The Moment of Silence Special

Review, 4-pages comic based on the game & interview with the publishers in the UK
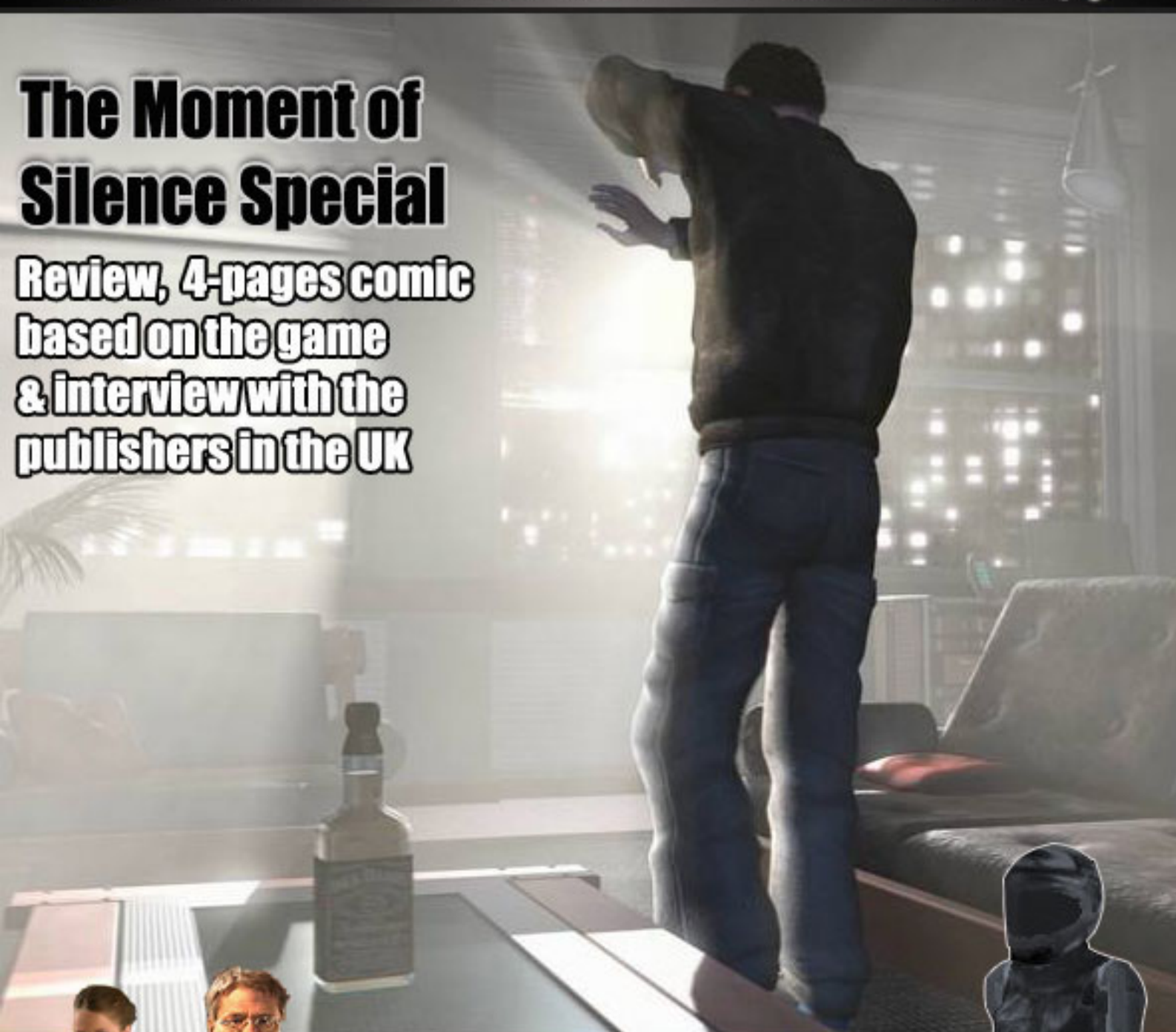
Reviews of
- *Myst Revelations*
- *BeTrapped*
- *Broken Sword*

Interview with *L'art* developers of *Boyz Don't Cry*

First review of the science fiction adventure *Legacy: Dark Shadows*

Contents:

Prologue

Like last month, I would like to begin by thanking the fans who helped our efforts with their financial contributions. So I would like to thank Bruno Fonseca, Rene Schnoor, Vicky Harrison and Alper Tasci for helping us. This issue is dedicated to you dear fans.

Now, I would also like to apologise for two mistakes in the initial version of last month's issue. First and foremost I would like to apologise to our readers who had not played The Black Mirror for the piece of text in the interview with DTP that spoiled the ending. As soon as we learned of our mistake we corrected it. The second mistake was that we had written the wrong website address for Law and Order: Justice is Served. Instead of linking to L&O's website we were linking to the website of Legacy: Dark Shadows. We have a new version of the mag on both JA and theinventory.org where these mistakes have been corrected.

Did I say theinventory.org? Yes I did. That's right my friends, we have a new home provided kindly by www.element.gr. So visit our site www.theinventory.org, and make sure to join our forums where you can talk and socialize with other readers of The Inventory from all around the world.

As for the contents of this issue... The Moment of Silence has been getting amazing reviews in Germany from both adventure and general gaming press and our German writer, Oliver Gruener gives us the first review of TMOS in English. To celebrate the review of TMOS we also feature a 4-page comic based on TMOS provided kindly by DTP, the German publishers of the game. Next month we will feature the second and last part of the comic.

In our Lounge we invited Digital Jesters, the UK publisher who is bringing Sherlock Holmes and TMOS to adventurers all around Brittain and other countries in Europe. We also invited L'Art, the developers of the offbeat Boyz Don't Cry to talk to us about their upcoming title. Last but definitely not least, read reviews of Myst IV, Legacy: Dark Shadows, BeTrapped and Broken Sword 1. Don't forget also our hardware corner where you can read which graphics card suits your needs best. Enjoy...

Dimitris Manos

New adventure to be revealed next month

Next month we have a surprise for our loyal readers as we will be announcing and previewing a new adventure game. The developers have opted for secrecy at the time being so we cannot reveal much this month. But think amazing graphics with quality the level of Syberia in a fantasy setting. For more information read the next issue of The Inventory.

The return of L'Inventaire

Our fans in France can once more enjoy The Inventory in their native language. The team behind the site www.planete-aventure.net have already translated issues 15 and 16 and are hard at work translating issue 17 as we speak. If you would like to translate the magazine in your language do not hesitate to contact us at theinventory@yahoo.com . If you do not have a site we will be able to host it in either theinventory.org or later on in Adventure Europe. In the meanwhile you can download the French version from their website. All we can say is ... merci :)

The cover of the 16th issue in French

Digital Jesters decides to sponsor TV-show

After DTP in Germany another European publisher, Digital Jesters from the UK, is showing publishers around the world how to succesfully market adventure games. Digital Jesters's upcoming Moment of Silence (read our review of the game in this issue) will sponsor the TV-show Battlestar Galactica, broadcasted by Sky One in the UK. If you live in the UK, you can catch the show on Sky One on the 14th, 15th and 18th (world premiere of the new series) of October. Read our interview with Digital Jesters in our Lounge.

Is this what Ann from Lost Paradise will look like?

Before the summer I had visited the offices of White Birds Productions in Paris and I had the chance to see footage of Lost Paradise. The game back then was in very early stages of development. At that time Ann, the main character of Lost Paradise, looked a lot like Kate Walker with dark hair of middle length and an athletic shape.

Now White Birds Productions releases for the first time in the public an image of a 3D model which judging by what I saw back then, has to be

Is this what Ann will look like?

what Ann will look like in the game (slightly modified from how she looked back then).

If you want to know more about Lost Paradise read our interview with Michel Bams in The Inventory 13 or visit the official website at www.white-birdsproductions.com.

Himalaya reveals Al Emo!!!

Sierra as we all know is now nothing more but a fond memory. But who cares when you have companies like Himalaya Studios to continue the legacy that Sierra created? Himalaya Studios is a company created by one of the developers of AGDInteractive (formerly known as Tierra), responsible for the King's Quest 1 and 2 remakes.

Today, the last day before the release of The Inventory I was browing adventure-treff.de and they were announcing that Himalaya Studios have posted the first screenshots of their upcoming adventure game Al Emo and the Lost Dutchman's Mine. You can find the screenshots at the website of Himalaya Studios

which is www.himalayastudios.com . The screenshots look, sound, smell like and scream .... Sierra. The first thing that will probably come to the old fans' mind is Freddy Farkas, Al Lowe's hilarious adventure in the wild west.

It looks like Al Emo will be the second commercial adventure using the AGS engine, after Fatman. It was about time that we saw AGS developers exploring the commercial side of their job. And it can only lead to growth in the adventure genre. We wish Himalaya Studios good luck.

THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

Interview with Digital Jesters

As we have mentioned before the adventure market is booming in Europe. Publishers appear to realize that and lately we see more and more adventures finding their way to the game stores. One of those publishers that are supportive of the adventure genre is Digital Jesters. DJ have recently acquired the rights for Sherlock Holmes: Case of the Silver Earring and The Moment of Silence. We invited DJ to this month's Lounge. Let's see what they have to tell us about their titles and their future plans.

Yourselves

Could you tell us a little bit about yourselves?

My name is Kevin Leathers and I am PR Executive for UK publisher Digital Jesters. I have been with Digital Jesters for a little over 10 months helping with online press and bringing general gaming expertise to the company.

Do you play adventures in your free time? Could you name some of your favourites?

I used to play adventure games a while back, with games like Blade Runner, Grim Fandango and Sam & Max, but my tastes in games have changed some what over the years, now playing games on the PC like Unreal Tournament 2004, Call of Duty and of course TrackMania. ;)

Sherlock Holmes

You recently released Sherlock Holmes: Case of The Silver Earring. How have the initial sales of the game been so far?

So far initial sales for The Case of the Silver Earring have been very promising. They have been very

healthy and did take the Silver Earring into the Top 20 of the PC game charts here in the UK.

How did you get to know about the Silver Earring?

When we came across the Frogwares website the first thing that flashed up was their game The Case of the Silver Earring. Having Sherlock Holmes being a British created character, we believed Frogwares and us could do the detective justice. What better way to have a British character in a game than being overlooked by a British-based publisher? Having a look at Frogwares past games The Mystery of the Mummy and Journey to the Centre of the Earth and hearing what Frogwares had learnt from their previous games and what they wanted to do with The Case of the Silver Earring had sold it in our eyes.

What were the qualities of the game that played a major role in your decision to publish it?

The main qualities that played a major role were the depth of the plot itself. Created by a true Sherlock Holmes fan, the plot to The Case of the Silver Earring was as intelligent as the original Sir Arthur Colon Doyle Sherlock stories

and really presented the character of Sherlock Holmes much as he is known today. Not only the plot that impressed us but also the world, the characters and the atmosphere Frogwares had created to show this fantastic story in all its splendour. If you have a look at the screenshots or even the trailer, the characters and the world they inhabit are rich and full of detail, while the music, voices and dialogue give the game an atmosphere that helps the world meld together to form an experience that is just fantastic to play.

What would you say are the biggest advantages and what are the biggest disadvantages of the Silver Earring?
The biggest advantage in The Case of the Silver Earring again, has to be both the plot and the atmosphere that draws the player into the world of Sherlock Holmes.

What has been the feedback from gamers and press so far?
Feedback from gamers about The Case of the Silver Earring has so far been very positive about most aspects of the game. Many players have enjoyed the plot of the game, as well as the investigating and puzzles that present themselves in the game.

Frogwares has been reading up on what the gamers have been saying about the game and are taking everything onboard, so improvements and new ideas can come forward for future projects.

You decided to sell the game bundled up with a movie of Sherlock Holmes (The Secret Weapon). How did fans welcome this feature?
Many of the fans did actually enjoy having a free DVD come with the game. How many games on the

Many of the fans did actually enjoy having a free DVD come with the game. How many games on the shelves do you see come with free films?

shelves do you see come with free films? Many enjoyed the film as many people see the actor Basil Rathbone as the greatest Sherlock Holmes actor there has been to date.

Is there anything you would like to add regarding Sherlock Holmes?
I hope that everyone that brought The Case of the Silver Earring is enjoying it. Give us your feedback on the game at the Silver Earring website at www.sherlockholmesgame.com.

The Moment of Silence

What is the release date for The Moment of Silence?
The current UK release date for The Moment of Silence is the 5th of November 2004.

Voice-overs have become an issue in the adventure community lately. Many developing companies cannot afford professional actors and the outcome is sometimes … let's say unpleasant. The Moment of Silence is originally developed in Germany. Were you in charge of the casting for the English version or did the developers take care of that?
House of Tales is taking care of the voice acting for the English version of The Moment of Silence, as they have a better idea of how they want their characters to sound in their game. Currently voice acting is being done for The Moment of Silence, so I can't say too much on it.

DTP, the German publishers of the Moment of Silence, have done an incredible job promoting

the game in the German speaking-territories. In the last weeks before the game's release they used strategies like day-by-day emails to members of the press, release of mini-teasers, publishing a comic strip based on the game, coverage on online tv-stations etc, etc. Do you plan to do something similar prior to the game's release in the UK?

We plan to do quite a few things with The Moment of Silence heading up to its UK release. At the moment, I can't mention many of them, but we are starting to run banner advertising for the game, along with a competition to win hi-tech spy equipment too. But you'll just have to wait and see what is in store. ;)

How many copies would TMOS have to sell in the UK for you to think that it was a successful title?

We believe that The Moment of Silence will be a successful game and as long as the people who pick it up and play it enjoy the game and tell their friends about it, then the game has been successful. Regardless of the amount sold, if people have enjoyed the game, then the main point of its release has been realised.

What are the features of TMOS that will intrigue gamers the most in your opinion?

The Moment of Silence is another game that has a superbly strong plot, with roots based firmly in the real world. Even though the game is set in the near-future, there are plenty of things that make the game feel close to home.

We believe that people would be able to relate to the main character Peter Wright as he is just like a real person; he acts like someone would and talks like someone would. The Moment of Silence is also a pure adventure game, which has most of the action sequences happening in the beautiful made cut-scenes, which allows the player to concentrate on the adventure and puzzle solving side of the game.

Is there anything else you would like to add regarding TMOS?

Visit www.momentofsilence.com for all the latest information on The Moment of Silence, including the new trailer.

Will we see an English demo of the game soon?

An English demo is in the works and will be made available soon.

General

What qualities are you looking for in an adventure before you decide that you would like to publish it?

They kind of things we look for in adventure games are three things. The game needs to have an involving plot that will drag the player in and never let go until the end, be easy to pick up but will take a good while to finish and most importantly of all, is a fun and entertaining.

How are adventure games doing in the UK? Do you think the market there is appropriate for games like TMOS and the Silver Earring?

The adventure game scene in the UK has seen better days, but recently the popularity of the adventure game genre has become more and more popular over the last few months, seeing an increase in people looking for more intelligent and thought-provoking games, that adventure games can truly give players.

What is your target audience when you try to promote adventures? Who are you aiming your advertising and PR campaigns at mostly?

For our adventures games, we try to aim advertising and PR campaigns at different places, different audiences and different age groups, more notably the print and online publications that focus on story telling as well as the speciaist gaming press and also the main online adventure gaming sites too. As your reading this, you should be seeing online banner adverts at key European gaming sites as well as the popular adventure gaming sites.

Some people say that adventures are very similar to books and movies as a medium, in that their main purpose is to tell a story, albeit in an interactive way. Do you think it would be possible to draw the attention of the audiences that watch movies and buy books to adventure games, and if so how would that be possible?

Like with anything, if you try crossing from one medium to another, you always look for something that is familiar to start off with before moving on to that medium's own made series. For example, The Case of the Silver Earring is based upon the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, quite a few people who have been reading the original Sherlock Holmes books and interested in the Sherlock Holmes series as whole, have been interested to give The Case of the Silver Earring a go, as it is a brand-new Sherlock story, but also to see someone else's interruption of how Sherlock Holmes would sound and look.

Now the people that have played and enjoyed The Case of the Silver Earring, they could very well go off and try

The Silver Earring and The Moment of Silence were seen as fantastic examples of the adventure game genre and had us at Digital Jesters wanted to promote these two games as much as possible

different adventure games with names not heard of people in other mediums like The Moment of Silence.

Do you plan to publish more adventures in the near future? Do you have any adventures in mind already that look appealing right now?

At the moment, we are looking at a lot of things, so I can't say much at this point about future projects.

Some publishers help developers by funding them during development. Some other publishers decide instead to sign a title when it's completed or near to completion and to focus only on publishing, advertisement and PR. Do you usually help developers with funding during development or do you focus only on the publishing part?

It will depend on what state the game is in and what the possibilities of that game could be like. We do a mixture of the two, but we do it with a case-by-case look to see the potential a title could have.

Why did you decide to publish adventure games?

In the cases of The Moment of Silence and The Case of the Silver Earring, we saw potential in both games, as The Silver Earring has an established market with Sherlock Holmes as well as being

on the graphically pleasing and most atmospheric adventure game seen.

The Moment of Silence has a plot that is based in the real world, with characters that feel and look like real people. These two games were seen as fantastic examples of the adventure game genre and had us at Digital Jesters wanted to promote these two games as much as possible.

Right now you publish games in the UK. Do you see yourselves expanding your business in other countries as well in the future?

At the moment, Digital Jesters is looking to expand in many different ways; we are at the moment looking to cover Europe as we are currently doing with another title of ours called 'Freedom Force vs. The Third Reich', but we are looking to expand as we have a quite successful first year already.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you too all the people that brought The Case of the Silver Earring from us and I hope you all enjoyed it. Digital Jesters and the developers appreciate all the feedback that is given to us through either our forums or email, etc and hope you guys keep telling us what you think our current, past and future games.

Interview with L'Art

Comedy adventures appear to be making a full-blown come-back, and one of the adventures that justify this argument is Boyz Don't Cry by L'Art. Boyz don't cry will feature an offbeat style of graphics. We invited the (somewhat crazy) author of Boyz Don't Cry, Maciej Oginski, in our Lounge to give us some behind-the-scenes, top-secret, for-your-eyes-only information on their upcoming title. So here we go.

Yoursef

- Can you describe yourself to our readers? Are you really as crazy as you sound?

Well, if you say so, that means there's still hope. There's nothing worse than being a 'normal' citizen, ya know what I'm saying.

- Do you play adventures yourselves? If you do, could you name some of your favourites?

Yeah, sure. Recently, I've been playing BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON and I must say that I really liked this experience. BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL was very impressive, too, and it featured a great main character. I would also mention the MONKEY ISLAND series, Sierra's QUEST series, Jordan Mechner's THE LAST EXPRESS and the old-school DREAMWEB.

Boyz Don't Cry

- Could you describe to us the game's story?

Fred and Pearcy - main characters of the game - are bad ass gangsters. Drugs, girls, robberies, harassments, this is their daily bread. Or it WAS their daily bread. This stupid but likeable duo of losers got into a fight which ended up with Pearcy shooting Fred to death. Fred found himself deep in the dirt, lifeless, while Pearcy was cast to prison. This should be the end of their adventures, at least of their adventures as partners - after all one is in jail, but still on Earth, while the other should begin his afterlife. However, things went the other way round. God was so dissatisfied with the creation of his (Fred), that He has decided to revive him, and ordered him to do good, as a second chance. A true good deed - something Fred was not familiar with after 32 years of his lousy life. First trial seems as the most difficult of all - pick Pearcy from prison, forgive him for the death-shot and convince him to do good as well. In duo again.

It is Guy With The Beard - a god-sent messenger, as he calls himself - that tells Fred about all these conditions of his Extremely Important Task. Having nothing better to do, Fred decides to undertake this mission impossible and drives to the prison with his Infernal Car, to meet Pearcy, who is just leaving the prison.

Of course they get together, however nothing is left of their friendship anymore - they keep arguing and insulting each other throughout whole game. No wonder. When they saw each other last time, one of them shot the other one…
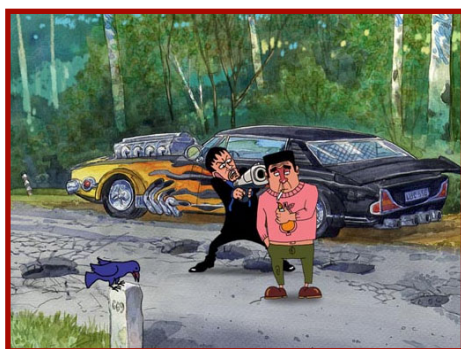
Fred is a main character of the game - player controls him, while Pearcy follows everywhere. Sometimes Pearcy is helpful, sometimes he is not, and he keeps commenting on Fred's actions. Commenting means criticizing here…

And that's about it, because saying more would only spoil the fun of playing the game. But I can assure you, that the game's story features many twists and turns. As we said on www.boyzdontcry.com, in this game everybody lies. Nobody's who they're supposed to be.

- Talk to us about the main characters of the game, gangsters Fred and Pearcy. How did they meet each other? What are their similarities and what are their differences? How are they like in their everyday lives? How often do they swear?

The characters met some time ago, and they're known as fearsome bad-ass, trigger-happy, die-hard gangstaz from the coast (no matter which coast, no matter of what sea). I would say that they're both rather evil - they don't believe in any high ideas, they care only for money and I'm talking big time, baby.

They don't even care about this whole resurrection thing. Fred is embarking on this quest only because he's forced to do it. And Pearcy? At the beginning of the game, he's leaving the penitentiary, in which he spent some time for killing Fred. So he doesn't really know what to do with himself and a quest sounds to him like... well, fun. More or less.

- Boyz Don't Cry is a comedy adventure and apparently the dialogues will play a large role on the game's success. My ques-tion is did you write the dialogues in Polish and then translated them into English, or did you write the dialogues directly in English? (If first in Polish then in English) Did you translate all the jokes directly as they are in Polish or did you modify them slightly so that they make more sense in English?

Well, the dialogues were written in Polish and then they were translated to English by a professional crew of translators. As for jokes, some had to be slightly changed, because they wouldn't make much sense in English. We even had to modify some characters. For example, there is this guy who owns a record shop. In the Polish version of the game, this role reffers to a polish musician, who looks pretty similar. But outside Poland, this reference isn't that obvious, so in English version we changed his name to Danny Diamond - in this way, we hope he will resemble the well-known American producer, Rick Rubin. :)

Agent Smith appears in the game, there is El Asso city instead of El Passo, Pearcy could be also named "Pearcy-Brosny", but I guess a first name should be enough...

- Will the story feature events or dialogues that might be considered by some people controversial?

Definitely.

- The graphics of the game seem unique to say the least. Were you inspired by some other source when you chose this style or was it completely your idea?

Everything was drawn by Mirek Urbaniak, who's one of the best comic artists I know. We wanted BOYZ DON'T CRY to look like a
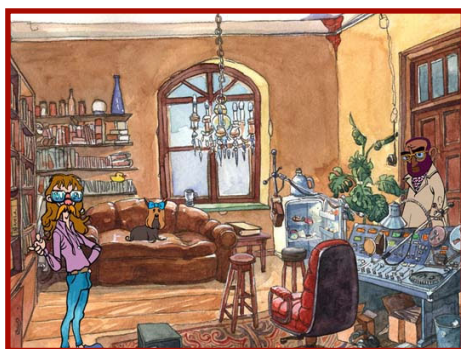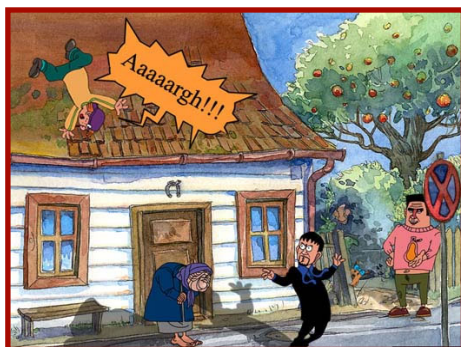
really nice comic book, and I guess it did work out. As for inspirations, you should ask Mr. Urbaniak, but from what I know, many places are inspired by... well, reality. For example, the building of the Public School looks like the one near the studio we recorded the voice-overs in and the punk-kids characters are inspired by friends from old times.

- What kind of resolution will the graphics reach?

There's going to be only one resolution - 800x600. But you will be able to play the game in a window (nice, huh).

- I have heard from other developers that animating 3D characters is much easier than animating 2D characters. Are the characters of BOYZ DON'T CRY in 3D or in 2D?

Yeah, it sure is easier, but the easiest way isn't always the best. The characters in BOYZ are 2D and they're animated by human beings, not computers. It's 100% roots, old-school cartoon style. You won't get such effect in 3D animations.

- Will the game feature a large number of cutscenes?

That depends what do you mean by saying 'cutscenes'. If you ask for rendered movies like the ones in WARCRAFT3, for example, then the answer is - there ain't gonna be any cutscenes, yo. But there will be some scenes processed by the game's engine, there will MAX PAYNE-style comic-strips and there even will be some variation of an audio-book. Other than that, you will se about 10000 frames of animation and believe me - that's a lot.

- What kind of music will BOYZ DON'T CRY feature and how much time will the soundtrack of

the game last?

As for the second part of your question, I don't really know yet, because we're still finishing that part. But you will hear a large variety of themes. We got some fat hip-hop beats, some classic adventure-style themes, parts that resemble Yann Tiersen's work on "Amelia", some industrial and metal, and lots of urban alternative. Our main composer is a fan of Zorn, Mr. Bungle and The Residents, so I guess everything is possible.

- In the screenshots you have published for the games so far, we have seen much of the backgrounds and the characters of the game, but we haven't seen any examples of the interface you are going to use. Could you describe to us how will the interface work?

We've implemented the easiest interface possible. You only have four or five actions possible an you switch between them by pressing the Right Mouse Button. You use the FEET to move your character, the EYE to examine things, the HAND to take them, and the MOUTH to talk to characters you'll encounter. The 'M' button brings up the map and by pressing 'I' you will open the character's inventory. Within the inventory screen you can also combine some of your items.

- What kind of problems will the players have to solve in the game?

I would say, the classic wacky adventure stuff. Talking to insane characters, using items in ways you're not supposed to, thinking your way through some absurd obstacles, you know...

- Will the game contain any action elements?

The characters in BOYZ are 2D and they're animated by human beings, not computers. It's 100% roots, old-school cartoon style. You won't get such effect in 3D animations.

You will get to control Fred while Pearcy will play a role similiar to the female character in INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS. You won't get to control Pearcy, but you will be able to interact with him.

Not really.

- Since Boyz Don't Cry features two main characters, it would be interesting to see how they would interact with each other. Will the players get to choose which of the characters to play with whenever in the games or will they have to use one of the 2 characters (predetermined by the game) at certain moments?

You will get to control Fred while Pearcy will play a role similiar to the female character in INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS. You won't get to control Pearcy, but you will be able to interact with him. At some parts of the game, Pearcy will play a significant role.

- Will the game feature an inventory and will the players usually carry a lot of items with them? Will they have to combine inventory items to solve a problem in the game?

The game will feature some items and yes, sometimes you will need to combine some of your items in inventory to get things done.

- Have you found publishers for BOYZ DON'T CRY yet?

That depends. We have a publisher in Poland (hi!) and we have an agreement with the Russians. But as for the USA and the UK the business negotiations are under way. Between you and me, sooner or later everyone is going to play our game ;-) We're aiming for total world domination.

- When will the game be released?

November 2004.

- Do you intend to release a playable demo before that?

We're planning to launch a english demo version just after we release BOYZ DON'T CRY in homeland.

- Are there chances that we will see a sequel to BOYZ DON'T CRY?

Yeah, sure. Why not? Anyway, if the game sells good and the angry mob won't lynch us, I would really like to make sequel. And I'm already thinking about GIRLZ DON'T CRY.

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

Yes. Don't you think that it would be great, if Steve Buscemi would agree to act in the English version of the game?

General

- Some years ago people spoke of the death of point and click and/or catoon adventures. Nowadays however, and especially in Europe, we see more and more point and click cartoon adventures coming out and more publishers who are willing to support them. Would you say that we are witnessing a return of cartoon adventures?

Heh, it would be nice. I don't think that adventure games will regain the popularity they had in the 90's, but on the other hand - I would be really surprised if this genre of games totally vanished. In my opinion, it's nice to play such a retro game from time to time.

- Have you played any recent adventures that you enjoyed thoroughly?

During last months I was rather busy, but I remember that before this thing started, I finished BEYOND GOOD & EVIL and was trully mesmerized by this title. The
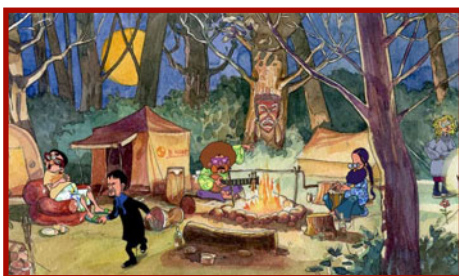
only problem was the game was really too short - it was surely an example of the FULL-THROTTLE syndrome. Other than that, I really liked SILENT HILL 2 for the PC and the latest BROKEN SWORD, which I mentioned before.

Although it's not adventure, I spent a few weeks sucked into Bethesda's MORROWIND. As for me, those guys did THE perfect game. I'm also waiting anxiously to play FABLE on Xbox.

- What do you think has to happen for the adventure genre to grow and prosper?

The games need to be better, I guess. Look at the FPS genre. A few years ago, it was all on the DOOM/QUAKE level - you were running around and you were just killing things. Right now, the FPS games feature stories, strong characters and lots of options that - a few years earlier - weren't even dreamt of. Evolution.

And adventures are still like the ones released in the 90's. Even the 3D ones feature the same scheme of thinking, the same cliches... But on the other hand, one cannot change too much, because then you won't have an adventure game, but a RPG or action-adventure-fpp-rts... :)

- From your website: "Feel invited to the most daring, full interactive animated film ever created". I found interesting that you desribe BOYZ DON'T CRY as a full interactive animated film. Do you consider the term more appropriate than the term adventure game? Do you think that nowadays games like BOYZ DON'T CRY are more interactive films than they are games?

The point is to make a great adventure game that will behave like a full animated, interactive movie. And I guess we did it, but you will need to check for yourself. The game features lots of locations and characters, tons of dialogues, lots of animations and a sinister plot and - in my opinion - this turns it into an animated film. On the other hand - we have all the quests, items and puzzles, that the user will need to solve. Adventure-style things.

Computer games and movies are similar in many ways. In both worlds, it's all about a good story that will keep the audience in front of the screen. You just use slightly different ways to express your ideas.

- When was L'Art founded?

The company was founded in the 90's by our Great Archmage, ups, I mean, the CEO, Kamil Metrak. Initially, L'Art was all about doing the best game localizations possible (it was fun, I must say), but four years ago, the company changed profile to creating our own computer games. The best possible, of course.

- Have you created other games before BOYZ DON'T CRY? Were any of those adventures?

Although we created some games before BOYZ DON'T CRY, this is our first adventure game. Those other productions include the SKI JUMPING series and from some time, we're working on a tank simulator.

- Do you plan to create more adventures after BOYZ DON'T CRY?

Sure. I would really like to create something more dramatic and something that would be produced in full 3D. But I'm afraid it's still too early to talk about it.
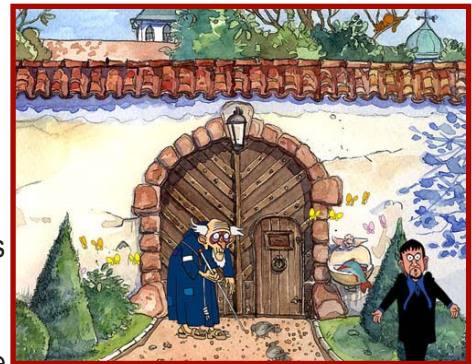
The Moment of . . . SILENCE

Oliver Gruener reviews the German version of The Moment of Silence. We will review the English version in the next issue of The Inventory. Now let's see what Oliver thought of this sci-fi adventure.

Developer:
House of Tales
Perspective:
3rd person
Interface:
Point and click
Site:
themomentofsilence.com
Difficulty:
Medium

I couldn't wait to pop the DVD into my computers drive because I had heard quite a lot of rumours about the new adventure game "The Moment of Silence". It is rare that a German game causes so much attention. "Far Cry" might have been an exception but "Far Cry" certainly is no adventure. The install screen popped up and after a reboot (DirectX 8.1 - I had DirectX 9 installed already though) I was ready to play. First shock, the game uses the "StarForce Copy Protection System" so I had to install that too and reboot a second time. After the restart I breathlessly hacked the serial number from the back of the manual in and was greeted by a well done render video sequence that promised a thrilling adventure in the spirits of "X Files" in the near future, 2044 to be exact.

Story: I want to believe that everything is alright, that the government isn't involved in a conspiracy with aliens and doesn't infiltrate its people's homes. But strangely enough, a police squad just stormed the floor of an apartment building,

where ad writer Peter Wright resides since a few days, and brutally arrest his neighbour, a family man of good reputation, leaving his devastated wife and young son behind, clueless. Wright who had just lost his own family after a tragic accident(?) promises to help the poor woman to find her husband.

And it soon becomes clear that there must be more behind the freelance journalist's disappearance - according to the police there had been no operation but if that is true why and by whom became the unfortunate journalist hijacked? Peter Wright, who momentarily works on an "anti cryptography" ad campaign for the government has a hard time swallowing that there might be something "bad" going on, something like a conspiracy, maybe?

This is the beginning of "The Moment of Silence", an espionage thriller and the second point and click adventure for the PC by developer "House of Tales". It is published by "dtp" who also released "The Longest Journey", "The Westerner", "Runaway" and "Black Mirror" in Germany.

The story delivers a suspense-packed, stirring science-fic-

tion plot. The developers took true institutions like the SETI project and the Echelon system - the first is searching for extraterrestrial life the second, more worldly, is used by the USA and some other countries among other things for industrial espionage - and wove it into an interesting politics thriller. *Spoilers* Reality is worse, believe me…) including some alien conspiracy a la X Files. *End of Spoilers*

Dialogues use the common multiple choice system. While they all make an interesting listening experience many are not really necessary to progress in the game but they do give more depth to the characters. Unfortunately I couldn't really identify with the lead character Peter, who was a bit too pathetic and disbelieving at times and also a tad too "plain" but I did feel a lot for the poor Deborah. Most dialogues are rather long and often have nothing much to do with the plot but they make the story deeper and intense. That said, it is clear that "The Moment of Silence" is more for the players who like a rich epic, Myst and puzzle junkies won't be too happy.

Graphics: The game uses 3D characters in pre-rendered 16:9 backgrounds with 1024*786 pixels and black borders on top and the inventory at the bottom; The backgrounds consist of static, rendered 3D artworks. Most of them are richly detailed, state of the art and wonderful to look at with animated props here and there. The apartment of our hero for example is a place I wouldn't mind living - unlike the homes of the usual game characters.

Sadly the developers didn't take the same care for all locations some, luckily rare, screens look rather meagre and empty. Real time

weather, mirror and particle effects are nice to look at and add to the realism of the scenes. In some scenes there is a cool video effect when Peter runs into another screen.

As nice as it is to see the adventure genre reach the 3D age, the polygon character models are poorly done. They do show facial expressions but the polygon count and texture quality is one or two years behind, as are the animations. Too often the models look as if they where stuck onto the backgrounds, the pixeled outline adds to that effect but is a little minimized when 4x anti aliasing is activated at the settings dialogue. This feature however depends on the graphics card you use.

Sound: In terms of voice acting "The Moment of Silence" is a little gem. "dtp" didn't try to save any money and hired some of the most famous dubbing specialists: Manfred Lehmann and Daniela Hoffmann are very well known as the German voices of Bruce Willis and Julia Roberts. Needless to say Lehmann's voice fits the doubtful and melancholic Peter Wright brilliantly as does Hoffmann and the pretty but desperate housewife, Deborah Oswald. The music and

The hacker will help if Petter does something for him first.

Clair, the robot, has had her AI downgraded and is acting stupid

Below: Lunar 5. Holidays in space with pretty girls or a huge brainwash facility?
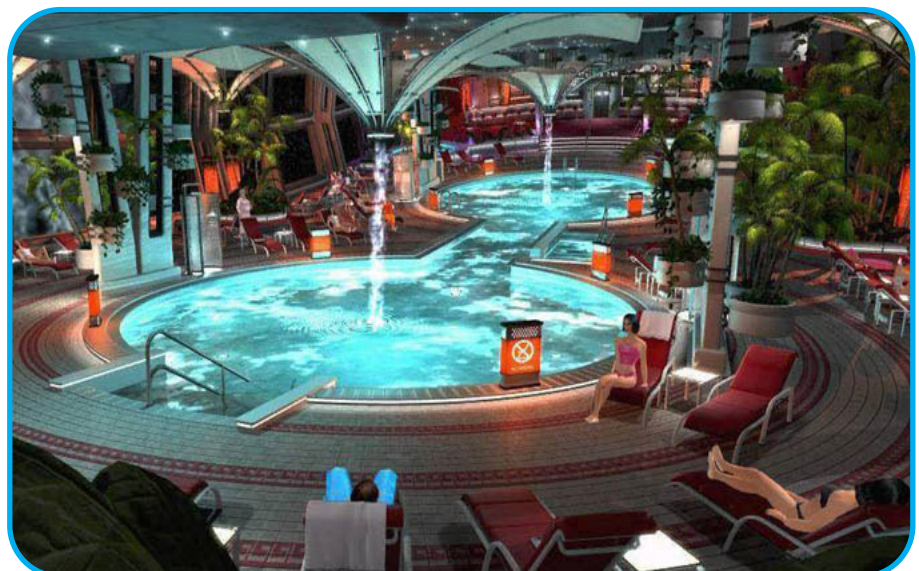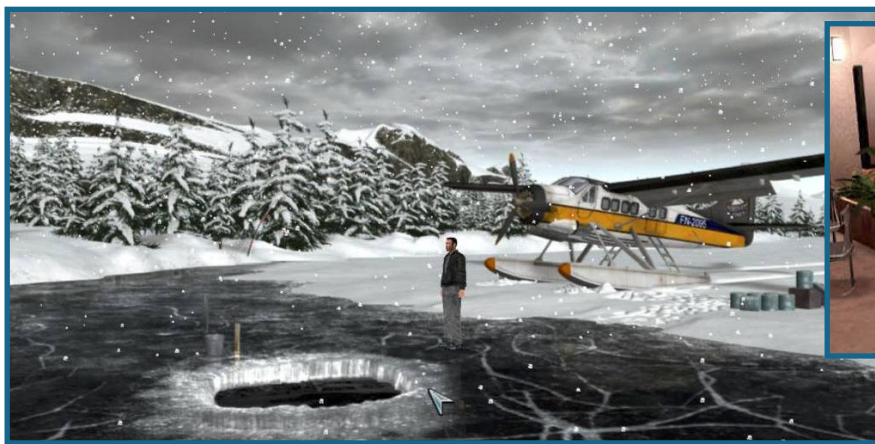
Right: Deborah needs some help and Peter is the right man for the job
Left: Ice is always a dangerous thing to step on.

"Altogether The Moment of Silence is an exciting and gripping experience with an intriguing plot that absorbs the player and keeps him/her curious of what comes next."

Highs: Gripping and absorbing storyline, logical traditional inventory-based puzzles, top notch voice-acting.
Lows: Pixel-hunting, path-finding, poorly done 3D models with low poly count.

The Verdict	
Story:	88
Graphics:	83
Sound:	90
Gameplay:	80
Overall:	**85**

*Overall = (Story x 2 + Graphics + Music + Gameplay x 2) / 6

sound effects mostly stay in the background but fit the current scene well. At the "Nuclear Café" hard rock riffs bang out of the speakers while in a park birds sing and cars drive by in the distance. In most scenes however unobtrusive ambient tunes float through the air.

Gameplay: The game is completely mouse controlled but also uses some hotkeys to make the interaction more comfortable. A nice idea is the player's messenger, a combination of PDA and cell phone that is needed for - who would guess - calling someone and to get into Peter's office. It can either be chosen from the inventory or by pressing the "m" key. Also to leave a location, the messenger is essential cause it functions as sort of credit card for the "Sat Cabs" that Peter uses to travel around.

The puzzles are mainly inventory based, pick up object A, combine it with object B and use it on object C, no action, no pushing boxes around but even though the cursor changes when scrolling over an object it sometimes is difficult to find the desired piece. Exits are another issue. Often it is not clear where the character can go into the next screen or get back to the previous one because the player model strides on defined paths so the freedom of walking around is limited. For

example, Peter stands in the northern screen of a location and wants to go to the southern one, but to do so first he has to go back to the western screen. The developers must have recognized that problem, too because pressing down the "h"elp button for some seconds shows all possible exits but be cautious, when pressing too long it might also show some unwanted spoilers in some screens.

General Info: The Moment of Silence is shipped on one DVD, minimal system requirements are Windows 98, a 1 GHz CPU, 256 MB RAM, a 3D graphics card with 32 MB RAM, it takes at least 900 MB hard disk space but a full installation with 3,4 GB is highly recommended, otherwise it will take ages for a new location to load.

In a few words... Altogether "The Moment of Silence" is an exciting and gripping experience with in general excellent techniques, intelligent - sometimes serious, sometimes funny - dialogues, deep and thoroughly worked out characters, an intriguing plot that absorbs the player for around 25 to 30 hours and keeps him curious of what comes next and, not to forget, good, traditional puzzles. Just remember: The truth is out there somewhere…

- Oliver Gruener

Myst IV: REVELATION

In 1993, brothers Robyn and Rand Miller created a game that changed adventures forever. It was called Myst, and if you haven't heard of it you are probably reading the wrong magazine. Over the next decade two sequels and a spin-off game were born: Riven, Myst III: Exile, and last year's Uru: Ages Beyond Myst (which had an expansion in the form of Uru: The Path of the Shell). Now, in 2004, we are treated to the latest in the franchise, Myst IV: Revelation, created in-house by Ubisoft. Having played the fruit of their labor from beginning to end, I will say that people who have never liked the Myst games or are biased against first-person adventures will probably not be converted, but everyone else is in for a real treat.

Story: The Myst franchise has always had very strong themes and characters, but many gamers claim there is no real story in the series. This is a baseless and entirely false accusation. The key to understanding a Myst game is to absorb absolutely everything. Though much of the story is supplied via journals you discover while exploring, a large amount is told by the visuals themselves. Many players forget that this is a visual medium, and they thoroughly ignore what is right in front of them. Like Benoit Sokal's excellent Syberia, the environments are physical extensions of a character's psyche. In Syberia every place you explored represented a period in the

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life and soul of Hans Voralberg. Here in Myst IV, the Ages of Spire and Haven are the tangible manifestations of the obsessions and instincts that drive the sons of Atrus; Sirrus and Achenar. Those who believed the two brothers to be dead after the conclusion of Myst will be interested to learn that they are both, in fact, alive and imprisoned in Ages that Atrus intended for such a purpose.

However, he never expected his sons to be the ones trapped within them. The sins of Sirrus and Achenar have been well documented over the course of the other games, particularly in the original and third entry. The subject of the fourth game is whether or not they have repented for those sins over a twenty year period. Atrus and Catherine have tried to move on. They even had another child, Yeesha, who was first introduced as a baby in Myst III and is now about ten years old. But the painful memories of the past are causing problems in the marriage of Atrus and Catherine (a point illustrated almost entirely by the visuals alone), and they must be confronted. Catherine is convinced her boys have changed for the better, while Atrus isn't so sure.

That is where the player comes in. You arrive in Tomahna at the request of Atrus, and he explains that your mission is to give an outside, objective perspective on the possible rehabilitation of the brothers. As you

Developer:
Ubisoft
Perspective:
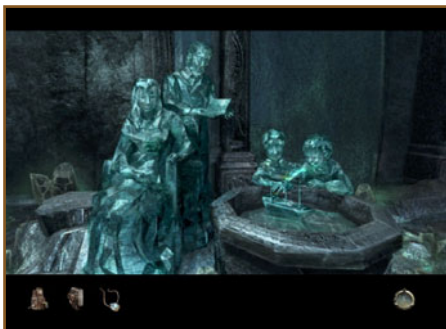**1st person**
Interface:
Point and click
Site:
mystrevelation.com
Difficulty:
Hard
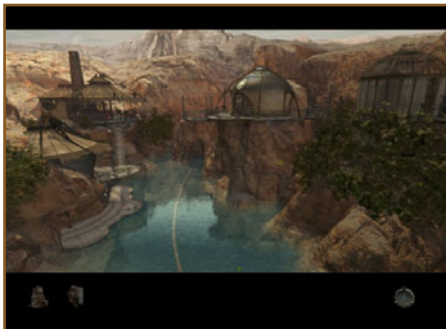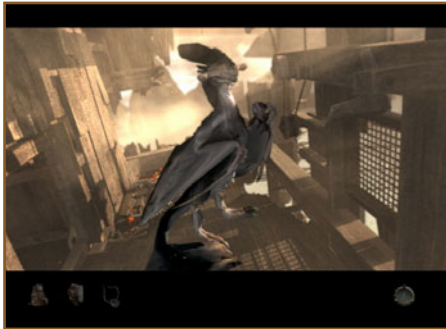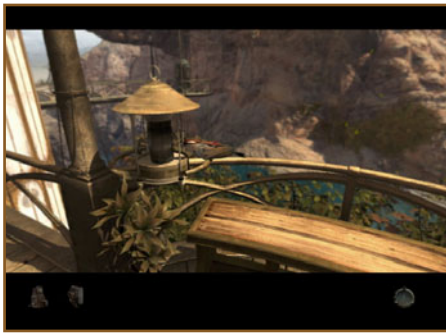
From Top to Bottom:
1. The bird is moving around, the leaves are blowing in the wind. Myst IV seems alive
2. One of the native creatures of Haven
3. Tomahna: The home of Atrus, Catherine, and Yeesha
4. A sculpture intended to recall Myst island in happier times

are about to get a look at the Prison Ages via the Crystal Viewer, there is an explosion and Atrus leaves urgently, asking you to look after Yeesha and get the power up and running again while he's away. As you attempt to do so, there is another strange explosion that knocks you unconscious for a number of hours, during which time Yeesha has disappeared. Were the brothers somehow involved? Have they escaped from their prisons? Do they intend to harm Yeesha, Atrus, Catherine, or the people of other Ages as they did years ago? Your journey will lead you to the answers, and it's a journey well worth taking.

Gameplay: This part of the game is relatively unchanged from the original aside from the additional dynamic of being able to view the world in 360-degrees, including looking up and down with complete freedom. Myst III offered this free-look mouse control as well, but Myst IV feels even more polished. The game is node-based, which means you will be standing in one place, but you'll have complete freedom in that spot to view the world all around you and interact with objects within reach. When you see a path that looks promising, you simply use the mouse to click in the direction you want to go, and you will be forwarded to the next point, occasionally enjoying a first-person walking animation.

　　One of the new gameplay elements that I love is the way the mouse control feels more realistic and natural. It's still point-and-click in most respects, but now there is some "click-and-hold" if you will. Instead of just clicking a lever to pull it or clicking a book page to turn it, you now click the page, for instance, and you hold the button down as you make a motion with the mouse itself in the direction that you are turning

it. This sounds unnecessary, and one could argue that it is indeed, but I believe this gives the game a more believable feel and gets the player more involved in interacting with the environment. The puzzles are quite challenging, but at the same time very logical and rewarding. I've seen jokes around the internet that a degree in engineering is almost a requirement to beat the game. While I don't doubt that it would help, it's certainly not required. What you will be dealing with are various puzzles that are similar to the type found in previous Myst games and other first-person adventures. Many of them have multiple parts, and some even require the completion of an Age before you find the answer to a puzzle in another. It's not easy by any means, and this is certainly a challenging game. But I find that the challenging puzzles are often the most fun to solve, and there is a built-in hint system to save you if you get stuck.

Graphics: If I had to summarize this portion of Myst IV with a single word, that word would have to be: "phenomenal". The immense level of production value and imagination on display is downright baffling at times. It has become popular practice in mainstream game criticism to sing the praises of the latest true 3D engines while thoroughly bashing games with pre-rendered art. For these critics, Myst IV should serve as proof of two things: (1) 3D engines simply can't look this good yet, and (2) pre-rendered games don't have to feel pre-rendered. So many Myst clones feel pre-rendered because they are still emulating the original Myst, a game made eleven years ago. Myst as a franchise, however, has come a long way with respect to the visuals. Myst IV takes this progression to the next level.

You will really feel like you are exploring a world that surrounds you; you will find yourself fully immersed in the various Ages. Unlike the computer generated still shots used in the first two games, and even more impressive than the free-look environments of Myst III; playing Revelation is like being the star of a beautifully animated CG film. Leaves flutter by on a breeze, birds take flight or land nearby, water shimmers and moves with elegant grace, shadows glide along surfaces, smoke escapes from a chimney, insects swarm around you, frogs hop at your feet, etc. And these things don't just happen right in front of you, they exist as if you are standing in a real 3D space. The comparison to a virtual world would be understandable.

What's more impressive is how very different all of the Ages really are. Tomahna is the secluded paradise, Spire is a lifeless place resembling a large stone prison, Haven is primarily a jungle environment filled with all kinds of marvelous creatures, and Serenia is an age of dreams, full of peaceful, simple wonders. Every age is a real joy to explore; even Spire manages to impress despite its bleak, depressing style. The creatures in Haven deserve special mention here because they are well designed and wonderfully animated, breathing further life into the proceedings. It's hard to find anything negative to say about these visuals. Games will only get more beautiful than this when these environments can be done in real-time 3D.

Sound: Without a doubt, this is an extremely important part of a game's ability to pull you into its world, and that is particularly true of Myst IV. Every little sound does its job, making the experience more convincing, no matter how subtle or invisible the effects may seem. The whistling wind, a creaking board, the flap of a bird's wings, the roar of a fearsome creature, etc. Ubisoft has really outdone themselves in terms of the entire production. While I would argue that you get much more out of the visuals, if one had to choose between the two, it's still the marriage of image and sound that makes Myst IV such a breathtaking journey. The music is extremely well done also. Jack Wall has done a fantastic job of capturing the proper mood for each Age through a tapestry of instruments and vocals. From grasping the tribal aspects of Haven to evoking the loneliness of Spire, Wall's work is a success from beginning to end. Peter Gabriel has a song in the game as well, and it comes across quite well during a particularly colorful cinematic sequence. I really only have good things to say about the soundscapes of Myst IV.

There's still one question that remains unanswered. Is this the best Myst game to date? That's hard to say because I haven't played the others in quite some time. Based on memory alone, I would say the only game in the series that can possibly compare would be Riven. Myst IV is really that good. However, I must recommend that players do the full install of around 7 gigabytes in order to make the game run smoother. A DVD player is also required. Beyond that, there is nothing that should keep fans of first-person adventures from enjoying this game. It's obvious that it was created by a group of people who really adore the genre. The result of their efforts is an experience that not only doesn't disappoint, it actually impresses.

- Ben Keeney

What is Achenar doing in Serenia?
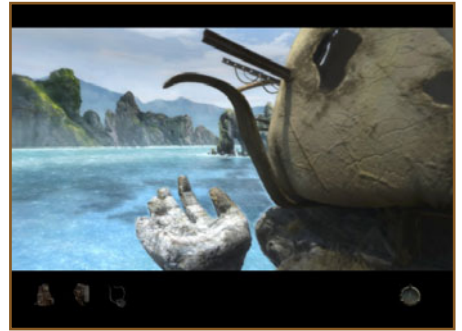
Serenia: One of the most beautiful locations in Myst IV

"There is nothing that should keep fans of first-person adventures from enjoying this game. It's obvious that it was created by a group of people who really adore the genre"

Highs: Amazing marriage of image and sound, satisfying storyline, fun exploration and puzzles.

Lows: Regardless of how fun they are, the puzzles are tough. The acting is also a bit up and down throughout.

The Verdict	
Story:	86
Graphics:	99
Sound:	91
Gameplay:	81
Overall:	**87**

Overall = (Story x 2 + Graphics + Music + Gameplay x 2) / 6

LEGACY
DARK SHADOWS

Razbor Studios is a new developing company from Croatia. Their first adventure Legacy: Dark Shadows is a point and click sci-fi mystery. Razbor released a build of the game to the public about a year ago. Legacy, at that point, showed a lot of promise, with beautiful backgrounds and a user-friendly interface. The drawbacks of the certain build were its sloppy animation and the unprofessional voice-casting.

The developers however stated that the animation would be improved and that the voices would change as well in the final version of Legacy: Dark Shadows. The developers also made promise of an epic storyline, with 14 chapters and a story longer than the one we saw in The Longest Journey. We now had the chance to play the final version of Legacy, which will be published by GMX Media in the UK, and by Tri-Synergy in the US.

Before I start talking about each part of the game separately, I would like to say that my opinion of Legacy changed quite a few times as I was progressing throughout the story. The first impression was …. iiigghh. The voice-overs were completely amateurish and the animation was very poor. But as the game went along I started to enjoy Legacy, despite its flaws, especially due to its great gameplay and to its somewhat cheesy story. Yes, I found that part of Legacy's charm lies in its cheesiness, believe it or not.

Story: The story of the game starts in the past, and more specifically at the battle of Stalingrad in 1942. For a very short time, you take control of Jack Black, a journalist. You explore the surroundings for a little while, until you find …something (if I would say what it could be considered a spoiler) and then the story jumps to the future in the year 2138. Now you control Ren Silver, a futuristic private investigator who is on vacation on Mars. But Ren's vacation won't last for long. She suddenly receives a message from her friend Hacker. A scientist has been kidnapped and it is your job to find him.

Ren is one of those kick-ass girls who likes her clothes tight and her guns big. If she were to choose between finding a password for a safe or blowing it up with some dynamite she happened to have, she'd choose the latter. It was actually quite refreshing to play such a character. She'd be considered clichéd if seen in an action movie, but how many times have you recently played in an adventure, a girl who is more mean than Ben of Full Throttle? Oh, she really, really hates barrels also, but that's another story. Did I talk about cheesiness before? There's lots of it.

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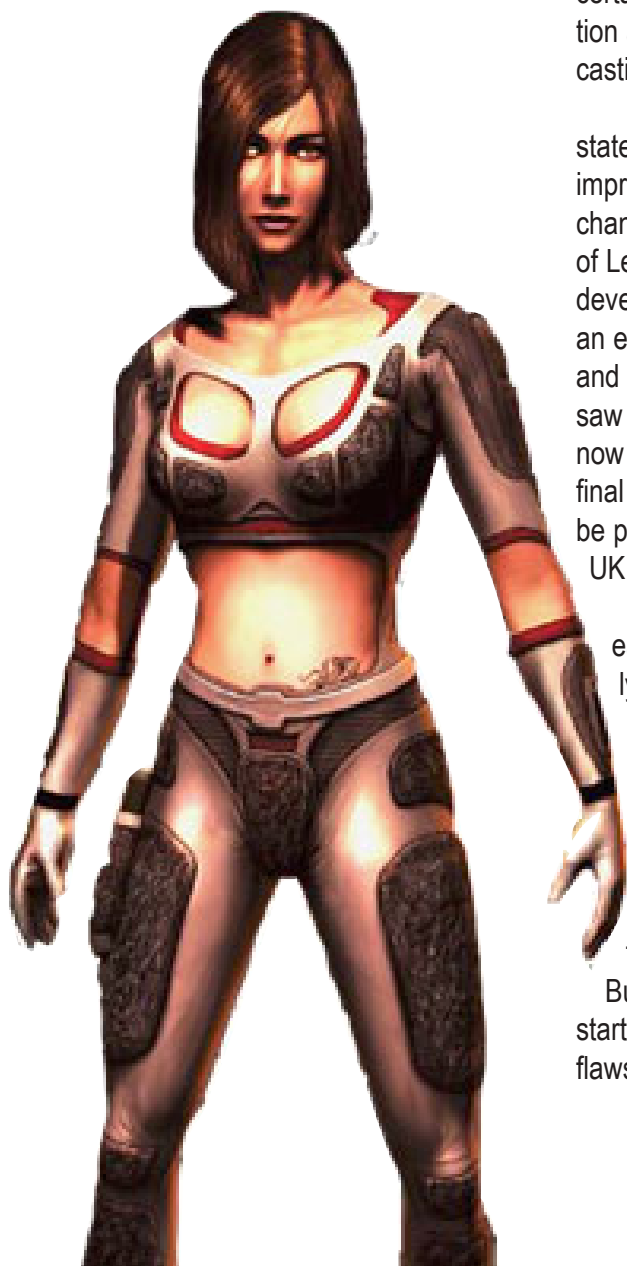
From the dialogues to the names of the characters. Examples: a tour leader who's name is miss La Tour, a gun dealer who's name is Gunman and a hacker who's name is… Hacker. The dialogues might seem strange to you in the beginning (some of the jokes apparently don't come out that well when translated into English) but they all add up to the cheesiness I just mentioned. To give you an example by using movie comparisons: If you expect to experience a story like Talented Mr Ripley or Donnie Darko, well you will be utterly disappointed. But if you start up the game, lie back on your chair and expect to experience a game with a story similar to say… Resident Evil, Legacy is absolutely the right title for you.

What I was really disappointed with in terms of storytelling, was the ending of the game. Without giving out any spoilers, the developers totally rushed the game and did not keep their promise of a grand storyline that would exceed in terms of length the Longest Journey. I played the game for about 4 to 5 hours a day and in the 3rd day I played it, I was done. I expected the villain of the game to be featured for a much longer time, and it felt somewhat of a letdown that the ending did not last longer than it did. It is really abrupt and you really can't believe you are watching the end credits at that point. I could think of many ways that the developers could have handled the story so that players would get 4,5 more hours of Legacy. And not just for the sake of length, but because it would actually fit well in the story. For example a lot of the story is explained through text near the end, something that could have been handled

in a playable way instead. But let's hope that Razbor will take that into consideration while developing their next game.

Playing adventure games is also about experiencing unforgettable and magic moments. And Legacy has one of those moments that will stay long in my mind when I will think about gaming experiences. Without spoiling anything, it involves Ren walking on the surface of an asteroid. The music, the backgrounds and generally the whole atmosphere during that scene is absolutely magical. The fact that no actors are talking during that sequence probably helped a lot as well, because as you will read later on, the voice-overs are horrendous. Nevertheless, it is not very often you see such scenes that turn games into an experience, and Razbor deserves Kudos for that.

Graphics: As I mentioned before, the animation is poor. Ren walks (and runs) in a very peculiar way. It seems more like she is floating on the screen, rather than walking on it. Her body parts seem totally disconnected from each other. And I swear I've never seen a female butt moving that much! The model itself is very well constructed, but the poor animation makes it hard for you to appreciate the design. The backgrounds on the other hand are a whole different story. I actually thought that the backgrounds improved as the game progressed, and I was really amazed by some of the scenery later on in the game.

The cutscenes come often and they are a nice addition most of the time, but the problem here is once more the animation. Ren and the rest of the characters move in a very peculiar way and it fails to impose on you the cinematic fee-
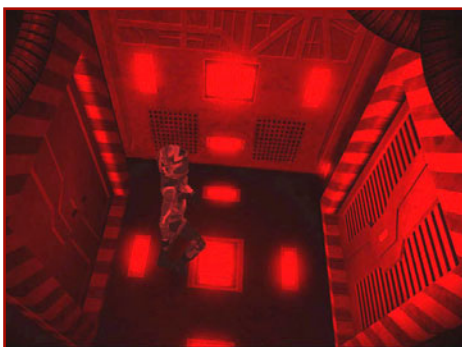

Ren's office overlooking the city

Developer:
Razbor Studios
Perspective:
3rd person
Interface:
Point and click
Site:
legacythegame.com
Difficulty:
Easy

Below: Legacy is rich in atmospheric environments.
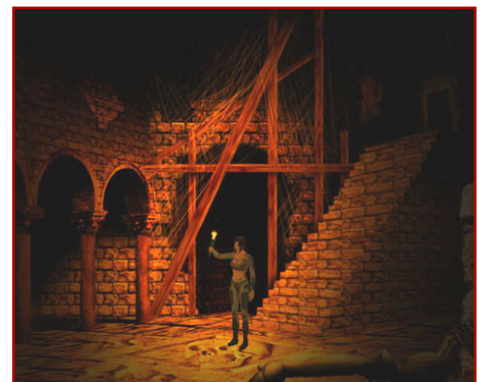
From Top to Bottom:
1. Hacker and his dolphin
2. Libraries have always been an endless source of information
3. When you have solved too many puzzles it is time to use force
4. All ready for the surface of Mars

ling, which is what cutscenes are supposed to do. One more thing that one might find odd, is that if you don't move Ren for a while, she will lift her right foot, as if she is stretching it. Almost all adventures nowadays feature some sort of animation for your character when he/she stays idle for a while, but I have to say this is the weirdest one I've seen so far.

Sound: The worst part of the game has to be the voice-overs. I don't know how much I can be hard on the developers however regarding the casting of Legacy. According to what they told us, their initial plans were to find a publisher that would help them find appropriate actors. However these initial plans never took place, since no publisher was found that would be willing to help Razbor financially to find professional actors. Therefore the developers had to find actors by themselves, and considering their limited budget you can imagine the rest. It is truly a pity, since better voice-acting would vastly increase the final rate of the game. If you live in a region where English is not the native language and publishers usually release localized versions for the native language, I would suggest you wait for this one instead. It can't be worse in any way imaginable (unless they hire one single actor to cast all characters).

The music is quite average on the whole. In the beginning of the game, some of the music tracks felt quite amateurish, but as the story progressed they got better and better and some of them were quite spooky and atmospheric. And I know I said that about the backgrounds of the game as well. Maybe the developers gained valuable experience during the development of the game; hence the

later parts of the game are quite better when it comes to technical characteristics.

Gameplay: This is where the game really excels. There were quite a lot of things that really impressed me in Legacy: Dark Shadows. First of all, the pace of the gameplay. I never got stuck for more than 10 minutes. I always knew what I had to do next. All the problems that I had to face made sense. This is something really rare nowadays. Razbor deserves congratulations for achieving something that many other developers with much bigger budgets have failed to achieve for so long time now.

Something else that I was impressed with was the interface. It is not everyday you play an adventure that has an interface which feels really transparent. Simple, effective and it makes you forget about it… which is how all good interfaces should be. You click somewhere, you go there. Double click, Ren will run to that spot. If you click an item that's non-interactive, Ren will give you a description. If you click an interactive item you can either look at it, or pick it up. If you click on a character you can talk to him/her. The inventory? You can either double click, or scroll through your items on-screen just with the use of the mouse roller. Simple and effective. In the inventory, you can also check Ren's log, that records all important events of the game. So if you stop playing and start again after a long time, you can remember what happened last time you played by reading the log. The tasks you have to solve in the game range from typical inventory-related tasks, to solving logical puzzles (but no need to worry, I would not describe any of them as extreme and most of them made

Top: There are a lot of monsters that will stand in your way throughout your mission

Left: Even alcoholics can be of help

sense). Some of the ways to proceed in the game reminded me of Full Throttle. Do you remember how Ben would kick the door down instead of searching the place for the key? Well expect similar behavior from Ren Silver as well. Generally speaking, many of the tasks in the game are action-oriented - but always in an 'adventure-context'. I hope the future titles of Razbor will feature the same high quality of gameplay.

General Info: There was a certain bug during the game that would throw me out after playing for about an hour. I have no idea though, whether the build I played is the final version sold in the stores but just in case, remember to save often. Talking about saves, I found it also odd that you are not allowed to delete your saves in-game. Since I'm one of those persons that save every 4th or 5th screen, I ended up with a LOT of saved slots.

In a few words… Is Legacy a great game? Certainly not. Is it worth its money? I personally think

so. While you should not expect a technically superb game and you should not expect a grandiose story that will make you think about it for days after you are finished with it, Legacy: Dark Shadows is an adventure that will give you some hours of fun, especially due to its great gameplay. My mood about it changed from the initial 'oh I hope this game ends soon' to the final 'I have to study, do the laundry, and clean my room until tonight…or maybe I can play Legacy for a little while instead and do everything else after that".

And let's not forget that this is the first attempt of Razbor. Remember Frogwares, House of Tales and even Sierra's and Lucasarts' first games? Do you see my point? I just hope that the developers will try to improve on their animation technique in their next game and that they will get better support from publishers. We can only wish them the best of luck, cause the potential is certainly there.

- Dimitris Manos

> "While you should not expect a technically superb game and you should not expect a grandiose story, Legacy: Dark Shadows is an adventure that will give you a few hours of fun, especially due to its great gameplay."

Highs: Logical tasks, great interface, amusing story at times, atmosphere
Lows: Horrendous acting, poor animation, short story

The Verdict	
Story:	74
Graphics:	59
Sound:	25
Gameplay:	96
Overall:	**70**

*Overall = (Story x 2 + Graphics + Music + Gameplay x 2) / 6

BeTrapped!

Developer:
Oberon Media
Perspective:
3rd person
Interface:
Point and click
Site:
oberon-media.com
Difficulty:
Easy

Let's get one thing straight right now: I believe Jane Jensen is the best adventure game designer in the business. I've been a fan of her work ever since I played that little underwater journey from Sierra called EcoQuest: The Search For Cetus. I believe her contributions to King's Quest VI helped make it the best game in the series, and the Gabriel Knight trilogy is legendary, arguably the greatest franchise in the genre's history. I even defended Inspector Parker as a fun, addictive little way to pass the time. However, what every Jane Jensen fan really wants right now is Gray Matter; the game that was supposed to begin a new series comparable to the mysteries of Grace and the Schattenjager. Unfortunately, Dreamcatcher has decided to put this title on hold for financial reasons, forcing Jane to waste her talent making low budget games for ninety year old women. Don't get me wrong, I've done my fair share of defending what BeTrapped! was supposed to be, but it didn't turn out as advertised. I expected the adventure mode (as opposed to the puzzle mode) to be for fans like me, without all the Minesweeper-esque trap disarming. Unfortunately, the adventure mode is still very much a repetitive "it came with Microsoft Windows" puzzle game with very few adventure style puzzles, all of which are extremely easy.

Story: Though Jane Jensen has a fantastic knack for designing adventures, it's her stories and characters

that breathe life into them and set them apart. After playing all of her richly written games and reading both of her novels, Millennium Rising (later known as Judgement Day) and Dante's Equation, I would be the first to understand if she needed some rest time to recuperate. I suppose that's where BeTrapped! comes in. Jensen clearly wrote this thing in her sleep. We've got a group of people stuck together (due to a storm, no less) in an old mansion after a man's funeral, where everyone seems to have ample motive for murder. It's the same tired old plot we've seen in countless mediums; from whodunit movies and Agatha Christie novels to hundreds of television shows and the two Laura Bow games. Unfortunately, every other version of this story is superior to BeTrapped! Despite the obvious tongue-in-cheek style, reminiscent of Clue or Neil Simon's Murder by Death, it's still quite absurd and forgettable. The trap stuff, for instance, just doesn't work as either drama or comedy, and should have been left out entirely in the adventure mode. Quite frankly, everything here is well below Jensen's formerly established talent level.

Gameplay: In three words: I feel betrayed. Jane claimed this game would have an estimated twenty hours of gameplay, but I finished it in under four. She also claimed the adventure mode wouldn't have the Minesweeper puzzle stuff; it would be a traditional adventure game through and through. If that were true, which it's not, this would be a thirty minute experience. The vast majority of the "adventure mode" requires you to do exactly what you

Below: As I said, the game isn't ALL bad....

Below: A perilous pantry. Reminds me of home.

would do in the puzzle mode: run around on a tile based map and disarm traps in each room. After clearing a room of traps, you can then talk to people within the room via dialogue trees, or click on whatever objects are flashing at you, blatantly letting you know exactly what items can be examined or picked up. The six or seven items you can collect over the course of the entire four chapter game are painfully obvious; this is "use insect repellant on bee hive" type stuff all the way. Worse yet, at the climax of the game, you get to choose answers to solve the mystery, and then read a bunch of text (in the visual form of a book that fills the screen) until it says "The End". For non-geriatrics, this is the new cure for insomnia. That brings us to the real meat of the game. For three and a half hours, make no mistake about it, you will be playing Minesweeper. The tiles are color-coded here instead of using numbers to let you know how many traps are adjacent to a particular tile (blue = 0, green = 1, yellow = 2, orange = 3), and the visuals are a bit more appealing, but this is the same game. You left click the mouse to move, and you right click to disarm a trap. It's nearly impossible to fail. The game allows you five lives and five "misses" per room, which amounts to ten "free failures" even when the entire number of traps never goes higher than twenty-nine, as I recall. Additionally, if one is pathetic enough to require a second chance at disarming a certain room, it's possible to retry as many times as you wish. In the puzzle mode it's harder because there are two additional tile colors that consider four or five adjacent traps, but in the adventure mode it's completely easy.

Graphics: Had the game actually been good I freely admit I may have been more lenient here. However, there is no denying that these are below average, "free download" graphics. That means they are alright during the first hour, and increasingly more annoying in the three hours after charging twenty bucks to your credit card.

Everything is sharp and crisp because the resolution is decent, but the actual content that forms the images looks like it was designed fourteen years ago. The rooms look pretty simple, and while the character portraits during conversation are the most impressive graphical addition to the game, I've seen better work in ancient Sierra titles (including Jensen's own 1994 release, Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers). To make matters worse, close-ups of items are blurry and lacking in detail. Games with graphics like this are generally found in five dollar bargain bins or given away at garage sales, not sold for a crisp twenty dollar bill. Last month I reviewed The Case of the Silver Earring and Dark Fall II, both of which retail for the same price, and the difference in quality is staggering. Quite simply, those games are worth the money. BeTrapped! is not.

Sound: Again, this is a category where I think Jane's previous games have excelled. The music her husband, Robert Holmes, composed for the Gabriel Knight series perfectly complimented the visuals and provided further texture to the themes of the story. Mr. Holmes also provided the catchy theme for Inspector Parker. Unfortunately, BeTrapped! is a different game, and it suffers from a lack of music. There is only a single piece to keep things lively, and it just doesn't succeed in doing so. I somehow don't think two or three tracks would have been too much to

ask, but apparently it was.

As for the sound effects, there is really nothing impressive. A few exploding traps here or falling chandeliers there, please nudge me to make sure I'm awake when it's over. While I understand that really loud or powerful sound effects might make the core audience of this game go into violent seizures, I'm still not ready to be merciful.

There is a place in the world of gaming for BeTrapped!, but it's not with adventure gamers, despite the pre-release lies and hype. If you enjoy these simple little puzzle games it's still hard to recommend it since it's just a Minesweeper clone with actual graphics. I hate to bash this game since I love Jane Jensen's work so much, but she has simply failed this time. Perhaps her heart wasn't in it. Perhaps her heart is still in Gray Matter. I know that's where mine wants to be as soon as possible.

- Ben Keeney

"There is a place in the world of gaming for BeTrapped!, but it's not with adventure gamers, despite the pre-release lies and hype"

Highs: It's mercifully short
Lows: Everything else

The Verdict

Story:	**27**
Graphics:	**35**
Sound:	**28**
Gameplay:	**29**
Overall:	**29**

*Overall = (Story x 2 + Graphics + Music + Gameplay x 2) / 6

Broken Sword: The Shadow of the Templars

Joe Thorpe is a new writer in the Inventory staff. His first review is a review tribute to one of the best adventures of the past, Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars. The game is known as Circle of Blood in the US.

Developer:
Revolution
Perspective:
3rd person
Interface:
Point and click
Site:
www.revolution.co.uk
Difficulty:
Medium

When you're trying to summarize most games, you try to find the essence of the game, a short way to describe it to give people an idea of what its about. With Broken Sword however, I couldn't find that one element because simply put, this game has something for everyone.

Story: The story begins to unfold when our hero George Stobbart is dining outside a Parisian café that is soon demolished by, of all people, a clown. Soon after, George meets Nico, a reporter who was to be meeting the target of the explosion and together they begin to investigate. As George and Nico make more progress, they soon discover that the killing is part of something much larger and they need to (cue music) SAVE THE WORLD!

The story, albeit clichéd, works well because the characters bring the game to life. George is a very likable protagonist; he has the perfect mix of naïve gallantry and shrewd logic to make you believe he could have survived this adventure. He is a real person with real emotions and the chemistry between him and Nico is great.

The supporting characters are great too, I have fond memories of a British aristocrat and George's alter ego, Sewer Jacques. The globetrotting nature of this game gives the developers plenty of chances to take cheap shots at stereotypes but the game does a good job of pushing them far enough to be funny without being offensive.

Graphics: The games backgrounds and characters are gorgeous. Each screen is hand-painted and looks fantastic. I found myself staring at some of the screens marveling at the attention to detail, whether it was intricate building designs or late afternoon sunlight being filtered through a tree. Another small but pleasing touch in

Below: **Who knows what secrets this Parisian church may hold?**

Left: **The attention to detail is especially impressive in this hotel**
Right: **George can stop to throw back a few pints in Ireland**
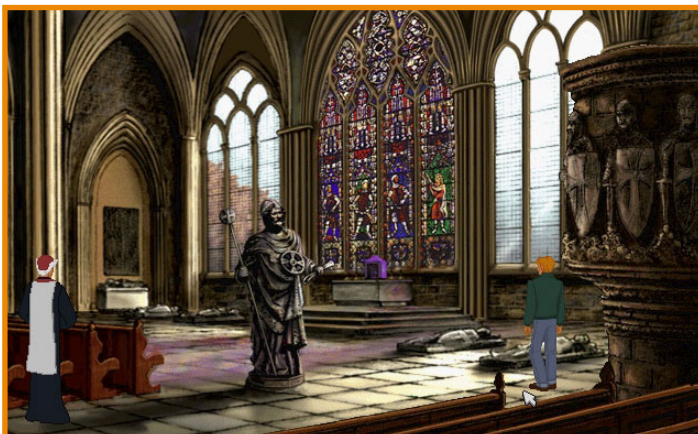
the game was the inclusion of inventive camera angles, which I haven't found in many recent games. The only problem I had was in the inconsistency of the cut-scenes. While some were done nicely, others were of lesser quality but nothing that destroyed the atmosphere.

Sound: While I was mostly pleased with the sound in this game, some parts were a mixed bag. On the positive side, all of the voices suited the characters perfectly and had me entertained throughout the game and the music reflected the current mood of the game and locations and was done very well. One the negative though, the music would sometimes cut off, leaving an awkward silence and there were some events which could have greatly benefited from the use of sound effects but they were still not included.

Gameplay: Broken Sword has a good assortment of puzzles but as in most third person games most revolve around inventory manipulation but with a few dialogue and other kinds thrown in for good measure. The games interface is very streamlined and easy to use; a left click will interact with an item and a right click will give a verbal description. The inventory can be accessed by moving your mouse to the top of the screen.

The puzzles are not too taxing (though there is a rather sinister goat that had me stumped)

but they are hard enough to keep you involved in the game. The goals of the puzzles vary and they do not fall back into meaningless fetch quests.

General: I've been referring to the game as Broken Sword because it's the name of the series but the American release was (stupidly) renamed "Circle of Blood". The game comes on two CDs and can be easily run through Windows XP's compatibility mode or using SCUMMVM. I don't think I encountered a single bug in the game unless the aforementioned sound cutoff was a bug, but nothing that seriously detracted from the game. The game was re-released a few years ago on the Gameboy Advance so this might be a way to get a young relative hooked on adventure games or just a way to have some fun on the road.

In a Few Words: Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars is a great game that will appeal to almost all fans of the genre. While the game has a few faults they are vastly outweighed by the fun factor of this game and to anyone who has not yet played this classic, I wholeheartedly recommend it to all.

"While the game has a few faults they are vastly outweighed by the fun factor of this game and to anyone who has not yet played this classic, I wholeheartedly recommend it to all"

Highs: Deep and moving plot, beautiful artwork, professional voice-overs
Lows: Audio could have been better

The Verdict	
Story:	**98**
Graphics:	**91**
Sound:	**74**
Gameplay:	**95**
Overall:	**92**

Overall = (Story x 2 + Graphics + Music + Gameplay x 2) / 6

Bits and Bytes
The Hardware Corner

In the last issue Oliver gave us a brief history of computers. Now in this issue Oliver talks about the latest graphic cards you can find in the market. So if you want to check what is the option that will make your adventures look the best, read carefully.

Next to the CPU and the RAM nowadays the graphics card is one of the most essential and important types of hardware a PC is equipped with - and that gpes not just for gamers. The graphics board is the interface between the computer and the screen, because the screen, maybe a conventional one with a tube or a modern TFT flat screen, no matter how good it is, it can only display a picture with the quality of the signals it gets from the graphics card. Well known for cards with a good VGA signal quality is Matrox. Unfortunately the latter Matrox graphics cards are too slow for playing today's games.

But let's take a short look back before we introduce the current graphics hardware from ATI and Nvidia. 3D graphics or graphics itself was never a strong domain of the IBM-PC until in 1997 a small company called 3DFx released the Voodoo card, an add-on graphics card that could be plugged into the PCI port as addition to an already existing graphics card. The first Voodoo cards had 4 MB of memory and could only display a 16 bit colour depth but most importantly they showed never seen before 3D graphics with tons of special effects. Playing games like the first Tomb Raider and Quake on a Voodoo was a completely different experience. Today, almost twice a year a new generation of graphics cards is offered and promises to be almost double as fast and use tons of new and better effects than its predecessors. The game is always the same. At first both NVidia and ATI present their "masterpiece" the usual fastest card of its generation and offer it for a price some people would buy a whole computer for. When the new cards are out other models with the same abilities in effects will follow soon after but are much slower, just about as fast as the fastest cards of the old generation and sometimes even slower than those. These "cheaper" graphic cards usually cost more then last generation cards so the customer can decide either to buy a cheap still fast but old one or an expensive but "modern" card that offers all the new FX.

Before we finally come to our candidates a word about the port you plug the card in. There are some graphic cards out already for the brand new PCI-Express port, yet tests have shown that there is no difference in speed compared to the ordinary AGP port. It seems that PCI-express needs to ripen another one or two computer generations

before the AGP port will die out completely. So we concentrate on AGP cards here because mainboards with PCI-E are still quite uncommon.

All new cards support Microsoft's graphics interface DirectX 9, but while NVidia cards already use the Shader model 3, ATI stays with an upgraded Shader model 2 causing very slight disadvantages in very modern games like Doom 3 or Far Cry but generally both companies flagships, the GeForce 6800 Ultra / GeForce 6800 GT / GeForce 6800 and the Radeon X800 XT PE / Radeon X800 Pro / Radeon X800 SE are practically equal in costs (the six models are between 300 and 500 Euros / Dollars) and speed. NVidia's GeForce is faster in some brand new games but slower in most benchmark programs like the 3D Mark 2003 but all six models easily reach between 10,000 and 12,000 3D Marks when backed up by a proper CPU of the 3GHz generation. The GeForce's biggest disadvantages are their enormous hunger for electric current (that can cost a lot of cash, folks!) and the noisy ventilator. In those two areas the ATI cards are undefeated.

Power gamers certainly will buy one of those new graphic cards but what about the casual gamer who wants to play new games at a good speed but doesn't want to spend half of his monthly income? They should avoid the lower price models from the GeForce 6zzz or Radeon Xzzz series because the flagships of the last generation are not only cheaper but also faster. For around 150 to 250 Euros / Dollars the Geforce FX 5950 U / FX 5900 / FX 5900 XT or Radeon 9800 XT / 9800 Pro (256) / 9800 offer a good value for their money and reach about 6000 to 7000 3D Marks. Some might have wondered why I didn't include exact numbers to give a better comparison but believe me when I say that the difference is not recognizable within a league or cards when playing a game. Nobody can make a distinction if a card reaches 70 frames per second or 72 besides it's different in every game, anyway. When buying a new graphics card it's important to plan the amount of money you want to spend and only then decide which card to buy. When looking for one of the cards mentioned here, you should be sure that you make a fair bargain whether you buy a high end card and be certain that within the next six months you have one of the fastest cards in the world or if you choose just a reliable card that offers as much speed as possible for its price.

- Oliver Gruener

Invento-Mail

This is the part of the magazine where you can make yourselves heard. Send your emails to theinventory@yahoo.com and we will reply to you in this section in one of our future issues. Now let's move on to some of the mails we received since our last issue.

Dear All, It's a fantastic zine. Credit where credit is due. I really would be lost without a fix of "Inventory". Well done with all the tireless work, well crafted articles and thankless output. Keeping feeding the adventure hounds!! Btw how about a few IF articles/reviews as well??

Laurence

The Inventory: Dear Laurence, thank you for the kind comments. Unfortunately right now we cannot add IF articles due to lack of time. Maybe in the future. Keep being fed :)

When are you going to review Crystal Key 2? Is it any good?

Paradox

The Inventory: Hi Paradox. I sent a review copy to one of our reviewers some time ago, but he hasn't had the time to review it yet. I couldn't be bothered playing it for more than half an hour, but having said that, it's not my kind of adventure to begin with so you should either wait for the review or maybe look for a demo and decide for yourself.

Thank you for ruining the end of Black Mirror for me in the interview with DTP (Sept '04). Just putting *spoiler* imediately before a question like: The main character kills himself at the end of..... This question should have never been asked and I would suspect several of your readers probably feel the same way. Knowing the end just pushed Black Mirror to the bottom of my "to-play" list, sorry DTP. Most people read several lines ahead of what they are comprehending. I was done with the first sentence before Ieven recall the work spoiler. Please be more careful next time.

Regards,
Jason Kolodziej

The Inventory: Dear Jason, as you probably read already in the prologue, we identified our mistake and apologised for it. I am terribly sorry that you read the spoiler. We will do our best so that it does not happen again.

People who run the Inventory, I'm very offended by your mention of pornographic games in your magazine, especially ones featuring bestiality! In your hardware corner on page 38, "Hump the Wumpus" is mentioned not once, but twice! You should be ashamed of yourselves!

Insincerely,
Stuart Feldhamer

The Inventory: Dear Stuart, no need to be alarmed and no need to call the police. It was a spelling mistake done by a non-English writer and not detected by a non-English editor. The author was reported of his mistake in a thread in adventure forums and if I remember correctly the actual name of the game is Hunt the Wumpus. So no bestiality here :) Although I have to admit this is one of the funniest spelling mistakes ever.

the purist

The Purist is a new opinion column by the editor of The Inventory. This column will discuss recent events in the adventure genre, seen from the perspective of adventure purists. And since we have had so many great titles lately, the first column of the purist has a positive stance.

After a very stale 2003 with not even one single title that could be considered as a classic, I have to say I felt kind of pessimistic. Especially after the cancellation of Gray Matter, I thought that things would start going downwards for the genre.

Fortunately, I am glad to say I stand corrected. Already in the first two months after summer we have had quite a few titles that have scored over 80% in our magazine. Those were The Moment of Silence, Sherlock Holmes and Myst IV. The Apprentice was also a great example of what non-commercial developers can achieve. Even Legacy: Dark Shadows that was technically poor for today's standards, had better gameplay than any of the adventures we played last year.

And this is not all yet, since we are still expecting to review The Westerner and Law and Order: Justice is Served before the end of the year. And who knows, maybe even the talented guys behind AGDInteractive will decide to give us QFG2 as a very nice christmas gift before the year is over?

Considering that we even have more great looking titles coming up in the future such as A Vampyre Story, Still Life, the great looking fantasy adventure we will be announcing in the next issue, Benoit Sokal's Lost Paradise, Broken Saints, Shadowplay, Runaway 2, Nibiru, Al Emo and the Lost Dutchman's mine, Boyz Don't Cry, Project Joe, King's Quest 9 and many others, the future does look bright indeed.

It seems like the adventure genre did indeed die a couple of years ago, but it is being reborn. We have so many new developing companies like House of Tales, Frogwares, Microids, Razbor, FutureGames that might have done a couple of mistakes in their first titles but they seem dedicated to the genre and willing to improve. Anyway, if you remember Sierra's and Lucasarts' first titles it might make you appreciate these companies even more.

We also have to emphasize the great job done by some European publishers that support the genre and give developers the chances they need. Publishers like DTP, Digital Jesters and GMX Media.

Now all that remains is to get a publisher to realize what a goldmine they are missing by not funding Jane Jensen to develop Gray Matter. Another chance that the adventure genre cannot afford to miss is A Vampyre Story. The potential is certainly there, and with the right marketing these two game could become the hits that the adventure genre needs so much, the hits that will give the genre the poisture it deserves.

Because everyone might say that adventures will never become the leading genre they once were, but I am sure it is a secret wish in the back of the head of many adventurers out there.

So let's embrace the new developers and publishers by buying their titles and helping them to become better through constructive criticism. The future looks .... adventurous.

Epilogue

The 18th issue has come to its end. I was planning to apologise for the non-existence of a preview this month. But then I read recently the second book of the Sandman library - which is a must for any Gabriel Knight fan - and Neil Gaiman, its creator, wrote a very inspiring epilogue, which I quote here:

Never apologise, never explain.
It's not a bad two-rule maxim for life, all things considered, but it's not very helpful when it comes to writing afterwords or books. After all the only reason people read afterwords is for some kind of explanation of what they've read, if they haven't understood it or for some kind of apology if they have. So no explanations, no apologies...

So no apologies from me this time (thanks Neil Gaiman). But maybe some promises for the next issue would not hurt. The Westerner (Wanted) had to be postponed for the next issue, because it will look nice with something else we have prepared for you. The second part of the Moment of Silence comic will be featured in our next issue as well as the review of the English version. Expect to read reviews of Law and Order Justice is Served, as well as a review of AGON.

Last but certainly not least, if all goes well you will also get the chance to have a first look at the great looking new fantasy adventure. Don't forget to visit www.theinventory.org and register on our forums. Lots of cool information to come there in the near future. For those of you who want to support our efforts with The Inventory you can donate money through Paypal (www.paypal.com) to theinventory@yahoo.com. Until next month then...

Dimitris Manos

The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

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