

# The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only



## Fenimore Fillmore 3 **REVEALED**

Revivtronic takes the series in a whole new direction and we are here to tell you all about it

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# Prologue

**D**ear readers, welcome to the last issue before our traditional summer break. But before we leave we gathered all our last powers to create an issue that will make you remember of us until we come back next September. And for those of you who can't wait until then, you can of course check out Adventure Europe ([www.adventure-eu.com](http://www.adventure-eu.com)) which will continue working throughout the summer.

So what contents await for you in the 25th issue? First of all, we are the first publication to preview Fenimore Fillmore 3, also known as Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge. Revistronic surprised every adventure fan out there with the first screenshots and information about the sequel to The Westerner. Action-clouds started covering the adventure sky of Fenimore's world, but the preview comes a strong wind blowing the clouds away.

Puzzle/Adventure fans who used to feel neglected when reading the Inventory have good reason to rejoice with this issue as Jordy Tubman and Sudeep Pasricha have prepared lots of material that will appeal to fans of riddles and puzzles. Jordy interviews the team behind the unofficial sequel to the 7th guest and reviews the older Egyptian adventure, Riddle of the Sphinx.

Sudeep uses his biofeedback energy to make his way through the wild divine. What am I talking about? I am talking about one of the most expensive, if not the most expensive, adventures to ever be released. The Journey to the Wild Divine uses biofeedback, allowing you to do things you could never do before, such as interacting with objects on the screen simply by breathing. Sudeep will tell you more about it in his review.

Oliver got his hands on a German review copy of Nibiru, the long awaited point and click adventure by Future Games (known for their Black Mirror adventure) and tells us all about it in the review of the month. Now let's meet the new Fenimore Fillmore.

*Dimitris Manos*

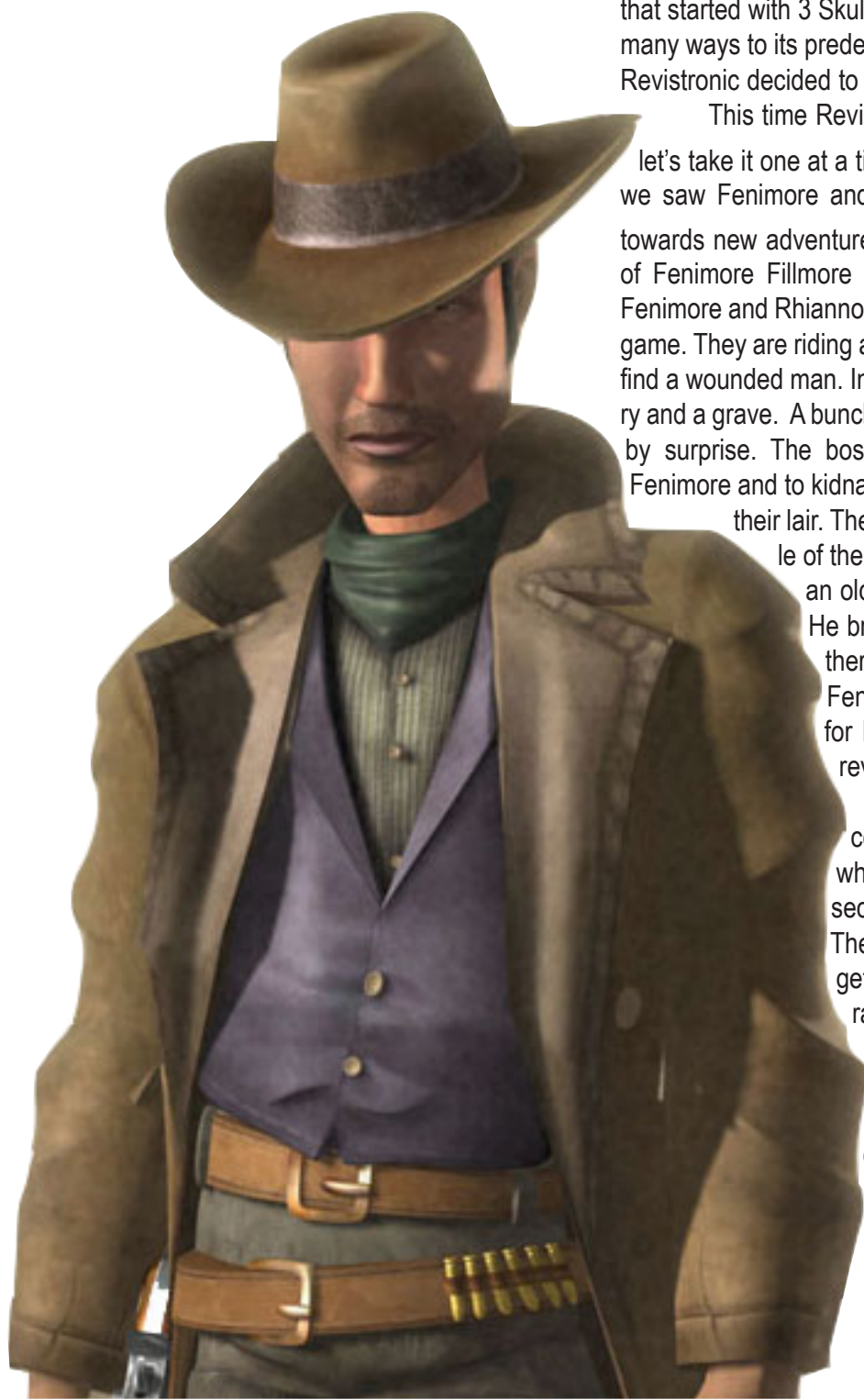
# Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge

Those of you who read our Awards 2004 booklet already know that the Best Adventure 2004 Award was won by *The Westerner*, a wild west 3D adventure by the Spanish developers Revistronic. *The Westerner*, also known as *Wanted in North America*, featured a comedy story and a main character that looked very similar to Woody from *Toy Story*. The 'cute' graphics of the game gave the story the characterization of light-hearted. *The Westerner* was the second part of the Fenimore Fillmore series, that started with *3 Skulls of the Toltecs*. *The Westerner* differed in many ways to its predecessor, especially considering the fact that Revistronic decided to use 3D graphics for the sequel.

This time Revistronic follows a new approach again. But let's take it one at a time. In the end of *The Westerner* **\*Spoiler\*** we saw Fenimore and Rhiannon riding away from Starek City towards new adventures. **\*End of Spoiler\*** Now in the beginning of *Fenimore Fillmore 3: Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge*, we see Fenimore and Rhiannon at the point where we left them in the last game. They are riding along prairies and suddenly they happen to find a wounded man. In his delirium, the man mentions a cemetery and a grave. A bunch of outlaws takes Fenimore and Rhiannon by surprise. The boss of the gang manages to shoot down Fenimore and to kidnap Rhiannon who is being taken by force to their lair. They leave Fenimore alone to die in the middle of the prairie. Fortunately for Fenimore however, an old mountain man passes by and helps him. He brings him to his log cabin and lets him rest there until he recovers from his wounds. When Fenimore is alright again, he starts preparing for his mission to free Rhiannon and to take revenge from the Outlaws.

While in *The Westerner* we only got to control Fenimore himself throughout the whole game, this time we get to control a second playable character as well, Rhiannon. The story is split in 4 scenarios where we will get to meet approximately 20 different characters (including Fenimore and Rhiannon).

Apart from the leading duo, we will also have 3 main non-playable characters. The good one (the man from the mountains called Baker), the bad one (the boss of the outlaws called Stevens) and the mad one (the wounded man from the introduction





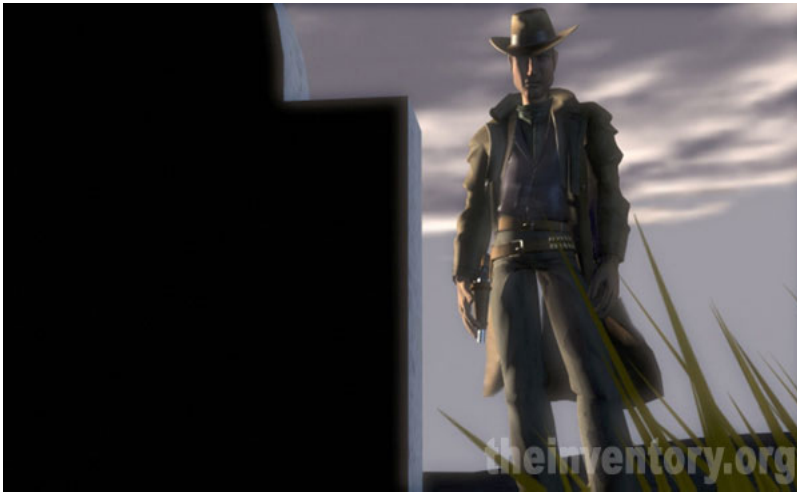
talking about a cemetery and a grave, called Jackson). And then there will also be about a dozen gang members, some of them toughies others just funny characters.

All the scenarios will take place in 'wild environments'. No towns, no laws, even no women. Just mountains, prairies and outlaws. The locations that we will get to visit, include a lonely log cabin in the middle of a nice forest in the mountains, an immense prairie, an old abandoned mine, the hideout of the Stevens gang and a big forsaken cemetery.

When Revistronic initially announced Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge, they issued a press release that had adventurers around the world worried. The press release was talking about many more gunfights and much more action in the game, as well as a more mature theme for the overall story. However, short after the press release was issued, the developers appeased adventure fans through statements given to the website Adventure Europe. It appears that the developers opt for a more 'mature' look for their characters, the dialogues will be more vulgar and there will be more violent scenes in the game. They claim however that this new part won't be an action/adventure although it will focus more on violence and sarcasm than naivety and simplicity. There will be more gunfights, however, the gunfights won't require reflexes or action skills. The players will just have to use fire arms in a traditional adventure way.



## Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge



To give an example, if an outlaw is shooting at you behind a tree all you will have to do is to 'use' the revolver on the outlaw, and the game will take care of the rest. No targets, no health bars, no single mini-game that requires action skills and reflexes. The shootings will just be challenges that will be solved like any other traditional adventure challenge/puzzle. The developers also emphasized that this time around it won't be necessary to feed your horse with carrots or to collect money.

Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge will feature several innovative surprises, always faithful however to the classic adventure tradition. An example of these innovative features is the ability to play as two characters, Fenimore and Rhiannon. At certain points you will have to combine actions from those two characters in order to overcome a challenge or to solve a puzzle.

Some examples of the challenges that Fenimore will have to face include escaping from an abandoned mine while having being trapped inside, preparing traps in order to form an ambush for the enemy, taming a wild horse, curing a bullet wound, and winning gunfights using your wits instead of action.

The developers have included more than 40 collectible objects and even more interactive objects on-screen like a mine-wagon, a scarecrow etc. Unlike in *The Westerner*, in *Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge* you won't be able to pick up big objects like saddles for example and place them in your inventory. Instead, you will be able to use items on other hotspots even if those items are on screen and not in your inventory. For example if you see a saddle and a horse on the screen you can select Use Saddle on Horse and then Fenimore will get the saddle and use it on the horse directly without pla-

cing the saddle in his pockets.

One thing is for certain, *Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge* will be radically different to its predecessors. We already knew that Revistronic could deliver a good comedy western title, but whether they are able to deliver a good serious western title remains to be seen. By eliminating the carrots and the money elements though Revistronic proves that they did take criticism of their previous game into consideration. *Fenimore Fillmore's Revenge* looks like a very exciting title and it is the first serious wild west adventure ....ever? Well truth is I can't remember any other adventure that took the far west seriously and this fact alone make us curious of what Revistronic can come up with.

- Dimitris Manos

## Write for Adventure Europe!

Adventure Europe ([www.adventure-eu.com](http://www.adventure-eu.com)) is expanding faster than we ever imagined and we need more staff to help us with articles and features. We also need editors for new subsites that we would like to open. For starters we are looking for Spanish, Italian, Dutch and Scandinavian editors but if you speak some other language and you would like to start a new subsite for it feel free to contact us too. If you think you have what it takes send an application to [d.manos@adventure-eu.com](mailto:d.manos@adventure-eu.com) . If you would like to be a reviewer please attach 1 or 2 (preferrably two) reviews of a game that you really like and/or a game that you really dislike.

### King's Quest IX to be released this winter

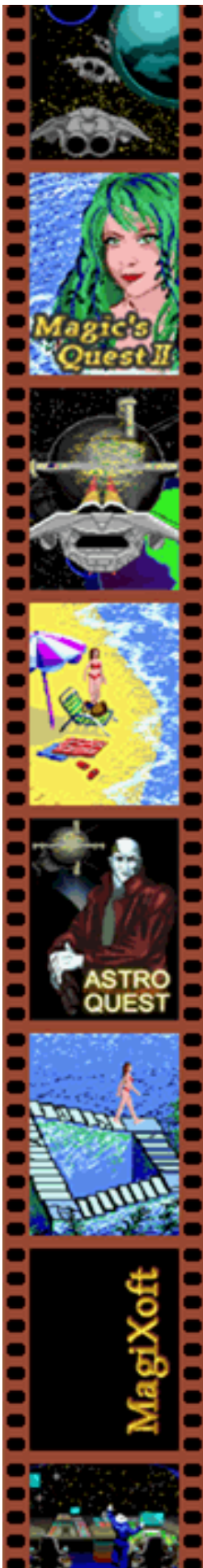
Phoenix Freeware impressed fans and press alike during their birthday chat that took place on the 15th of May. The developers announced that the game will be provided in 3 episodes and that the first episode will be available for download this winter. They also had some surprises for their guests. Ken and Roberta Williams, the incredible Sierra duo that kick started graphic adventures with the King's Quest series, were the guests of honour during the chat. Ken and Roberta stated that they were very impressed with the work that the developers have put in this project and that they are looking forward to the outcome of their efforts. The surprises did not stop there though. Guests could also have a look at 11 fresh new screenshots from the first episode of King's Quest IX. The screenshots showed that the graphics of the game is not something you would expect from a freeware game but instead they give the impression that this is a commercial title. You can have a look at the screenshots here: <http://www.kq9.org/media/screenshots/> and you can read the transcript of the chat here: <http://www.kq9.org/chat-logs/kq9birthday2005.php> . As for future coverage of this highly anticipated game, let's just say that a new special surprise is coming very very soon :)

### TellTale buys the CSI rights?

Pre-E3 rumours were saying that TellTale Games have bought the rights for the CSI games from Ubisoft. It has to be noted that this is just based on hearsay and none of this has been confirmed by either TellTale or Ubisoft.

### Eye of the Kraken available for free

The adventure game Eye of the Kraken, that was previously sold online, has now become available for free by the developers and you can download it from Adventure Europe at: [http://www.adventure-eu.com/index.php?option=com\\_repository&Itemid=62&cat\\_id=1&game\\_id=15&file\\_id=11](http://www.adventure-eu.com/index.php?option=com_repository&Itemid=62&cat_id=1&game_id=15&file_id=11) .The main character of the game is Abdullah who is on a ship to the Hyade islands. The Eye of the Kraken has been stolen and Abdullah has to retrieve it before the mysterious ship reaches its destination. The developers are also working on a new game called Carte Blanche and you can find a trailer at [www.absurdus.net](http://www.absurdus.net)



# Interview with the developers of the 13th Doll

*Jordy Tubman speaks to the developers of this unofficial sequel to the 7th Guest, a quite popular puzzle adventure released by Trilobyte in the mid-90s.*

**Tell us a bit about yourself and your studio. Where are you located out of, and how many people work with you? Is this your first game creation project?**

My name is Ryan HoltKamp; I've been a gamer since I was a kid. I studied Computer Science and Art with an emphasis on painting, and am now a software developer professionally. Though I've been involved with a few gaming projects, the 7th Guest III is the first project of this scale that I've been involved with.

Somewhere along the way, I stumbled across the StaufMansion-line, an amazing site dedicated to The 7th Guest and The 11th Hour. I contacted the site host, Paul Van Der Meer, and we've been collaborating on this project ever since. Along the way, we've added a number of developers for the game, some who are very dedicated to the project, as well as those who just pop in once in a while to say hello. We're a diverse group, scattered across several continents, but mainly based in Holland and the United States. We communicate through

email and our forum, and hold conference calls almost weekly.

**What, in particular, made you want to work on a fan-made sequel to 'The 7th Guest' as opposed to another adventure series?**

Of course I've been a big fan of the original game since it came out in 1993. I was one of the many people who had to get a CD-Rom for the family PC before we could play the game. I had the game for several months before we did so, and perhaps being forced to stare at the box and wait anxiously to play the game may have had some impact on why I enjoyed it so much! At any rate, the game was absolutely worth the wait. Never before or since have I been so captivated by a game as I was with the 7th Guest.

The game as a whole really came together. The atmosphere of the game is phenomenal, with the beautiful renderings of the mansion, and the classic, creepy musical score. The introductory fairytale of Henry Stauf is beautifully told. I also like the abstractness of the plot, where

each player is able to draw their own unique conclusion about what exactly occurred there. The game really came together on a number of levels.

Why the 7th Guest over another series? It just seems that the series is ripe for a third installment. There have been a number of attempts, from the original designers 7th Guest III, to Virgin's secret 13th Warrior project, and most recently, The Collector. At one point, there was even talk of a motion picture, and I believe someone purchased the license to do so. Also, the aforementioned Staufmansion-line has a forum discussing the games that is quite active considering the game is 10 years old. A number of people still seek information on getting the games to run on new machines. So the interest is still there, just waiting for a company to revive the title. Unfortunately, the company that picked up the Collector, then bailed out, has almost certainly put a final nail in the coffin of any official sequel. There is now a stigma on the game to any company who would otherwise pick up the title. We've all enjoyed the original games, and have been waiting for



years for a sequel. Now that we're older, we've acquired the necessary skills to create a game like this, and since it is becoming apparent that no companies are willing to do so, we've decided to do it ourselves!

**Have you been inspired by or drawn any ideas from other games in the adventure genre? What's your favourite game aside from 'The 7th Guest' or its sequel 'The 11th Hour'?**

We've looked at a number of other games for inspiration, too many to mention! We're fortunate to have Robert Washburne on our team, who has written a number of game reviews and walkthroughs and is a virtual encyclopedia of adventure games.

The list of titles we've discussed is very large, but to name a few, we've been inspired by the style of The BlackStone Chronicles, the game introductions in Alice and Thief, The flow of the White Chamber, the split story in Resident Evil 2, and more. Personally, I am a big fan of adventure games, but I like some diversity as well. Aside from The 7th Guest, my favorite games range from Super Mario World to Myst to Resident Evil, even things like XIII. My favorite adventure games are Amber: Journeys Beyond, Space Quest 4, King's Quest 5 and 6, and Phantasmagoria. I quite enjoyed Runaway as well. Recently, I found a Commodore 64 emulator and have played Labyrinth a bit.

**Could you tell us a bit about the story and how 'The 13th Doll' will begin? Will the player need to be familiar with the past games to understand what's going on?**



Players will not need to have played the original games to understand The 13th Doll. There are a few returning characters, but those that return have roles that relate to the original, without depending on the story of the original 7 guests. That said, there will be some references to the original game, but these won't drive the overall story. Though little content is directly related to the originals, we do intend to tie up some of the loose ends that occur between the two games.

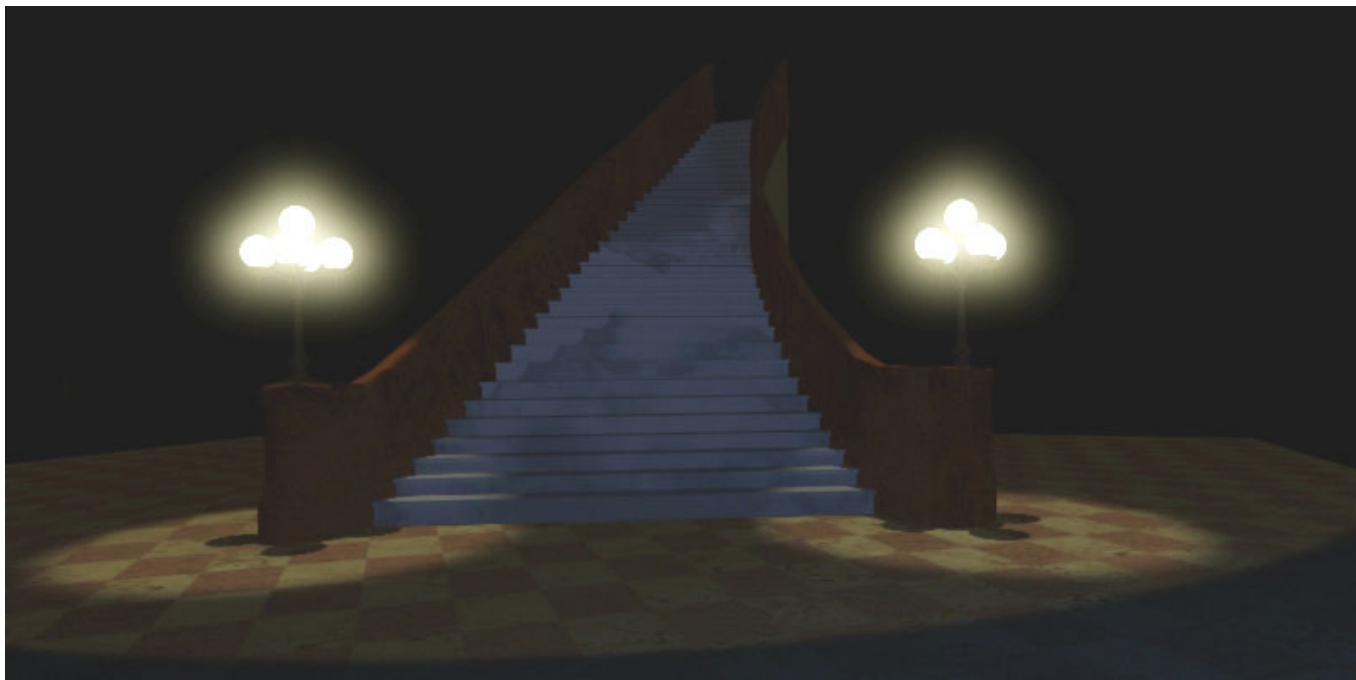
The 13th Doll opens shortly after the end of The 7th Guest. Tad has defeated Stauf, and in a hurry to escape the mansion, he doesn't realize that though Stauf is defeated, he has failed to finish him. He runs away from the mansion, but is forever haunted by the souls of the children he left behind. Haunted by these ghostly visions, and obsessed with the wild story that he was trapped in an abandoned mansion, he is misunderstood, perceived to be insane, and subsequently institutionalized. He is treated by an apathetic doctor, whose choice of treatment is to sedate and medicate his unruly patient, hardly a

successful cure. Tad's visions don't stop haunting him, and he understands what he must do: return to the mansion and save those he left behind years ago. He hasn't the means, until a new doctor comes to the asylum; a young doctor, naive to the power of the Stauf Mansion.

**The website ( [www.t7g3.com](http://www.t7g3.com) ) mentions something rather exciting! The player can choose between two characters to play through the game as. Could you describe these two characters and tell us a bit about how the choice will affect the gameplay and story?**

Yes, the game has two individual roles that the player can choose to take. Dr. Richmond is a young doctor fresh out of medical school. He has been hired to take the place of a retiring doctor in an asylum full of those who blame the eccentric toy-maker Henry Stauf for the deaths of their children.

Dr. Richmond comes across evidence of a mysterious 'Great Work' of Henry Stauf's, and becomes enth-



**“ Tad is the original 7th Guest, who naively entered the mansion on a whim as a child. A decade later, he is now in his early 20's, and institutionalized after being haunted by visions of the mansion. Tad must return to the mansion and rescue those he left behind. ”**

ralled in the history of this machine, as well as the legacy of Stauf himself. With his contemporary education comes a progressive approach to psychiatry. He decides upon a treatment for Tad, the most severely disturbed of all his patients: He plans to return him to the abandoned Stauf mansion, to cleanse him of his demons.

Tad is the original 7th Guest, who naively entered the mansion on a whim as a child. A decade later, he is now in his early 20's, and institutionalized after being haunted by visions of the mansion. Tad must return to the mansion and rescue those he left behind.

The player can choose to play either of these characters throughout the game. The goal of this is to be able to tell the story through different eyes, as well as adding to the replay value of the game.

The two stories are independent, yet parallel to each other. As we journey through the game, we see hints of where the other character has been, and learn what they have been up to, which often isn't as innocent as it seems.

Though both storylines are in the same game, each is a completely unique experience from the other. Each story has its own unique puzzles; playing as the Dr., you will never play the same puzzle when you play the game as Tad. Also, though both characters end up in the Stauf mansion, each character has unique areas to explore in the game, and certain rooms are accessible only to one player. Also, each character has several different endings for the player to experience.

**'The 7th Guest' certainly had quite an array of devious puzzles. Do you anticipate that there will be a similar emphasis on puzzle-solving in 'The 13th Doll'?**

Absolutely! We couldn't use the 7th Guest moniker without the majority of the game being puzzle based. We have a good set of puzzles designed so far, more than enough for one game, though we're always improving the list we have. So far there is quite a diverse mix. The

game will feature an assortment of word puzzles, chess based puzzles, AI puzzles, and various other styles. Like the 7th Guest, we have several classic puzzles reinterpreted to work for this game. We also have a few based on puzzles from the original games, with an added twist to them. But the majority are of our own design.

**Something gamers who are looking for a challenge will no doubt get excited about is the inclusion of AI puzzles. Is it difficult to create AI-based challenges?**

Absolutely! As with the other puzzles in the game, there's a balance we're after: the puzzle can't be so difficult that the player gives up and never returns to the game, but also, it can't be so easy that the player scoffs at the game for being too trivial. AI puzzles are the hardest to judge, as it's difficult to gauge what level will frustrate the player.

**Will an inventory system be included in your project or will it stick solely to logic puzzles, forgoing inventory-based ones altogether, much like the original?**

The bulk of the game will be logic puzzles, but yes, there will be an inventory of sorts. Throughout the game, the doctor collects the pieces of what is heralded as Stauf's 'Great Work.' Similarly Tad must collect and assemble the pieces of a mysterious 13th Doll. Both mechanisms play a key role in the outcome of the game. Though we do have an inventory of these pieces, there aren't inventory based puzzles, just collecting certain items for the final battle to take place. We have dis-

cussed otherwise, but have decided to stay true to the 7th Guest, where puzzles are all self-contained.

**'The 7th Guest' took place in The Stauf Mansion with its vastly different rooms. Will your project take place entirely in one building too, or are there going to be a few different environments?**

We had some discussion about this early on. We questioned whether the Stauf mansion was becoming too tired a place to return to, or whether it would be sacrilegious NOT to return there. We opted to go both routes. The game begins in the asylum, and takes the player to other environments, and ultimately to the mansion itself. We know that many fans will want to return to the mansion, and leading them elsewhere to begin with is dangling a carrot in front of their noses! In addition, it adds a new element to the series, and leads us through the thoughts of our characters and their motivations.

**Are there going to be other characters that we will be able to 'see' in the game? If so, are we going to be able to interact with them?**

Unlike the original games, where we were shown solely ghostly reenactments of past occurrences, this game will feature some interactivity with other characters. There will be a mix of ghostly spirits we visit, as well as those in flesh and blood. We may still see some reenactments of past events, but the real story will be driven by interaction with other characters. By the end of the game, the player will have some decisions to make

based on who they've spoken with, and what they have seen.

**Speaking of 'seeing', could you give us a little bit of information about the game engine you're using? Can we expect graphics as good as the original? The website mentions that characters "will be filmed"; will FMV be in the finished product?**

The game engine is being written in house using Macromedia Director, largely due to its cross platform capabilities. Director has been a wonderful tool for us. It has made this game a lot easier to develop, as well as allowing us to work on a Macintosh version of the game with few modifications. Also, some Linux users will be able to run the game on their machines using a WINE emulator.

Regarding the graphics, expect as good or better than the original games. A decade after the original 7th Guest, we now have tools at our disposal that the original designers simply didn't have: better 3d modeling software, faster computers, DV cameras, bluescreen software, etc. On that note, yes, the game will feature filmed actors in FMV sequences. The environments will be modeled in 3d studio, and we will composite the bluescreened actors over the models, as in the original games.

**The music samples, which can be downloaded from the website, are a wonderful mix of classic MIDI-styled music and modern ambient music. How do you go about creating these musical scores?**

We have several talented compo-



sers on our team, each with their own approach. Virtually all of them use some sort of software to compose and mix tracks. In addition, some of them record live samples from keyboard and guitar for their arrangements. We plan to stick fairly closely to the original soundtrack, while expanding on that style a bit. There are some great things in store for the player.

**Is the development of the game, in general, near completion? Will we be able to play a demo, or the game itself, soon?**

When we started the project, we talked about a Summer/Fall 2006 release, and I think we are on schedule for that. Keep in mind that we are doing this in our spare time without pay, so we can't put a definitive date on the release just yet. But we are making good progress. We do plan to release some demos along the way, and could presumably do so in the next few months. In the meantime, we have a few puzzles available for download on the site. Keep in mind that the grap-

hics for them are just temporary, as their environments have not been modeled yet. And yes, there will be more difficult puzzles in the actual game!

**How will 'The 13th Doll' be distributed when it is finished?**

The game will be available for download, free of charge. We have received permission from Rob Landeros, co-creator of the original game, to pursue this project so long as no one is making a significant amount of money from it, which isn't the case. We're fans of the originals; this is an homage to them, and a gift to the fans of the series. As has been said on the forums, this is a labor of love.

**Finally, what would you say to someone who has had a favourite adventure game series dropped from development? Would you encourage them to make a fan-made sequel?**

I can empathize with everyone who sees their project fall on the cutting

room floor. I was very excited about The Collector, which was whisked away as if it never existed. But, I guess at some level you have to view things from a business standpoint. Working on a fangame, we have the luxury to have full creative control over what we're doing. An established company can't afford that, and subsequently must make some tough decisions to keep food on the table.

I would encourage anyone who sees their favorite game dropped from development to pursue a fangame, so long as they stay true to the characters, and stick with the game until it is complete! A project like this has its fair share of highs and lows, and it is easy to become disheartened. But overall, this has been a positive and rewarding experience.

**Thank you very much Ryan for taking the time out of your development schedule to be able to speak with us! I'm certain fans of 'The 7th Guest' will be awaiting your project with keen anticipation.**



# NI\$IRU:

## Messenger of the Gods

The man with the hat is back...? No, Martin Nolan doesn't look like your typical (movie) adventurer and certainly isn't carrying a whip around but what happens to him in the game NiBiRu by Future Games and Unknown Identity, published by dtp in Germany, can easily be described as Indiana Jones meets Fox Mulder and both crossed with Sherlock Holmes. On the contrary Martin looks like the average everyday guy and certainly is no action hero. Alas he acts his own way, straight forward and a bit egoistic but in the end he needs the guiding hands of the player to solve the riddle of the twelfth planet and become the "Messenger of the Gods". Whatever that may truly be the player has to find out by himself, after solving tons of riddles and puzzles.

**Story:** Is NiBiRu an ancient myth? Is it fantasy? Reality? Young archaeologist Martin Nolan finds

himself standing on the Charles Bridge in Prague looking to meet a strange woman called Barbora just because his uncle, also an archaeologist, told him to. The reason is the discovery of a hidden tunnel complex established by the Nazis during World War II that was just now found by some construction workers. The further Martin travels the more mysterious and dangerous his journey turns and it very soon becomes clear that others have the same goal, others who act merciless and willing to walk over dead bodies. And more than once it is not only Martins life that is at stake. To enter the place where the secret Nazi facility has been discovered Martin needs some papers. His "date" Barbora is supposed to hand them to him but she doesn't show up.

**\*Spoiler\*** After some first mouse clicks our hero disco-

Developer:  
**Future Games**  
 Perspective:  
**3rd person**  
 Interface:  
**Point and click**  
 Site:  
**www.nibiru-game.de**  
 Difficulty:  
**Medium**





vers a hidden message directed towards him saying that Barbora felt that somebody was following her. When he finally enters her apartment Martin is knocked out cold. The next morning police sirens echo through the streets and Martin wakes up in a messed up room. Barbora is dead in her bathtub and our young archeologist has no other choice but to flee through the window. The task seems clear, even cold-blooded, reach the Third Reich tunnels before the opposition does and find out what secret is so important and hidden underneath the surface that people would kill for it.

**\*End of Spoilers\*** His search for the truth will lead Martin on a fantastic journey, taking him to three different countries on two continents and ultimately discover one of world's most important historical facts and a device that could change mankind forever.

**Gameplay:** NiBiRu – Messenger of the Gods offers the well established point and click interface adventure players like the most. Left clicking on an object, that gets highlighted when the mouse moves over it, gives some basic information or lets

Martin pick it up, the right mouse button lets Holan search thoroughly. Archaeologists are not known to be the exciting, jaunty type and Martin is no exception. He walks to every spot on screen the player clicks on as if he has all the time in the world sometimes one wishes he would be able to if not run but at least jog. At least double-clicking on an exit makes the screen fade out and turn to the next. When pressing the tab key all exits are shown. The inventory is a popping up bar on the bottom where items can be examined closely or combined. Some popping up gearwheels in the upper right corner lead to the main menu where an unlimited numbers of games can be saved or options can be changed.

The main focus of the riddles is to find items and use on other items or places. **\*Spoiler\*** A typical example might be an old woman who asks for a hot dog as exchange for her walking stick that again can be used to pull down a ladder. Or a test tube is needed to hold the acid from a battery to cauterize a lock. **\*End of Spoilers\***. Several slider puzzles also might satisfy Myst

lovers even though most of them are pretty easy. Especially at the end some of them become a bit harder. Since I am more of the story and not puzzle type adventure player I needed one and a half hours to sort some coloured balls in rings that could turn. On the other hand breaking the code lock of a suitcase took me only several seconds and that was not because I used to crack these old code locks of bikes for fun during my teenage years... The old school adventure riddles start out easy and become more demanding by time but are never illogical. The player feels like a real investigator on a paper chase coming closer towards the ultimate goal little step after little step. The game is separated into several chapters with subplots, so the puzzles are limited to a few locations avoiding long distance walks to find the missing link. And here we are getting to the main backdrop of the game. It is rather short. The addition of another subplot or another full chapter might have increased the game's final mark by quite a few numbers. The average player might need 12 to 15 hours to finish



it, regular adventurers can make it in 10 to 12 and hasty persons who don't enjoy the dialogues and just concentrate on solving the puzzles can finish the game even faster. Personally I needed around 14 hours but was listening to every dialogue to its full extent and as I said before it took me one and a half hour to solve one of the slider puzzles, others might be a lot faster there.

**Graphics:** The characters of the game are 3D figurines acting inside pre-rendered backgrounds in 1024 x 768 pixels displaying today's standard for adventure games. I'm wondering when the first games come out who take notice of the growing numbers of TFTs that usually have 1280x1024 pixels as lowest standard resolution. To make the edges of the characters look softer anti aliasing is supported if the graphics card offers this feature. Countless animated objects make the screen come to life, like a tram that rolls by in the background for example. Sometimes citizens walk down the street even though it sometimes seems odd that the same women with umbrellas walk around the block whenever the player enters the screen again. While the colour's temperature of the single locations is fitting its setting perfectly and creating a consistent

atmosphere the downgraded renderings in some parts look like some colour shades are missing.

**Sound:** As always dtp hired professional voice actors known from German television and movies. A good choice, they bring the drawn characters to life and are a pleasure to listen to. The music is a different case While the tunes are nice to listen to and harmonically attached to the whole picture they are also easily forgotten. In some places they turn dramatic, which is nice but we are playing an adventure game and while the player is searching the screen for ten minutes it becomes a bit exhausting. Sound FX are fitting and proper but nothing spectacular.

**Overall:** NiBiRu – Messenger of the Gods is a clearly above average game promising a dozen of hour's fun solving the mystery of an ancient race, Nazi scientists were after 60 years ago. Good graphics and sound along with the fine story make up a good package that could have needed some little improvements here and there. The short length of the game alone is a major drawback, yet adventure fans shouldn't miss this one.

- Oliver Gruener

*“ NiBiRu – Messenger of the Gods is a clearly above average game promising a dozen of hour's fun solving the mystery of an ancient race.”*

**Highs:** Good story, nice looking prerendered graphics, logical challenges

**Lows:** Short story length, music not fitting at places

### The Verdict

<b>Story:</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Graphics:</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Sound:</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Gameplay:</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Overall:</b>	<b>83</b>

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



Puzzle/Adventure:

# Journey to Wild Divine

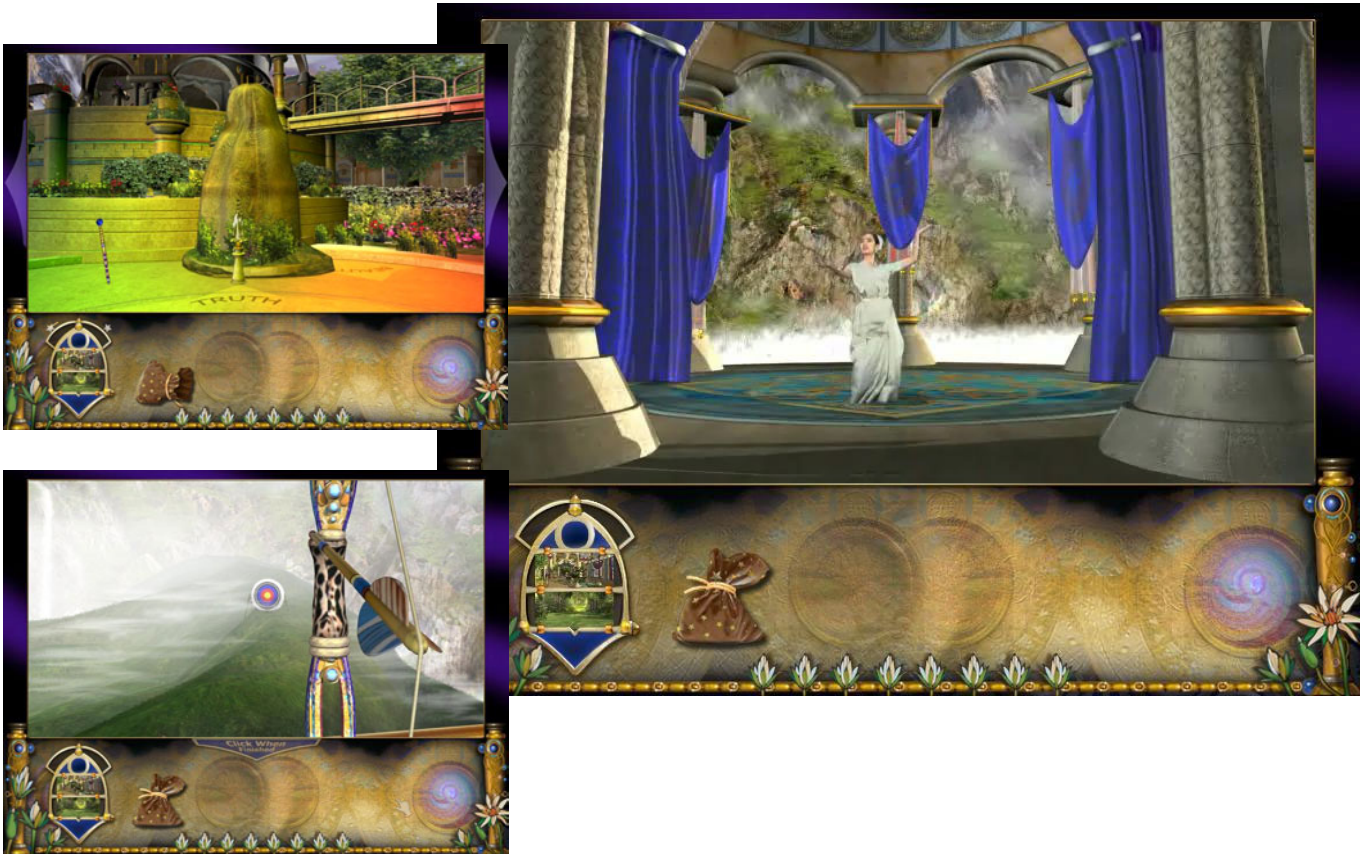
The Journey to Wild Divine: The Passage is not your run of the mill adventure game. A casual glance at the screenshots might have you believe that it's just another Myst clone, but there's an unusual facet to this game that has never been explored in the adventure gaming genre before: biofeedback. That's right, you can actually hook yourself up to a computer with the biofeedback equipment that comes with this game. Biofeedback technology started as a fad in the late sixties, and till a few years ago depended on complex hookups to clunky EMG and EEG instruments. This has all changed now, and you can see the new heights of simplicity, effectiveness and entertainment that biofeed-

back technology has reached with this game. While they don't go as far as to read your thoughts, the biofeedback sensors included with The Journey do monitor your heart rate and skin conductance level. These biometrics allow the sensors to detect a change in your energy levels and body rhythms when you experience such emotions as joy, excitement, relaxation or aggravation (your typical reaction when you stumble across a wretched maze in an adventure game for instance). Movement through parts of and the ultimate completion of The Journey is dependent on your ability to regulate your energy levels, which you will learn to do in the course of the game. By now you would have fig-

ured out that this adventure game is quite different from the ones you are used to playing. The Journey claims to be a game of personal realization where you can discover the ancient yogic wisdom of mind-body mastery through the power of biofeedback technology. Is this game for you? Read on to find out ...

**Story:** The Journey to Wild Divine: The Passage is the first journey of the Wild Divine trilogy (the second is due out in late 2005) and is set in the mythic Sun Realm where you embark on a journey of self-discovery. It is loosely based on Joseph Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces which drew upon the vast archive of the world's stories that tell the journey of the hero



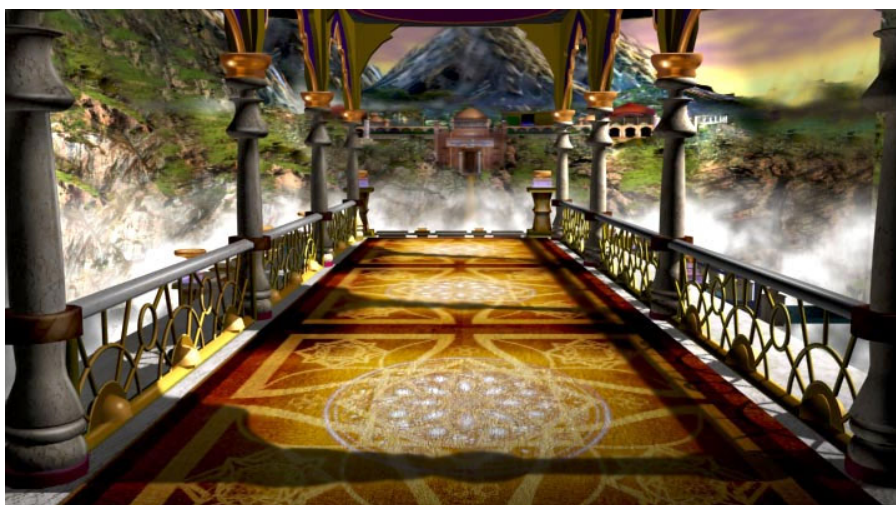


and his or her transformation. Actually there is really not much of a story here to speak of. When you play this game for the first time, you are guided by Sophia, a game personality who teaches you how to interact with your environment and shows you how to use your biofeedback interface. Once this introductory tutorial is over, you're on your own, ready to explore your surroundings and solve a series of quests. I would have really liked to see a more cohesive storyline in this game, as it would have added another dimension of immersion to the game. However, credit goes to the developers for making the game immensely satisfying and enjoyable to play, even without much of a story to bank on.

**Gameplay:** This is where the game earns its bread and butter. The Journey has a unique biofeedback user interface consisting of three biofeedback sensor rings (or "magic

rings" as the manual would have you believe) that must be worn on the hand that is not controlling the mouse. These rings connect to a small turtle shaped hub ("Lifestone"), which in turn connects to your computer via a USB port. The Journey uses the biometrics detected by the sensors on your fingers to control various "events" in the course of the game. While you'll still be using your mouse to move around, pick up and drop items and trigger hotspots on the screen, an "event" will be an opportunity to use the biofeedback sensors to complete a challenge essential to your progress or to practice your skills. There are over 40 different types of events in the game where in order to succeed you must regulate your body's physiology through the use of breathing techniques that will be taught to you by your spiritual guides in the game. For instance, in one event you will need to light a fire and you'll be able to do that by

being relaxed and breathing calmly. The calmer you are, the higher the flames rise in the fireplace. If you're excited or tense, the fire will die out. In another event, you must levitate a sphere till a certain height. If you are unable to breathe calmly and rhythmically, the sphere will not even get off the ground. Don't worry if you're perpetually hyperactive like me - the breathing techniques taught in the game will help you overcome many of these challenges. While some of the events will require you to be relaxed, others will require you to raise your energy level. In one such event you must juggle three balls and the more vigorously you breathe, the higher the balls will soar. Some events will require you to shift between different energy levels in order to succeed. For instance, in one such event you have to stack a set of rocks one on top of each other, and as the next rock come flying towards the stack, you must regu-



late your breathing, breathing calmly to lower the rock and more energetically to raise it, so that the rock lands at the top of the growing pile. There are many other events throughout the game where you must control your breathing to open doors, hit targets with a bow and arrow, land flying parachutes and operate boats. Not all of these events are essential for the completion of this game - a lot of them exist to unlock parts of the game which teach you more advanced yoga and breathing techniques, or show you beautifully rendered animation clips and pictures. The game can get frustrating at times, and I found it very hard initially to reach the desired level of 'calmness' to complete certain quests (feeling energetic to raise my energy level

was never a problem). However, perseverance is the key and you will certainly find yourself becoming much more relaxed and tranquil as you successfully complete quests and learn to better control your energy levels. Best of all, the skills that you learn with this game can be applied to reduce stress and anxiety in your daily life. The Journey also some puzzles which do not require biofeedback, but these are fairly easy and enjoyable enough to not seem like a chore.

Moving around in the game is as easy as clicking a mouse in a particular direction. The visual interface is simple and intuitive, using a magical wand as a cursor. When the tip of the wand turns from blue to gold, it indicates an area available to explore and you can click with the

mouse to go in that direction. Once you get the magic bag, you can pick up or drop items by simply dragging them to or from the bag. Interactive objects on the screen which trigger events are indicated by a purple puff of smoke when the wand passes over them. Other areas on the screen which have objects that can be picked up, or expect an object to be placed on them offer similar visual clues. One minor gripe that I have with The Journey is that it does not offer complete 360 degree exploration of the environments, which is a kind of a let-down, considering how beautiful some of the locations in the game are. And on the topic of let-downs, I was slightly annoyed with the inability to quickly move around in the game. When you click on the part of the screen which



allows you to move your current point of view to another position, often a painfully long motion animation is played as you move to the new position. In all fairness, the animations do look nice, but they get repetitive after a point. The ability to interrupt the motion animations with the click of a mouse would have been nice. The developers did have the right idea when they provided a bookmarking feature which allows you to jump to bookmarked locations in the game and speed up the in-game navigation. However, for some inexplicable reason they only provide two miserly bookmark slots. You'll find yourself wishing for more slots as you progress in the game, especially after you've yawned your way through several lengthy motion animations.

For the most part, you will find yourself roaming around the Sun Realm interacting with objects, looking for clues, completing events and training yourself from time to time so that you can succeed in even more challenging events. Your journey will take you through several enchanting locations such as the Sky Temple, the Towers of Legends,

the Golden Pagodas, the Temple of Great Compassion, the Pool of Akki and the Valley of Balloons. You will also encounter plenty of characters that you can interact with in your journey - an enlightened guru from the East, the enchanting Lady of Compassion, a journeying Falconer, the pagan Lady of the Woods and many others. This eclectic group of characters will teach you essential skills, offer clues and guide you in your quests. If you're ever lost, just make your way to the magic mirror in the house of the Lady of the Woods, and it will tell you what you need to do next. You can also find clues in the wonderful companion guide that comes with the game.

**Graphics:** The mythic Sun Realm that you will encounter in this game is a beautifully rendered oasis of peace and tranquility, replete with breathtaking temples carved in stone, majestic pagodas and magnificent towers. You will travel through mountains, pass through lush green forests, navigate rivers on a boat, journey into caves and come across magnificent gardens with sparkling fountains and colorful flowers, as you progress in the

Developer:  
**The Wild Divine Project**  
 Perspective:  
**1st person**  
 Interface:  
**Biofeedback, Point and click**  
 Site:  
**www.wilddivine.com**  
 Difficulty:  
**Medium**

game. There is a misty, dreamlike quality to the environments in the game, which makes playing the game a soothing, almost blissful experience. When you come across a character in the game that you can interact with, you're shown a blue-screen video of the person superimposed on the rendered background. The quality of these videos is quite good, and blends in quite well with the environment. The graphics in The Journey are imaginative, detailed and look gorgeous, even if they are not as good as some of the more recent games like Myst IV Revelation and Aura: Fate of the Ages.

**Sound:** All the instructions and conversations with characters in the game involve voice overs which have been very well done. The game has a wonderful background musical score which changes from location to location. The ambience created by the music adds to the magical feel of the game. After you complete certain quests, you will also be rewarded with some superb songs sung by the Wild Divine Band. Their music is very New Age - soothing, uplifting and immensely



***“The Journey to Wild Divine: The Passage is a groundbreaking interactive experience which boldly goes where no other adventure game has gone before. But all this comes at a cost.”***

**Highs:** Extremely innovative biofeedback based gameplay, plenty of replay value, beautiful and imaginative graphics and animation, top notch musical score, immersive environments, learning relaxation techniques is a great bonus.

**Lows:** Expensive, flimsy storyline, slow in-game navigation

### The Verdict

<b>Story:</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Graphics:</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Sound:</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Gameplay:</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Overall:</b>	<b>85</b>

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

listenable. The music CD "Soul Flight" which accompanies the game has more music from the Wild Divine Band, and believe me, it's really good.

**In a few words...**The Journey to Wild Divine: The Passage is a groundbreaking interactive experience which boldly goes where no other adventure game has gone before. The game is like having Yoda in your living room, training you to become an enlightened warrior who can harness and control the synergy between your mind and heart to enrich your daily life. But all this comes at a cost. Did I mention that the game costs around \$160 (USD)? For this price you get the hefty game package which includes the PC and MAC versions of the game, the biofeedback sensor hardware, a manual, companion guide, a bonus CD with music from the game and another bonus CD featuring an interview with renowned spiritualist and best selling author Deepak Chopra, animated excerpts from his new best-seller "The Book of Secrets" and a preview of the next installment of the Wild Divine series, The Journey to Wild Divine: Wisdom Quest, which is due out later this year. The majority of the cost, not surprisingly, must be attributed to

the biofeedback sensor equipment, which does not come cheap.

So why would you want to spend down so much money on this game? Because The Journey will most likely be one of the most innovative games you've ever played which will have remarkable and perceptible repercussions on your everyday life. The exercises and techniques that you will learn in The Journey will help you to reduce stress and anxiety in your life, and teach you to use your meditative mind to regulate your body's physiology for improved creativity and performance. Even after completing The Journey, I often find myself revisiting certain parts of the game to relax and calm down at the end of the day, and it's really effective. Think of this game as an investment. The next installment of the Wild Divine series won't require you to buy the hardware again, and there are already several enterprising fans of the game have already begun producing free applications to perform basic biofeedback graphing using the biofeedback equipment (check out <http://www.psychostucture.net>). I highly recommend this game to anyone - you owe it to yourself to give it a try, especially with the 30-day unconditional money back guarantee offered by the developers. If you do try it, you will find The Journey to be a fantastic voyage of self-discovery that offers an incredible sense of immersion and a learning experience you will never forget.

**- Sudeep Pasricha**



## Puzzle Adventure

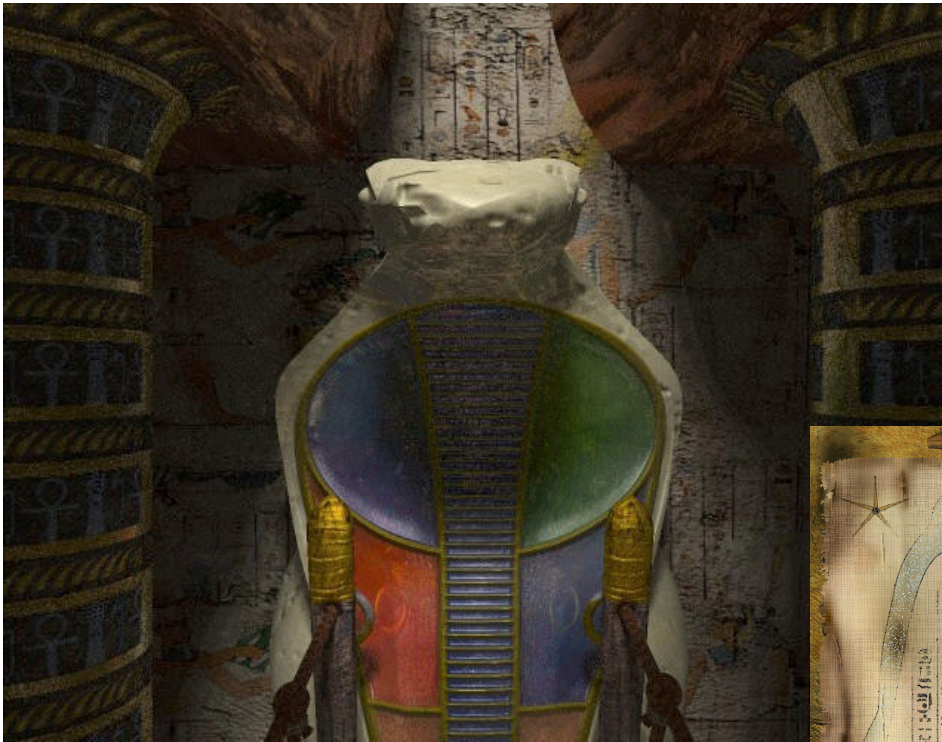
# Riddle of the Sphinx

Egypt has been the setting for more than a few adventure games, and rightly so. From its unique history that lends itself to magnificent storytelling to its complex hieroglyphs that scream out to have a puzzle made around them, it's easy to see why we've become well acquainted with this majestic setting. And as one of the most well researched and, ultimately, thought provoking Egyptian adventures, "Riddle of the Sphinx" has a lot of what puzzle aficionados crave!

**Story:** Your long-time friend and noted archaeologist Sir Gil Blythe Geoffreys, while excavating the area around The Sphinx and The Great Pyramid, uncovers an ancient papyrus scroll that has been overlooked for centuries. What is

written in the scroll is deciphered to be a 'Rosetta Stone' of the Sphinx, which ultimately is the key in solving the age old riddle of the Sphinx. However, once the scroll has been unsealed Geoffreys realizes that he has unleashed an ancient curse, and with a host of discontent and scheming assistants, he sends for the only person he can trust; you. While the game is set up with a very interesting premise, after about the first or second hour, the story really takes a backseat to the gameplay. This is really not a good thing as I didn't feel compelled to complete the tasks ahead of me because there wasn't much payback in terms of story development. (Think "The 7th Guest", but after you've solved a puzzle, no little video to further

Developer:  
**Omni Creative Group Int'l**  
 Perspective:  
**1st person**  
 Interface:  
**Point and click**  
 Site:  
**www.riddleofthesphinx.com**  
 Difficulty:  
**Medium / Hard**



drive the story and your curiosity). That's not to say that there aren't some plot revelations to be had, (in fact there is a rather exciting and large one to experienced near the end), it's just I would have liked to have seen the story be a more dynamic and driving force behind the game. As it is, your character's motivation is solely a mixture of curiosity and duty, with no real sense of urgency. Having said that, the story that is there does get the job done and can hold enough interest to make it memorable, I just wish there had been more of it.

**Graphics:** Having come off of playing some more recent adventure games, this year 2000 offering took a little while to get used to graphically. While it is most certainly incredibly detailed with great variety, both in its colour palette and props, it can also be slightly grainy. This is to be expected though as the game runs at 640x480. A nice touch is that graphically the designers made use of fade-in and fade-out transitions between exploration nodes, as

well as side-to-side swipes for turning. Also featured are points where you can click and drag the mouse to rotate in full 360 degrees the view of your surroundings, which helps to orientate yourself when you enter a new room. What doesn't help though is that a couple of these VR scenes tend to be very pixilated to the point of, in a few cases, not really knowing what some of the things on the screen are. However the graphics never impede the enjoyment of the game, and all writing is legible and sharp enough to be read (which is something not all games manage). Some nice animation is used sparingly throughout, as well as a couple of FMV sequences where we get to see real-life actors portraying characters.

**Sound:** "Riddle of the Sphinx" primarily employs ambient sound effects, such as wind howling, generators humming, and rock crumbling. These are well implemented and sound authentic. I never felt

bombarded by a cacophony of sound and I never felt lonely because of too few effects. So it really struck a nice balance. The musical scores that are in the game are also well done and suit the Egyptian feel of the game. Arrangements run from stringed violins for the base camp area, reflecting an English colonisation in a foreign world feel, to heavily beaten ancient drums deep within the ancient stone rooms of The Great Pyramid. Spoken voice within the game is recorded well and plays back clearly so that it is easily understood, and is acted in an above average way.

**Gameplay:** Here is what the game is really all about. The puzzles/challenges within the game come in a great variety and you truly get to use your intellect to try to solve them. Represented are translation puzzles, audio puzzles, timed puzzles, inventory puzzles, a maze, and many more. A testament to good gameplay design is that there are usually several clues to each puzzle, so you never feel like you



need to resort to trial-and-error to get the job done. I recommend, though, having a notepad on hand to copy down anything you feel is a clue. There is some backtracking to be done, however the creative developers have implemented a 'warp' feature so you can easily get back to places you've been without clicking yourself silly. On a slight negative, and this ties in with the graphics'; in this game you mostly turn a full 180 degrees and occasionally can turn 90 degrees to your left or right. The cursor though looks very similar in these instances so it's easy to not realise if you've turned left/right, or back. This can make exploring the maze incredibly frustrating. While there are clues to get you through the maze and an audio signal that you're getting near the exit, the navigation system causes severe disorientation and turns something that is already challenging into something aggravating. Strange

too, is that if you have an inventory item in your 'hand' and you pick up another, the one in your 'hand' returns to its original position in the game world. Aggravating. Also, there is no character interaction or development, and barely any instances where you get to learn about the in-game personalities of the characters; however this was covered in the 'Story' section.

**In A Few Words:** Puzzle lovers and Egyptologists unite! "Riddle of the Sphinx" has what you're looking for as long as you can motivate yourself to finish the puzzles and don't require an unfurling complex storyline to drive you. The graphics are serviceable, the audio above average, and the gameplay shines for those who love challenge variety!

- Jordy Tubman

***"Riddle of the Sphinx has what you're looking for as long as you can motivate yourself to finish the puzzles and don't require an unfurling complex storyline to drive you."***

**Highs:** Puzzle variety, setting, story setup, intriguing end game revelation

**Lows:** Lack of continuing story/character development, inventory system, navigation system

**The Verdict**

<b>Story:</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Graphics:</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Sound:</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Gameplay:</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Overall:</b>	<b>71</b>

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

# *Invento-Mail*

**This is the part of the magazine where you can make yourselves heard. Send your emails to [d.manos@theinventory.org](mailto:d.manos@theinventory.org) and we will reply to you in this section in one of our future issues. Now let's move on to the mails that we received lately**

Dear inventory, End of every month, I eagerly wait for the month's issue and I truly appreciate your effort to support the adventure games. I strongly believe the games will be considered as an Art form gaining the lead in dramatic performances as movies did last century. So why not focus on the future and try to make games as an Art form?...Adventure games have the highest chance to pull that off. No question about it. I would love to see that The Inventory could take that step into the future and include a section covering the issues to get there. I try to throw one in for example: Past ten years I could only enjoy two games: The beast within and Syberia. The beast within thought me stuff, educated me while I was solving the mystery. It was a very good game experience. Syberia was too; it was a good game experience but it did also something different. It touched me; I started caring for Kate Walker; she transformed...She started as an ordinary girl who just followed rules and transformed to a passionate person. She cared...I cared too...I felt like a better person at the end. It was good to be a human. For me that was a step towards the future; a small step, but indeed a step.

I believe if done right, the players would like to care for the characters in the game without being aware. when that happens, oh boy the adventure games will be on top again. Any kind of effort towards that direction will help & inspire the game designers to share that vision... So anyways, just wanted to share my views and suggestions with you.

cheers, ibo

**The Inventory:** Hello Ibo and thank you for your comments and your suggestion. A very interesting one and if we find the time and staff to proceed to such an article we might go ahead with it. Thank you once again.

Dear Olga Fabry and Dimitris Manos: I also liked very much of the "most pleasant surprise" of this year. I was wondering if it is possible (or intention) to make a speech pack for the game - then it would become a even better "suprise". Thank you, Pedro Salenbauch

**The Inventory:** Hello Pedro, Unfortunately I can't help you cause I was not involved with the development of 5 Magical Amulets. So only Olga can answer your question.

Hello Dimitris & Co, Let me start by saying, I simply LOVE the Inventory, I've been a loyal follower since the earliest issues. I simply loved this months issue, I don't think it's a Bad thing to focus on independent developers some Developers out there came make some decent stuff. But they never get recognition for their work. So thank you very much for not ignoring the independent Developers out there working their butts off to create The game of their dreams. I wanted to make a request For the Inventory to review more independent developers Developed games, I'm not asking for you to give 10 pagesOf just those type of games but every one or tow issues Try to squeeze in a review/preview of those games out There being developed by independent developers. Once again, thank you very much for having such a lovely service to the adventure game community.  
Regards, -Reptile

**The Inventory:** Hello Reptile. Thank you for your comments. We can promise that we will cover indie adventures as much as possible depending on the quality of the indie adventures coming out and if they match up or even surpass the quality of commercial titles. Something that so far has happened quite a few times I must add.



# Epilogue

**T**his is the end of a very successful year for The Inventory. Lots of scoops, new layout, new readers, new co-operations with international websites and magazines, the first Awards booklet, a new website dedicated exclusively to The Inventory... and it can only get better next year.

At the same time it has been an exhausting effort, with lots of sleepless nights in front of computers, writing articles, emails and fixing the layout of the magazine. Therefore it is high time for a good rest, and the summer is a good opportunity to do that.

We hope you won't forget us while we are absent. Our next issue will be available next September. And we will try our best to release issues sooner rather than the end of each month as we have done so far this year. So we hope that you will all enjoy your summer holidays and we hope you will get back to [www.theinventory.org](http://www.theinventory.org) this September to read our new issue. Until then feel free to visit Adventure Europe ([www.adventure-eu.com](http://www.adventure-eu.com)) for the latest adventure news and downloads. Till September then...farewell.

*Dimitris Manos*

# The Inventory

A magazine for adventure games only

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