that part of the functionality of the eventual DVD set ;)

- Did Flash have some limitations that imposed boundaries on the story or in the way you wanted

to tell the story? Was there any time that you wanted to do something but couldn't because Flash would not allow you to?

The main limitation we encountered with Flash (other than the 'pause' feature, which we couldn't implement due to how we layered audio in our movies) had to be file size. We didn't vectorize most of our images – which drastically compresses them – that accounts for the common cel-shaded look of Flash animations. Instead, we stuck with bitmaps because it gave the art, especially in the later chapters, a definite richness. The problem arose as our chapters got bigger and bigger, and we were using more and more shots in a scene – those bitmaps add up! Eventually, a scene that may have originally been one 15 minute piece had to be broken into two 7-minute 'acts' in order to keep the files below the overall size boundary (around 4Meg) that made Flash 5 crash on occasion.

of the series (we're planning to upgrade this work for the DVD set next year). And second – I would've stuck with my original plan of having chapters 2-5 come out as one MEGA chapter! This would've allowed us to spread out the production times on the gigantic final chapters a little bit, as opposed to taking three to four months to make them…leaving the fans in excruciating agony!

Broken Saints – The Adventure Game

- Why did you choose the adventure genre for the Broken Saints game?

Broken Saints is undoubtedly driven by the STORY. Yes, the art's edgy and the effects are amazing and the music is truly haunting and unique, but it's the narrative that really burrows into people's minds and hearts. From there, it's not much of a leap to realize that the best way to convey narrative arcs and the slow discovery of a strange new world in the gaming medium is clearly the adventure genre.

- How similar will the game's storyline be to the flash series? Will it include any surprises for those that have already seen the flash series?

The game's story *will* mirror the Flash series, but the goal is to expand upon the overall experience. I don't just mean adding new areas and situations – though that will most definitely happen – but we will give players

"Broken Saints is undoubtedly driven by the STORY… it's not much of a leap to realize that the best way to convey narrative arcs and the slow discovery of a strange new world in the gaming medium is clearly the adventure genre."

So yes…Flash 5 definitely had a limitation, but we learned to work around it and create smaller, self-contained scenes that were their own mini-cliff hangers. But in the end, when Macromedia released Flash MX, the problem solved itself – we were even able to include video clips in the final chapter!

- If you could start the series all over again from the beginning, is there something that you would have done in a different way?

Two things – first, I think we would have taken more time with the art and post-production on the first third

and fans the chance to explore the Broken Saints universe in much greater detail and emotional depth for the series' protagonists. We will learn more about Shandala, Kamimura, Raimi, and Oran – their pasts, their secrets, their dreams – as well as events that didn't make the final cut of the Web version of BS due to time constraints.

- Are you thinking of creating new characters just for the purposes of the game?

Yes! I want to resurrect some discarded characters from the original story treatment, and also add some

new ones for the saints to interact with. And for the hardcore fans, we'll definitely be creating some expanded scenarios for the supporting cast – I know more than a few people who will freak at the prospect of getting more time with Hassan (Oran's childhood friend), Cielle (the tarot lady), and Masayuki (the egg man)!

- There are some issues left unanswered by the end of the flash series. Will the game try to give an answer to some of these issues?

My favourite narratives have always left threads dangling…it leaves something for people to discuss in years to come, and allows for a degree of artistic interpretation. That said, there continues to be a few issues that fans are determined to see resolved – and I'm not completely against that happening – so I think it's safe to say that the game will definitely answer some of those lingering concerns.

But the real question is…will it raise new ones?

- How much and in what ways will you be involved with the development of the game? How will you ensure that the developers will not produce something that has little to do with the actual Broken Saints series and how much control do you have over the project?

Currently, I am co-designing the game with Gnosis, and will act as Executive Producer of the title. Creative control won't be an issue. My only concern will be making sure nothing gets cut in order to satisfy a snug milestone schedule.

- Now let's go to the question that our readers will probably find the most interesting of all the questions in this interview. In the summary of the game it is stated:

*'A third-person adventure/action title, Broken Saints builds on exploration and communication-*oriented gameplay found in classic adventure games like Myst and the King's Quest series, while introducing chilling mature themes and action found in such groundbreaking titles as Resident Evil and Eternal Darkness.'*

While the first part of the above sentence is sweet music to the ears of adventurers, the second part probably made some of them shudder. How much action will the game have and how will it be handled? Will the focus of the game be on character interaction and exploration or will the focus be on action? Will the player have to jump, run and shoot enemies in the game or will the game incorporate a cerebral gameplay? Could you explain to us with the use of a percentage how much of the gameplay will adventure and action take respectively?

I can't give away too much right now, as we're going to be fusing the adventure and action genres in a very unique way…but I can assure everyone that the focus of the game will indeed be exploration, character interaction, puzzle solving, and ADVENTURE. Broken Saints is a cerebral experience, so the game apple shouldn't stray far from the tree. And if I had to give a percentage split for adventure vs. action? I'd say around 75/25…but in the end, it's whatever best serves the design and the overall immersive experience.

- Will the game focus more on the Broken Saints fans or on hardcore gamers?

Broken Saints fans ARE hardcore gamers…so it makes our focus that much easier!

- Will it be easy or difficult in general?

It won't be 'difficult' just for the sake of 'added hours of gameplay'…but the puzzles will be cryptic and challenging, and the action sequences WON'T be the equivalent of one-button cinema sequences. Let's just say the experience, and the completion of said experience, will ultimately be very satisfying.

- Is there any other game in the market right now, that you would say Broken Saints will be similar to in terms of gameplay?

Without giving too much away, I'd have to say that it will have elements of games like Eternal Darkness, Broken Sword, and Shadowrun…but the 'action' component of our title – the Vision Mode - will be completely unique. That's the part we're really excited

about, but I can't reveal specifics at this time. All will be made clear when the time is right…

- Have you given any thought on what kind of interface will the game have, and if so could you describe it to us?

Again, we're trying to keep as much under wraps as possible with the project, but rest assured that the interface will be killer AND user friendly. ;)

- It takes approximately 10 and a half hours for someone to watch all the chapters of Broken Saints. How much time do you think it will take for someone to complete the game?

Any solid game design needs to be scalable to account for development schedules and milestone concerns, but the goal is to provide an interactive narrative experience that engages users emotionally and gives them their money's worth in the end. Take from that what you will…

- How will the camera angles work? Will we see the game from a static viewpoint, will the camera angles change automatically depending on which place of the screen the player will be standing or will the camera follow the player from behind?

Multiple camera angles and control schemes are essential in creating a modern immersive experience. The Broken Saints series is a modern immersive experience. The game will be an extension and expansion of the series. So, basic logic should yield an answer to this one.

- Will the graphics of the final version of the game be much different to those used in the trailer and if yes then in what way?

The style and detail of the trailer is indicative of what will be seen in the game. We won't suddenly pull a Miyamoto – though we love him – and make this cel-

shaded. Broken Saints is all about 'mood', and the graphics, as witnessed in the teaser, will service this need and then some.

- The flash series featured a truly magnificent soundtrack. Will the game use the original soundtrack of the flash series or will it have its own soundtrack?

My dear and talented cousin, Tobias Tinker – composer for Broken Saints – will be contributing established and original pieces for the bulk of the game. We'll also be talking with Quentin Grey and Godspeed You Black Emperor to see if we can secure their incredible works from the series for the title.

- A very important issue in the game will be voice acting. It will probably be difficult to find actors that will meet the fans' expectations (which might vary from each other because the flash series did not feature voice-overs). Will you play any role in the decision making regarding which voice actors will be used for the purposes of the game?

I will personally supervise casting sessions and direct any voice work that the game requires. Vancouver has one of North America's best talent pools for voiceovers – in fact, the majority of anime that gets localized for the Western market is done here – and I've worked with some of the best on games like Kessen and Need for Speed.

Still, I'm not sold on the fact that Broken Saints *needs* voices. I love that the BS universe was spawned from comic books – a LITERATE medium – since it allows for each reader/viewer to interpret personal and emotional intent within the story. We're definitely budgeting for voice, but if I find that the game feels more engaging without it…well, then nobody will be twisting my arm to keep it textual.

- In the trailer it says that the game will be available for 'next generation consoles' in 2006.

What consoles would that be exactly, bearing in mind that by 2006 the current versions of X-box and Playstation will probably be outdated? Will the game be available for the PC?

We're aiming for PC and the next incarnations of home consoles due to launch Xmas 2005. We're still in discussions for our target platform, so stay tuned!

- How did you come in contact with the developing company (Gnosis Games)? Did they approach you first or did you find them and presented your work to them?

Gnosis Games was formed by a talented group of peers in Vancouver that I had contact with through the school that I teach Game Design at – the Art Institute: Center for Digital Imaging and Sound. They came to me with some very intriguing dev studio plans, and we discussed the possibilities of working together. In the past, I had been approached by some established publishers to develop a game based on Broken Saints, but they always wanted to water it down or push it in a direction that would weaken the overall narrative.

Gnosis gets it. They're hungry. And the situation lets me put my producer hat back on and work with a team that's building something from the ground up. It's damn exciting, as there's the opportunity for creative freedoms *and* fiscal rewards for both sides. You can't ask for much more than that in a collaboration. ☺

- The game will take more than 2 years to develop. Since the Broken Saints series has been completed, how do you plan to keep the fans of Broken Saints 'in touch' with the franchise? Are you going to present the Broken Saints fans with something new until the game is developed?

Absolutely! In the immediate future, we'll be posting videos from our big wrap party concert in September, as well as some project retrospectives. As previously

mentioned, the final volume of the BS Soundtrack will go live before the holidays, as will some other collectibles in our shop. But the BIG surprises about the future of BS should be announced by the end of the year…and, if all goes as planned, the fans will be frolicking in our 'quiet corner of the globe' for years to come!

- Apparently not all of the Broken Saints fans are accustomed with games. Do you have any promotion strategies in mind to pull this non-gaming audience towards the BS game?

If you take a peek at our forums, you'll see that the majority of BS fans *are* serious gamers – hell, there are intense debates on games happening weekly! In fact, it was a forum fan that made this really wise comment about what we had planned (immediately following our game announcement): "They should not try to make BS into a game…they should try to make a *game* into BS."

Our fans get it. They understand that any artistic medium needs to serve the story/themes, as opposed to the other way around. And since the non-gamers on our site still inherently understand this principle – and appreciate the ground we've broken with the series - I'm sure that a good portion of them will finally take their first dip in the gaming pond come 2006.

- How much will the production cost of the Broken Saints game will be approximately?

My lips are zipped on this. Let's just say that, unlike the online series, the game could NEVER be self-funded.

- How many sales will the game have to make in order for you to say that you are satisfied with it?

Hell…I was happy when *one* person was touched by BS, but that's probably not practical from a videogame perspective, is it? Fiscally, you always want to have

some success with a venture like this and create more opportunities for yourself creatively. Personally, I've had the number 500000 in my head for some time now – and I think that's a realistic sales goal for the title. But most importantly, I'm excited about having the chance to keep the saintly gospel alive and shared for years to come. That's why I'll drain every last cell in my body to ensure that this title doesn't fall short – we (the BS team) just spent three years of our lives creating this project, and I'll be damned if it doesn't endure in some form. The story has touched thousands of hearts and minds around the world, and I feel like I'd be committing some kind of sin if I simply let it die.

- Will Gnosis Games publish the game as well, or is Gnosis Games only the developers of BS?

They're the developers of the titles. We'll be making a publisher announcement when the time is right.

General

- In the presskit you have published on your website, under the future section you described what could happen when the series would be completed. The choices included a graphic novel/print, a live-actors TV series, a game, an animated TV series and books/novels. You have already started producing a game, but what about the rest of the choices mentioned over there? Are you planning to go ahead with any of the rest of the ideas?

In an earlier question, you asked how we were planning on keeping fans of the series engaged now that the story is completed. All of the suggestions in our presskit for branch-offs of BS make sense…and currently, some suggestions seem to be making serious sense to some 'serious' people. Again, you'll just have to stay tuned – that's an essential part of the Broken Saints experience – we love our surprises!!!

- If Broken Saints would become a movie, which actors/actresses would you have chosen to portray the characters of the series?

LOL. I can't tell you how many times this has come up in mails or on the forums, so obviously we've thought about it. Of course, casting choices would really depend on whether it ended up as a TV episodic, a mini-series, or a feature film. If I had my way, I'd add to the intrigue of the project and have the four leads be relative unknowns – I'd especially like to cast an Arab

actor as Oran and a Japanese elder as Kamimura, as it would give the production the truly international and multicultural texture it needs. But, if you really want some name actors, then here are some interesting suggestions:

- Jake Glyllenthal or Wes Bentley as Raimi
- Vin Diesel or Billy Zane as Oran
- Ben Kingsley as Kamimura
- Jena Malone as Shandala
- Sir Ian McKellan or Donald Sutherland as Lear
- John Malkovich or Kevin Spacey as Palmer
- Patrick Batemen or Jude Law as Gabriel
- Bob Hoskins as Mars
- James Earl Jones as Chief Tui
- Julianne Moore as the Tarot Lady
- Anthony Hopkins as General Briggs

Feel free to send us your suggestions – the studios might even listen!!!

- What does the future of flash videos holds in store? Do you think that more people will follow your paradigm and produce in-depth graphic literature?

I think it's hard for a lot of people to follow in our footsteps once they realize the time and cost involved. However, I really do think there's a future for animated comics scored to music – either online, or on DVD – at least from the major studios like DC, Marvel, and Dark Horse. And since Flash is the best tool to make this happen quickly, I wouldn't be surprised to see projects akin to Broken Saints popping up on a regular basis as soon as next year.

- What is the most important advice you have to give to all those that might want to do something similar to Broken Saints?

- Plan.

- Surround yourself with good / talented / devoted /forgiving / patient / insane people.
- Envision the end product every step of the way.
- Don't wait for the media to find your work…take it to them.
- Learn to love weight loss and sleep deprivation.
- Believe.

- What opportunities do games open up for storytellers? What is the difference between developing something interactive like the Broken Saints game, with something non-interactive like the Broken Saints flash series?

I actually broach this issue in my design classes each semester. A non-interactive or 'linear' experience like the BS series or any traditional movie or television show allows creators to craft a defined narrative 'arc' that the viewer travels along. So, as long as the story's well-structured and the characters clearly defined, there will be the desired 'revelation' and emotional payoff when it concludes.

between 'freedom' (storyline branches) and 'direction' (linear narratives) that yield the desired response. And that's what we're hoping to do with Broken Saints.

- Windows vs Linux. I know what Raimi would answer…what do the BS creators answer to this question?

IAN – my brother, the code guru we consult for the computer sequences in BS, is a Linux freak – so I should follow suit. But I'm a Windows boy born and raised. It's all I know…for better or for worse.

ANDREW – whatever gets the art on the screen, man. If there were teams of gerbils running on little wheels inside my box, and it allowed me to paint, then I'm cool.

BROOKE – I'm still figuring out how to turn my damn laptop on and off. Ask me again in a year.

- What are your future plans, apart from developing the game?

"We need to find the delicate balance between 'freedom' (storyline branches) and 'direction' (linear narratives) that yield the desired response."

With games and interactive entertainment, this is more difficult. If you give users something too rigid and linear for the sake of story, then they feel like they're being led by the nose – accomplished tasks A thru Z – in order to see the next piece of plot advancement. RPGs are notorious for this. Of course, if you give players too much 'freedom', then they can't experience any real sense of arc or growth – they wander aimlessly, and it all turns into an experience of "win/acquire". Sims and MMORPGs are often the culprits here. And then there are the games that are purely 'fight or flight' experiences – fighting, action, and FPS titles – that basically adhere to old-school principles and challenge your reflexes and pattern recognition parameters.

What we need to do more of at the design level is create systems that compel the player to shape the character and narrative arcs through the gameplay itself. We can create a very wide pathway for them to travel down (the illusion of freedom), but that path invariable leads them to a profound conclusion that is *emotionally resonant*. That's why games aren't yet considered 'art' on a mass social scale – they currently fail to impact our emotions consistently. We need to find the delicate balance

Rest.

Regroup.

Return with a vengeance.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Nope…other than a huge thanks for the opportunity! Hopefully those reading this will take the time to drop by the site and experience our little corner of cyberspace. Just remind them to turn off the lights, crank up the sound, and breathe – it's a trippy ride. Oh, and spread the good word if you dig it ☺

Thank you very much for accepting our invitation, for sharing your knowledge with us, and most of all for producing one of the best stories ever told through any story-telling medium. The Inventory team wishes you the best of luck with your game and we hope that it will live up to the expectations of the Broken Saints fans.

Interview with Eric Viennot creator of In Memoriam

In Memoriam is a new innovative interactive movie that remained in the shadows until today, and it is already released in Europe! In Memoriam combines video, gaming and The Internet to give birth to a new way of storytelling. This interview was not even planned for this issue actually, but the new concept of the game and its never-seen-before features forced us to create some extra space in order to bring you the latest information about it from its own architect, Eric Viennot. So let's welcome Eric in our lounge and find out if In Memoriam will become the Blair Witch Project of adventure games.

Yourself:

- Welcome to The Inventory's Lounge Eric. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Hello ;-) I was born in 1960 in Lyon, France. I was trained as a visual artist and, in the 1980s, I practiced photography, painting and video-making. With the Equipage 10 group, I took part in several multimedia exhibitions, having the opportunity to show my work in France, Germany, Italy and Denmark. Initially, I taught at the University of Paris 1 (Panthéon Sorbonne) for five years. Then, in 1990, I founded the Lexis Numérique production studio with Marie Viennot and José Sanchis. In 1998, I created the first part of the Uncle Albert adventures collection, for which Lexis Numérique has won many international awards. (We continue to develop the collection through books, CD-Roms and a forthcoming animated cartoon series).

For me, video games are a new medium that make it possible to tell stories in a totally original way. I'm interested, first and foremost, in interactive fiction because I'm convinced that, a century after the dawn of cinema, video games will soon become a new narrative form, rich in emotion and the stuff of dreams.

- Do you play adventure games? In that case what are your favourites?

First of all, I don't consider myself a core gamer. Many people in my team are real hardcore gamers, but my personal references come much more from cinema and literature than games. One of the first adventure games I played at was Myst. I was fascinated by the environment and the visuals. The only problem was that I found it a bit too hard for me ;-). All the same, I recommended the game to most of my friends.

But Generally speaking, I don't find what I'm looking for in the today video adventure game genre. Although most of my team are real fans of the good old classics (Monkey Island, Fate of Atlantis etc…) and even though I really enjoy games like Zelda (for the immersion and the poetry) or Silence Hill (for the atmosphere and the rhythm), I must admit I don't take pleasure anymore in opening doors, searching for a key and collecting gold. One of the reasons why I made In Memoriam was that I didn't found in the existing genre what I was looking for and I had the feeling that the adventure genre didn't evolve a lot in the past few years.

In Memoriam

- What is the story of the game about?

The story takes place nowadays in a totally realistic environment. While investigating a series of bizarre murders committed throughout the length and breadth of Europe, the journalist Jack Lorski vanishes with his young female companion. A few weeks after Jack's disappearance, the agency he works for receives a CD-ROM featuring fragments of the filmed logbook he kept, along with a mixture of strange data. The agency decides to publish the CD-ROM. It's the only clue that might help them find the missing journalist. The CD-ROM is designed like a game and was created by a kind of crazy aesthete who, though cultivated, seems devoid

of any moral sense. The killer goes by the name of "The Phoenix". He toys with the player, steering him this way and that, feeding clues in dribs and drabs which lead back into the past to shed light on the mystery.

- On the website it says that you need Internet connection in order to play the game. Could you explain to us in short how will the game work?

Internet is mandatory, but In Memoriam is not an online game. It is played using a CD-Rom created by a serial killer, but to make progress in the adventure, the player also connects to the Internet to find information that's essential to accomplish some of the missions. The information has to be found on real or fake sites. More than 300 sites are involved. For instance, you can find fake articles related to the game on a major real online newspaper, "hack" the intranet of a famous company etc…

During the game, the player also receives mails from NPCs on his mailbox. Moreover, at certain key moments, the player receives snippets of film that the serial killer stole from the journalist. Those extracts enable the player to reconstruct the events that led Jack and Karen into the clutches of the serial killer and save them from death. They also contain many clues…

- Do we get to control a main character in the game who will be able to walk, explore the game environment and talk with other characters or does the game only consist of non-interactive video footage plus internet clues and the real main character is actually you, the person that is sitting on the chair in front of the PC?

In most adventure games, there's someone between you and the game universe: the main character. You're not Guybrush, you're not Indiana Jones, you're not Lara Croft, you just play them. In Memoriam, YOU are the

hero, the one who is going to save the kidnapped journalist and his girlfriend. YOU are the one who is going to play with the serial killer. You must have seen Silence of the Lambs. To make a comparison, most game featuring a serial killer would give you the opportunity to play Clarice Starling. In Memoriam gives you the opportunity to forget Clarice and place YOURSELF in front of Hannibal.

You play with the same tools as a real investigator: the serial killer's CD-ROM, Internet, you mailbox, analyzing tools (for images and sounds) etc… In terms of gameplay, I wouldn't say In Memoriam is an interactive movie with Internet clues. Film excerpts are one part of the game, as are games or Internet clues. Most of the game takes place on the CD-ROM created by the serial killer. The CD is divided into several levels (Water, Earth, Wind, Fire). Each level contains missions that have to be completed for reaching the next level. The serial killer's missions are present a real diversity (dexterity games, 3D games, puzzles, intelligent bugs to tamed etc…). But all are linked to each other and make the scenario progress.

- It is said also on the website that gamers will be sent e-mail messages on their real e-mail address that will help them progress with the story. Will the e-mails be sent at the same time to all of the players/subscribers or will there be some auto-mailing function integrated in the game, so that when the player has reached a certain point he/she will receive the e-mail that's necessary to continue?

Each player is treated specifically. Not only will he receive mails when it is relevant for him in the frame of the scenario (when he discovers something, when he does something…) but all players won't receive the same mails. Depending on how you play, you will receive certain mails or not. For instance, a player who

is blocked at a certain level might receive a specific mail that another player, who is not blocked, won't receive.

- What happens if the player doesn't get the e-mail due to a technical fault (i.e. his/her e-mail inbox was full and the e-mail was returned to the sender). Will there be a way to receive the e-mail again to continue the game or will the game come to a dead end then?

In that case, the mails are stocked on a server and sent to the player when the server works again

- The website also says that the game is based on real facts. Does this mean that you are involving the player in a real serial killer case that you reformed for the purposes of the game? What are the real facts that the game is based upon?

Ooops, no ;-) In fact, I wouldn't, for deontological reasons, make a game based on real murders. Although the part about the serial killer and his murder is very documented, it is fiction.

- Will players be able to finish the game if they do not read the e-mails and do not visit the websites or are they an obligatory part of the game?

We strongly recommend reading the emails. Although all are not mandatory for the game, a few are. The information in the few very important e-mails are sent in several different mails. After finishing the game, reading or re-reading the emails will give you hints on secondary stories within the scenario.

- Will the story have multiple endings, or will there be only one ending? Can the player 'loose' in the game somehow?

Like in a movie, the scenario and the end are the same for all. But as the missions in a same level can be done in any order, all players won't have the same information at the same moment of the game and each player will have his own perception of the scenario.

- Were there any movies, books or games that inspired you while creating In Memoriam?

"We even made a real and serious investigation about a real character linked to esotericism and found details that very few people gave before us."

But all the historical background about esotericism and events that happened back in the past are all real. We even made a real and serious investigation about a real character linked to esotericism and found details that very few people gave before us. Those fond of history and/or esotericism won't be disappointed.

- It is also mentioned that the player will have to visit real and fake websites in order to continue the game. Will the real websites be normal commercial websites that you have some kind of deal with? Could you give us an example of a real website that is going to be used in the game and what will the player have to do with the website?

Yes, the real websites will be normal commercial sites. For instance you might find fake books on major online bookshops or find articles related to Jack Lorski's investigation on official newspapers websites. For instance, you can try and search for "Jack Lorski" on www.liberation.com (one of the largest French Daily Newspaper), you will be surprised.

It goes without saying that I read a lot of contemporary thrillers about serial killers – in particular, novels by James Ellroy, one of the first authors to take an interest in them. What often struck me was this feeling of evil power they give off, because they kill without any rational motive and scoff at the investigators. They're not scared of being caught. I was also inspired by Michael Connelly and Maurice G. Dantec.

- The concept of the game, involving attempts to create an impression that the story is taking place in real life by playing mind games with the viewer and using real-life sources of fictitious information reminds me a lot of the work behind The Blair Witch Project. Do you see any similarities between the two projects? Were you inspired at all by their work and do you think that In Memoriam can become a surprise-hit just like Blair Witch Project did?

Yes, we really liked the idea of the Blair Witch Project. Regarding the possible success of In Memoriam, it's a bit early to know it ;-) . All the same, we are really happy to see that so many people are waiting for the

game (we receive tons of mails from all around the world).

- The alias of the serial killer (The Phoenix) as well as some images seen in the beginning of the trailer, pinpoint to esoteric societies. Will the story of the game delve into the territory of esoteric traditions? Will the story also involve historical events and religious issues?

Definitely, yes. All the game background is based on real esoteric facts and religion is a major part of the scenario.

- What kind of puzzles will the game feature? Could you give us an example of some puzzles that will be used in the game?

Answering this question is quite hard because I really tried to give the player a feeling of diversity in the gameplay as do other games in totally different fields (eg GTA, Zelda). One typical example of internet a mission called "Tetima". On the cd-rom, the Phoenix asks you to find a place where a murder has taken place. One fist step is assembling a jigsaw made of pieces of paper. You soon realise that theses jigsaws are in fact pictures that you can develop. Once you have developed them, they remind you of a film you've been sent by a hacker. This film can be analysed with a special tool (you can magnify anywhere etc). One clue in the film is a street name. If you type the street name on the Internet, you find the name of the place.

But there are many other kinds of gameplay situations such as taming an "intelligent" bug, playing a weird pinball etc…

- On the website again it is stated that: the Serial Killer holds all the cards. You must interact with

him to get the clues needed to solve the mystery of **Jack Lorski's disappearance. In what ways will players be able to interact with the serial killer?**

Like Hannibal in Silence of the Lambs, the Phoenix asks you to do things that you wouldn't like to do… You are always wondering what you do on your own choice and what you do because the Phoenix wanted you to do. Moreover, the Phoenix often talks to you and even plays directly against you, "face to face", in the last stage of the game.

- Will players have to pay a monthly fee for the Internet content or will they just have to buy the game and all the rest will come for free?

In Memoriam has a very simple business model. You buy the box and that's it ;-) No additional charges or subscription system.

- Quite a lot of FMV adventures have suffered from poor acting, due to limited budgets. What could you tell us about the actors used in 'In Memoriam'? How many of them are there in the game? What is the background of the actors that play the main characters?

I totally agree with that, and that's precisely why it took us so long to make the films (2 years). I really wanted to have the best conditions: the chief cameraman has worked with Dian Kuris and Michael Haneke, the actress worked with James Ivory and the actor is currently on the set of the new Jean-Pierre Jeunet's movie (Alien, Amélie Poulain).

Moreover, In Memoriam was awarded the SACD award (French Society of Authors and Composers of Dramatic Works) with Jean-Pierre Jeunet (Best Movie) or Peter Brooks (best Theatre piece). All in all, there are 25 actors.

- It is stated in the website that while shooting on various locations , the actors did not have a specific scenario to follow. How did this work? What did you tell the actors to do when you started shooting?

Wasn't there a plotline that they had to act according to?

Yes, the scenario is very precise (I took my one full year to complete) and I knew exactly what I wanted. But I didn't want to write final dialogues. I trusted the actors and I wanted them to be as natural as possible. They helped me a lot and found very interesting solutions.

- Which countries did you have to visit in order to shoot In Memoriam?

I can't tell exactly which countries because the player has to discover it. But I can already tell you we shot in Greece, in Italy, in France and other countries.

- Are there any behind-the-scenes stories from the shootings that you think are worth mentioning?

Yes ☺. One funny thing happened during a make-up session. We where making shootings of a murdered priest (strangled and tortured) in a house that was on sale. In the afternoon, someone rang at the bell. The actor making the priest didn't remember he was in disguised and full of blood. He opened the door to… potential buyers that ran away…

- Is the game recorded in English or French?

The game is recorded in English (in the scenario, Jack is French and Karen is Dutch. They talk in English to each other)

- The trailer of the game features a fascinating ambient track with some moments where the music style turned to trip hop. Is this the kind of music that we are going to hear during the videos of the game? How long will the soundtrack of the interactive movie last?

Thank you for noticing that ;-) Music is very important in In Memoriam and we paid REAL attention to the sound track. There is about 45 minutes of original music.

- Why did you decide to make a game that requires interaction through the Internet? Why not just make another typical adventure game?

The idea for In Memoriam grew out of personal experience. One day I received a screenplay. I did an Internet search on the author's name, and I ended up on a confidential site – almost as if I was a real hacker. One thing led to another, and I found out loads of things about this guy who – as it turned out – had a namesake. For a couple of hours, I felt I was living out a real-life detective story. As a result of this experience, it occurred to me that making use of the Internet within a game could add an intriguing imaginative dimension. Nowadays, most heroes of detective stories use the Internet in their investigations. Here, the players themselves have to use it, playing the part of the investigator.
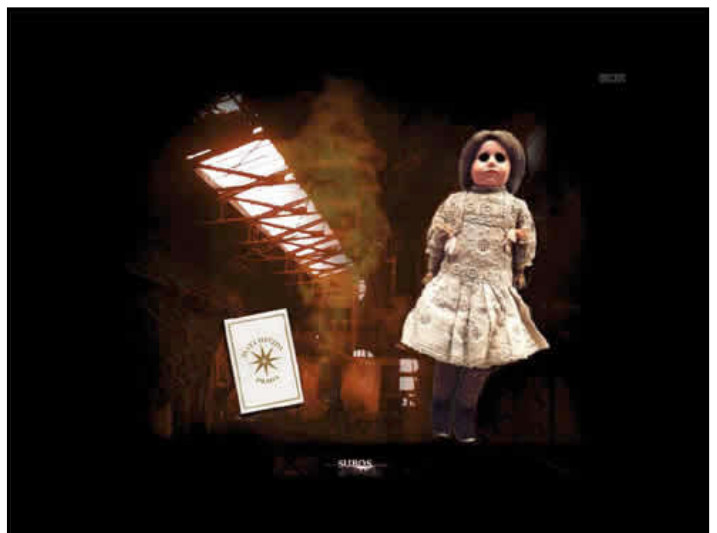
- Some of the material on the web is only available in French. Will this be the case when the game is released as well, or will everything be available in English?

On the website, this will be corrected very soon. In the game, all the interface (messages, tools etc… are in English) is in English. Al the same, due to the scenario, some websites are in specific a language (French, Italian, Spanish ect.). For instance, you wouldn't find it realistic to find a Spanish guy making his personal site in English. For these specific sites that are not in English, there is no need to understand the content to progress in the game: you only have to find a picture, a figure, a date etc…

- Is there any other adventure out there that you would say In Memoriam is similar to?

From what I know, In Memoriam is the first game that actually makes a gaming experience with a blend of games, Internet and films.

- Will In Memoriam contain sexual or violent scenes? What will the minimum recommended age be?

All the game is based on its atmosphere. Dark images

(murders etc…) are something you expect in a thriller. All the same, I didn't want to show explicit violence or sex scenes. Everything is suggested or shown quite quickly. The game is rated 16+.

- What multimedia programs will the players need in order to view all the video material of the game (i.e. Windows Media Player, Quicktime, Flash Video, Real Player etc…) Will these programs be included in the game CD or are players supposed to have them already by themselves?

All the programs (QuickTime, Flash…) are included in the install process.

General

- As stated on the website, it took you 4 years to develop In Memoriam. In our days, game companies try to promote their games from the beginning of their development in order to build up as more fuss around them as possible. Why did you decide to keep In Memoriam under covers until now?

The decision was quite hard to take, but we feel it was the right one. We've been working hard for 4 year to create believable characters and animate fake sites around them. In the past year, people actually wanted to buy paintings by Karen Gijman (Jack's girl friend), we had many parents who wanted to join some kid association we created etc…

It would have been impossible to do that while having a normal communication. The final result is that when we announced that everything was fake, we had an excellent and quick feedback ;-)

- Having a crew travelling to different countries shooting videos at each one of them must have cost

a quite considerable amount of money. Who financed your efforts all these 4 years? Did you come across any problems of financial nature during the development of the game?

We have the chance of having created kid games that work very well. The uncle Albert series in France is #1 and we develop games for Ubisoft, Disney and other publishers. This gives us the opportunity to finance the whole game by ourselves. I don't say it was not a risk, but we really believe in it ;-)

- How did the co-operation with Ubisoft start?

We've been working with Ubisoft for 2 years now. They first asked us to develop 2 PC games based on the E.T franchise. They were very happy about them and decided to give us other projects. As we got to know each other better, they asked us if we had projects of our own. We presented a very early demo of In

the future? Do you have another one under development right now?

I'm thinking about the sequel of In Memoriam. I've been contacted by movie producers who love the concept and I'll able to give you more details in a near future ;-)

"Yes. I strongly believe that we have to focus on the general audience media before the gaming press."

Memoriam and the really liked it. I take this opportunity to thank them for taking this risk with us in those hard times for the industry.

- Do you think interactive-movies can become a popular entertainment form in the future?

I don't' know if In Memoriam is to be considered an "interactive movie", but I'm convinced that the future games will more and more feature a mix of several different media. The game industry is at its early beginning, as was the movie industry at its early stage. I do believe that technology will be considered less important than the feeling in a very close future.

- Do you plan to create more interactive movies in

- If you ask many people out in the real world 'what are games?, many of them will probably think of games like Tetris, Pacman, Fifa and Doom and many of them have no idea that adventure games and interactive movies exist and that they are a new narrative form targeted to adults. Do you have any marketing strategies in mind to let those people know of your work?

Yes. I strongly believe that we have to focus on the general audience media before the gaming press. We have the opportunity with In Memoriam to show things that are familiar to the large audience (real actors, films etc…) and talk about something that people don't know well but that fascinates them (the Internet underworld).

From what we see now, it seems to work. In Memoriam seems to be very appreciated by the movie press and also by woman magazines. Cherry on the cake, we are very happy to see that the gaming press seems to like the game ;-)

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer our questions regarding your upcoming interactive movie. We are looking forward to playing In Memoriam and we wish you the best of luck with your company.

Interview with Lori Ann Cole and Mishell Baker

"So you want to be a hero." Most of us read this phrase for the first time when we were children and it really caught our attention. The phrase was a title of a game that was meant to become one of the most popular series in the history of adventures. We are talking of course about Quest for Glory, perhaps the only adventure that managed to mix adventure and RPG elements so well.

As most of you already know, the 'nowadays' Sierra has nothing to do with the legend of the 80s/90s. Quest for Glory was one of the many great adventure series that were terminated because of the change in management within the company. Even though the QFG computer games might not have a lot of chances to be revived, Lori Cole and Mishell Baker have found another medium to continue this magnificent series. So if in the near future you enter your local bookstore and you see The Quest for Glory novels right beside the Harry Potter ones, do not be surprised. We invited Lori Ann Cole, one of the two creators of the Quest for Glory series as well as Mishell Baker, the co-author of the upcoming Quest for Glory novels to share with us their knowledge on one of the most beloved adventure series of all times. Let's turn to our guests now…

Yourselves:

- Lori could you give us some background on yourself?

Lori: I have been a reader and a lover of fantasy and mythology most of my life. I've also been a game player and a role player. (I met Corey at a Science Fiction Convention when he was running a Dungeons and Dragons scenario.) I've been a storyteller, an artist, an animator, a teacher, and I always admired voice actors. All of the myriad aspects of my personality came together while designing Quest for Glory.

- How did you start making games? And how did you end up working for Sierra On-Line?

Lori: I had been creating scenarios for role-playing games, but I had never been on a computer until I met Corey. He introduced me to "Adventure" the silly "cursed cave" computer game, and I was fascinated by it. Corey always wanted to make computer games, and he and I worked out game play mechanics and concepts for a number of game varieties. I even submitted some proposals to a video game company. So it was definitely something I wanted to do. But it took a friend to actually help us get a job in the game industry.

- Could you please mention all the games you have developed in your life?

Lori: Well, if you want to count non-computer games, Corey and I created a paper-based role-playing system called, "Fantasy Guild." Some of the aspects of that system were actually incorporated into Quest for Glory. But aside from the five Quest for Glory games, I designed "Mixed-up Fairy Tales" for children, and we formed the "Far Productions" company to create "Shannara," based on the novels of Terry Brooks.

- Mishell let's turn to you now. Could you give us some background on yourself?

Mishell: My professional background in writing has so far been in playwriting, screenwriting, and copywriting, but fiction has always been my first love, especially fantasy fiction. I had been waiting for just the right idea to start my grand epic fantasy novel… then one day I realized the idea was already there. All it needed was someone to make sure it got written.

- How did you get in touch with the Coles in the first place?

Mishell: This, to me, is the best part of the story. When I realized how much potential QFG had as a novel series, I became so excited that I pretty much lost all reason. I had never met or communicated with Lori

or Corey Cole in any way. But I tracked Lori down via Internet research and sent her an email in which I spelled out my idea. When I look at that email now it embarrasses me, but apparently it was enough to convince her of both my sincerity and my ability, because within a few weeks she was driving down to Los Angeles to meet with me over lunch. And then dinner. And then lunch the next day. And dinner again. By the end of the weekend we had the main characters invented and much of the first book mapped out.

- Have you played all the Quest for Glory games? What do you think of them?

Mishell: I have played each of them at least a dozen times, so that should tell you what I think of them. QFG4 was absolutely haunting. Even before I officially collaborated with Lori, I found some of the themes in the games, particularly the Rusalka and the Leopardmen, coming up over and over again in my stories and screenplays. In fact the first short story award I ever won was for a fantasy story about a race of shapechanging leopard people…! I guess you can say that I've always been collaborating with Lori, but now I've made it official.

Quest for Glory – The games

- Let's travel back in time and let's go in the very early days of the development process of Quest for Glory 1 (or Hero's Quest as it was called at the time). How did you come up with the idea of releasing a game, which was a mixture of adventure and RPG? Was this how you planned the game from the beginning or was that an idea that just popped up while you were developing QFG1?

Lori: I really enjoyed RPG games, and had never really

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played an adventure game before working for Sierra. Unfortunately, most computer RPG's at the time were all monster crawls and very little real role-playing. I wanted to play a game with story and characters. Sierra wanted to make the next "Ultima" game, so they hired me to create an RPG. However, their system was really more suited to Adventure games. So I designed a game that would work with the strengths of Sierra's programming and what I considered to be the best parts of RPG's. The original design altered significantly over the course of its creation, but it turned out very well.

- People usually react strongly when adventure games are mixed with other genres. Quest for Glory however was received well even by hardcore adventure fans. Do you remember if there were protests against the hybrid nature of the Quest for Glory series back when it started?

Lori: There were very few adventure game purists who realized that Quest for Glory wasn't just an adventure game. I don't think anyone complained about the mixture. They complained a lot when we went from a typing interface to a point and click system, because they felt it made the games too easy. However, I actually preferred the mouse interface. To me, having to type every command was too artificial and took away from the game. And eventually, all games incorporated such a system.

- Even in Quest for Glory 1, there are short mentions of places and characters that are seen in the sequels (i.e. the map seller in Shapeir and Silmaria). Had you planned the whole Quest for Glory saga from the very beginning?

Lori: I sold Quest for Glory as a four game series. The Wizardry games initially allowed you to continue playing the same characters through the first three games, but they had to cheat and take back all the skills the characters had developed over the other games, so what was the point? I wanted to create a game right from the start designed to allow the character to improve throughout the series. Besides, once you create a character, you really start to believe in the character and the story. You certainly don't want the story to end. So the series was clearly the right way to design the game.

- Quest for glory is without a doubt one of the most non-linear games ever, with three different paths depending on the character the player chose and with puzzles that did not have to be solved in a

specific order for the most part. The complexity of designing such games is just mind-boggling. Can you talk to us about the special difficulties that arose while designing and developing the game because of these features?

Lori: In retrospect, the Quest for Glory games were far too complex. One of the reasons that QG4 was so buggy is that there were so many factors that needed to be kept track of. This is fine, as long as you have plenty of QA to make certain that all the bugs were worked out. I find that I have a knack for keeping track of characters and storylines, so it wasn't difficult for me to write this level of complexity, just difficult for the programmers to program such things.

- In Quest for Glory 2, there was a new character added for the first time, and this was the paladin. Whose idea was it to include the paladin in the games and why did you decide to do so?

Lori: The Ultima RPG game had the concept of Paladin in their world, but they really didn't do anything with it. It was just another fighter class. Dungeons and Dragons had the concept of the Paladin, but it was a highly lawful version. My concept of Paladin was slightly different. A Paladin was someone who does what is right regardless of the laws or other people's

Lori: The Quest for Glory 1 remake came out slightly before Wages of War, so it really was the first with point and click. I prefer that style of interface. To me, when I play a game, I want to be totally immersed in the game. I do not want to think about how to do something on the computer. So the more transparent the interface, the better. The players who had grown up on Adventure games really didn't like the change, but it really was the right approach for most players.

- Quest for Glory 4 was a much darker game than its predecessors. It was also one of the buggiest games Sierra had ever produced. Why did you choose to incorporate a darker theme in the fourth one and what were the reasons for QFG4 being so buggy?

Lori: I wanted to do a dark, Transylvania-like Vampire story with elements of Edgar Allen Poe and H.P. Lovecraft right from the series beginning. I wanted to capture all the excitement and spine-tingling spirit of Halloween. In Wages of War, the Hero becomes a stranger in a strange land, but you also have friends and friendly people. In Shadows of Darkness, you start out all alone in a frightening and fearful place. A little like telling spooky stories in the dark.

"The real reason that QG4 was so buggy is that it was released in the first week of December after one week of QA and with a totally exhausted programming team."

opinion. That some people really do have an innate grasp of what is good and right, and must act on their on conscience to be what and who they truly are. The Paladin sort of taps into the "Force" and the concept of cosmic Good. It was something I felt strongly about, and I wanted the player to earn that character class through his actions. It was not something you could just choose, but you had to understand the concepts of Paladin before you could become one.

- QFG3: Wages of war was initially not meant to be a part of the QFG series (QFG4: Shadows of Darkness was originally meant as the 3rd part of the Quest for Glory series). It turned out however to even be considered by some fans as the best of the series. It was also the first game in the Quest for Glory series to use a point and click interface. Did the point and click interface make your work easier? How was the interface change received from the fans?

The reason that the game was so buggy is that schedule delays forced the entire project to run late, and all the programmers were on overtime and overwork for months, which doesn't make for clean code. The fact that QG4 was the most complex game Sierra ever created probably didn't help matters any. However, the real reason that QG4 was so buggy is that it was released in the first week of December after one week of QA and with a totally exhausted programming team. All in all, my favorite game in the entire series was released almost unplayable, and I was crushed.

- Rumour has it that you passed through a lot of troubles in order to proceed with QFG5. Would you like to tell us why did it take so much time for Sierra to decide to go on with the game?

Lori: After QG4's abysmal release, Sierra said they still wanted to make QG5. Corey and I began the design process, but we were told that QG5 would have less of

a budget than QG4. At that point, we felt that we could not make the game for that amount of money. So Sierra wound up breaking our contract and releasing us. After we made "Shannara," Sierra had entirely changed management. I was approached by the new Sierra to co-design a multiplayer on-line game with another designer using the QG name.

- Rumour also has it that the plans were to make QFG 5 a multiplayer game. Why didn't this happen finally?

Lori: The Quest for Glory Multiplayer game had all sorts of technical problems that had to be solved before it could be developed. So I proposed that we release a solo and a multiplayer game that used the same resources. That way, I could make a true Quest for Glory game that would be a climax and conclusion for the entire series. Unfortunately, they never did solve the technical problems with Multiplayer, and so we never did get to play the game as Elsa or as Magnum online.

- From the five parts of the Quest for Glory saga which one is your favorite one, which one did you like the least and why?

Lori: Quest for Glory Four. It is both my favorite, and my least favorite. A beautiful game almost destroyed by bugs and bad company management.

- Which character did you like developing the game for the most? The fighter, the wizard, the thief or the paladin?

Lori: Although I preferred the concept of the Paladin character, whenever I playtested the game, I played a fighter-magic user. And for Dragon Fire, the wizard spells were so much fun. QG5 was the first quest game I actually enjoyed playing.

- As it happens in all professions I am sure that there must have been good and bad times while you were developing the QFG series. Would you like to mention some of these good and bad times?

Lori: There were times so stressful at Sierra, I forgot my password to get into the building. I had used it for months, and then I never remembered it again. QG2 was made during one of the bad times, but the game turned out well. QG3 had some really stressful moments as well. But QG1 was a blast to make, QG4 was enjoyable at times, and QG5 had some wonderful moments. However, to work in the game industry, you

need to have an extremely high tolerance for stress. It is not a profession that most people can stand for long. The short deadlines and long overtime and difficult people to work with all make making games a rough business.

Quest for Glory I   [Score: 25 of 500]

- If you could go back in time and develop these games all over again from the beginning, would you have done something in a different way and if yes then what would that be?

Lori: We made mistakes along the way (such as the practice makes perfect approach we started with that forced players to do far too many repetitive actions), but we always tried to make the next game better and to have continual improvement. We were lucky in that we initially made no major errors that couldn't be fixed in later versions. The only real thing I would change was the decision to keep QG2 as a 16-color game so we could release the game sooner. It really should have been made as a next generation style rather than sticking with what had worked. Instead, we had to use the art system that was set up for 256 colors, but we got no advantages from it and it more than doubled the production costs.

- In all five games there is a strong focus on nature and the game usually rewarded the player when he/she did something good for nature. The game also usually 'punished' the player if they did something that is considered as a bad habit in real life (i.e. drinking). Did you want to pass any messages through Quest for Glory to the youngsters out there?

Lori: As a child, I always wanted to be a teacher, and I have taught school on an Indian Reservation. One of my favorite books was "Teaching as a Subversive Activity." It had the premise that teaching is subversive by its very nature because it forces a person to actually think. The QFG series requires that a player think

about what he is doing and have to make moral decisions. The player really becomes a Hero through the course of play, and hopefully carries some of the concepts of heroism onward in real life.

Quest for Glory I — [Score: 147 of 500]

- I imagine that there must have been loads of behind-the-scenes stories that gamers never got to know in the end (i.e. characters, puzzles or events in the game that were cut out from the final version of the games). Would you like to share with our readers some of behind-the-scenes stories that you remember like it was yesterday?

Lori: The only things in the earlier games that were cut that I really remember was the "Saurus Repair Shop" in QG2 (we ran out of disk space to ship with it), and the "Wizard's Whirl" game with Aziza also from QG2 (we ran out of time to develop it). We had to kill another puzzle from Shannara that involved water pressure through pipes (ran out of time). And in DragonFire, we had to re-write most of Salim's lines, because the president thought he was too anachronistic and hippy-dippy, and Nawar's lines, because they were too salacious, and Gnome Ann's lines, because they were too silly, and he didn't want to give reviewers the wrong impression of the game. ☹

- If Vivendi or any other company that would possibly buy the QFG rights asked you to create one more Quest for Glory game would you do that?

Lori: I'd jump at the chance. Of course, the game I would make wouldn't be exactly what our fans want. Most want to see the Hero continue his adventures. Unfortunately, he's now a king and a husband and a father. He's got his own responsibilities. Now it's time for new Heroes to go save the world – the sons and daughters of the Hero. We'll see if we get the chance to make those games.

- There are some dedicated Sierra fans that have formed a gaming company specialized in remakes

of older Sierra games. Their King's Quest 2 remake was met with enthusiasm from both fans and the press. The name of the team is Tierra and their next project is Quest for Glory 2 remake. Are you aware of their work and if so then what do you think of it?

Lori: There are even a few websites where the fans are trying to make their own version of Quest for Glory. I'm really proud of all the people out there trying to make their own games. It's hard enough a task when you are getting paid for it. It's tougher when you are only working for yourself and your friends. The only person really pushing you is you. That takes a lot of self-discipline and determination. So whether they succeed in making a complete game, or it fades off into oblivion, these people are real Heroes.

- You have already worked on one QFG remake so far. What would be the best advice that you could give to Tierra now that they are on the process of remaking QFG2?

Lori: Re-making a game for the Designer is easy because you know what you want to do with it. However, it is harder for the other members of the team who have a chance to make the game new and different, and yet keep it the same. If I were remaking QFG2, I'd alter the way the events occurred and make them triggered off the player's actions rather than a set timeline. No one should ever lose the game because they ran out of time. However, you need to maintain that sense of urgency in the player that he COULD lose the game by running out of time. That's the art of game balance.

- There are even more fans working on unofficial QFG games. Do you enjoy seeing people honouring your work in this way, or do you think in a way 'hey this is my game, I am the one who should be working on that'?

Lori: I'm very much of the attitude – go for it! I'm cheering them on from the sidelines. It is a great honour that people care enough about the series to create websites and other games.

Quest for Glory – The novels

- How many novels have you already written/plan to write around the Quest for Glory mythology? Have you thought the titles of each one of them?

Mishell: Depending on how you look at it, there are either eight or ten books in the series. The first two books we're going to release at first as four shorter books, until we have a solid enough fan base that we can start writing longer novels. Then we're hoping to re-release them as two long books. Books three through eight will be longer, and will cover the next three QFG settings, plus add three new ones to continue the story. As for titles, that's usually the last thing we come up with, but the first two are going to be called "By the Book" and "By the Sword."

Lori: We originally intended to write a book per game. It is clear now that we've started that we have more to say in a book than the game did. So it will probably be at least two books per game, and at least three books after that. We've got a long ways to go. ☺

- Could you give us a synopsis on the books you have completed so far?

Mishell: Anyone who has played the games knows about as much about the plot and setting as we're willing to release at this point. You can also read a brief synopsis of the first book at Lori's website, www.transolar.com.

- Compared to the timeline and the geography of the games when and where will each of the novels take place?

Mishell: The actual timeline of the games is a little confusing. It's supposed to all take place in one year, but Rakeesh goes mysteriously gray within a span of months, giving a feeling that more time has passed. We decided that due to the intense nature of the events portrayed, trying to fit them all into a year would be a little bit crazy. Fiction has to be more realistic, so we've spaced the adventures out over several years, beginning with the Germanic setting of Siegburg. The geography

is exactly the same, but some place names may have changed.

- Will the books contain characters from the games?

Mishell: Absolutely. Some characters have been left out, but others have been greatly expanded. Some characters who don't even have names in the game now have life histories, goals, and obstacles to deal with.

- Will the novels attempt to give answers and explanations to questions and enigmas that were never solved in the games, and if so could you give us some examples on what kind of issues will the books tackle?

Mishell: Not to sound overly dramatic, but the books will unravel some major mysteries about the very nature of magic in Glorianna, the reason why the world is the way it is. We'll also find out what links the events of the games together… they are not random, but all part of a larger trend that will actually culminate in what amounts to a magical World War!

- Approximately how big will each book be?

Mishell: The first four will be about 300-350 pages long. The longer ones will be 600-700 pages. If you're familiar with Harry Potter, think "Sorcerer's Stone" for the first four, and "Goblet of Fire" for the remaining six.

- Have any publishers showed interest in the novels yet?

Mishell: We haven't done that much marketing yet, and what we've done has mostly been directed at literary agents rather than publishers. We got a surprising expression of interest from one of the largest agencies in the country, but unfortunately the agent

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there who read our first book doesn't handle a lot of fantasy and didn't get sufficiently excited about the project. I've heard it takes an average of a year to sell a book, and we only started marketing it last month.

- The last Quest for Glory games were a bit 'darker' than their predecessors and were focused on a slightly more mature audience. I have read that the books will be targeted to a younger audience. Is that true? If it is, will adults also be able to enjoy the books?

Mishell: My original plan was to write for a regular adult fantasy audience, but Lori convinced me that slanting the series toward Harry Potter graduates was a smart idea. I think that although we've rewritten the characters to be somewhat younger than the hero in the game, the books will definitely appeal to fantasy fans of any age. I think teens and even children can certainly handle dark subject matter, as the last couple of Harry Potter books have shown. I wouldn't personally recommend these books to anyone under thirteen, however, as there will be blood, gore, and some "sophisticated flirtation" here and there. The later books especially will be pretty much PG-13 quality.

Lori: Harry Potter sold as much to adults as to children. Rowling proved in her writings what QFG and Dr. Brain proved in games – universal appeal. All ages can share and enjoy the same thing. The thing must have something within it that is meaningful for all levels. And in our case, the books are about teenagers on the edge of adulthood. As the kids grow, so will the maturity of the books and the subject matter.

- The rights for the Quest for Glory series are owned by Vivendi. Do you plan to buy the rights from Vivendi or acquire them in some other way? Have you contacted Vivendi about it, and if so what was their response? What will you do in case it is finally impossible to acquire the rights?

Mishell: We've been advised not to contact Vivendi until their games unit has been sold off. Right now there is no one there who is empowered to make any type of decision. We've been waiting around for a year so far, and nothing is happening. I can't speak for Lori, but my intention is to get those rights, whatever it takes.

Lori: We'd love to acquire the rights. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to negotiate with Vivendi for them. However, we have altered the books significantly from the games. They will stand on their own.

- On the book description of 'By the Book' novel, the town that the hero visits is called Siegburg. Is that the same town with Spielberg and if so why did you change the name?

Mishell: Some of our test readers who hadn't played the game were annoyed by the name "Spielburg," as they thought it was a pop-culture reference that didn't belong in a fantasy novel. It bothered me, too, so I talked Lori into changing it. "Spielburg" means "game town" anyway, and there's no reason within the world of the novel that the town would be called that. So I proposed several alternatives, and Siegburg was the one Lori chose. It means "Victory town."

- Will the books be targeted to the fans of the games, or to a more mainstream audience?

Mishell: My point in approaching Lori with this project was to get the wonderful stories she created out to a much, much larger audience than the one that played QFG. So naturally we have to write the novels in a way that is inclusive of everyone, rather than writing them as a cultish, inside-joke thing that only a few people will enjoy. This series isn't about nostalgia, it's about moving forward, and bringing the spirit of Quest for Glory to a new generation of readers (and perhaps one day, gamers).

Adventure games:

- Did you use to play adventure games apart from your own ones? If so what are some of your favourite adventures of all times?

Lori: The only true adventure game I ever enjoyed was the "Monkey Island" series created by Ron Gilbert. It was fair and funny and most of the puzzles were logical. I get too frustrated with most adventure games. I don't

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like playing the "Guess the Designer's Mind" school of puzzles.

- If you were to make an adventure game tomorrow, how would you do it? What kind of graphics would you use, what kind of interface would you choose, what kind of puzzles would you come up with?

Lori: If I were making an adventure game, it would be designed more like a paper D&D game – scenario style. I'd go with the 3D graphics because they are more versatile. We proved with Dragon Fire that you could animate a character, then transfer that movement to a different character, so you only have to design the movement one time. You don't have to tediously re-animate every last character. And there are programs that give characters limited AI for movement and actions. So it is very possible to create a 3D world for an adventure game. The puzzles would be integral to the environment – locked doors, unclimbable cliffs – and complex plots with twists and turns. In short, I'd make a Quest for Glory sort of game.

back to 3rd person because it is more fun to see your character doing things. And it's even better in a 3D world.

Sierra:

- Do you miss working for Sierra On-Line?

Lori: Not in the least. ;-)

- Was Sierra like a big family? I mean were developers of different Sierra games friends with each other? Did you hang out altogether? Who were your best buddies inside the company? Do you have any contact with them nowadays?

Lori: My favorite people at Sierra were all laid off or went elsewhere long before the demise of our division. I do get to see them at Game Developer conventions occasionally.

- Could you talk to us about your last days in Sierra On Line?

Lori: Yosemite Entertainment, the division of Sierra that made QG5, was in many ways the best company I ever worked with despite all the problems we had to produce the game. Early in the project, we actually did team building activities like "laser tag" and paintball. We had team T-shirts, and a very nice sweatshirt with the Dragon Fire label. They actually made an effort to make working conditions at the place as tolerable as possible. On the other hand, Corey and I had had a vacation planned for Thanksgiving weekend of that

"My favorite people at Sierra were all laid off or went elsewhere long before the demise of our division. I do get to see them at Game Developer conventions occasionally."

- Apart from the Quest for Glory series, you have also worked on Shannara, which was much different in terms of graphics compared to QFG. While QFG games were seen from the 3rd person perspective Shannara was seen from the 1st person perspective. Which viewpoint do you prefer in adventure games, a 3rd person or a 1st person one?

Lori: In Shannara, we showed 1st person in a static background. In the last project I worked on, we had first person perspective as you moved around a 3D world. For an adventure game though, I think I'd go

year, and the game was still in QA at the time. I had to skip the vacation and spend that weekend making sure that Dragon Fire shipped with minimal bugs. They worked my tail off for that project. Still, I'm very sorry that they shut Yosemite down.

- Back in the days of Sierra's heyday, the biggest (and maybe only?) serious competitor in the industry of adventure games was Lucasarts. Was there some special kind of rivalry between the employees of the two companies? Were your games ever compared to Lucasarts games either in terms of gameplay or sales from management?

Lori: When we were making QG2, Ron Gilbert at LucasArts was working on Monkey Island 1. They had a softball team, and so did we. So at one point, they came up to Oakhurst and played us, and we went down to Skywalker Ranch to play them. It was great sport. I also gave a debate at a game developer's convention with Ron about "Death in Adventure Games." His premise is that killing off a character in a game destroys the player's fun and emersion in that game. That's one point I won't argue. I can't stand adventure games that kill the character every time the player makes a mistake.

General

- In your future plans there is also the launch of the site www.howtobeahero.com . What will the final version of this site feature?

Mishell: I am very excited about this site. I don't know that there will ever be a "final version," as we plan to add new things to it every month. But the basic idea behind the site is that it's a kind of "online correspondence course for heroes." People can log in whenever they want and read the "quest board" for assignments to complete. They'll earn points based on the quests that they complete, and move up through the ranks. The site is launching with a hero test that will sort the users into one of four heroic archetypes: Warrior, Wizard, Paladin, or Rogue. I encourage everyone to take the hero test. It's fun, quick, and very rewarding.

- You have formed a new company called Transolar Games (www.transolar.com). What kind of games are you working on in this new company? Is there any chance we might see some adventures in the future?

Lori: Transolar Games was originally founded to create RPG games. Unfortunately, it really didn't get off the ground. Right now, the website is devoted to entertainment. It's there for the fun of it, and it changes every month with QFG information, short stories, games, and artwork.

**- Could you tell to us a little bit about your future plans?**

Lori: With a dozen or more books to write and two websites to work for, I'm keeping myself busy. ☺

- How can the fans aid you in your quest for a publisher?

Mishell: Any fans who really want to see the QFG legacy continue should flock to http://www.howtobeahero.com and get involved in the community there. In addition to being a fun site, it's also going to be THE central point for news about Quest for Glory and the How to Be a Hero series of novels. It's going to be the closest thing there is to an "official" Quest for Glory site. When it comes time to get the rights from Vivendi, we are most likely going to need a huge outpouring of fan support. So although I encourage people to make and support various fan sites, it's time we QFG fans also had one official, central rallying point. The fan base is very divided right now, and I want to bring them all together again at HowtoBeaHero.com.

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Mishell: Just one more plug for HowtoBeaHero.com! If you have any questions about this online correspondence course for heroes, you can write to the Famous Adventurer at hero@howtobeahero.com.
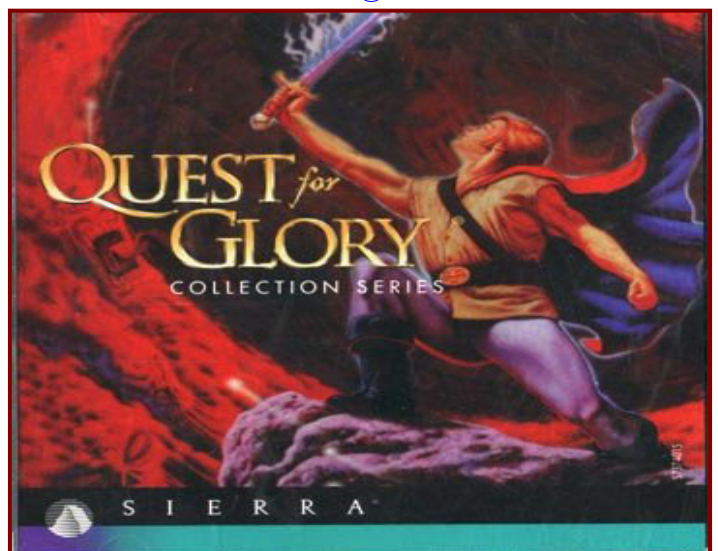
THORGAL
ODIN'S CURSE

Thorgal was originally a comic strip series, that was mostly popular in countries like France and Belgium, places where comic strips are much more fashionable than in other European countries. The Adventure Company, following their new strategy of turning comic strip series into adventures, decided to bring Thorgal in the three dimensional world of our computer screens in *Thorgal: Odin's Curse*


Thorgal Aegirsson

Since it became known quite a while ago that Thorgal would be turned into an adventure game, I purchased some Thorgal comic albums during the summer. The ones I found and read were (free translation) 'The city of the lost god', 'Between earth and light' and 'Aaricia'. I have to say I was really impressed with the original storyline written by Van Hamme and the pleasant artwork of Rosinsky, so I was really looking forward to play the game. I have to say unfortunately that while the effort of Dreamcatcher to turn famous comic strips into adventures is admirable, the final outcome seemed once more rushed.

Story: Let's start with a general background on the story presented in the original comic strips. A Viking tribe, whose leader is Leif Haraldsson, has embarked on a journey with the purpose to find a new land for their tribe. However, Aegir, god of the sea, is unleashing his fury upon them and most of them do not survive the storm. For the few survivors all hope was lost. Until suddenly a strange light appeared that gave them strength to believe that god Aegir has shown mercy upon them. They approached the place where the light was coming from and to their surprise, they found a shipwreck and inside the shipwreck there was a little child sitting there. They named the child Thorgal Aegirsson. For those of you who are not familiar with Norse traditions, you might want to know that when a name ends in son, it means that this person is the son of the first part of the name. I.e. Aegirsson means son of Aegir. Thorgal, after having numerous adventures, manages to find peace within his own family after getting married to Aaricia and giving birth to his two Children, Jolan and Louve.

In *Thorgal: Odin's Curse* god Aegir is once more angered and he does not let Thorgal return to his own island where his family is awaiting for him, after his trip to the
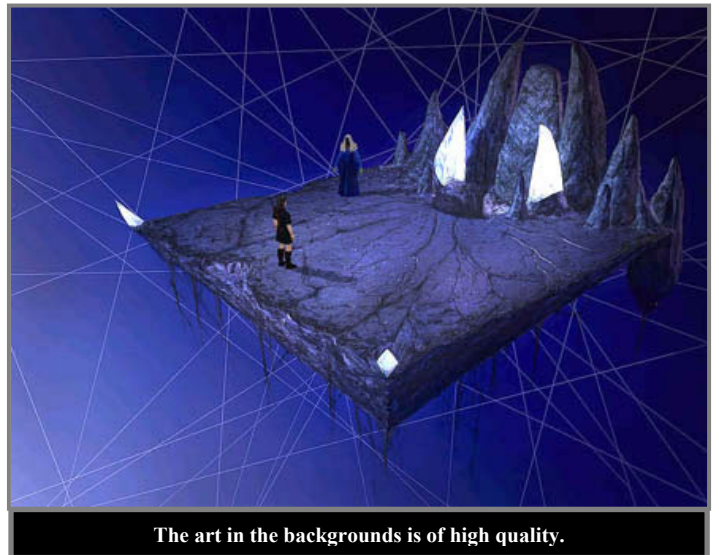
The art in the backgrounds is of high quality.

northern lands. Since Thorgal is unable to do anything else he decides to explore the small Viking village nearby for a while. While exploring the village, he gets to meet Nolan, an old wizard. The wizard shows Thorgal a vision/prophecy, according to which, Thorgal will assassinate his own son Jolan in the future! While Thorgal is confused by what he was shown, it is quite obvious to him that his family is in danger and he must return to his village immediately.

The plotline of the game starts getting really interesting after the first parts of the game, and it becomes really fascinating around the middle part. However when you think that this is just the beginning, you see the end titles and you keep wondering if you just played a demo or the whole version of the game. Unfortunately Thorgal's Quest is the shortest commercial adventure game I have played in my entire life. If you thought Shadow of Destiny was short, think again. I finished *Thorgal: Odin's Curse* in less than 4 hours. It is a great pity, because up to that point I was really excited with the events taking place in the game.
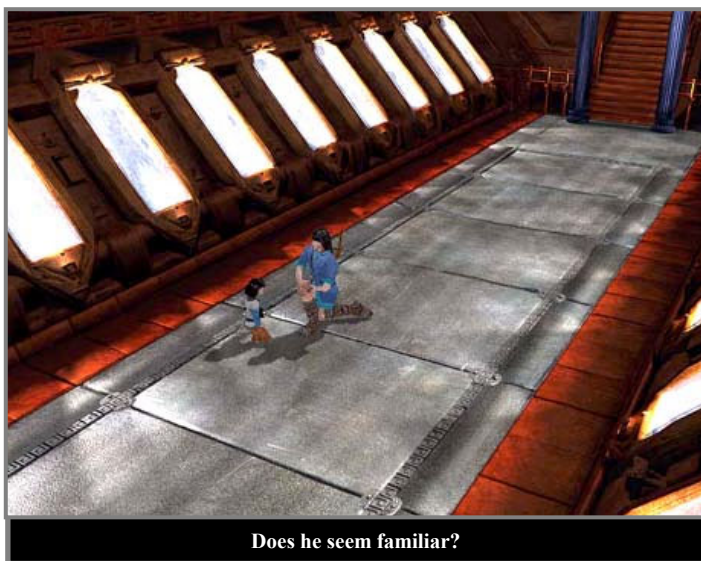
Does he seem familiar?

The story was adapted by Van Hamme himself, and it definitely shows in the game, since it is loyal to the comic strip series and the level of writing is as high as the one found in the comic albums. The game features some of the characters that have appeared in the albums as well (i.e. the Guardian of the keys). Many of the characters are well developed and they all have their mini-stories to tell that make you care about them. A sense of melancholia is obvious throughout the game that is very appropriate with the Viking theme of the game. The story is also very similar to ancient mythologies (Viking, Greek etc.) where punishment, condemnation and revenge are characteristics that are found very often, especially in the relationships between people and the gods. I also really enjoyed the way that

Another lost soul.

the game uses to make the players accustomed with Thorgal's past. I am not going to explain the way the game used cause it would be a spoiler for those of you who haven't played it.

And when all these positive issues make the game look like it is going to be the King's Quest of our times, one of the best adventures of this year and you are about to say 'Finally this is a fantasy adventure I will thoroughly enjoy'………The End. If the game was at least three times bigger than it was, or if the price of the game was three times smaller than it is, I would have rated Thorgal: Odin's Curse with a grade definitely higher than 80. The story would have worked really well in a comic album, but it is way too short for a fully-priced adventure game.

Graphics: The graphics of the game, while not being something spectacular, have a positive effect on the overall atmosphere. The game is seen from the 3rd person perspective. The 3D models are not the most technically detailed you have ever seen but they are

Things are not always what they seem.

Vikings were not famous for their hospitality…

Nolan has his eyes on Thorgal.

loyal to the way that Rosinsky has drawn the characters in the comic albums. The biggest problem of the graphics is that some hotspots are not visible on the screen, which causes for some irritating pixel-hunting especially in the beginning of the game. Many objects are either too tiny or hidden in dark places (or both!). On the plus side, the backgrounds are very atmospheric and they add a lot to the whole experience by creating a moody gaming environment. Thorgal gets to walk around many dark settings, which makes it a much different experience than for example the light-hearted atmosphere of the old King's Quest games.

The videos of the game are well done but as with the most parts of the game there are not so many of them. The lip-synching is not that good and sometimes it is not evident at all.

Sound: Dreamcatcher has proven lots of times before that they know how to create a remarkable soundtrack and they are holding up to their fame with Thorgal as well. The main theme of Thorgal is just exquisite and it will stay on the back of your head for a long time to come. Unfortunately, the same thing cannot be said for the voice-overs. While some of the acting is done well (i.e. Thorgal's role is top-class) some of it is poorly executed (i.e. Nolan and Hiralgur).

Gameplay: The biggest flaw of Thorgal's gameplay is intertwined with its story's biggest flaw, which is its extremely short length. There is just too little to do for a fully priced game. The game doesn't start in a very nice way. There is a lot of pixel hunting in the first locations Thorgal gets to visit. But as the story progresses, the pixel hunting gets less recurring and the puzzles become better and better.

The interface of the game has a lot of problems. First of all sometimes when you click on something or when

you press a key (i.e. esc to open up the options window) the game does not even respond to your command. Furthermore the interface incorporates a feature that not only is not helpful but it is plain bothersome. Let's say that you see an item that you want to pick up. If you browse your cursor on top of it, this item will be highlighted. If you click while the item is highlighted, Thorgal will do nothing at first, and the only result will be that your cursor will change to another symbol (i.e. a pick-up cursor). So after the cursor changes you have to click once more so that you can interact with the certain object. This extra-click is just unnecessary and I do not see what did the developers want to accomplish with that. Double-clicking on a spot will make Thorgal run there. Thorgal usually carries only a few inventory items with him.

The puzzles are for the biggest part quite easy. Some of them might seem harder at first sight but you won't need to spend more than 5 to 10 minutes even on the hardest ones. A couple of these puzzles will require you

All you need is some keen observation and a piece of paper.

The Guardian of the keys will be familiar to Thorgal fans.

to use a pen and a piece of paper in order to solve them. Some of them (especially after the middle part of the game) are very innovative and for the most part they will make sense. The game has a few action elements thrown in here and there but they are so easy that you won't even notice them most of the time. In the game you will also find a mini-board game played with runes. You will need to win this game in order to proceed in the story. The board game is quite fun and easy to learn so it made for a pleasant addition in the gameplay. In general terms the second part of the game will remind you a bit of Syberia in terms of gameplay.

General Info: The game came in a DVD case and it only takes one CD (quite logical judging by the game's length). There is a black and white comic strip included in the game, which is drawn by Rosinsky himself. This is a nice addition that is however executed in a wrong way. The album is only available within the game, that is to say you have to play the game and then go to the album menu to access it. This way you cannot print the album and it is impossible to read as a stand-alone comic album because you have to click on each box in

the comic strip to get back a description of what is happening in the box. Another drawback of the comic book is that it functions as Thorgal's logbook and thus you already know what is happening in the album's story. I met no bugs while playing Thorgal's Quest. I recommend everyone to buy some Thorgal comic albums before you play the game. The general background given by the albums enhance the overall experience.

In a few words… It is really a pity that this game ended so soon. I would have rated Thorgal much higher if it was either longer or a lower priced product. But being as it is, you are actually being ripped off. I would recommend you to wait until the price falls considerably and then buy Thorgal. For the while it lasts it is a quite interesting game, with a nice story, pleasant graphics and a rather naturally flowed gameplay. The Adventure Company missed a good chance with this one to produce a majestic fantasy adventure.

-Dimitris Manos

Watch the holes in the floor…

THORGAL: ODIN'S CURSE

Game Info

Developer: The Adventure Company
Category: Point and Click
Perspective: 3rd Person
Difficulty: Easy
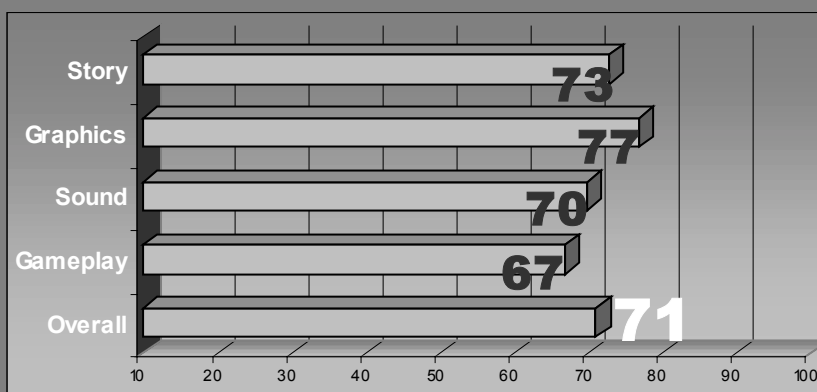**Site:** http://thorgal.dcegames.com

System Requirements: Win 95/98/ME/2000/XP, Pentium II 400 Mhz, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, DirectX 8.1

	Score
Story	73
Graphics	77
Sound	70
Gameplay	67
Overall	71

AGON

The game above all games

Private Moon Studios has thrown their hat into the adventure gaming ring with a unique idea. Their first game, Agon, is, in many respects, like other 1st-Person adventure games on the market today, with one very notable exception. Agon is the first Adventure Game ever to exist as an episodic series.

Over the course of the next two years, Private Moon will release thirteen more chapters to this story, each a self-contained game that contributes to a much larger story. New chapters will be available every two months or so, at a charge of $9.80USD. Players download the episode, roughly 200 MB in size, install and play offline. As of review time, only one episode, London, is available to the public. It would be unfair and irresponsible to judge the entire series by one episode, so consider this as much a preview things to come, as it is a review of what little there is so far.

Professor Samuel Hunt

Story: It is the early 1900s, and Professor Samuel Hunt prepares himself for another long night of paperwork at the British Museum. Going through the mail left on his desk, he comes across an odd letter from "W.K.", whom he has never met, which includes a bizarre ancient manuscript that speaks about the "Agon" but doesn't identify what it is. After placing a brief call to a colleague, Professor Hunt begins his exploration through the museum for answers to this baffling, yet fascinating riddle. His journey will take him all over the globe, solving a series of puzzles in his quest to understand what the Agon is, and what it could mean.

The premise for the game is admittedly a bit slapdash, but ultimately functional for the episodic nature of the game. Each chapter will be independent of the others, and this is a fitting enough thread to connect them all, for the moment at least. No information has been given regarding the storylines of future episodes, except to say that each of the remaining thirteen episodes will involve an ancient board game at the center of each story.

Graphics: The in-game screens are smoothly and superbly rendered. Reflective surfaces appear in some scenes, showing a stiff and unmoving Prof. Hunt, as he turns around the room. It's a nice thought to include this, but it could have been done a bit better. The cut-scenes are a different matter, and are almost unpleasant to watch at times. Being slightly grainy isn't as much a problem as the awkward and jerky motions of the characters. Having to watch stiff characters move so clumsily can seriously distract from what is being said. Hopefully this can be rectified in future episodes.
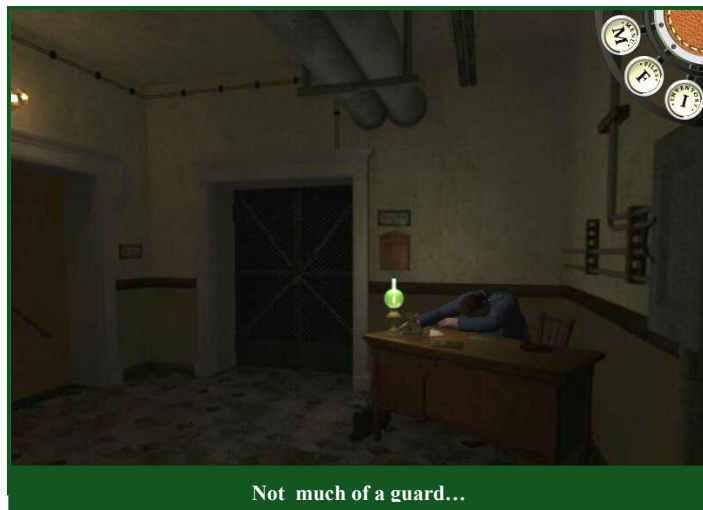

The furniture is well drawn

Could I make a phone call from Dr. Moresby's office?

It never hurts to ask first.

Not much of a guard…

Sound: The game's musical score, though sparse, is well composed and provides a sense of casual mystery. The voice acting is well done too, done in calmly understated British tones.

Gameplay: The interface resembles the scrolling 3D 1st-Person style of Zork: Grand Inquisitor and Myst 3: Exile, which is easy to understand, allowing the player to effortlessly begin playing the game. Clicking and dragging the mouse shifts the perspective over 360 degrees, and when the screen is still the mouse reacts to different hotspots with different context-specific commands.

The few puzzles in the game are easy enough to make sense of, while still being a bit challenging to solve. They rely heavily on meticulous investigation of the surrounding area as opposed to obtuse logic or item swapping, which really is best suited to a game such as this, where exploration is so fundamental to the storyline. The only real slow point in the first episode is in a large stairway connecting the museum's administrative hallway to the storage basement. You have to make this short trek some six or seven times, and each lasts some 35 seconds, which slows the game down immensely. Otherwise the game moves at a reasonable pace, and is without any other complaint.

In a few words… Agon is an ambitious game, and is entertaining to play while it lasts, but there are several concerns in mind about the potential success of the series. Foremost is that $9.80 for a three-hour game is a bit much. Whether or not the price will drop for future episodes, or if there is a discounted subscription service, has yet to be determined. Additionally, though the game holds it's own technically today, two years from now the engine may begin to look a bit dated. Fortunately, such issues can likely be easily addressed in the future, and there is little cause to worry.

Unfortunately, at this time I cannot actually recommend buying the only episode available, despite being enjoyable. I would suggest waiting a few months for more episodes to become available before actually buying the game. I look forward to playing future episodes of the game and seeing how the whole series ties together.

- Justin Peeples

AGON

Game Info

Developer: Private Moon Studios
Category: Point and Click
Perspective: 1st Person
Difficulty: Easy
Site: http://www.agongame.com

System Requirements: Win 98/ME/2000/XP, Pentium II 400 Mhz, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, 32MB DirectX Video Card, Internet Access To Buy

Category	Score
Story	80
Graphics	75
Sound	85
Gameplay	85
Overall	81
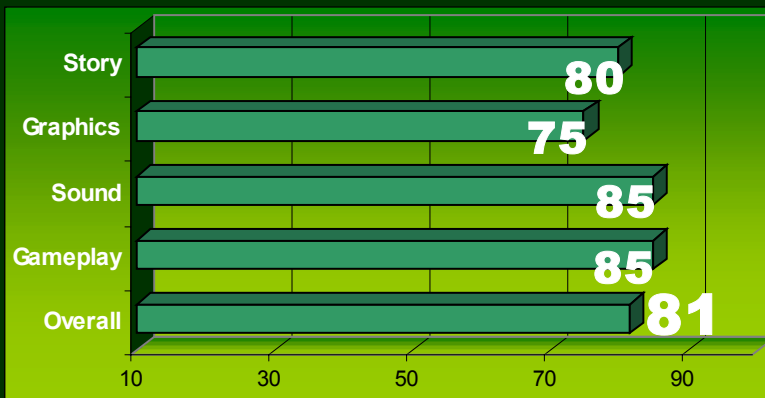
QUEST FOR GLORY I
– So you want to be a hero –

So you want to be a hero. I think I was less than 10 y.o. when I first read that phrase on my computer screen. Little I knew back then that this phrase would become the trademark of an adventure series that would write history in gaming evolution. From the heydays of Sierra, comes this gem called Quest for Glory (originally named Hero's Quest but copyright issues forced the developers to change it to Quest for Glory). It is probably the only series that has managed to mix adventure and RPG elements so well with each other.

The two main creators of Quest for Glory were Lori Ann Cole and Corey Cole. You can also read an interview with Lori Ann Cole in this very issue of The Inventory. There is a lot of interesting information around all the parts of the Quest for Glory series.

But let's focus on the first Quest for Glory now. The initial version of this game came in diskettes, it featured EGA 16-colours graphics and its interface was keyboard-driven. A few years later, when the evolution of gaming made it possible to feature better graphics and interface systems as well as more storage space through the use of CDs, gave the possibility to the developers to re-create the fantasy world of Quest for Glory 1 with the new tools available. Hence, the Quest for Glory 1 remake was born. This is also the version of the game that we are reviewing on this issue.

Story: You are a hero wannabe whose name and personality is up to you to decide. You can either be a fighter, a wizard or a thief. This choice will affect the

way the story will be developed as well as the gameplay. For example there are events that only one of these characters can witness or participate in. For the purposes of this review I chose the fighter character. However I have played Quest for Glory 1 numerous times in the past with all different characters and I can safely say that the game features a high replayability value.

The village of Spielburg is in desperate need of a hero. What a better chance for social recognition you think! Brigands have been attacking people coming in and out of the valley of Spielburg making it virtually impossible for merchants to trade their goods in the area. The result of this situation is that the stocks of the local sellers are empty and nobody feels safe anymore in a what used to be a peaceful village. Only within the city

Spielburg's entrance.

walls do Spielberg's inhabitants feel secure due to a spell, cast a long time ago by the protector spellcaster of the valley, Erana. To make things even worse, the Baron of the valley is troubled by a fearsome curse that has resulted in the disappearance of his own two children. That is when you come in the village all confident and strong ready to face anyone who will stand in your way!

Well the story of the game is nothing less to what the former Sierra had spoiled us with. Magical characters that linger in your head till you grow old, humor lurking all around you, waiting for you to just 'click on it', loads of interesting dialogues and an epic plotline. It is also worth mentioning here, that the game goes under a day/night cycle. There is usually not a certain order in which you have to solve puzzles, therefore the game is a seminar in non-linearity. You could finish the game in 15 game-days or you could finish it in 115 game-days depending totally on the way you play it. So even though most people will call Quest for Glory a 2D game, it is actually a 3D game! Because time is a dimension as well.

Graphics: It is quite obvious that we will judge the graphics for what they are. 2D sprites walking on 2D VGA backgrounds in a 320x200 resolution were the state of the art graphics for adventure games in the age when the remake was published, and honestly sometimes they still look better than other recent adventures. I do not know if I feel this way for the graphics because I grew up with the absolutely amazing line-up of Sierra adventures or if they really have something attractive in them by default, but all I can say is that sometimes I wish there were developers who went down that road even today.

If you did not grew up in that age though and if you did not play those games at the time when they ruled the gaming world, you might not be as fond of the graphics

The adventurer's guild. A place to brag about yourself.

as me and they might seem dated to you. Nevertheless, anyone who compares QFG1's graphics to the graphics used by other games published in the same time period, should notice that the developers made an outstanding job. From the main character to the kattas in the Spielberg inn, the player cannot help but be charmed from the way they move their 2D bodies and the several nicely drawn facial portraits while they are speaking.

Sound: I think it is a pity that Sierra did not think of doing a talkie version of Quest for Glory 1. So the game will probably feel somehow quiet if you are used to recent games that feature a full cast of actors. That put aside though, the music composed by Mark Seibert (who has worked in many other Sierra adventures) for the purposes of the game is very relaxing and nostalgic to hear if you play the game nowadays. Who can forget the familiar Quest for Glory tune that is even heard in the sequels of the game as well, or the track when you have to choose and create your character. There are also some sound effects as well, but do not expect something that will push the limits of your Dolby surround audio system.

Gameplay: As I said before you can choose one of the three available characters in the beginning of the game (figher, wizard and thief). The fighter is more skilled in battle, the wizard is more skilled in spell casting and the thief is more skilled in stealth and thieving. Then you get to allocate some points, which the game gives you in the beginning, on the abilities of your character. Divide your available points wisely because the number of points you have on a certain skill might affect the solution to a puzzle.

Our hero also has a health bar and a stamina bar. If one of them drops to zero our hero dies. So it is quite important that your hero gets his rest often. There are several healing and stamina potions that the hero can drink to raise his health and stamina numbers. Money is

The beautiful centaur girl

Dancing with fairies in the night.

also an important issue, since it is not easy to do a lot of things in the game without it. So you will have to either find a job soon or kill some monsters/brigands who might carry some money with them.

One word that could describe the gameplay of Quest for Glory 1 is freedom. This freedom in the gameplay is the game's biggest strength but at times it becomes one of its weaknesses as well. And let me explain what I mean with that. You have the freedom to try anything you want to, whenever you want to. You have the freedom to choose what character you will get to play in the game. You have the freedom to start fighting with a monster or just run away and avoid it. You have the freedom to spend a whole day training your skills at throwing, or talk with Spielberg's inhabitants or you could simply spend the whole day sleeping. Yes that is right, sleeping. Because the hero can (and must) do some every day human habits, like sleeping and eating. If you do not feed your character for a while then expect to see one of the familiar R.I.P. windows Sierra used to adorn their games with.

There are a couple of puzzles in the game that require you to be on a certain location at en exact time of the day/night. However, with the freedom given in the

Watch your reflection in the water.

game, you might not even be aware that the certain event happens at the certain point of time because you thought it would be fun to hunt some goblins at that time on the other end of the forest. And if you get stuck in the game, it is often difficult to find where is the place (or the time) that the next action has to be performed.

The game uses the familiar point and click system of the older Sierra games with the addition of a special action button that was required to introduce the available actions for the RPG elements of the game, like sleeping, running, stealth etc. There is also fighting in the game. How much fighting there is depends also on how much you stay and fight or run away from such a situation but it is inevitable to avoid all fights as some of them are quite essential for finishing the game. And since you might not stand a chance in those fights if you have not trained your skills earlier, it is quite obvious that it is better if you do fight often. Although there is lots of fighting however, the game feels more like an adventure at all times, because the adventuring elements are much more often met and they are more dominant than the action ones. It is generally a minus though that the character gets to die quite often.

Erasmus' tower.

General Info: The first Quest for Glory (EGA version) was released in 1989 and it was the first game of a 4-part series. That was the plan anyway because after Quest for Glory 2: Trial By fire, which was released in 1990, Quest for Glory 3: Wages of War took the place of Quest for Glory: Shadows of Darkness which was supposed to be number 3 in 1992. The reason for this 'injection' of Wages of War between Trial By Fire and Shadows of Darkness was that Lori and Corey Cole thought it was too early to introduce gamers in the mature and dark theme of Shadows of Darkness, so a more light-hearted game took its place. Shadows of Darkness was finally released in 1993, but unfortunately the large numbers of bugs in the game, made it almost

unplayable. Read more about that in the accompanying interview with Lori Cole.

Sierra re-released no 1 in a VGA version with a point and click interface and they even released a Quest for Glory anthology CD including all the four Quest for Glory games of the series. A CD that I never regretted buying actually. And when everybody thought that this was the end of the Quest for Glory series and that the last part which Lori had planned would never see the light of day, the fans came in to save the day. After lots of nagging and complaining Sierra was convinced to develop the fifth and last part of the series. The original plans made mention of a multiplayer capability but this was finally left out from the final version. Published in 1998 and for the first time in a 3D environment it made a nice ending to a widely loved series.

Lori and Corey Cole have retired from developing adventure games and the current Sierra is not the Sierra we once knew. But the Quest for Glory universe lives on! There are a lot of Quest for Glory fans making their own QFG adventures. The most interesting of those adventures comes from our well-known Tierra, and it is going to be a remake of Quest for Glory 2. Lori Cole on the other hand has teamed up with Mishell Baker to continue the QFG saga through another medium, which is literature.

Quest for Glory 1 has a couple of bugs. Especially if you use a recent computer to play the game and you do not use a CPU killer (program that makes your computer run in slower speeds) then some of the puzzles are virtually impossible to solve. I.e. winning the sword master is totally out of the question since the fight is over…before it actually starts! The game was made with much slower computers in mind and the puzzles that require you to act fast do not give you any

Quest for Glory I   [Score: 57 of 500]

Erana's peace.

time to do it. So make sure you find a CPU killer before you play QFG1.

It is also rather difficult to run QFG1 at all on any new computer. One thing that I have found to be working is VDM sound. VDM sound is an emulator that allows you to play older DOS games under Windows XP or Windows 2000. You can download VDM Sound from this page: http://ntvdm.cjb.net/

In a few words… Most adventure games nowadays look pale in comparison to the old Sierra and Lucasarts games in terms of quality. Yes, those adventures did not have the latest 3D graphics and they did not have a full cast of professional actors performing the voice-overs of the game characters, but they did have amazing storylines, unique characters and exciting gameplay. Whether you have played the game before, or you are a new adventure gamer, this is an adventure that must stand on your game shelf. If Lori and Corey are reading this, then I just wanted to say that you are both terribly missed and we hope that you will return in game development soon.
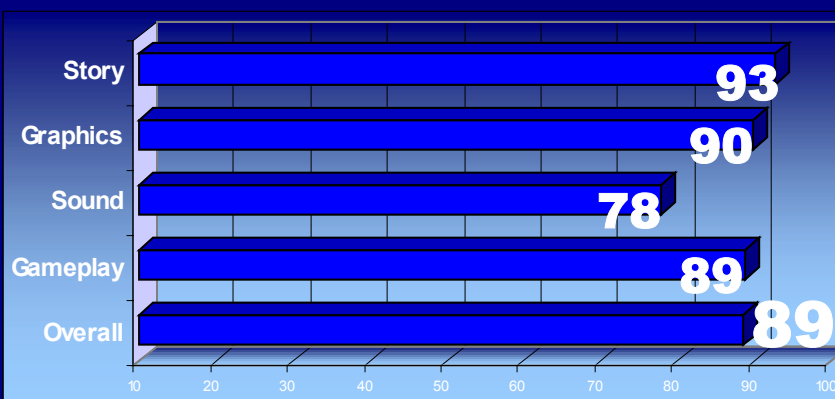
-Dimitris Manos

QUEST FOR GLORY I

Game Info

Developer: Old Sierra On Line
Category: Point and Click
Perspective: 3rd Person
Difficulty: Medium
Site: N/A

System Requirements: Any recent computer should do.

Story	93
Graphics	90
Sound	78
Gameplay	89
Overall	89

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

An American touring Spain stopped at a local restaurant for dinner. While sipping a glass of wine, he noticed a sizzling platter being delivered to the next table. It not only looked good, it smelled wonderful. He asked the waiter, "What is that dish?" The waiter smiled. "Ah, señor, you have excellent taste! Those are from the morning bullfight. After the matador kills the bull, his testicles are removed and brought to our restaurant. Ah, such a delicacy!" The American was momentarily daunted by the origin of the dish, but decided, what the hell? I'm on vacation! "Bring me an order!" The waiter frowned. "I am so sorry, señor. But since there is but one bullfight each day, there is but one serving each day. But you could place your order now for tomorrow and I would be pleased to serve you this specialty!" He placed his order and impatiently waited 24 hours. The next evening he returned to the same restaurant and the same waiter proudly served him the one and only order of the delicacy of the day. After a few delicious bites, he called the waiter over to his table. "These are surely delicious, but they seem so much smaller than yesterday's serving?" The waiter replied, "Si, señor! Not everyday does the bull lose!"

A wife arrived home early from a business trip to find her husband in bed with a young woman. "What the hell is going on here?" she screamed. Her husband calmly replied, "Let me explain, dear. I was driving home when I saw this young lady hitchhiking. She was hungry, so I brought her home and made her a meal from that roast beef in the fridge you had forgotten about. Since she was bare-footed, I gave her those sandals you discarded because they were out of style. Since she had no coat, I gave her that sweater I bought you for your birthday that you never wear because you don't like the color. Since her pants were torn, I gave her that pair of jeans that are too small for you. Then, when she was about to leave she asked me, 'Is there anything else your wife doesn't use any more?' and..."

A man rushes into a bar, orders six shots of whiskey and downs them just as fast as the bartender can pour them. "Drinking kinda fast, ain'tcha, buddy?" the bartender asks as he pours number seven. "Humph," snorts the man. "You'd drink fast, too, if you had what I have!" "Oh? What do you have?" asks the bartender. The man stands up before replying, "About twenty-eight cents!"

The Dean of Women at the exclusive girls' school was lecturing her students on sexual morality. "We live today in very difficult times for young people," she droned. "In moments of temptation, you must ask yourself one question: Is a lifetime of shame worth an hour of pleasure?" From the back of the room came a quiet voice. "How do you make it last an hour?"

A lawyer married a woman who had previously divorced ten husbands. On their wedding night, she told her new husband, "Please be gentle; I'm still a virgin." "What?" said the puzzled groom. "How can that be if you've been married ten times?" "Well, husband #1 was a Sales Representative; he kept telling me how great it was going to be. Husband #2 was in Software Services; he was never really sure how it was supposed to function, but he said he'd look into it and get back to me. Husband #3 was from Field Services; he said everything checked out diagnostically but he just couldn't get the system up. Husband #4 was in Telemarketing; even though he knew he had the order, he didn't know when he would be able to deliver. Husband #5 was an Engineer; he understood the basic process but wanted three years to research, implement, and design a new state-of-the-art method. Husband #6 was from Finance and Administration; he thought he knew how, but he wasn't sure whether it was his job or not. Husband #7 was in Marketing; although he had a nice product, he was never sure how to position it. Husband #8 was a psychiatrist; all he ever did was talk about it. Husband #9 was a gynaecologist; all he did was look at it. Husband #10 was a stamp collector; all he ever did was...God I miss him! ...But now that I've married you, I'm really excited!" "Good," said the lawyer, "but, why?" "Duh; you're a lawyer. This time I know I'm gonna get screwed!"

-Al Lowe

- Myst Ages Word Jumble -

Unscramble the names of the various Myst ages. Use the letters in circles to complete and unscramble the puzzle phrase below.

PHINESTOS

HAMONAT

TYMEIO

SHENAELEHR

Critics agree, Cyan Worlds' upcoming game <u>URU</u> is…

☐☐☐ ☐☐ **B**☐ "☐☐☐☐"

- Myst Trivia -

1: John Keston, who played Gehn in Riven, has done all but which of the following?:

A - authored a Myst Novel

B - Appeared on Broadway

C - been injured snowboarding

D - Ran the 10k in 43:52

2: Brad Dourif, saavedro in Myst III: Exile, starred in all but which of the following films?:

A - Child's Play 3

B - LOTR: The Two Towers

C - The exorcist II

D - Critters 4

3: Which of the following games was not created by cyan worlds prior to the release of myst?

A - Manhole

B - Cosmic Osmo

C - Spelunx

D - Tuneland

Answer key
Jumble: stoneship; tomahna; moeity; releeshahn; not to be "myst"
Myst trivia: 1:a 2:c 3:d

- Justin Peeples

Before we continue, we must mention here, that our e-mail address was under heavy virus attacks for the duration of a week. During this week, we were unable to receive any e-mails at all during some hours (especially in the night) because files with virus attachments were sent to us constantly and they filled our mail storage…hence we were not able to receive any more e-mails. So if you sent us an e-mail this past month, feel free to re-send it just in case we did not receive it the first time.

Now we move on to the letters for this month's Invento-mail. This time we wrap up, the e-mails we received during the summer holidays. We will start with Jason, who would like to see action/adventures in The Inventory, then we will move on to Jeremy, an experienced game designer who wants to know the answer to the eternal question 2D or not 2D, then you will get to see what Staffan has to say about disc-swapping and finally we get to read Lotty Farebanks who craves for a review tribute of Grim Fandango.

Hello,

I was just reading your final The Inventory of the year and I would like to commend you on all of your effort for this year, and I cannot wait til the fall (aside from missing the sunny summer weather)!

I have been playing adventure games for quite some time. Dating back to the original King's Quest 1 days. Right now I spend most of my computer entertainment dollar on adventure games. However, and this is my question. Why do you exclude (or despise) action/adventure games? I know it is not the same as Gabriel Knight 2, but there have been some spectacular action/adventure games released in past years. Specifically, Thief 1&2,System Shock 2, and Deus Ex. If you have played either of these you will know that the storyline is definitely on par with anything the adventure community has released in the past 5 years. Believe me I play adventure games 5-to-1 over more action oriented titles, but I feel they shouldn't be omitted from your publication just because they require a little mouse dexterity. And hell in the Thief series you aren't even supposed to fight!

I think this reason alone is why people say that the adventure genre is dead. It didn't die, just the graphics and processors have increased to the point where in an action/adventure game you can feel like part of game, with a bonus of having a fabulous story. (As opposed to the old days of side scrolling action titles.) In the past this unique feeling of "being there" was relegated only to adventure games. Just look at a recently released game like Splinter Cell, a tremendous story driven experience. In fact, I cannot wait for Half-Life 2 and Deus Ex 2 later this year equally as much as waiting for Syberia 2.

Now believe me when I tell you that I know PC game magazines could care less about adventure games, and I have grown tired of hoping that they will start covering adventure games. I now figure my only hope is to see quality, story driven action/adventure games in The Inventory.

Well Dimitri that's my question. Have a great summer and look forward to reading The Inventory next year!

-Jason Kolodziej

The Inventory: Hello Jason, and first of all thank you for taking the time to e-mail us. I hope your summer was sunny enough! Now to your request… There is nothing wrong with someone enjoying action/adventures and I certainly do not despise those who do enjoy those games (although I have to say I hate it when developers turn an adventure series to an action/adventure for the sake of sales).

On the other hand I think there is nothing wrong with a publication that specializes in a certain genre of computer games either. And even if action/adventures share some gameplay or story elements with adventure games, they are still a unique genre of their own. On the other hand I do not think there is any lack of coverage of action/adventures. Most sites and magazines will feed you the same news about those games over and over again, so I do not think there is really any point in The Inventory repeating those news once more **continued->**

As you said yourself the adventure genre is one of the most neglected genres out there, and this is what we are trying to change with The Inventory.

Altough we would love to be able to fulfil everybody's wishes, we simply cannot do that. You for example enjoy action/adventures, someone else might enjoy RPGs and will argue that some RPGs have adventure elements as well. But a publication has to draw the line somewhere and say that 'This is our territory and that is what we are going to cover'. Furthermore file size and time constraints allow us to write only up to 50-60 pages per month. Why should we have neglected any of the adventure games we have covered so far, for the sake of an over-promoted action/adventure?

The Inventory will stay a magazine only for pure adventures, where story and exploration are in focus. We understand that this may not be everybody's cup of tea, but then again we cannot please everybody. We hope though that you will continue to enjoy our magazine.

I am an experienced game industry developer and I would like to make an adventure game. I have the dialog and most importantly the plot, but I am not sure if I should go fully 3D and require the latest greatest video card or if adventure game players are happy with the 2D adventures as they are. So I had a question for all of your readers. 2D with 3D characters? Or completely 3D?

Thanks,
Jeremy

The Inventory: 2D or not 2D? That is the question. Well, I can't really talk for all the readers of The Inventory, but I will state my personal opinion. Bearing in mind that you will start developing your game now, it would be ready from 1 to 3 years from now, I think you should not worry about gamers whose video-cards might not be able to play a full 3D game. Most people nowadays have video cards that are able to play 3D games and they can only become more by the time you are ready with your game.

What you shouldn't do is to ask other people what they would like to see, or to check the latest trends in graphics. What you should really ask yourself is how do you want your game to look like? Would 2D or 3D represent best the story you have in mind? Will a 2D environment or a 3D environment allow you to incorporate best the gameplay you are thinking of? Do not attempt to please everyone because in the long run you might please no one enough. So I would suggest that you take that decision on your own (or by discussing it with the rest of the development team). Just bear in mind that the graphics should serve the game, and not the other way around. Whatever your final decision is, feel free to share it with us and let us know how your upcoming adventure is doing.

Hi Inventory!

Nice adventure magazine! I enjoy it - thanks! Great that some people still care so much about our favorite game genre (..and thank God that Syberia revived it! Can't wait for S2 - October come on!!)

Here's a little piece of advice. You sometimes get irritated over disc swapping. Solve it: go to the below link and soon you do not need to swap discs again. It will give you up to 4 virtual CD-ROM drives - the only catch is that you have to make image files of your discs (takes appr. 3-5 min pr. disc). It works perfectly and even better - it's free!
http://www.daemon-tools.cc/portal/download.php?mode=ViewCategory&catid=5

Go for it! And keep up the good work!

Regards
Staffan

The Inventory: Hello Staffan and lots of greetings to Denmark! Yes we are very grateful to Benoit Sokal and his team for bringing adventures back to the attention of the general gaming public. Unfortunately though you will have to wait a little bit longer as you probably read in our last issue.

As for your suggestion, while it is indeed a solution for those who are annoyed by disc-swapping, I have always believed that a customer should be able to enjoy a game as it comes out of the box and that he/she should not have to undergo any further research in order to enjoy what he or she just bought. So on one hand I thank you for your proposal but on the other hand we will continue to complain about it in reviews because not all customers know that, nor are they supposed to. Thanks for the e-mail and we hope you enjoy our future issues.

Hi there

I would just like to say how impressed I am with The Inventory! Sadly, as much as I would like it to be cold enough to be snuggled up in front of an open fire sipping hot chocolate and reading it, it is a scorchingly hot, slow-day-at-work, August day. I have managed to read many of your issues in one go and am now on Edition 5. It has evolved into a very professional looking magazine and you should be very proud of yourselves.

Although the first game I ever played at the age of 14 was Leisure Suit Larry, I have recently "found" adventure games and love them to pieces. Your publication is great as it is pointing me towards games which I have never heard of!

However, a recurring theme with you has to be collecting items in your inventory which you never use. One game which you have not mentioned so far is Broken Sword. You actually get to use everything you pick up, even the "useless" items. In my opinion it is a fantastic game. Sadly, the same cannot be said for its inferior sequel, Broken Sword 2, which is a bit shabby in comparison (in my opinion).

I have one suggestion for a future issue - any chance of a tribute to Grim Fandango? This has to be the most awesome game I've ever played. The dialogue, the voice acting, the feel of the game, the attention to detail - it is a truly wonderful game and not just for those who are playing it. On several occasions, I was playing it in the evening and my boyfriend asked if I could turn it up so he could listen to it whilst soaking in the bath! Well, I suppose I'd better get back to work. :(

Please keep up the good work and I look forward to reading the next issue!

With kind regards

Lotty Farebanks

The Inventory: Hello Lotty and thanks for the e-mail. Although I guess that right now in the middle of October your wish for the weather being cold enough for you to be snuggled up in front of an open fire sipping hot chocolate is easier to be fulfilled. I am in agreement with you regarding Broken Sword 1 and 2. No 2 was much inferior to no 1. As for a tribute to Grim Fandango, I am sure it will come at some point in the future, however not by me. The reason is that I personally did not enjoy Grim Fandango that at all (boy am I going to get a lot of hate mail for saying that) mostly because of its flawed interface.

However there are other members on our team who thoroughly enjoyed Grim Fandango (like Carla for example) and they would be much more appropriate to write a review tribute to Grim Fandango than me. So we will have to fit a tribute to that game in one of our future issues. I can't promise it will be on one of the following 2,3 issues however, because we have already arranged some interviews for those issues that we would like to combine with review-tributes. Hope you enjoy this issue with a cup of hot chocolate!

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:

A MESSAGE TO THE ADVENTURE COMPANY

The Adventure Company is undisputedly the no 1 publisher of adventure games in the world right now and their support to the genre is quite evident. It is on that ground that I am writing this message, which should be considered as constructive criticism and something to ponder upon. Food for thought if you like.

Dear Adventure Company,

I am more than grateful that you have decided to support our genre that much by publishing a wide range of adventures every year. However, I have noticed that some of your current titles lack the small details that would make them stand out in the history of adventure games, as great titles that are remembered by gamers for years to come and not just as titles that came, passed and nobody will ever think of again. Some of the latest examples (Salammbo and Thorgal: Odin's Curse) that as far as we know were developed in-house, featured pleasant gameplay and interesting plots but were both extremely rushed.

Thorgal's Quest could be completed in less than 4 hours and featured an interface that quite simply did not work most of the times. On the other hand Salammbo featured a graphic engine that is the least to say outdated and it was a great pity that Philippe Druillette's magnificent artwork had to sink to the bottom of the ocean along with the 'sinking engine'. Furthermore Salammbo featured an ending sequence that lasted for some seconds only, as if the developers got tired of making the game and decided to go for a coffee instead.

My question now is, would it not be more prudent to spend more time on each game separately and pay attention to small details like those mentioned above? At the end of the day, it is the small details that distinguish great adventures from the rest of the titles out there. And if finance does not allow for something like that, then would it not be better if you developed a couple of titles less each year in order to focus more on each title you do develop?

I do not know what your titles strategy really is, but what I do know is that Sierra and Lucasarts became loved among fans because they produced great adventures with depth in gameplay, exciting stories and paid attention to small details that made them stand out from the rest of the games. I hope you take this message for what it is…constructive criticism. After all, a better Adventure Company would mean a better future for adventure games.

- Dimitris Manos

Epilogue

Ok this is totally irrelevant, but writing the epilogue and prologue parts of The Inventory is probably the most boring part of the whole writing process. Anyhow, next month we celebrate the 1-year anniversary of The Inventory and the 1.000.000th (or however you call him/her) person that downloads the Inventory 10 will win a Ferrari!!! (yeah right).

On a totally irrelevant matter (again) next month it is not just The Inventory's birthday, it is also its editor's birthday! So feel free to send your (preferably expensive) presents to the address that you can find in the credits page, on the 14th of November. And yes that is when the next issue will be out as well.

But seriously now, next month we have some surprises for you (again). You know the kind of surprises that when you announce them on forums you put lots of exclamation marks in the end of the sentence as if you won the lottery or something. And if you think we are going to tell you what kind of surprises we have for you, then you guessed wrong. After all how would we be able to put lots of !!!! in the end of the sentence if you already knew about it?

Except from the few normal surprises though, the ones with the 3 or 4 exclamation marks, we have one big mega-super-extra surprise with two or three rows of exclamation marks. It is a thought that has been going around my mind for a while now, and I have recently decided to go ahead with it. More on that in the November 1-year anniversary issue.

But as far as reviews go, we can already say that we will feature a review of In Memoriam, and maybe Law and Order 2 and Journey to the Center of the Earth (depending on when we will receive the review copies.) We really hope that Emerald City Games will come in contact with us again so that we can continue the comic strip series that we featured last month.

We recently featured a questionnaire in the Just Adventure forums where we asked several question regarding our magazine. If you want to take a look at the answers the participants gave you can visit this thread http://www.justadventure.com/cgi-bin/yabb/YaBB.cgi?board=AdvGameDiscuss;action=display;num=1065215736 and you can either answer them directly over there or send us your suggestions over e-mail to theinventory@yahoo.com Your participation will be deeply appreciated.

As we mentioned last month we are looking for sponsors so if you are interested in advertising your products in The Inventory then e-mail us and we will give you all the details (downloads, pricing etc) necessary. We are also looking for someone who can create Flash videos in order to create promo videos for The Inventory. Those interested, send us an e-mail.

Well, that's it for this month. We hope you enjoyed this magazine and if this was your first experience with The Inventory then we suggest that you download some past issues that you can find on The Inventory page of Just Adventure. Till next month…

Dimitris Manos
Editor

The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

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