

Adventure Lantern

October 2007

Featured Game:

Last Half of Darkness:
Beyond the Spirit's Eye



Interviews:

Zoetrope Interactive on Darkness
Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder

Reviews:

Delaware St. John: Seacliff Tragedy
The Blackwell Legacy
Tale of Two Kingdoms
The Museum of Broken Memories
Midnight Nowhere

Articles:

Death Worm, Killer Worm 1
and Killer Worm 2

Resident Evil 4
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Nightmare Before Christmas

Walkthroughs:

Nancy Drew: Ghost Dogs of Moon Lake
Nancy Drew: Treasure in the Royal Tower

Editorial

It has been seven years since I read R. A. Salvatore's *The Dark Elf Trilogy*. Salvatore is the author of numerous well-known books that take place in the Forgotten Realms setting created for Dungeons and Dragons. *The Dark Elf Trilogy* chronicles the early years of Drizzt Do'Urden, one of Salvatore's most famous characters. In the novels, Drizzt is a dark elf born into the Do'Urden family in the corrupt underground city of Menzoberranzan. Even during his early childhood, he shows remarkable prowess as a fighter. However, his personality is at odds with the dark elf society. He has a sense of honor and principles that does not belong in a city that upholds treachery and deceit. He does not belong in his own home. Yet the dark elves are a symbol of malice through out the realms. Outside of Menzoberranzan, Drizzt will be met with fear and suspicion. Thus begins his struggle to find acceptance and a place to call home.

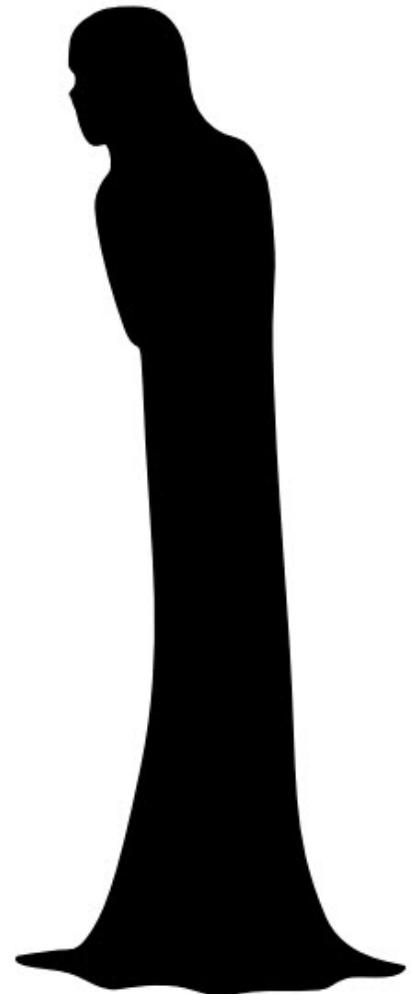
I remember reading part of the trilogy as I waited for a friend to join me for breakfast. I set the book aside when I saw him approach the table. He noticed the title of the series and inquired about the books. I tried to describe Menzoberranzan, the corrupt dark elf society, and Drizzt's struggle. He was quick to ask me why anyone in their right mind might want to read about a city full of evil creatures. Why would anyone want to read about such a dark and twisted place? As those of you familiar with Salvatore's work and the Forgotten Realms setting may point out, there actually is quite a bit more depth to Drizzt's homeland than the evil nature of its denizens. More importantly, Salvatore's trilogy hardly glorifies Menzoberranzan, especially since we are exposed to it from the perspective of a dark elf that does not share the beliefs of his people.

The question may have been put forth with a limited understanding of the novels. Nevertheless, its overarching theme still merits discussion. Whether it is found in a fantasy novel, a survival-horror game, or a scary movie, why do people expose themselves to an unnatural, disturbing world? In the same vein of questioning, why are horror themes so common in entertainment media and why do people enjoy exploring them? What could be so great about potentially spending

hours in terror while viewing often very graphic and disturbing imagery?

An article at [Science Daily](#) explores the topic from the perspective of horror movies and discusses why people might enjoy them. According to the article, one popular argument is that viewers may be excited, rather than frightened by the movies. Another viewpoint is that the audience may enjoy the relief that comes when the protagonists overcome the threat. In essence, the expected positive ending of the experience is sufficient to endure the negative aspects. The more recent explanation that is the highlight of the Science Daily article comes from the Journal of Consumer Research. In their paper [On the Consumption of Negative Feelings](#), Eduardo B. Andrade and Joel B. Cohen argue viewers may actually be experiencing different aspects of the experience at the same time. The positive and negative feelings associated with the activity can be evoked simultaneously. As such, viewers may perceive the movie in a positive way even when they are frightened. This duality of experience can explain the willingness to watch horror movies. It can also be extrapolated to understand why people may participate in thrill-seeking activities such as extreme sports.

Turning to the gaming world, we find that horror-themed titles are a notable niche even though they may not be developed in great numbers or enjoy the highest sales fig-



ures. Whether you are fighting to stay alive in a zombie-infested mansion, banishing restless spirits with a camera, or trying to uncover a mystery before hellish creatures devour your soul, games deliver horror in many different flavors. Sometimes the fear is concrete, it is the monsters chasing you; it is that distant growl you heard as you walked inside the building. Sometimes it is more abstract, rising from the unknown. Your mind weaving the story in ways that go beyond what is presented on the screen...

As Andrade and Cohen's research explores the reasons people watch horror movies, we can question why many players enjoy horror-themed games. While I cannot presume to understand why other gamers play horror games, at a personal level, my reasons are parallel to the idea of feeling the positive and negative aspects of the experience at the same time. One of the elements that almost inseparably come with horror themed-video games is a sense of mystery. As you experience the most suspenseful encounters in a game, knowing that you are finally about to uncover a part of the mystery can create quite a unique sense of euphoria.

Another powerful component of the experience is the knowledge that you are not just a member of the audience. In a well-executed game, the danger can seem more real if you are actively trying to keep the protagonists alive. If the game has succeeded in making you care about your character, helping them survive can be quite exhilarating. The anticipation of ultimately overcoming the danger can be sufficient to put the fear aside and continue fighting.

You play horror games with the knowledge that your character may not be able to overcome each threat. You may not be a valiant hero, but simply someone desperately struggling to stay alive. You may not be 'the chosen one' blessed with godlike powers, but simply a man lucky enough to survive the initial onslaught. One misstep and your character can easily meet a gruesome death. Those chasing you may barely flinch at your puny weapons. Even when there is no real danger, you may be on the verge of discovering a terrible truth that is better left undisturbed. The dark mysteries and the fear you must overcome can make your experience more memorable. Though the remembrance can be haunting rather than pleasant...

Whatever reasons you may have to play horror-themed games, they can offer a rather unique experience. And it is in recognition of this distinct form of gaming that we present you Adventure Lantern's second Halloween edition. If you dare, step in and enjoy the issue. Tread carefully through the pages. The shadows beckon...

Until next month,
Ugur

Adventure Lantern

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Adventurer's Ravine

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In the News...

Well chaps and chappettes (or whatever you ladies want to call yourselves) it's been one interesting month for us adventure gamers, what with the non-adventure but really Full Throttle-y trailer of Brutal Legend and the media blow-out on the second Sam & Max season. Then again, you are probably aware of news like that. Here's the less mainstream stuff.

-Gnome

Rise of the Hidden Sun

It's been over 5 years since Chapter 11 announced their ambitious, impressively polished yet very freeware Rise of the Hidden Sun adventure game series, but as time went by and news have been pretty sparse, many thought the project was dead. Well, good news then, for that's not the case and the brand new <http://rattlesnakejake.com> will help convince you. As for the game itself, it will indeed be the free yet professional quality AGS adventure spanning 4 episodes and 100 locations it was always meant to be. Rise of the Hidden Sun will also come complete with a classic Sierra-style point-and-click interface, fantastic 2D graphics and a full musical score.



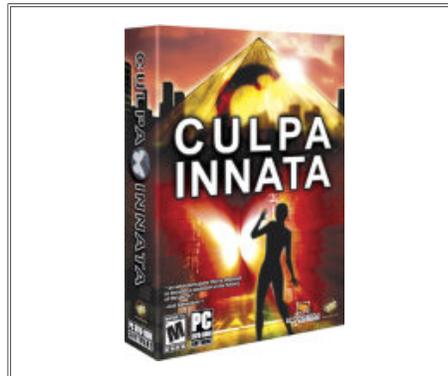
So Blonde: The Website

Ok, this one will probably be one of the smartest adventures ever written, but for now all Steve Ince has to present us with is a lovely German/English website, some impressive cartoon quality screenshots and an intriguing spoilt 17-year old anti heroin. The story in this seemingly traditional point-and-clicker has something to do with said brat being stranded on an isolated island. Lovely.

[\(http://www.soblond-game.de/\)](http://www.soblond-game.de/)



IFDB (no. not imdb) launched



Culpa Innata, a political 3D game developed in beautiful Istanbul and a game you, yes, you dear readers, absolutely have to try has already hit the stores. Grab it or wait for the soon to be available download only version.

www.culpainnata.com

Culpa Innata Widely Available

IFDB, the Interactive Fiction Database has just been launched and you happily enjoy it over @ <http://ifdb.tads.org>. You'll find tons of info, reviews, covers and anything related to text based adventures and even a most impressive "play now" button. Some interesting social network bits have also been added.

A Wii New Beginning

A New Beginning, the latest project by the developers responsible for Ankh, is shaping up to be one of the more interesting adventures that will soon appear on Nintendo's Wii and accidentally also grace both the DS and the PC. The game will be an eco-thriller, thus most probably a rarely political game, complete with hand-drawn graphics and traditional point-and-click gameplay. Find out more at <http://www.daedalic.de>.



Textfyre



Even though we definitely can't deny the sheer quality and quantity of modern freeware interactive fiction (text-adventure) games, Textfyre is something to really be excited about. Textfyre, you see, aspires to be the next Infocom-style commercial text-adventure publisher, complete with boxed products, fancy manuals and feelies, and that's by all means a good thing™. Here (<http://www.textfyre.com/>) is their still sparse website and here's to the full-fledged revival of i-f.

A The Exchange Student Episode 2

You can't have episodic gaming without episodes and that's why Pan Metron Ariston just had to release the second Exchange Student episode, which they apparently just did. Hoorah! The story of episode 2 (subtitled Point Club) starts exactly where episode 1 ended, when someone comes knocking on Emilio's door in the middle of the night. The game is out for PC & Mac, sports some lovely cartoon graphics, nice humor and a more than reasonable price tag.



Undercover: Operation Wintersun Contest

We're still running our game giveaway until November 4, 2007. So head on over to: www.adventurelantern.com and click on the contest link at the top of the page. Solve the puzzle and get a chance to win a free game. You have nothing to lose.

Good Luck!

Interview with Zoetrope Interactive on Darkness Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder

Conducted by Wendy Nellius



I don't know about you, but I get excited when I see a new developer coming onto the scene that is actually going to put out an Adventure game. It feels good to know that there are developers and publishers out there who know that the AG Community is fully alive and yearning for them to make more games.

So, it is with great pleasure that I got a chance to interview Galip Kartoglu at Zoetrope Interactive (a small indie developer located in Istanbul, Turkey) about their brand new adventure game, *Darkness Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder*.

Darkness Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder is dark thriller intended to play with your subconscious as you track down a missing detective whose last case was shrouded in mystery and murder. With quite a few new innovative features, Zoetrope's intent is to give you a gaming experience that you've never had before. *Darkness Within* is being published by Lighthouse Interactive and due for release next week (hopefully by Halloween).

[Adventure Lantern]: First of all, we'd like to get to know a bit about Zoetrope Interactive. Can you tell us a little bit about each of the team members? How did Zoetrope get started?

[Galip Kartoglu - Zoetrope Interactive]: Zoetrope Interactive was founded by 3 people: Onur Samli, Oral Samli and Galip Kartoglu. I (Galip) am responsible for programming and game engine development. Onur and Oral are focused on 3D modeling and sfx/music composing. We also work on the game design together. Zoetrope started 2 years ago when 3 of us gathered to make a game called *Loath Nolder: Labores Solis* (now titled *Darkness Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder*). We worked on a Game Boy Advance game called *Dual Blades*, which released in 2002 in North America and Japan.

[AL]: What made you choose the Adventure Game genre instead of Action, RPG, FPS etc?

[Galip]: We all love Adventure games, therefore producing an Adventure game sounded like a good start for us. There are many independent developers who

have been successful since there isn't a single "big" development company ruling the market. The Adventure community is also very dedicated.

[AL]: In your spare time, assuming you have any, we'd like to know what type of games each of you likes to play? Any stand-out favorites?

[Galip]: I like to play RTS and fighting games, as well as Adventure games. My favorite games are *Guilty Gear XX* series, *Silent Hill 2-3*, *Warcraft 3*, *Diablo 2* and the *Monkey Island* series.

[Onur and Oral]: We have been playing simple, but entertaining games on different platforms for some time. We particularly enjoy Action games like *Bomberman*. Unfortunately, we haven't had much time to play since we began developing *Darkness Within*. A few of our favorite games are the *GTA* series, *Carmageddon 2*, *Morpheus*, *The Dark Eye* and *Sanitarium*.

[AL]: Exploration of the Zoetrope website reveals that you have created a new game engine, "CPAGE". What prompted you to create a new one as opposed to

utilizing existing game engines? What makes “CPAGE” different?

[Galip]: We had noticed that there wasn't a mentionable panoramic Adventure game engine around, and there are many enthusiastic people who wish to create Adventure games of their own. So we thought, why not develop an engine to help them create beautiful and graphically advanced Adventure games? We wanted CPAGE to be the answer this question. So we're open to share our engine.

[AL]: You also say you are willing to help other independent game developers and enthusiasts by providing tools that will ease the game development process. This seems to be a trend with independent developers.....willingness to help out other developers. What do you think is the reason for this unlikely camaraderie in the ultra competitive gaming industry?

[Galip]: As a game developer, I think the current games on the market that are developed by the big companies are becoming dull in terms of game design and ideas. Independent developers give a fresh new perspective. They can come up with cool new ideas, but to implement these ideas and sell them, they need adequate tools and development environments to narrow the technology gap between them and those who dominate the market dominant. This is one of the reasons why we should support each other.

[AL]: You managed to garner the attention of Lighthouse Interactive. Congratulations! For those who may have no clue how to get started, what was your strategy in locating a publisher?

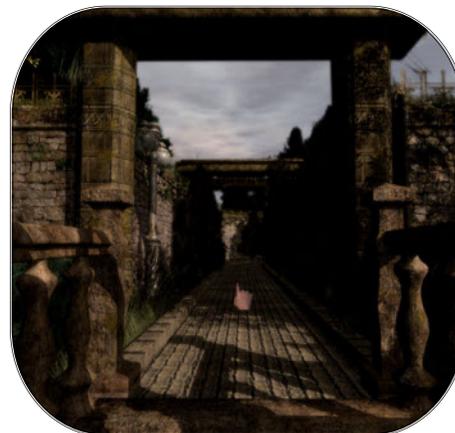
[Galip]: First, come up with a strategy. Define and design your game well. Know what you want and learn what qualifications you must have in order to reach your goal. Our basic strategy was to develop a playable demo and show it to the publishers who are interested in the same kind of game we're making.

[AL]: What types of obstacles have you encountered during the development phase? What was the most challenging? And, alternatively, what were your favorite moments?

[Galip]: Being inexperienced was our most fearful obstacle. We're still learning and know that we have to learn to adapt ourselves to anything we're asked by our publisher. For now, the most challenging thing for us was working with large files and sending them to Lighthouse without any problems. Our location and internet connection is a big obstacle here. Sending the gold master version of the game was an unforgettable experience for us :)

[AL]: How long have you been working on Darkness Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder?

[Galip]: 2 years. Before I joined Zoetrope Interactive, Onur and Oral were working on the project. If you search the internet you can find very old screen shots of the game on some gaming sites. At first we intended to create a classic 2D Adventure game without panoramic





views. After CPAGE was implemented, the overall look of the game changed drastically. We also decided on a new name: "Darkness Within."

[AL]: Can you provide us with some information about the storyline?

[Galip]: The story is about a police detective named Howard E. Loreid who is after murder suspect Loath Nolder, who happens to be an ex private investigator. But this seemingly routine case will turn into a nightmare for Howard. He'll face terrifying happenings and reveal something about himself. The player will take on the role of Howard and experience the game through his eyes. In other words, players will share his story, which leads to madness.

[AL]: What made you choose H.P. Lovecraft's works as your inspiration?

[Galip]: We are big fans of H.P. Lovecraft. Onur and Oral adore his works. They think he's the only person who defines "fear" perfectly.

[AL]: The storyline seems to revolve around 2 main characters; Howard E. Loreid (playable character) and Loath Nolder (the object of our pursuit). Can you tell us more about their personalities? What makes them tick?

[Galip]: If I tell about Loath Nolder, I'll probably ruin the game since his character is the heart of the mystery. So I'll talk about Howard. He's a young police detective (in his thirties) and an admirer of Loath Nolder's P.I. work. After discovering the strange things Loath Nolder has done (i.e. selling everything, traveling to exotic countries, and becoming a the primary suspect in the murder of a wealthy man), Howard's passion to find Loath Nolder becomes a personal matter for him. He must find him and learn the truth about Loath Nolder and

more importantly, himself!

[AL]: Do we ever get to actually interact with Loath Nolder? Or with any other characters?

[Galip]: Yes, and other characters.

[Adventure Lantern]: How do we progress through the story? Is the game linear in nature?

[Galip]: Actually it's not. There are some points in which players will follow different paths. For instance, you may miss the chance to speak with Loath Nolder if you act cowardly! So the game does have some replayability. There is also a results screen at the end of the game telling you how far you progressed in discovering the hidden truths in the game and story. Someone who plays in Standard mode probably won't be able to learn the full story since this is the easiest level of the game. There are 3 difficulty levels to choose from.

[AL]: What can you tell us about the overall game mechanics? How do the players interact in the 3D environment? Will it be a traditional 1st person exploration?

[Galip]: *Darkness Within* is first person. The game has a node-based panoramic exploration style used in many games like *Myst IV*, *Dracula* and *Post Mortem*. This is a point-and-click Adventure game, so left clicking is your best friend. :) There isn't any walking around in a node and left clicking takes you to another node. Also, there are many interface-based screens like inventory, a 3D object examination screen, Howard's Mind ("Thinking Screen"), and document underlining and reading screens. *Darkness Within* also offers a more realistic first person experience since the game some times takes control from the player. For example, in some horror scenes, if you don't run, Howard does automatically.



wanted Howard to have a character of his own. He sometimes coughs in the game; you can hear his heartbeats getting faster and slower according to the situation he is in, and you can also see the in-game camera move up and down in accordance with his panting.

[AL]: What kind of locations will we get to explore on our quest?

[Galip]: The gamers will explore many creepy and different locations in the game like big old creepy houses, mystic underground galleries, cemeteries, caves, crypts... The game also has various “dream/nightmare” levels which adds more locations to the “different places to see” category.

[AL]: What are the kinds of challenges players can expect to encounter in the game? Is there a predominant puzzle type such as inventory, logic or mechanical?

[Galip]: There are traditional puzzles which involve combining items or using an item on another object, but *Darkness Within* also has some new kinds of puzzles, which may be pleasantly challenging for Adventure gamers. So keep your mind open. :) The game has inventory, logic and mechanical puzzles, but logic puzzles are the dominant type.

[AL]: Your website mentions an “All new thinking system” and also “Feeling and hearing with your character”. Can you tell us more about these interesting features?

[Galip]: *Darkness Within* utilizes a “Thinking Screen” which represents Howard’s mind. Clues are a very important part of the game. This will be evident as soon as you begin the game. You will be warned when you’ve found a clue and you’ll get clues from different actions and situations. You can also think of “Howard’s Mind” screen as a “Quest Log,” which shows your progress in the game given the clues you have collected. You can also combine clues with one another (or with physical items!) to get new clues and advance in the game.

[AL]: The game demo most certainly had a surprise at the end. Should we expect more of this throughout the game?

[Galip]: Yes certainly! This is the most striking feature of the game. You’ll never know what happens next... full of surprises... a twisted storyline...

[AL]: Where will the game be released? And, what languages will be offered?

[Galip]: *Darkness Within* will be distributed worldwide by Lighthouse Interactive. The game will offer many localized language versions beginning with English, German, Russian, French and Italian.

[AL]: What can we expect from Zoetrope Interactive in the future? Are there projects in the works already?

[Galip]: Expect more Adventure games. :) Our next project is already in the pre-design phase. We’re working on some new ideas...

[AL]: Is there anything else you would like our readers to know?

[Galip]: We’d just like to say thank you for this opportunity and the support of the Adventure game community. We’ll do our best to bring you enjoyable and creepy Adventure games and hope you’ll all enjoy playing *Darkness Within*.

As far as feeling and hearing your character goes, we

With the impending release of the game next week, we know that free time is at a bare minimum. We would like to thank Galip Kartoglu and the Zoetrope team for granting this interview. We enjoyed reading the responses and look forward to playing *Darkness Within: In Pursuit of Loath Nolder*. We wish you great success!! Thank you also to Lorraine Lue at Lighthouse Interactive all her help. For more information about the game and to try out the demo, please visit the official website at www.zoetropeint.com or visit Lighthouse Interactive’s site at www.lighthouse-interactive.com

William R. Fisher's

Last Half of Darkness: Beyond the Spirit's Eye

By Wendy Nellius



As I arrive home from work, I see a package in my mailbox with WRF Studios clearly marked in the return address. Sweet! It must be Last Half of Darkness: Beyond the Spirit's Eye. I bring it inside and immediately rip it open. I crack open the case and to my delight find some little extras included with the CDs.

The first thing I notice is that a certain Madame Ze Hira has written a letter:

"My sister mentioned your success in New Orleans, and thought you might be able to help with a similar situation here. The black world has cursed our tiny town with an infection of bloodfeeders and vampire-like creatures known as the "Guardians of the Eye" The plague entered our gates of Shadowcrest with a bounty brought back by a local explorer, Captain Marcos. His treasure included an ancient uncut bloodstone"

[The success in New Orleans relates back to Bill Fisher's first game, "Last Half of Darkness: Shadows of the Servants". However, you do not need to have played the 1st game in order to play "Beyond the Spirit's Eye". But, I highly recommend checking it out.]

The letter goes on to beseech your assistance and includes a small piece of treasure attached to the bottom of the letter. A Journal provides insight into the initial transportation of the treasure to a town called Shadowcrest. A quick-start guide and some notes from the author are also included. The beauty of these extra little items is that you haven't even placed the CD in the drive and you are already playing the game. The mood is being set from the first written word and it's important to actually read them as they are part of the game. The game comes on 2 CDs and installed without any problems. No other technical issues were encountered during gameplay.

So, the basic premise is that Cap

tain Marcos, in essence, stole this treasure and cursed a whole town through his greediness. Now, it's up to you to figure it all out and release the curse. This 1st person game begins in a seemingly abandoned structure. Find a key, decipher a puzzle and a secret entrance will appear in the floor. Head down the steps and find a boat waiting for you. The boat will make its way through the swamp to meet up with Madame Ze Hira. As you enter her house, her scratchy and creepy voice immediately warns you to "Touch Nothing". Of course, being the true adventure gamer that you are, you will pretend as though you didn't hear and touch EVERYTHING. Talk to Madame Ze Hira and she

Developer: WRF Studios
Publisher: WRF Studios
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: June 2007

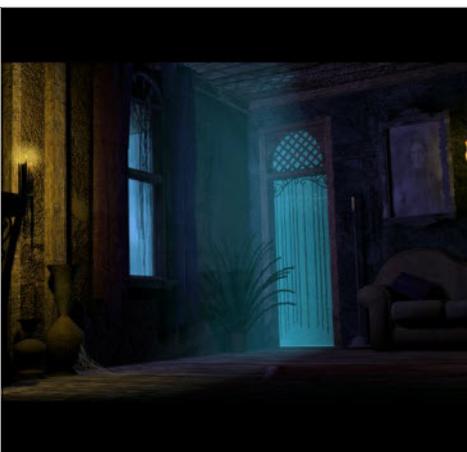


lays down a bit more info about why you've been summoned and then sends you on your way to Shadowcrest to find the answers which lie in Marcos' house. It is in Shadowcrest that the real work will begin and your heart will jump up into your throat more than once (if it hasn't already).

Part of the success of *Shadows of the Servants* was the emergence of Bill's innate ability to scare the bajeepers out of you without being cheesy. Part of this is accomplished by scattering the clues throughout the environment. When you find one, you're automatically thinking of where and how to implement that clue. So, essentially, your mind is on the clues as you're heading off to another location. And, then...BLAM...something jumps out at you and you find yourself letting out a gasp/shriek despite all attempts to be cool and collected. It is what Bill does....and he does it well. Now, I must say that I was bit more mentally prepared this time around after playing the first one. So, did he get me on every single scare? Nope *she admits with a satisfied smile on her face*. But, did he get me at all? Uhhh....yes. He got me alright and multiple times at that. Damn him! But, this is what you're signing up for when you get the game. It's similar to when you go see some horror movie and end up checking all your closets twice be-

fore you can go to bed. You asked for it!

Graphically, Bill has kicked it up a notch. The 2D backgrounds are as dark and creepy as ever, but there is a lot more to see this time and the amount of detail has increased. Each location is crisp and clear with more variance in the colors of darkness. As per the last game, the balance between darkness and light is wonderful. Light can appear in many forms. Moonlight is seen casting an overall glow or simply streaming through a dirty window. Candlelight is used throughout the game. Truly, he did an outstanding job with this. Animated 3D cutscenes have been improved as well. Animation is much smoother and more plentiful this time. The cutscenes cover anything from ghost interactions to "visions" when touching an item to seeing the cor-

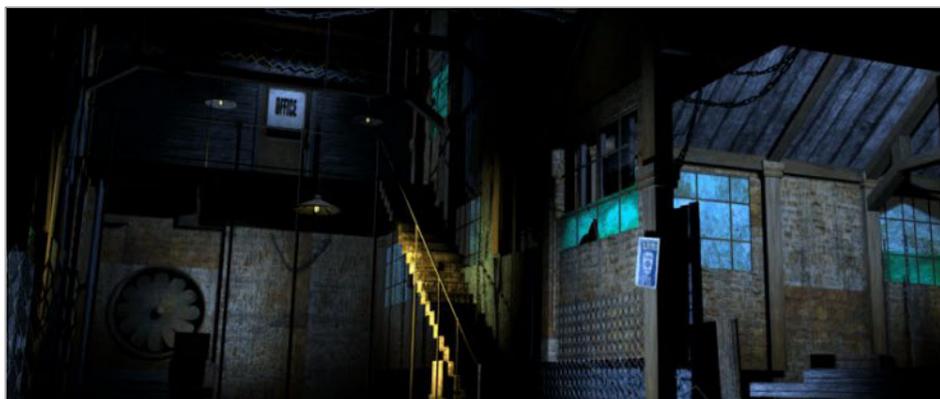


rect use of an item played out in front of you.

The game is based upon solo exploration. However, you do get to talk to a couple of characters. Ok...so only one is alive, but does that really matter? Please...I've had conversations with worse. One thing that is not present and would be nice to see in future installments is flexibility in the dialogue. Right now, dialogue consists of clicking on 2-3 questions provided. Then, you get to listen to the other character talk for a while. Of course, you're getting a lot of useful information to the story, but it would be nice to have some options. True, the game is not really based around having conversations so this is likely more my personal preference. Voices are good and have the prerequisite creepy sounds but at times can be difficult to understand due to the reverb effect. For most dialogue, text has been provided to alleviate missing out on important information. But, this feature is not used 100% throughout the game so you may miss a sentence here and there.

As for the spirits you do get to see, there are most certainly two different styles used here. Some of them are more fluid in their movements. Others look like you're seeing the dead body as opposed to the spirit within – their acting is wooden. There is no lip synching at all, but I can only imagine the work involved to get that coordinated. One character even has her lips sewn up. No need for lip synching there. While you may want to see these spirits graphically live up to the great backgrounds, they appropriately serve their purpose which is to scare you and otherwise contribute to the overall atmosphere of the game.

Music does not play a big part in the game. It is the ambient sounds that take center stage. At times you'll walk around in complete silence. At other times, a spirit's laughter or



bumps in the night will play with your subconscious. The ambient sounds do the job in creating an atmosphere where you will be looking over your shoulder. Of course, that leaves you wide open for what is in front of you...waiting to pounce.

While you won't be able to do much with most of them, there are a lot of items in every location to look at. And, there are more locations than ever. In Captain Marcos' house alone, there are a ton of areas to explore. While there are the standard rooms, there are hidden passages and balconies that lead into courtyards. Courtyards have hidden doors and secret locations as well. This is likely one of the major reasons to get stuck (which I did) in the game. You simply have missed a doorway somewhere.

The town has more to offer than just Marcos' house. There is a wharf, warehouse, the local bar, and even more hidden tunnels. There is a map available, but you won't get it right away. You'll have to explore Marcos' house pretty well before you get access to all the other areas. Once you have the map, however, you will be able to jump back and forth to all the locations as you find your clues. Of course, all the places you visit in the game are places you would NEVER explore in real life. You couldn't pay me enough. That being said, it's easier to feign bravado in a game. Speaking of walking, navigation is simple. You have a simple arrow as

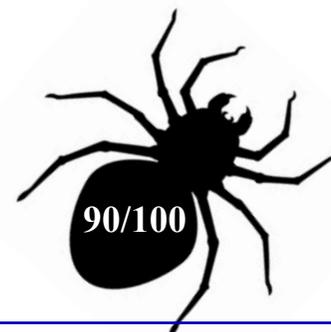
a cursor. It will turn red when something can be interacted with. If you've picked the right inventory item, the cursor will shake. An "X" cursor along with text denotes exits and entrances with an "eye" rounding out the group for examination.

The inventory is located at the bottom of the game screen and can be scrolled through. Left clicking on an item located in the inventory will allow you to use that item. Right clicking will provide further examination. The main menu can be accessed at the top of the game screen where you can save, load, or exit the game. There are 10 save slots available, but honestly, you likely will not need that many. Game Options include music volume, ambient sounds/voice volume and you can change the transition mode by turning the fade on or off.

As for the puzzles, Bill has continued his tradition of providing interesting and diverse puzzles. There are inventory puzzles, logic puzzles and cryptic messages abound. But, you'll also get to play hangman and a memory game where you have to watch a sequence of electrical currents and click to match the sequence you just saw. While the diversity of the puzzles will maintain your interest, the difficulty level seemed to be less than Bill's first game. I remember being stumped quite a few times, but I got through pretty easily this time. My only true downfall was not noticing one specif-

ic door and therefore ended up wandering around for quite some time. While the storyline is more in-depth than with Shadows of the Servants, I wanted more. I really liked the story and I did "get it", but I had questions. I may have missed something, but I wanted more detail about the transition the town went through. I also wanted more information about Madame Ze Hira and how she managed to stay alive. And, why she couldn't rid the town herself since she seems to be so connected to the occult. Or what was the deal with the skeleton sitting in some sort of medieval contraption in the center of one of the rooms. What happened to that person? Perhaps some animated flashbacks could have filled in some of the gaps.

Overall, Beyond the Spirit's Eye was truly an enjoyable experience. Bill's talent for creating horror adventure is still in full force and we're happy about that. The thrill of being scared is why we visit haunted houses, go see the latest horror flick and the reason why we will sit in front of our computer for hours with the full knowledge that we're going to jump. If you haven't already, jump on the bandwagon and get the game. Your racing heart won't thank you, but I'm sure Bill will.



Minimum System Requirements:
 Windows 95, 98, 2000, XP, ME
 Pentium III 800 MHz or higher
 128 MB RAM (256+ Rec)
 3D Video Card
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

Delaware St. John

Volume 3: The Seacliff Tragedy

By Wendy Nellius



We're now up to the 3rd installment in the Delaware St. John series of games.

Taking a Look Back

[Excerpts taken from my review on volume 2]

Delaware St. John is an unusual young man with a flair for investigation and a soul that calls those from beyond. From the time Delaware was a young boy, messages from beyond the grave have plagued him in his sleep; strange voices he couldn't control or understand. It wasn't until he was older that he knew his purpose. He had to find the

source of the voices and provide them with the help they needed, whatever that may be.

A chance meeting had Delaware joining forces with Kelly Bradford, the owner of a bookstore downtown and a paranormal investigator on the side. What a pairing! Kelly is Delaware's constant companion through the wonders of a voice imagery communicator, VIC for short. Delaware can speak to Kelly or send her photos and recordings for instant analysis.

Volume 1: The Curse of Midnight Manor

We last saw Delaware at Midnight Manor, an ill-fated resort built in 1892 by Bernard Amand. Plagued by 4 unexplained deaths, the manor was shut down. Unbeknownst to Delaware, more deaths have occurred since the closing of the manor - some quite recent. Undeterred by ghostly close-encounters and a stalking by a paranormal being (The Hunter), Delaware used his keen

senses, psychic abilities and detective skills to piece together the horrors that occurred in the manor, ultimately releasing the souls of those poor, unfortunate victims and destroying The Hunter. Along the way, Delaware stumbled on bits and pieces of information relating to his childhood (he was an orphan) and the powers he possesses.

Volume 2: The Town with No Name

We met back up with Delaware as he contemplated the events at Midnight Manor and why he has these visions. Is this fate? Why was he chosen for this task? Will he finally be at peace?

While helping Kelly clean out the back room of her bookstore, an old atlas fell open at Delaware's feet and ultimately led him to town that existed even though all the facts say it shouldn't have. The town was deserted but gave all indication that the desertion was not voluntary. Something horrible happened in this



town. Delaware's investigation led him to the Hunter again and brought even more questions about his childhood. As with the first case, Kelly was around to help Delaware out via VIC. In addition to Kelly, another character made an appearance in volume 2. Simon is a friend of Kelly's but seemed to be at odds with Delaware and the reason seemed to be Kelly. Just a little bit of male rivalry here. However, he turned out to be of great assistance in the research department.

Volume 1 & 2: Both volumes have 2 stories. The first always begins with the initial mystery haunting site. The second story brings us more detail on Delaware's identity. It also brings more light to why Delaware has these visions, his connection to the Hunter and what his purpose is here in this world. Big Time Games gives you these details sparingly in each case so that you will look forward to the next installment.

Volume 3: The Seacliff Tragedy

As we begin the 3rd installment, Delaware is once again found pondering his fate. And, honestly, if you had this kind of life, wouldn't you ponder it? No visions of late so Delaware has had a little break. A

routine trip to the local bakery one cold morning blows that peace right out of the water. As he exits the bakery, the snow on the ground fades away and Delaware has a vision that transports him to an amusement park. Amusement parks should be fun but something seems wrong (as usual). The ground begins to shake violently beneath him and the sounds of screaming regale his ears. What's going on??? In an instant, Delaware is back at the bakery again, sprawled out on the snow covered ground, and wondering where this new vision is going to lead him.

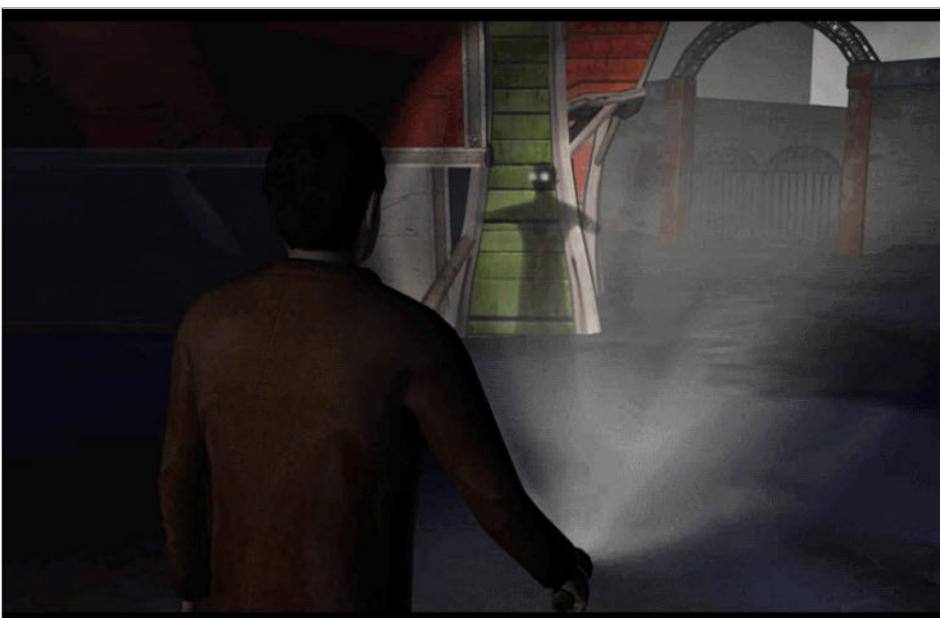
Standard procedure dictates a briefing with Kelly. Simon (or Sir Dork-a-lot as Delaware calls him) has also reappeared in this installment and seems to be getting along slightly better with Delaware...well...sort of. Crafty research leads Delaware to Seacliff Amusement park. The park opened in 1968 and up until 4 years ago was a place for family fun. That was until the entire back half of the park collapsed and killed 100 people. Twenty-four people alone died when the roller coaster flew right in the ocean. The very same day, Theodore Crandall (the owner at the time) hung himself in his house located on the same property as the



park. There are rumors of extensive paranormal activity around the park. Well, this is certainly right up Delaware's alley.

The gameplay begins with Delaware venturing into the park in the dark. Question: Can't Delaware ever investigate during the day? What, ghosts don't show up if it's too light out? Is there some rule about that in the paranormal world? But, I digress. Delaware quickly realizes that it is indeed a bit too dark and goes back to the truck for his flashlight. He discovers something unusual in the bed of his truck -- Kelly. Tired of being left behind, Kelly played the stowaway. This is good news because it is the first installment in the series where you will get to play as Delaware and Kelly alternatively with Simon helping through VIC. Will the Hunter show up this time? Will it go after Kelly too?

This 1st person game comes with 2 CDs, one for the installation and one that must be in the drive to play the game. No problems were experienced during installation or gameplay. There are only a few options that you can choose from the main menu. You can adjust the music





volume, voice volume and turn the subtitles on or off.

On the bottom of the game screen is VIC (Voice Imagery Communicator). Your inventory is located here, although you never have more than 4 items at a time so there are only 4 slots. In the center of VIC is a panel that when clicked will take you to the main menu where you can save, continue or exit the game. There are only 10 save slots, but you can overwrite earlier ones as needed. On the right side of VIC is the communication aspect. This is how you keep in contact with Simon. There is a connect, photo and a record button. Now, here is where I am usually disappointed and was again. You can call Simon, but he rarely has anything to tell you. You can take pictures, but they will rarely bring back a result. Recording didn't even happen this time. Basically, there is no challenge to this part of the game. You take a picture of what you're told to take. You talk when the game spontaneously bursts into a cutscene. You never get the choice or option to do any of these yourselves. You merely listen to conversation instead of participating in them. Please Big Time Games.....give us more flexibility next time. It's such a fun option. Let us use it. There is no clickable map. The maps you have are throughout the park....just like in the mall with

the "you are here" marker.

There are a lot of places (out in the open and hidden) to explore. Usually, you will have an agenda based upon a conversation between Delaware and Kelly or from either thinking out loud. I personally found the park difficult to navigate. But, as always, this could be due to my lack of direction sense. I found I walked around and around in circles. I would check one of the maps and clearly see where I needed to go, but somehow I just couldn't get there on the 1st shot. Ok, or the 2nd or 3rd either. But, eventually the moronic haze would clear and I would find my way. Hey, it's not like you could use a creepy clown for a marker since they were everywhere. Yes...I'm making excuses.

Navigation is your basic up, down, right, left and go back arrows. You have the eye to examine, hand to pick items up, and occasionally a fist to break down a door. When using an inventory item, the item will have a red glow.

The puzzles are mostly inventory based and not overly difficult. More difficult was finding an item in the dark that Delaware saw in his vision. I can't tell you how aggravated I was looking for a game token that was supposed to be lying next to a soda can. All you see in the vision is the

can and the token lying on the ground. There's a lot of park to cover and the search became the bane of my existence. Of course, it was in a place that I had forgotten was even there. That's part of the trick. You may search a location and see nothing. But, something else will trigger a clue to appear later on. So, you need to retrace your steps consistently. There are a few logic puzzles like figuring out a code on a box or fixing a fuse box. There are also a couple of mazes. One involved following a code of symbols to decide which doors to enter. That one wasn't too hard. The other was decidedly more difficult. But, if I could get through it, anyone can. So, it couldn't have been that hard. Or perhaps I just got lucky. I really didn't use any specific strategy. I was just winging as usual.

One other aspect of the game is dealing with your enemies. There are shadow people throughout the park. The flashlight will destroy them, but only if you click on them fast enough. If not, Delaware or Kelly will pass out. It won't kill you, but you'll end up with a headache. Then, there are the Hunter chase sequences which have become standard in this series. I'm not sure why, but something was different. Perhaps I missed the plain old piano music or the sequences were de-



played more. But, I didn't feel the same urgency of the chase as in previous ones. I felt like I had all the time in the world. In DS1, I thought that thing was going to bite me in the butt any second. This time, not so. But, this does not detract from the game. It just made me miss it a bit.



I must say I liked the opening music that plays during the credits. Yes, you will have to watch the entire credits upon beginning a new game. You can't spacebar through them. But, I have said before that I do understand the desire to have people actually read the credits. I also get a kick out of the Lighthouse Interactive intro. I think it's the combo of the music and that electric current running through the wire to power up the lighthouse. Cool. Alright...back to the music. I found the music to have the same melodic "theme song", if you will, as the previous two games. But, with each installment, the musical score becomes even more rich and full bodied than the last. At one point in the game, you have to watch a carnival game that is a horse race. The standard carnival music plays for the race, but the Delaware theme song follows it up in the same tinny sound. It was a nice touch.

The backgrounds are for the most part like dark, muted watercolor paintings. Your only real source of light and chance to see more vibrant color is when the carried flashlight cuts into the darkness. Occasionally you will see more some vibrancy upon meeting up with an apparition as their presence reflects a past time. But, as usual, these 2D backdrops are beautiful and extremely fascinating. If you've ever visited an amusement park (which I'm sure most of you have), you may even feel as though you've been there before. There's a carousel, a fun house, roller coaster etc. There's also less fun places like the owner's house, storage sheds or underground tunnels.

The inherent theme of the park is clowns. There's a whole section just dedicated to them. Hold on a second...I feel another shudder coming on. Really, clowns are supposed to be fun and happy and all that. I don't know who we're kidding.

They're downright creepy. Dark AND clowns? Just shoot me now and get it over with.

There are other characters to interact with during the game; some alive, most not. Interaction is primarily based on animated conversations. Graphically, I think Big Time Games did a good job here. All the characters looked great and sounded great too. Lip syncing matched up to a tee. Outstanding job on that.

Overall, the Delaware St. John games progress storywise and have improved on certain aspects to ensure an entertaining time. The stories are interesting and this one had a doozy of a twist at the end. The "twist" completely dispelled something I had been sure of during the first 2 games. Now, I can't wait for the next one to come out so I can find out what happens next. So, while I would like to see more flexibility in the VIC usage so I feel like I'm truly doing the investigation, I can sincerely recommend The Seacliff Tragedy to anyone looking to liven up a couple of nights with some spooky atmosphere and darned good mystery.



Minimum System Requirements:
 Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, XP
 Pentium II processor or higher
 32 MB RAM
 DirectX compatible sound & video
 Hard Drive space of 300 MB
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

A Tale of Two Kingdoms

By Thaumaturge



It started with a king, and with raiders. Refusing to relinquish his property to the thieves, the king ordered his escort to attack, and in the combat that followed, he was killed.

His son was Vortigern, and as new king assumed the throne of his kingdom of Theylinn with the proverbial thirst for revenge.

But it did not end with revenge. In slaking his thirst for vengeance he tasted of another vine, a vine that, it seems, wrapped its tendrils about his heart and made him its own: conquest.

“Vortigern the Bloody” made it his mission to make all lands within his compass his own. His armies swallowed city after city, bringing them under the power of the self-proclaimed “Emperor of the Southern Realms”.

In marching on the Duchy of Gronthal, however, he found resistance. The locals rallied behind Maeldun Whiteblade, and under this man held against and forced back the invading army.

Maeldun joined forces with the Lady Branwyn, a mercenary captain from the realm that had borne the raiders, and together they reversed the flow of conquest. Their force growing as they went, they broke Vortigern’s grip on city after city, pushing the “Emperor of the Southern Realms” back to his native Theylinn, and there they left him.

The repulsion of his conquest dashed both Vortigern’s dream and his spirit.

Three years pass. It is the evening of the Equinoctial celebration, a time of feasting and merriment. The bard Taliesin, an old friend of Maeldun and Branwyn, has just finished a tale.

The opening of the door silences the conversations at the tables. From the cold comes an old face: Geraint, commander of the forces of Theylinn. Hostility is immediate, but Geraint is unapologetic, stating tersely that he has a message to convey from his king, should they wish to hear it.

It seems that the goblins to the north are outstripping their resources, and are looking to their southern neighbors for sustenance. They do not plan peaceful trade, however – their preferred method of acquiring provisions is raiding.

Of course, there is little sympathy in this hall for the fate of Theylinn – Maeldun and Branwyn would seem to remember well Vortigern the Bloody. However, Geraint makes a point that penetrates even their dejection: Theylinn stands between the goblins and the Southern Realms; should it fall, the goblins would be free to raid the lands beyond – their lands, for example.

And so it is that Maeldun, Branwyn and Taliesin find themselves leading a band of warriors to the aid of their enemy.

But it will not be as simple as that. Oh no. An assassin’s blade will interfere, and with the murderer displaying adeptness at disappearance, suspicion falls squarely on the man with the most obvious motive, and who finds himself in possession of the murder weapon: Maeldun.

Thus is Maeldun Whiteblade left in an unenviable predicament, with two problems on his hands. Not

Developer: Crystal Shard
Publisher: Crystal Shard
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: Jul 2007



only does the goblin threat probably remain his most pressing concern, but now he has also the murder of King Vortigern to investigate – not to mention avoiding making himself too conspicuous and being thus recaptured. For though he may not mourn the old king overmuch, without the unmasking of the real culprit, the blame – and thus the punishment – still falls to Maeldun.

But there are more than just two realms involved in these events. In fact, it seems to me that *A Tale of Two Kingdoms* is doubly that: not only a tale of two mortal kingdoms, but also a tale of the human world and of Thierna na Oge, the faerie realm. For the Otherworld of the faerie will also take a hand in the events to come; in fact, without fae aid Maeldun has little hope of success in the events in which he finds himself ensnared...

The story that unfolds is one of magic and treachery, of unlikely friendships, and of secrets – both those that are obvious and those that might easily be missed. It is a story that owes much to fairy tale – some elements seem even to draw directly on a well-known tale or two – but which stands, I feel, on its own as one that is well worth exploring.

The writing is decent – perhaps not stellar, but good – and the plot is an interesting and well-crafted one. The characters, while not always

terribly deep, suit their setting and plot, in some cases borrowing from fairy-tale just as does the plot. Of particular interest (to me, at least), is that a number of names would seem to have been taken from Celtic mythology and history. Some readers may already have noticed the names of Taliesin, Branwyn and Vortigern, which are joined by others, such as Brann and Nimue. Similarly, the name given for the Faerie Otherworld is Thierna na Oga, which bears a distinct similarity to Tír na nÓg, the name of an Otherworld from Irish mythology.

While the main course of the plot is clear, there are a number of threads to the events in Theylinn, elements



of the plot that might easily be missed on one's first journey through Theylinn.

Discovering these and following their strands is not necessary to the completion of the game, but neither are they totally incidental – each contributes in some way to the final outcome of the game. In fact, there are five endings to the game, reflecting the quests that the player has discovered and brought to completion.

These side-plots are not, however, always easy to come by. Some are revealed only by being in the right place at the right time, or by paying close attention to what others say

and do. A few may rely on noticing an item and taking the opportunity to acquire it.

I do not, however, think this a major point against the game. In fact, for the most part, I hold it in the game's favor. These are elements that one might not notice at all on first playing through the game, let alone find solutions to. But, on playing again and going this time to *this* person earlier, or taking *that* item that you previously left at first and found blocked off later, you might open up new sub-plots that you had not explored. If you complete them, you may experience another of the five available endings. In addition, at its conclusion the game informs you not only of your scores (for you have two, described in the gameplay below), but also of the number of side quests and cut scenes that you discovered – along with the number available in total. It may also pay to take note of the conversation that plays out as the game concludes – there are hints to be found there, it seems.

Thorough exploration and attentive observation are therefore highly recommended, but beware! While time itself overall is not as important, these side-plots will not always wait, and having left some item behind to achieve other ends can result in certain paths closing to the player's exploration. Of course, accidentally missing an event that one knows should happen can on occasion re-

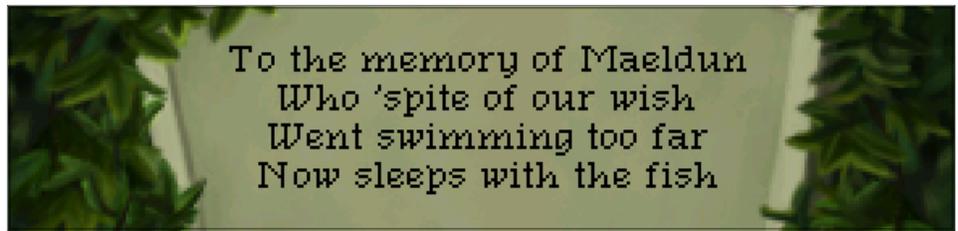


sult in some frustration, but for the most part I feel that these side-plots add more to the game in enhancing replayability than they are likely to detract.

Graphically, *A Tale of Two Kingdoms* presents a mix of quality. Many of the backgrounds are very good – some even beautiful, I would say, most especially in the natural scenes. The character portraits are of decent quality, but are generally less impressive than many of the backdrops (a notable exception being the monk's portrait, which I found to be very good indeed). However, while the sprites that represent creatures and objects are likewise decent, their animations are unfortunately not so good, being at times unconvincing.

The game provides a similar mix in terms of sound. The music and ambient sounds are very good, being generally appropriate and not uncommonly quite lovely. The sound effects, on the other hand, are used minimally, and are, I feel, of lower quality.

Unfortunately, the dialog is not voiced, as it would seem that the creators of the game did not receive applications appropriate to all of their characters – in particular, they



write that they had trouble in finding voice actors to read the parts of the older characters, as most applicants were too young. However, while a pity, I do not feel that this detracts overmuch.

The game itself has a structure common to many adventure games. It is viewed in the third person, with the player using the mouse to direct Maeldun's actions. The particular action taken depends primarily on the mouse cursor at the time. There are four primary cursors, one each to instruct Maeldun to walk to a spot, look at something, touch or use something, and speak to something. These cursors can be selected by clicking on their icons in a bar that appears when the mouse is moved to the top of the screen, or by clicking the right mouse button, which allows one to cycle between the available cursors.

The game makes much use of Maeldun's inventory, which, like the mouse cursors, is accessible by

clicking on an icon in the bar at the top of the screen. When opened, the inventory appears in an attractive circular window, items that Maeldun possesses being shown arranged around a central area. This central area contains cursor icons allowing the player to examine, touch or use, or select a given item, as well as an icon that allows the player to close the inventory and, should the player have discovered enough items, icons to view further inventory on the next or previous "page". Once selected, an inventory item becomes a fifth cursor, also available via clicks of the right mouse button, allowing the player to instruct Maeldun to attempt to use that item in the world.

Conversation is similarly familiar: when engaged in conversation, the player is presented with a panel containing available responses for Maeldun to give. Clicking on the desired response has Maeldun give it, and moves the conversation forwards, the current speaker being indicated by a portrait beside their words.

Since one of the threads of the game's story is the solution of the king's murder, the player is probably well-advised to pay careful attention to what people say – especially when they do not realize that they are being overheard.

One gameplay element that is not often seen (in my experience, at least), but which I found to be a very welcome inclusion is the ability to ask other characters to perform actions for you. This allows Maeldun to ask a character to describe or use





nearby objects, including items in their inventories. Most often this is a useful way of gaining information, but in some cases they will be willing to do more, even lending or giving to Maeldun items that they possess – although of course it is seldom that easy.

In *A Tale of Two Kingdoms*, as in some of the classic adventure games, the player is awarded points towards a score as certain actions are performed and quests are completed. In this game, however, the player has two scores: Honour (using the British spelling) and Wisdom. Points are awarded to each in much the usual manner, but are awarded based on the action performed – a clever use of an item might gain one Wisdom, while thinking of others or fulfilling a duty might gain one Honour. It is probably worth noting that, while I have not noticed such an event myself, the manual provided with the game indicates that it *is* possible to lose Honour and Wisdom points.

For the most part, the puzzles to be found in *A Tale of Two Kingdoms* are of the inventory kind, involving the (sometimes cunning) use of items that Maeldun has collected along his way. There is, however, also a riddle, a few logic puzzles (which I quite enjoyed), a “memory” puzzle, and at least one conversation puzzle. (I place “memory” in inverted commas as, while *Maeldun* might be required to commit to mem-

ory, we the players are more likely to have access to paper, or other means of relieving that burden.)

Finally, there are two over-arching investigative puzzles in the solution of the king’s assassination and the discovery of a means of dealing with the goblin threat.

For the most part these puzzles are both fair and interesting, and while a few might be found to be tricky, I do not feel that any are overly so.

One element of the puzzles that I find rather impressive is that a number appear to have more than one solution, a decision which doubtless increased the work that went into their creation not inconsiderably. One advantageous potential consequence of this is that having missed a particular item does not always mean that a puzzle is not yet soluble. On the other hand, some solutions yield more points, while others may cut off the completion of certain side-quests.

It is perhaps worth noting that it is possible to die at various points in *A Tale of Two Kingdoms* – by angering the wrong person, for example, or falling prey to an environmental hazard, such as attempting to swim for too long in the ocean, that last being pleasantly reminiscent of some of the adventure games of old. Also reminiscent of some of those classic adventures are the multiple death screens, which give a few brief lines

of rhyme related to Maeldun’s mode of untimely death. While the game does seem to autosave before each particularly dangerous scene, it is nevertheless recommended that one save regularly, as there are a few occasions on which one’s choices can result in death, but on which autosaves are not performed – swimming too far out to sea, for example.

In conclusion, I was very impressed with *A Tale of Two Kingdoms*. The story is interesting and fun, the characters reminiscent of fairy tale without losing interest for adults. The gameplay is fun and well-crafted, with the impressive advantage of the game’s creators having included multiple solutions to some of the puzzles. Simply put, the only negative elements that I noted are the imperfect sprite animations and less-than-stellar sound effects, and to a lesser extent, portrait graphics that are generally of lower quality than some of the other art found in the game.

Given that the game is free to download, I very much recommend it to anyone who enjoys stories of magic, treachery, or the faerie represented a little closer to their older, more powerful roots, or to anyone who simply enjoys a well-crafted fairy tale.

89/100


Minimum System Requirements:

Windows 95, 98, ME, XP, Vista
 Linux OS or Mac OS
 Pentium III 600 MHz
 SVGA Display with 2MB RAM
 DirectX 7 or Higher
 Hard Drive space of 100 MB
 Sound Card, Keyboard & Mouse

The Museum of Broken Memories

By Thaumaturge

The walls are bare, pristine white, the floor a repeating pattern in wood. And on those walls, or in display cases standing on the floor, are the displays: notes, photographs, poems, mementoes, and more. Whose are they? What do they represent? There are no captions to describe them, or their reason for being so preserved.

What is this place? It is the Museum of Broken Memories... But what is the Museum of Broken Memories? Where does it lie? Of what are its walls made? Aah – now those may be harder questions to answer.

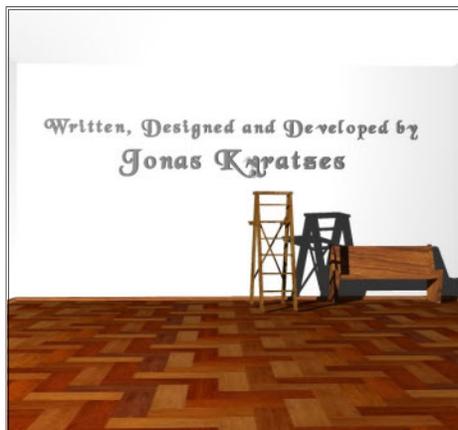


Is there an exit?

That, I am afraid, I will leave for you to discover for yourself.

There is no linear story, aside from the desire to find an exit out of the Museum. Rather, there are a number of smaller stories, or “fragments”, which seem to be memories. Are they the memories of one person, two, or many? I do not know, although I can take my guesses.

In each room there is one fragment, and into this fragment you may step, to experience the memory for yourself, and walk in the steps of its owner. The rooms hold other items



as well; displays that may further illuminate the fragments, or the Museum itself.

While each fragment is different to the others, there are themes common to many. There are references to a war, to a machine, and a dark power – those latter two, it would seem, one and the same, and named Urizen. These are not unique to this game – other works by the same game creator have covered similar topics – war, for example, in *Last Rose in a Desert Garden*, *The Infinite Ocean*, or Urizen in *The Great Machine*.

There are places in common as well. Many fragments take place in variations of the same few places. For example, the same room may be underwater in one fragment, and pitch black in another. It is the descriptions given that lead to the be-

lief that it is indeed the same place as mentioned previously.

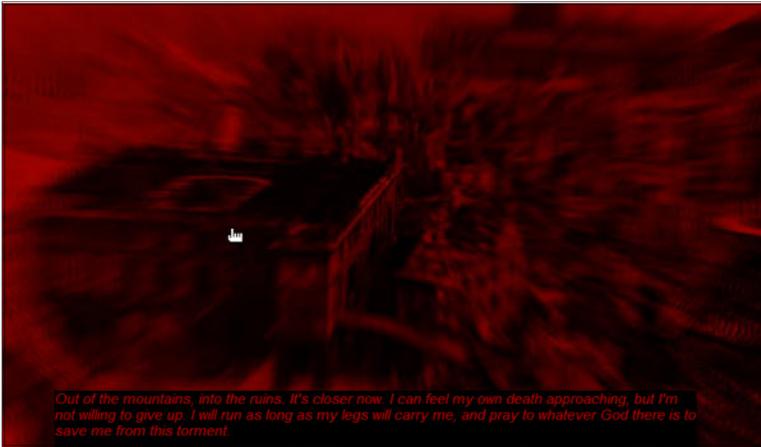
Starting the game places you directly into the Museum, without an intervening menu – although one does exist nearby. As you enter, almost all is white, and a message briefly describes your entry into the Museum. Although this message changes, it is generally cryptic, and suggests some altered state of consciousness – fever, or sorrow, or sleep, for example. Then the Museum becomes clear, wood below and white about and above, and the exhibits arrayed around you.



From there the exploration is up to you. You are not herded into one room or another, but may choose the order in which you visit them (all save one), and thus the order in which you explore the various fragments. Completing the exploration of one fragment is not required for entry to or completion of any other. In fact, you have but one journey through each fragment (barring the reloading of saved games); after exploring a fragment, it is no longer accessible.

Exploring the Museum and its fragments is simple, and entirely mouse-driven. Certain parts of the screen are “active”, meaning that

Developer: Jonas Kyratzes
Publisher: Jonas Kyratzes
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: Oct 2006



Out of the mountains, into the ruins. It's closer now. I can feel my own death approaching, but I'm not willing to give up. I will run as long as my legs will carry me, and pray to whatever God there is to save me from this torment.

clicking the mouse there accomplishes (or attempts) some action. When that action is movement, the mouse cursor changes to an arrow pointing in a relevant direction whereas interaction is indicated by a hand. There is no inventory. While you do occasionally collect objects, you do not get to see these, and they are used automatically when you attempt to interact with the appropriate object or location.

Even saving and loading is simple: simply click on the word "save" at the main menu, and your game is saved, while clicking on "load" restores the saved game.

While in some games this might have been an over-simplification, in this case it works well. The Museum of Broken Memories emphasizes exploration, thought and emotion over puzzle-solving, and I feel that a more complex interaction mechanism may well have distracted from this.

Note that things in the Museum are not always as they may seem. An example that you might encounter shortly after entering the Museum is that of the door that leads from the first room into the rest of the Museum – it is not active, and thus may not be walked through, despite be-

ing open. While there is another means of reaching the rest of the museum – one that makes a certain form of sense, for that matter.

The doors that lead out of each of the other rooms are different – they can be passed through, and all lead back to that first room, no matter in which direction it seems to go.

The graphics of The Museum of Broken Memories are overall very good, and vary noticeably in style. The Museum itself is, as has already been said, pristine. The fragments each have their own style, from stark black-and-white to shades of sepia, dressed as a series of old photographs, and even to pure black, entirely unbroken for almost the entire fragment (an environment that might have been annoying with a more complex control mechanism, or a longer experience).

These styles seem to each relate to some degree to the events that they describe, and serve well to support them, I feel.

The game's music is, if anything, even better. The theme that plays within the Museum is eerie – almost familiar, sad, and seeming to remind of a place just beyond the reach of mind and memory, a place not quite this world. Each fragment also has its own music -- appropriate to the fragment and strongly atmospheric.

The sounds, although sparse, are similarly very good, and are appro-

priate in their sparseness.

The Museum of Broken Memories is, I feel, a very good game indeed – an excellent one in fact. More than that, I would call it art. It is at times beautiful, at times macabre, at times sad, at times very creepy, and more. It is a game that I enjoyed very much, but also one that prompted thought and emotion.

It is thus a game that I highly recommend, but with a caveat: if you are looking for something light, or something with which to challenge your puzzle-solving skills, this is probably not a good choice. If, however, you want to explore, and to play a game that is both artistic and enjoyable, and don't mind traveling to some of the darker parts of human experience, then I recommend that you at least try this game.

And listen carefully as you explore – you may well hear the sound of grinding gears...

(It is probably worth noting that The Museum of Broken Memories is free to download; the game's page can be found here: http://www.jonaskyratzes.net/?page_id=8)



Minimum System Requirements:

Windows 9x, ME, XP

Sound Card

Graphics Card capable of 800x600 resolution with 16-bit color

Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

Yet another key... how many now? How many have I found? Where are they? Why... why can't I think? It all comes and goes. More and more keys, but nothing fits...

The Blackwell Legacy

By Wendy Nellius



Fresh on the heels of "The Shivah", Dave Gilbert (Wadjet Eye Games) is making his voice heard once again with his latest creation: The Blackwell Legacy. Both of Dave's previous freeware efforts (Bestowers of Eternity & Two of a Kind) are AGS award winners.

When I first began playing, I felt a complete sense of déjà vu. Darn it! Did I just pay for something that I already played??? Believe me when I say I've done this with books; it was bound to happen at some point in my life with games, too. But surely, I'm nowhere near senility age, right? Please, someone answer me!

After searching the forums, the reason became clear. Some time back, I had played "Bestowers of Eternity". The Blackwell Legacy uses some of the original concept and characters seen in "Bestowers of Eternity" but manages to take the game to a new level with a different direction. Well, enough about my own personal journey into loony town. Let's get on with the story.

It's not the best of days for Rosangela (Rosa) Blackwell. Well, it wouldn't be for you either if you were in the midst of scattering your Aunt's ashes into the New York harbor. Rosa's aunt Lauren spent the last 25 years of her life comatose at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital. It's not really the type of place where you maintain

great relationships. The coma doesn't help in this regard either. There's nothing worse than a day that starts out badly and just keeps rolling down that same dismal path.

Rosa is a writer for a local newspaper but completes all her writing from her apartment in order to maintain her anti-social hermit-like existence. This is the reason for the next problem in this day from hell. There's a doorman strike going on and a resident teen has taken to guarding the entrance to the apartment building. Since Rosa rarely ventures out, the teen in question doesn't recognize her and will not grant her access until she can prove she lives there. Personally, I thought a well-aimed kick to his nether region would have done the trick. But that's not an option. Oh, did I mention the tremendous headaches Rosa's been having? Or that her aunt's doctor at the psychiatric hospital is leaving her "really need to see you" messages? Is that enough? Of course it's not.

The final straw is the discovery of her own psychic abilities and the presence of her personal spirit guide named Joey. This is the set for this first installment and the basis for future ones.

You, playing as Rosa, will have to help lost souls who are stuck (for whatever reason) on earth find their way over to the "other side". Joey, the spirit guide, is Rosa's constant companion. Constant? Yep, as creepy as this may sound, he's always there. Talk about violation of privacy!! A coincidental (or maybe not so coincidental) writing assignment about a local suicide and Rosa is reluctantly off to test her new abilities on her first case ever.

The Blackwell Legacy is a 3rd person point and click adventure using Chris Jones' Adventure Game Studio (AGS) engine. The game is available either via download from [www.wadjeteyegames.com](#) or just recently on CD. Keep in mind that the CD version (\$25.00) is the more expensive option of the two. I played the downloadable version (\$14.95).

Developer: Wadjet Eye Games
Publisher: Wadjet Eye Games
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: Dec 2006

No technical difficulties were encountered during installation. The game offers the options to turn on or off speech and subtitles.

Another feature is the commentary by Dave Gilbert himself. When the commentary is turned on, the game will be halted at certain places so Dave can expound on the process of making this game (difficulties or something really great he implemented). The commentary is quite interesting, allowing us to see inside the mind of a developer. But it is not recommended when playing through the first time as it disrupts the flow of the game and your concentration level.

Considering that The Blackwell Legacy was created with the AGS engine, the controls are pretty basic. There is one standard orange-ish pointer-type cursor that is used throughout the game. Clicking the right mouse button will allow you to examine items. Left clicking will handle all other interactions. Within a location, access to different nodes is clearly marked with the appropriate text pop-up: "Exit" or "Go to XYZ location". When you choose to exit a location, you will have access to a map which will show all available locations. You can use the map to jump to the next location.

The inventory (although not very extensive) is located at the top of the gaming screen. I say "not much of one" because this is not a game based on inventory puzzles. Most of the very few inventory items you will



collect are letters and pictures. They simply provide background information on Rosa's history and the case at hand. Yes, there are a couple of items to use for inventory puzzles, but again, these are not the main crux of the game. The inventory toolbar is also where you can access the main menu to save, load or quit the game.

There is one additional tool that actually is the most essential to the whole game: the notepad. As Rosa learns new information, topics are loaded into the notepad. When entering into a conversation, the notepad will pop up. Rosa can then choose each topic she would like to discuss. Subsequent conversations based on the same topics can provide additional information. So, you will be going back and forth quite a bit and re-interviewing relevant NPCs. The notepad can also be used to search the Internet for information. The real trick to the game is making associations in the notepad.

For example, you may get information from one NPC that is contradicted by another NPC. If you correctly connect the two in the notepad, Rosa will have one of those "light bulb over the head" moments, and comment on the new information she just learned about one of them lying. Take that new information, confront the liar and eureka!... you will progress further in the game.

While the game is linear in nature, you do have some options. There are instances where you get to choose the dialog. For example: "Laugh it off" or "Express surprise". Other times, you are just running through the options available to gain additional information or to hit the right response.

You'll also be using that classic adventure gamer brain to create distractions in order to get the things you need. Overall, the puzzles are not overly difficult, but I must admit I did get stuck a couple of times trying





to make some of the notepad connections. I think we all get used to the standard type of puzzles: the ones where you get the old pen and paper and cross out, scribble and curse until you figure out the logical solution. Really, it's a matter of getting into a different mind set. For the next installment, it would be great to see even more variation in the puzzles.

Mind you, I like to chat. I'm actually quite good at it. I got into trouble at school often for my love of running my mouth. But, I like to get my hands dirty in a game as well with a good combination of mechanical, inventory and logic puzzles. It keeps the brain fresh and keeps my "duh" moments to a minimum.

The characters are quite interesting. The two main characters, Rosa and Joey, are a classic example of opposites getting together. Rosa, although she has her spunky moments, is mostly an introvert. She likes to keep to herself and really isn't interested in getting out there and helping people. At first I wasn't sure if I particularly liked the voice for Rosa. Further into the game, however, I decided I really did like the voice. This is primarily due to the emerging balance between Rosa and Joey. Joey is a fast talking, "rat pack" sounding, take charge extrovert. He has no problem jumping in with both feet into a situation. Wait...scratch that.

He doesn't have feet. Anyway, the differences between them, both in voice and personality, make the banter between them enjoyable. There are quite a few other characters to interact with in both spirit and earthly forms. The voices for these were done well also. I thought the voice of the teenager sounded a lot older, but that's just a minor quailm.

The game utilizes character portraits which pop up during conversations. There are some nice touches there. The faces are turned slightly so they don't have that "picture on a wall" feeling. There are also expressions reflecting their mood during the conversation. That is a welcome addition. There's nothing worse than bland, stagnant faces.

For those gamers who choose their games based upon graphics, this is not the game for you. These are low resolution graphics so they end up looking quite pixilated. However, if you look past that pixilation, you will be able to notice that there's still a lot of detail. The locations are vibrant and you're not dealing with a bunch of empty rooms. You will be able to visit Rosa's hermit cave (her apartment), dorm rooms at NYU, the local park and Bellevue Psychiatric hospital. Even with the characters, you can see the shading that was done on their clothes which makes a big difference with the low resolution. I'm a little torn on this

after playing *Al Emmo* (an indie game as well) which was created with the same game engine; I know it can look much better (in terms of pixilation). But budgets and manpower make all the difference in what an indie developer can do. So I will say OK now and expect improvements in every installment.

Couple of quick notes:

1. Music: Think Soap Opera and then Soap Opera with a little electronica thrown in. Interesting. Soap opera type music goes along with Rosa's crappy and depressing day. Again, interesting.

2. Length: A little too short for my liking. I wasn't expecting *The Longest Journey* or anything, but I finished it in one evening after work. I like my games to get me through at least a couple of days.

Overall, this was a good first effort for this series. Dave Gilbert has created an interesting "supernatural twist" story that will definitely be able to prevail through multiple sequels. As always, you should play the demo first to see if the game is right for you. But expect to see great things from Dave in the future.



Minimum System Requirements:

Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, XP
233 Mhz or higher processor
Video and Sound Card
Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

Midnight Nowhere

By Ugur Sener



You gradually return to consciousness. How long have you been asleep? You open your eyes, yet you cannot see anything. You can barely breathe. You try to get up, only to realize that your movements are constrained. You must be trapped inside something. There must be some way to get out, some way to break free. You desperately push; try to feel for something, anything that might help. Finally, your hand brushes against a zipper... You manage to force it open. You realize you were inside a body bag, left for dead...

There are other bags in the room. You open them to find three corpses. Who killed these people? You must

be inside some kind of morgue. How did you get here? How did you manage to survive? In the corner you see some laboratory equipment. Is that blood all over the table?

You quickly realize that you are trapped inside the morgue. The only door leading outside is tightly shut. The room seems to be falling apart. The entire building could be abandoned. Nobody is coming to your rescue. You cannot remember anything of your past. You do not even know what the date is. You are desperate to find some answers. But first you will have to figure out how to get out of the room...

Your watch is ominously blinking midnight. The nightmare begins...

Developed by Saturn Plus, *Midnight Nowhere* is a third-person point-and-click adventure game. The game is built around the main character who finds himself in a hostile environment with no recollection of his identity. Against the backdrop of a city plagued with a serial killer, *Midnight Nowhere* attempts to deliv-

er a suspenseful adventure gaming experience. Unfortunately, the unnecessarily crude humor severely disrupts the atmosphere, and problems with the interface occasionally make the gameplay frustrating. Even though it is packed with a great deal of potential, *Midnight Nowhere* ultimately comes well short of the mark.

The game greets players with a powerful opening sequence. You hear sections of police reports as the game begins. Since March 2019, Black Lake has been plagued by a serial killer. Bodies found all over town have created panic among the citizens. As people evacuate Black Lake, a state of emergency has been declared. But the killer is yet to be found and the murders have not stopped...

Upon starting a new game, you wake up to find yourself inside a body bag. As you climb out, a quick examination of the surroundings reveals that you are trapped inside a morgue. The refrigeration systems are malfunctioning. The room ap-

Developer: Saturn Plus
Publisher: Burka Ent.
 /Tri Synergy
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: 2002

appears to be in disarray. You cannot remember who you are or how you might have ended up at the morgue.

The amnesia theme might be trite, but it fits the setting. Not knowing who the main character is and how he ended up at the morgue immediately creates a sense of mystery. You want to figure out what is going on and who your character is supposed to be. Within the first few minutes as you start to explore the room however, the buildup dissipates and the mood falls apart.

It is difficult to like the character you control in *Midnight Nowhere*. Even if you can overlook his astonishing calmness given his circumstances, his snide remarks are far from endearing. There must be very few people that can comment on a corpse's "tits" within minutes of recovering from a near-death experience. Even when sarcastic humor might have been merited, his comments are often awkwardly worded and fail to deliver the point. Whether it was completely intentional or due to poor translation efforts from the original version, his attitude makes it rather difficult to appreciate the otherwise suspenseful setting. The fact that you can find reasons behind his mannerisms does not provide enough justification for having to endure them throughout the adventure.

Your character is not the only source of crude humor either. It is difficult to believe some of the posters and signs would actually exist in the hospital that you explore during the first half of the game. The cynicism you encounter feels over-the-top and out of place. It is as though the building was redecorated specifically to make it feel strange during your explorations after it was abandoned.

There is also a great deal of largely unnecessary nudity and sexual content throughout the game. It doesn't



contribute anything to the game and especially in a couple of rooms feels very out of place. Apparently, the hospital management did not think posters of naked women could offend some of the employees going to the morgue or the staff lounge. It would be very difficult to argue that this content is present as an indication of being comfortable with sexuality. Not every player will find it offensive, but it is certainly unnecessary and seems rather juvenile.

Despite the problems with the atmosphere that present themselves almost immediately, *Midnight Nowhere* does have strong points that give the game some merit. For instance, particularly during the first part of the game, a number of challenges have been integrated into the setting extremely well. As you explore the hospital, you won't be accosted by timed sequences, mazes, or outlandish contraptions you must learn to operate.

The game doesn't exactly spell it out,

but your mission is still clear. You have to find a way out of the building and attempt to unravel the mystery of your circumstances in the process. Within this context, your challenges revolve around gaining access to various parts of the hospital. There is too much emphasis on puzzles that involve little more than finding the right type of key, but by and large the challenges do not feel arbitrary, and they fit the game. There are also occasional grim undertones that contribute to the setting.

The progression of the plot is slow during the early parts of the game. However, this does create some tension as you explore the hospital and urges you to make progress. The story picks up pace during the second half. As events escalate, you start to gain insight into the underlying mystery. The atmosphere is also more consistent as the content that does not fit into the setting is toned down to a great extent. However, the puzzles during the second half do feel somewhat repetitive in nature and occasionally do not fit into the plot all that well. Nevertheless, the challenges and storyline remain interesting enough to drive you towards the conclusion.

It is worth noting that *Midnight Nowhere* has somewhat of a vague ending. The questions you will have upon reaching the conclusion may not be answered clearly and in fine detail. You can also find some inconsistencies between all the details you picked up throughout the game and what you are supposed to infer at the end. Fortunately, the ambiguity is not extreme and the core pieces of the puzzle should be clear by the time the credits roll.

Midnight Nowhere uses a simple interface players should be able to master easily. Four icons are used to interact with the environment. You have to select one of the icons



available from the list on the top right corner and click on a hotspot to perform the designated action. The eye icon is used to examine the environment whereas the mouth icon is used to talk to other characters. Two separate icons are used to pick up and use objects. As you proceed through the game, you will also eventually gain access to a notebook icon. When information the game considers important is encountered, entries will be automatically added to the notebook. However, you are most likely better off taking notes on your own as the notebook is only truly helpful in a couple of situations.

The inventory is accessed with a right click. The eye icon and the use icon can be used to examine or manipulate the items in the inventory. It is also possible to combine items. To use an inventory item on the environment, you must first select it, close the inventory, and then click on the desired target object.

For the most part, the interface works well throughout the game. However, there is one problem that can lead to some frustration. Hotspots will not always work, depending on which of the four icons you have selected. For instance, if you have the icon for picking up inventory items selected, a hotspot you can only examine or use may

not register. On various occasions, you need to remember to switch icons and click on the same object multiple times to make sure you get everything necessary to make progress. There are also a couple of spots where you have to click on the same object with the use icon multiple times to retrieve all the items. Forgetting these details can cause you to miss items you will need to solve some of the puzzles and force you to backtrack.

Movement through the environment is handled with a single click of the mouse. If your character can walk in a given direction, bringing the mouse to the corresponding edge of the screen will turn the cursor into an arrow. Apart from a couple of glitches with the animations, exploration is fairly smooth and easy. Your character does move a little slowly, but the area you cover is not large enough to make this a problem.

From a technical standpoint, *Midnight Nowhere* has humble system requirements. On the Windows XP system used to play the game for this review, *Midnight Nowhere* ran smoothly without any performance or stability issues. The graphics are not exceptional, but they certainly get the job done. The environments are generally nicely detailed and interesting to explore. The music fits the setting and the tone of the game

well, creating a good degree of suspense from time to time.

Midnight Nowhere is by no means a terrible game. Horror or suspense enthusiasts will likely find the overall premise intriguing. The game does a nice job of making players want to press forward. Initially, the plot development is slow, but this feels deliberate and actually suits the hospital setting in the first half of the game very well. Many of the puzzles are nicely integrated into the game and feel like challenges you should expect to encounter given the context of the game.

Unfortunately, despite its high points *Midnight Nowhere* suffers from a number of significant problems. Some of the wording in the puzzle clues can be confusing and the interface can be frustrating. The humor does not work with the underlying setting. The main character feels too devoid of emotion. His remarks all too often feel like inappropriate intrusions. It is a shame that the adventure is bogged down by issues that disrupt the atmosphere and break the mood. If the suspenseful atmosphere created at the beginning had been properly sustained, *Midnight Nowhere* could have been an exceptional game.

62/100


Minimum System Requirements:

Pentium II 400

64 MB RAM

DirectX compatible sound & video

Hard Drive space of 1 GB

4x CD-ROM Drive

Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

Death by Annelid:

And you thought that your cat had worms....

By Thaumaturge

The sun burns overhead, unobscured by any shading feature. All about is yellow sand, seemingly unending, and no water in sight. The desert can be a deadly place for the ill-prepared.

This one more than most.

A ripple runs through the soft surface nearby, a ripple wider than you are tall, and sinks again beneath the sand.

For a few moments only the wind and the grains carried on it move or make sound – just long enough for you to once again relax.

The sand before you explodes, a towering amorphous yellow hand reaching for the sky, throwing you back. As you wipe grit from your eyes, something at last shades the sun, towering above the now-falling shower that announced its arrival. It surges from the desert below, terrible in size, horrifying and graceful, its long, segmented body curving supplely as it reaches the top of its arc and begins to descend, its mass granting it deadly momentum. Your last living sight is of the circular, gaping maw that opens in its eyeless head, and of the rows upon rows of dagger-length teeth that line that mouth within.

You have just been eaten by a giant sand worm. But that is not the perspective from which one plays the games that I wish to discuss in this article.

Rather, they take the point of view of the worm.

In these games you take the part of

a giant worm, your only goal being the consumption of the prey that walks and flies in the world above your earthen home.

This may sound easy, given that you are far larger than your prey. And indeed, no one foe seems to offer any real challenge. The tables may yet be turned on you, however. Your prey is numerous, and some, though small, can nevertheless harm you – from sprays of little jabs to blasts that might scorch and tear at even your thick hide.

The games in question are Killer Worm 1 and 2 and Death Worm, three games based around this unusual premise of playing as a giant killer worm.

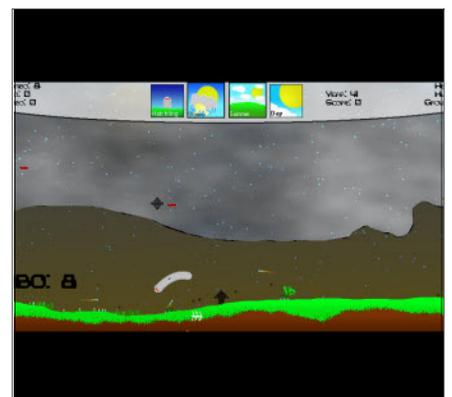
These games have a few elements in common. Firstly, each is an arcade minigame, built on simple controls and gameplay – the sort of games to which one might turn to fill a half-hour, rather than games into which to lose oneself for hours on end. Secondly, as time passes within the game, technology begins to appear amongst the prey, becoming more ubiquitous and more deadly – and generally aimed at killing you (well, do you really blame them?). Thirdly, each of the games implements a growth system: as you progress, your worm gradually increases in size, either by distinctly discrete stages (such as “teen” and “adult”) or simply by a slow increase in scale. Finally, none has any end that I have yet encountered – they are games of high-score rather than games of goal-accomplishment (the goal of attaining a higher score aside, of course).



Death Worm



Killer Worm 1



Killer Worm 2



Death Worm

Killer Worm 1 was born of a game-creation competition that had the theme “consume”, and would seem to be fashioned after a black-and-white B-movie – and to those themes Killer Worm is eminently true.

Everything (with the exception of the help screen) is presented in letter-box-format, black borders padding the top and bottom. The graphics are entirely gray-scale, and black spots and lines flicker across the surface of the screen, seemingly at random. The music, especially in the game itself, is wonderfully cheesy – very much, I would say, in the “B-movie” style, yet nevertheless good. Finally, the main menu has a “title” placed prominently to the right, flaunted in a large starburst:

“Killer man eating worm From [sic] Earth.”

The gameplay is simple: an arrow appears above the ground, and can be moved to left and right by movement of the mouse. A click of the left mouse button causes your worm to breach the earth at the arrow’s position, swallowing smaller creatures

and vehicles, and sending larger vehicles flying. The act of breaching also sends chunks of earth sailing through the air – chunks large enough to kill creatures and vehicles upon which they impact. Unfortunately, no control is given over the worm’s movements beyond commanding the worm on where and when to breach – on the click of the mouse the worm simply rears out of the ground at the appointed spot, jaws snapping at the air, and then subsides back into its lair.

Perhaps noteworthy is that some of the visual effects, such as the sun and explosions, are represented quite nicely. The sun (for that is what I presume the object to be), for example, moves across the screen through what seems an almost watery sky of a shifting, fog-like substance.

Killer Worm 1’s main flaw, however, is that the entire play-area is shown at once, and given that it has a fair range to either side, the characters are rather small – the smallest seem to be no more than single pixels, and only resolve to anything terribly recognizable at the scale of larger vehicles, such as helicopters. The worm, of course, is quite clearly rec-

ognizable (although it could, perhaps, have been better-drawn).

Nevertheless, Killer Worm 1 can be quite a bit of fun – although I will confess that I found it a little difficult at first. I am glad that I persevered into the discovery of a strategy that took me further into the game, however – I found it to be one that is indeed well worth playing.

That I love the in-game music only helps matters, of course.

Killer Worm 2, alas, was not fully completed, and is thus not fully functional – specifically, the score does not seem to update, and hunger seems to have no effect – and would appear to be unbalanced in terms of gameplay.

This iteration is rather different to its predecessor. The gray-scale graphics are replaced by color, and the style, within the game at least, now has a more cartoon-like feel. The environment in which one plays is also a little smaller, allowing for larger “prey” sprites, and thus a little more detail than was found in the original.

Both weather and a cycle of day and night have been included in Killer Worm 2, although they unfortunately seem to add fairly little to the game in their current state.

As before, an arrow indicates the point from which your worm will leap – but there lies another difference (and arguably a good one) between Killer Worms 2 and 1: instead of your worm simply rearing up from the ground briefly, Killer Worm 2 has the giant worm leaping out of the earth into the air, destroying creatures in its path before tunneling again into the soil.

Furthermore, there are now two cursors: first, the one already mentioned, and second, a cursor that

may be moved about in the air above the first cursor, and remaining always to one side of it. A click of the left mouse button instructs the worm to leap out at the point indicated by the first cursor, its aim based on the position of the second cursor. The right mouse button, on the other hand, causes the "ground" cursor to flip from one side of the "air" cursor to the other. In this way the player can select the direction and angle at which the worm leaps.

A nice addition is a combo system, which increases as you do more damage (including, conveniently, damage done indirectly, such as via tanks sent flying). For those looking for a working score system, this might be a workable substitute.

Another addition is that of a selection of worms. Before playing, one is presented with a set of three worms, along with a listing of their abilities and traits – the gray worm, for example, is slow, but well-armored and bigger than his fellow worms, allowing him to create more chaos in a single leap. The black worm, on the other hand, is small and fast, but lacks armor and bulk.

The music remains good, albeit, I feel, not as good as that found in Killer Worm 1.

Ultimately, however, I found that Killer Worm 2 is simply less fun than is Killer Worm 1.

Death Worm is the final of the games that I wish to look at in this article.

In style is most similar to the second of the Killer Worm games; like that game, Death Worm is presented in color, and allows the player to leap out of the ground and into the air.

Death Worm, however, distinguishes itself in a few areas.



Killer Worm 1

Firstly, it has a much better control system. In this game the player controls the worm directly, using the keyboard to direct its movements – the left and right arrow keys to turn the worm to its left or right, the up arrow key to have it accelerate and the down arrow key to have it decelerate. The result is a system that I found very natural and a lot of fun to use; I don't think that I have ever felt out of control of the worm while playing this game – one even has limited control of the worm while it is airborne

Complimenting the control mechanism is a section of the play area depicting the region below the ground, through which the worm tunnels. This area is the main region of travel for the worm, as well as its only source of cover from incoming fire.

This underground region also opens the way for a nice addition to the gameplay: the inclusion of other animals that live beneath the ground. These serve the purpose of health restoratives, allowing the player to heal some damage while incurring little danger. While eating these creatures does add to the player's recorded "meat" value, it does not add to the player's score – increas-

ing that still calls for mayhem on the surface world.

Like Killer Worm 2, Death Worm has a combo system. In this case, however, the system is more particular about the events that contribute to the combo – specifically; it would seem to be a count of creatures eaten in close succession of each other.

The action in Death Worm is viewed from a much closer position than is the case in either Killer Worm game. This does not limit the available play area, however – instead, the level scrolls to the left and right with the player's movements.

Graphically, Death Worm does not particularly distinguish itself. While it does look better than Killer Worm 2, it lacks a lot of the style that Killer Worm 1 showed.

On the positive side, however, the closer perspective allows a much better view of the mayhem caused by the player's predations than is given in either of the Killer Worm games. Rocks and dirt soar through the air (the former sometimes bringing down birds or aircraft, or squashing unlucky foes on the ground), the screen shakes as the worm bursts out of the ground and pummels



Killer Worm 2

Simple (but abundant and effective) blood effects attend deaths, and even the worm's green blood shows as its prey fights back.

While tunneling beneath the surface, a darkened trail represents the tunnel left by the worm's passage – a nice touch, although the tunnel does fade away over time.

On a more negative note, the explosion effects used in Death Worm are not particularly good, and the sprites are on the simplistic side.

Aurally, Death Worm does well. Its music is very good, well-suited to the action and theme of the game, and is complimented by some quite effective sound effects.

Overall, Death Worm is a much more visceral game than the Killer Worm games. It can be fast-paced, and a lot of fun, with a very good control system and a good variety of enemies (including some that are rather on the odd side – something that I count distinctly in the game's favor).

If you want a fun, simple game suitable to the filling of idle half-hours, and the thought of controlling a giant

much recommend Death Worm and Killer Worm 1.

In fact, I would recommend that you try them anyway, and try them both – both are free, and neither is at all a large download. Give them a shot – you may just like them:

Killer Worm 1

<http://clanexe.com/downloads/KillerWorm.zip>

Killer Worm 2 (unfinished)

<http://clanexe.com/downloads/KillerWorm11.zip>

Death Worm

<http://gmc.yoyogames.com/index.php?showtopic=279075>

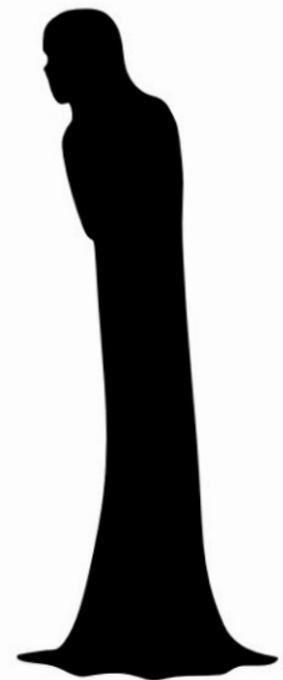
But the story is not quite complete. While JTR, the creator of Death Worm, has said that there are no plans for a sequel to the game, the source (that is, the Game Maker file for the game) is available for others to use. Indeed, there would seem to already be a two-player version of the game available, created by a third party.

Perhaps better yet, James Beach (A.K.A Unc1354m), the creator of the Killer Worm games, has revealed that he is working on a third game in the series. While it is still in the concept phase, it is planned that

it will use a keyboard control mechanism and closer view of the action, as does Death Worm, as well as possibly including the option to have the worm move across the surface of the ground. Hopefully it will improve upon all of the games presented here.

So, choose your moment, hide beneath the earth, and when they least expect it, burst forth to consume!

Go ahead. Let out your inner sand worm.



Resident Evil 4

By Gnome

Resident Evil 4 on the Nintendo GameCube is a uniquely sublime game, sporting some excellent eye-candy, an above average plot and moments of sheer horror followed by extended, yet relaxing, periods of violently shooting stuff. It also is an obvious, major even, evolution of

up for this drawback by offering a few extra gameplay hours. Kudos to Capcom for successfully pushing the PS2 hardware.

As for the Wii version? Well, it's good enough to make you cry, what with its inclusion of the PS2 content,

Capcom has somehow ignored the hardware muscle of the PC, the fact that the mouse is now (for this deceptively short 10 year long decade, at least) considered a pretty standard piece of high-tech equipment, that contemporary gamers like to have a proper save (let alone quick-



That's ...uhm...stunning?

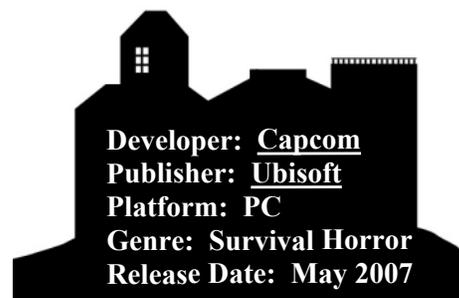
the whole Resident Evil series and the first RE game to do away with zombies and go for the rather more nimble possessed peasant variety of baddies. Oh, and it's in glorious real-time 3D.

What's more, RE 4 has also been made available for the mainstream PS2 and, despite the underpowered hardware, got a pretty impressive port, only slightly lacking in the looks department and more than making

fantastic Wii-mote controls, budget price and updated graphics.

So, what happens when Resident Evil 4, the same "president's daughter saving" supernatural survival horror video game that amazed the console crowds, hits the PC? Tragically, that's what. Or to be more precise, what happens, is a tragedy of such epic proportions Sophocles might consider producing it. For

save) function and that PC gamers aren't as game-starved as in the





So, I'm supposed to press 3, am I? Oh, you mean enter? No? Ctrl, perhaps?

very early eighties and tend to demand quality/complex gameplay. Ignorance helped Capcom to go on and promptly produce the shoddiest Resi 4 port imaginable.

The game, cunningly avoiding to offer mouse control as an option, is virtually unplayable without a gamepad (even though being prompted to press buttons 1, 2, 3 or 4 can still be baffling) as the keyboard-only control method is frankly shocking (WASD to aim?). Even if, and this will be a very ill-conceived if, you do decide to give RE4 a try just to experience the story and visuals, think again.

The thing not only plays but looks decidedly shite and doesn't even bother to provide a way to exit the game without going for the ol' ctrl-alt-del trick. The graphics themselves are a travesty, which could:

- a) have been easily avoided
- b) really wouldn't be so important if they hadn't removed daylight, night and fog effects in a brilliant attempt to strip away any sense of atmosphere.

Then again, instantly disappearing characters have been added, thus successfully adding to the hilarity of the whole affair. Obviously anti-aliasing, anisotropic filtering and modern sound card technology have seemed to evade Capcom's attention all together. And still, the bloody thing will eat up almost 5 Gigas of your hard drive. For what? I really can't imagine. Probably just to irritate you.

Warning, obvious conclusion: Avoid Resident Evil 4 PC like the plague. In fact, given a choice, go for the rotting away to death fetish, and if you really desperately need to play Resident Evil 4 -which you do- you're better off buying a GameCube and the original version. Or, better yet, a Wii. Or, why not, a PS2. Heck, you'll probably enjoy playing the offending Atari 2600 version of Pac-Man more. Oh, and to remind you... THERE'S NO MOUSE SUPPORT. Tsk, tsk.

Now, admittedly, Capcom did both- er to try and rectify the whole mess by releasing a huge patch that sort of brings the graphics to an almost acceptable late-90s level and some

good 'ol modders have provided a rudimentary mouse control option, but still, why bother? No reason, really.



Minimum System Requirements:
 Windows 2000/XP
 Pentium IV 1.4 Mhz (2.4 recommended)
 256 MB Ram (512 rec)
 128 MB DirectX 9.0 compliant AGP/PCI Express w/Shader 2.0 or higher (256 MB recommended for High Graphics Detail Support)
 4x DVD-ROM Drive
 Hard Drive space of 7 GB
 Keyboard & Mouse

Rogue Trooper

By G. Gordon Brown

Set on the distant, war-sundered world of Nu Earth, *Rogue Trooper* is a sci-fi action-shooter that brings some interesting new twists to the genre as well as a compelling story. Based on the British comic (also named *Rogue Trooper*, strangely enough), the game introduces players to the battle between the tyrannical Norts and the scientifically advanced Southers as they fight for control of a strategically vital worm-hole located in Nu Earth space.



As Rogue, the GI (or Genetic Infantryman), it is up to you and your fellows to take the fight to the Norts and win the surface of Nu Earth for the Southers. And with your genetically enhanced, blue-skinned bodies granting you greater strength, regeneration, and immunity to the toxic atmosphere, victory seems assured. But something goes horribly wrong, and as the GIs drop onto Nu Earth for their first engagement they fall into a Nort trap that wipes them all out except for Rogue. Now it's up to you, as Rogue, to discover who's responsible for setting the GIs up.

At ease soldier, because despite the dire circumstances you aren't without means. Three of your fallen comrades accompany you beyond the grave in the form of three bio-chips. For you see, each GI has a small silicon chip implanted at the base of their skull that at the moment of death downloads the GI's personality and skills and holds them for 60 seconds. In that time, another GI (namely you) can rescue the chip and install it into a piece of their specialized gear thereby preserving the dead GI's mind so that it can be uploaded into a newly grown body. Pretty out there, huh? But the awesome part is that these bio-chips can actually enhance the func-

tionality of the gear they're installed in by utilizing the skills of the dead GI. Essentially this transforms Rogue into a one-man platoon.

The first of your fallen pals, Gunnar, the weapons expert, gets installed in your GI rifle. He helps with your aim by enlarging your reticle and offers limited tracking. Also he can fit underslung units under the main barrel of the rifle, such as shotguns, mortars, and even a surface-to-air missile launcher. Lastly, Gunnar allows your rifle to be deployed as an automated turret, which is wicked cool fun, by the way. It's like having back-up that can't die or miss. Or move for that matter, but you can't have everything...

The second of your silicon allies is Bagman, the resident quartermaster, who inhabits Rogue's backpack. It's

Developer: Rebellion
Publisher: Eidos Interactive
Platform: PS2 (Reviewed),
 Xbox, PC
Genre: Action
Release Date: May 2006

Bagman's job to keep you supplied and he does so by manufacturing your ammo, med paks, and equipment upgrades from salvaged junk located around the battlefield.

And lastly, there's Helm, the electronics expert, who's stored in Rogue's helmet (notice a recurring theme with the names?). Helm controls your radar. He can be placed on enemy computer consoles and left to hack their systems while you fight, and he can cause distractions through image and voice projection. All in all, the varied talents of your comrades add up to you becoming quite the formidable force and it's truly fun to play as you follow Rogue on his trek across the scarred surface of Nu Earth. And seeing as you're journeying across a toxic, war-torn wasteland the name of the game is kill or be killed, by any and all means.

Here's where things start to get interesting. Yes, Rogue Trooper is a shooter. Yes, the levels are more or less linear. And yes, there is a certain order to the events (largely involving unavoidable fights) that must be followed to proceed. But where this game differs from other cookie-cutter shooters is in the engagement options that you possess. You can (if you're like me) snipe your enemies at range, distract them with projections and blast 'em to heck with mines, grenades, and shotgun shells, or even sneak around and lay 'em low with instant kill-moves from behind. There are so many different things you could do in any given situation that I often found myself considering my options for several minutes before actually acting. Granted some situations imply a preferred course of action, but largely you're free to act of your own accord. You really feel like a lone soldier, stalking the battlefield, beholden to nothing except your immediate allies and your own strategic judgment.

The design of the levels helps with the dystopic feeling, too. Everything that you encounter on Nu Earth from the landscape, to the buildings, to the strange wildlife, and the bio suit-wearing soldiers suggests that the world is not right; that it's broken and warped by the war. Twisted



rock formations jut out of the earth into a burnt, sickly sky. Every building is a ruin, and all those jagged pointy edges on everything serve a

functional purpose. One great thing about this game is the interactivity in the environment. Almost anything can be used as cover, which can be damn handy in the middle of a major firefight.

But it's not all just man-to-man combat. There is some variety in that respect as well. Occasionally, on your travels you'll need to use emplacements like artillery cannons and Lazookas (laser bazookas, I assume) to blow up enemy armor and such. Also, some sections are pure rail shooting as you take the gunners seat and try to fend off waves of assaulting Norts. These areas can be pretty hectic, but are still a fun change of pace.

The one and only chore you need concern yourself with during your one-man offensive is ensuring that you have enough supplies and the way you do this is by gathering the previously mentioned salvage on the battlefield. Salvage is essentially your money and you'll find piles of it scattered around at various points of each level. You can get small sums of it from your fallen foes, and although this game isn't necessarily all about stealth, you do get more salvage from enemies by being stealthy and using kill-moves. These kill-moves give you a little breakaway animation showing Rogue doing in his unsuspecting opponent at point-blank in various and interesting ways that can be a source of endless amusement and satisfaction.

And you'll certainly want all the salvage you can get. Not only are you going to be using a lot of it keeping yourself in hot lead to feed the unfortunate opposition, but the more of it you acquire the more un-lockable extras you can get. This includes cinematics and entries in the Nu Earth encyclopedia with background details on characters, pictures, and original artwork from the



comic. Tasty, and good for you too. And since we are on the topic of health and animation, there's nothing wrong with the CGI, either. The cutscenes combine equal parts of realism (in movement and facial expression) and comic book, so you feel like your watching something more like an animated war flick while not losing the unique elements of the comic. The sound overall is also very good, voice-overs are well executed and the rapport of gunfire, artillery, and explosions are constant, adding to the warzone ambience. In fact, if anything explodes in close proximity, you get an amazing blurred vision/defended effect for a few seconds until you recover. Even though it's detrimental to you, it's very realistic and very cool to behold.

In addition to all this you also get multiplayer which can be played online or via LAN in either Progressive or Stronghold mode. In Progressive, you and your team fight to gain ground from the CPU controlled Norts, and in Stronghold you defend your position against a Nort invasion. Both emphasize action via time limit and the constant push to engage the enemy to accomplish your objectives and thereby gain victory. While interesting enough for a little while, by the time you finish the

main body of Rogue Trooper you'll have seen all of this stuff before. Unless you really get your jollies from racking up high scores, there really isn't a reason to keep on playing because multiplayer doesn't gain you anything in terms of extras or bonuses. It's pretty good if you and your friends like a crazy fragfest and are looking for something new but frankly the focus of this game is clearly the single-player. There are much better online multiplayer shooters out there.

Problems with Rogue Trooper are few and far between, but those that exist are glaring. First and foremost is the radar, which gives you only a very loose indication of the locations of enemies. Often I've had no idea whether an enemy was above or below my position and actually ended up giving myself away in the process of trying to maneuver to see him. Also, the radar display is just way too small. It needed to be bigger or at least viewable on another screen you could cut away to so you could see the big picture. Overall the radar was functional, but very annoying.

Another small point was that I found I couldn't aim grenades or launch mines after taking cover. When Rogue goes back-to-the-wall all he

can do is shoot and toss grenades blind. I feel like you should still have been able to aim your throw as if you were free standing. The mines I can forgive (since their launched from your backpack), but not the grenades.

Also, when fighting alongside computer-controlled allies they have a tendency to get behind and shoot you if you try to take the lead. And if you let them go first, they grab all the good cover! Come on guys, we're supposed to be on the same side here! It's better just to let them lead and clear out the rabble as much as possible whenever you're forced to run with the pack. Mostly they're replaced by new reinforcements anyway, so you don't have to feel like you need to protect them. They knew what they were getting into anyway...

So we've reached the end of my review and you're asking the big question: Do I want Rogue Trooper in my squad or should I leave him peeling potatoes in the mess? If you'd like a shooter that's a little different, that mixes sci-fi, stealth, and more adaptability than you'd shake a shoulder-mounted, L.A.W. rocket launcher at, the choice is clear. Now on your feet, grunt! Plug in your biochips, stow your medpaks, and make sure you've got plenty of ammo. The battlefield awaits...and this war isn't going to win itself! Hoorah!



Kingdom Hearts 2

By Nuggy

For those insisting that Final Fantasy is the only game that Square Enix could ever hope to conceive, having no other obvious original ideas or concepts, well, meet the action RPG *Kingdom Hearts*... or at least that's what I would've said four years ago. *Kingdom Hearts 1* became an instant fan-favorite, garnering attention throughout the video gaming community for its smooth animations, frenetic and simple gameplay and the heart-warming notion of the cinematic Square teaming up with (of all companies) Disney. On a more personal level, I have to admit that the first KH is my second favorite game of all time. It's just too cool beating the stuffing out of something using a giant key with Goofy and Donald as your posse. Or at least it used to be. Something happened to *Kingdom Hearts 2*. The fast-paced action is still there and the graphics are better, but somehow Square Enix took a wrong-turn, almost fumbling their latest franchise.

Developer: Square Enix
Publisher: Square Enix
Platform: PS2
Genre: Action RPG
Release Date: Mar 2006

Gameplay - 7

Button-mashing should be a sin and if it is, it's the kind that you can't help but do over and over again while attempting to beat *Kingdom Hearts*. The game makes it feel so good. From Roxas to Sora, Mickey to Drive Mode, you smash the X-Button from a third-person perspective. This is the main mode of attack throughout the entire game. Each time you use it, Sora (mainly) will execute a smooth thrust and swing of the big ol' key, advancing to more powerful and stylish moves later on. Square Enix decided to take the concept a baby-step forward by incorporating the Triangle button in the mechanics to activate the Reaction Command, where players interact with an in-game cut scene to cause fancier damage to an opponent. Unfortunately, I use the term "baby-step" because, after a while, when battles become increasingly dire (and Nobodies and Heartless get cheaper and cheaper), players may begin pressing X and Triangle out of sheer panic. I have, in fact, seen players abandon the joystick and

D-pad altogether, forgetting Magics, Items and Drives (if they haven't already been activated), and turning the PS2 controller on its side to frantically mash X and Triangle. "A fool's effort", I remember saying while watching a friend use this method to fight Cerberus. I would've been right had he not won the battle... and continued to win many more thereafter, sometimes without the need to even look at the screen.

I have seen games that at least require a little thought when button-mashing is involved. While *God of War* isn't typical of such a sport, it did use a feature similar to the Reaction Command, where timing was crucial. Least gamers find themselves worse off in the battle. Heck, even the last *Kingdom Hearts* required precise



timing of the Arcanum and Ragnarok combos to achieve maximum damage. Not so here. The more the gamer presses X, the stronger an attack Sora will achieve without interruption. There's even a Berserk ability that allows endless combos, which might sound cool in theory, but makes the game just too easy even on Proud Mode. In KH1, the "Dodge Roll" ability (which made use of the Square button) at least gave players a chance to run away and think up a plan. A similar ability



doesn't appear in this installment until about 70% of the game is completed.

thus rated with a humble 7/10.

Sound - 8

True, one could argue that KH2 is a kid's game, but the general audience of the original KH has matured about four years. It doesn't take a genius to know that Square Enix knew what they were doing, especially judging from all the innuendos and the obvious fan-service of the game. With that said, Square Enix should have more faith in the ability of players to do more than press two buttons mindlessly and endlessly throughout the game.

The game does feature some fantastic battles (Roxas versus Axel being a favorite), but it's perplexing how such marked improvements could be made to Gummi-Ship levels and even Winnie The Pooh stages, as opposed to core action elements and stages like Atlantis. Also, the game's pace slows down, mainly because so much emphasis has been placed upon overall cinematics and not the sheer playability of the game. The fun factor may falter right after the 1,000th Heartless battle, which is right in the middle of the game. Only the most devoted of fans will manage to overlook the game's shortcomings. Gameplay is

As to be expected, the music, sound effects and voice-overs are greatly improved in comparison to the previous KH adventure. For the most part, the music offers an almost dark orchestral mix of your favorite Disney tunes ranging from Agrabah to Hollow Bastion to Christmas Town. A drawback, though, is that in certain cut-scenes the music is questionably absent. Gamers will hear Sora conversing with Donald and Goofy. But, without any background music playing, the emotional effect is quite dry. When music is heard, on the other hand, it feels as if Square Enix simply copied and pasted audio clips without any thought of scripting. For instance, the theme of Organization XIII (they could have come up with something that rolls off the tongue slightly better) is played on a loop at a critical juncture of the story.

The piano score is played endlessly and provides no rise in tension or any sort of climax. For a company that is considered an expert in producing cinematography, I definitely expected better. The music isn't bad. It's just poorly placed (if present at all). Most of the pieces are memora-

ble and beautifully done. I, for one, love the battle music near the ending of the game when Sora and the gang make their final charge. But, gamers should be aware of the fact that, at times, they'll have to hum their own music in the middle of a scene. They should also be wary of the Atlantis level. Maybe it's a guy thing, but if I had the power of grading a game with a "G" simply because of one stage's awkwardly placed singing environments, Kingdom Hearts 2 would get that 'G'. It simply doesn't make sense to fight Ursula to a song in an action game. This is especially ill-fitting if you didn't have to previously and particularly when Haley Joel can't sing. "Not today, Mommy!"... Yikes. However, since players can skip this stage almost entirely and still beat the game (while seeing the secret ending on YouTube), I will spare it the "G" judgment. Only the deaf and battle-weary need apply to the Little Mermaid level. Overall though, it's an 8/10 for the sound department.

Graphics - 8

From the beginning FMV to the ending one and every cut-scene in between, the game offers orgasmic eye-candy. The lip-syncing works extremely well, as do most texture effects and environmental back-





grounds. Twilight Town still stands as the most visually pleasing bit, at least to me. Animation quality is where the title truly shines, all the way from Trinity Limits to simply opening up treasure chests. Everything is just sexy. There are only a few times where the gamer will notice any frame rate stutter, which is quite an achievement considering the amount of action occurring on-screen. Nearly each and every environment looks like its theatrical counterpart, though the Lion King level could have used a better choice of scheme. It was simply too barren to be based on such a powerful film.

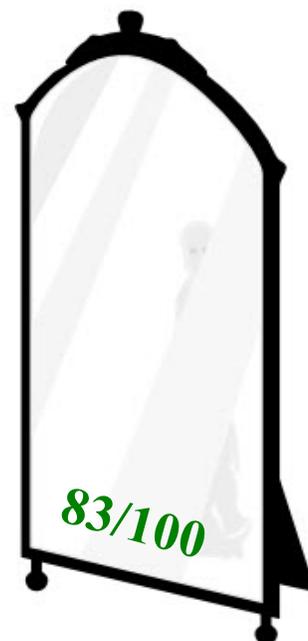
While some character models are stale and offer no real emotion in their facial expressions (must Timon and Pumbaa look so stoned?), for the most part the game is visually stunning. The Pirates of the Caribbean levels however, though crisp and retaining the feel of the movie, suffer from the sheer fact that Sora, Goofy and Donald (who are always announced like Team Rocket for some obscure reason) stand out so brightly in stark contrast to the overall setting. The Pirate movies are dark and foreboding, while our main characters scurry about the landscape

wearing rainbow-colored costumes. Square Enix could have at least put the gang in movie-themed clothing like they wisely did in other levels. As for textures, they are not much of a problem since the general look of the game is so soft and inviting. Reaction Commands, though stupidly easy to execute, are rendered nicely and are just plain cool to look at. Sadly, that was probably the point of the whole game. Graphics get a respectable 8/10.

In a nutshell...

I really do wish I could give this game a higher rating. This is unfortunate. Not only did they allow the gamer to have atrociously simple (unearned even) access to its in-game cinematics, but they also turned the game into a giant marketing campaign for the Advent Children movie. I for one saw AC on bootleg and it looks delicious, but I would always choose using a Keyblade versus a Buster-Sword any day. Besides, FFXIII already has a large enough fan base and needs no marketing help from some punk kid with a stupid dog and magic duck. It's saddening for me (as a fan) to say, but Kingdom Hearts 2 suffers from Square Enix's trade-

mark desire to focus on graphics rather than overall playability. By no means does the game lose points solely on the fact that it is fan-service either. I personally liked FFX-2 and *that* was fan-service. But, the emphasis was placed too heavily on which character fantasies the gamer could mentally create without putting the game down. On that note, I sum up Sora's new adventure with a constantly recurring phrase from the game, though not exact, that fits perfectly: "Sweet, but salty".



Tim Burton's
**The Nightmare Before Christmas:
 Oogie's Revenge**

By Vhayste

Welcome to Halloween Town!

A sober welcome greets players of the game based on the 1993 stop-motion film by Tim Burton. The game is a sequel to the film and is available for both PS2 and Xbox platforms. The game's hero, Jack Skellington is the king of Halloween, who always wants to find ways to spook people during Halloween. He returns home only to find his rival, Oogie Boogie, resurrected and having taken over Halloween Town.

Oogie wanted to capture all Holiday World leaders and become the Seven Holidays King. To save the townspeople from enslavement and rescue the Holiday World leaders, Jack sets out to pursue Oogie and get rid of him once and for all.

Jack has whip-like, jelly weapon called the Soul Robber which he can use against enemies. This handy weapon strikes and grabs enemies. Combos can be interconnected and learned.

The game's graphics are acceptable, if not decent. The environment very



much conveys the Halloweenish ambience and gloomy atmosphere. Jack however, albeit resembling a moving wooden pole tends to disappear when leaning against dark alleys and shadows. The camera is fixed too, making it impossible to carefully examine your surroundings.

The battles are basic; just like your typical one-two button combinations. The Soul Robber's range is short so you'll need to get in close to successfully attack an enemy. Fluidity of attacks is another thing that is not found in the game's battle system. This is the ability to connect attacks while moving. The aspect that "slows" down battles is that Jack cannot connect attacks without stopping and moving. Yeah, shattering enemies by slamming against the ground or each other is

fun but not that interesting.

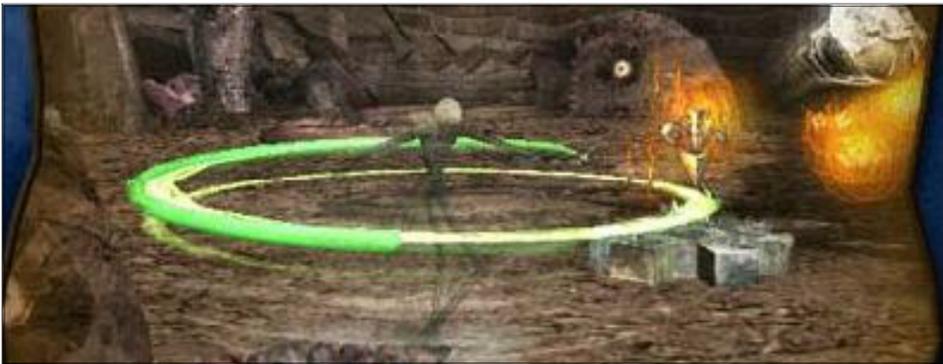
The background sounds are good, giving players the impression that they are "playing a movie." That enjoyment will last until you hear the same songs playing over and over again. The voice acting of the characters is not that bad though.

On the gameplay itself, the game fails to deliver excitement and un-repetitiveness. This is due to very limited switches in the game that force players to repeat rather similar puzzles and places. Also, the game lacks direction on what to do next. Players need to use their wits to find out the next step. Though this is what puzzles and objectives are meant for, this may tend to frustrate other players. Several locked doors get unlocked spontaneously, leaving players confused about

Developer: Buena Vista
Publisher: Capcom
Platform: PS2, Xbox
Genre: Action Adventure
Release Date: Oct 2005



which one to take first. The objectives are usually unclear and vague. Poor camera angles add to the frustration. Simple and easy to use controls help to alleviate this downfall a bit.



Aside from using his mighty ol' Soul Robber, Jack can transform into other costumes which gives him special abilities. For instance, when playing as Pumpkin Jack, players can turn enemies to ashes by breathing fire. These costumes however, are not extras but rather mandatory items to solve specific puzzles or defeat bosses.



There are 25 levels in the game, which can take 20 minutes to one hour, depending on how sharp the eyes of the players are and how good they are in identifying objects. Even when traversing different stages, the feeling of "doing it all over again" lingers too strongly to find the game exciting to play to the end.

67/100



Graphics:	71/100	The game's ambience may be presented good enough to portray the movie but the overall surroundings are quite plain and uninteresting.
Sound:	67/100	The soundtrack-like music during gameplay may be pleasant at first but hearing them over and over again in a very short interval is quite tasteless.
Controls:	75/100	Simple and easy to use; but nothing special to note
Playability:	70/100	Younger players won't have any difficulties controlling Jack but successfully moving in from stage to stage requires a sharp eye and older thinking
Replay Value:	55/100	Playing the game once will challenge players to even have the urge to finish the game to the end because of the repetitiveness even on the first playthrough. Though there are tons of goodies that can be unlocked after finishing the game, it will rather be a waste of time to play the game again.

Nancy Drew: Treasure in the Royal Tower

By Southern Belle

Welcome to Wickford Castle. Instead of skiing on vacation, you find yourself snowed in by a fierce blizzard. Since Marie Antoinette's treasure is rumored to be stashed in the tower, you have something to occupy your time anyway. But you are not the only one looking for riches.

Adventure Lantern and Southern Belle invite you to get a nice cup of hot chocolate, put on your warmest slippers and enjoy Treasure in the Royal Tower.

If you ever find that you can't get anywhere because no one is around, go to your room and set your alarm. Most people sleep at night.

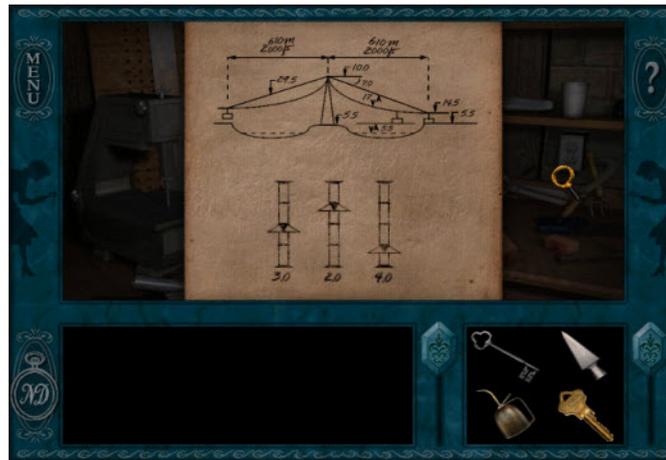
- Open the drawer in the desk.
- Look at the card for locker #310. The combination is 517.
- Close the drawer and look at the top of the desk. Take the keycard for your room, #205.
- Back away from the desk.
- Turn left and look at your luggage. Open the suitcase on the stand and look at the brochure. Click on the bottom right corner to read about Butter Lover's Lake. Close the lid of the suitcase and back away.
- Look to the left of the luggage and see the dresser. Open the top drawer and take the menu.
- Close the drawer, back away and turn around to face the table. Look at the magazine on the table and read the article about fingerprints.
- Back away from the table, turn around and exit the room.
- Turn right and move forward twice.
- Turn left and go forward. Turn right and go down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs, turn around and talk with Dexter.
- Once you have exhausted all conversation with Dexter Egan, turn left and enter the lounge.
- Turn right and talk with Lisa Ostrum.
- Exhaust all conversation with Lisa and turn around to the right.
- Look at the bookshelf and read the books *Major Figures and Events of the French Revolution*, Books I and II.
- Once you have read the books, turn back around to the exit through the archway by Lisa.
- Turn right and follow the hallway to a central area with suits of armor. Turn right and face the elevator.
- Push the call button on the right side of the elevator door. Enter the elevator.
- Turn around and press the button that is marked "B" for the basement.
- Open the grate and then open the elevator door.
- Exit the elevator and turn right. Go forward, turn left and talk with Jacques Brunais. If Jacques is not there, you can go upstairs and set your alarm for a time when he is at work. He works from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM and from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM. Take the brush when Jacques is not there. You will need the brush in the Library.
- Exhaust all conversation with Jacques. Talk with him again and get the Professor's boots. When the conversation is over, turn right and enter the locker room.
- Go to your locker, #310. Enter the combination 5, 1, 7. Enter 5 and click on the triangle above the dial. Do the same for the 1 and the 7. Clicking on the center knob will reset the combination and you have to start over. The combination does not work.

- Go back and talk with Jacques.
- Reenter the locker room and enter 5, 1, 7 on the lock on locker 311.
- This locker is occupied. Open the camera bag and look at the letter in Spanish, two passports and three ID cards.
- Exit the locker and go back to the office where Jacques works. Turn around and enter the elevator. Look up. Click on the panel in the ceiling. Climb into the shaft by following the down arrow.
- Go forward to the ladder and go up eight times to the opening with no grate.
- Enter the shaft and follow it to the Library.
- Open the grate and move forward. As soon as you hear someone coming, turn around and click on the grate. Go back into the shaft and watch Dexter. Once he has left, it is safe to go back into the Library.
- Go down the stairs, move forward and turn around.
- Look at the table with the chess set on it. Read the book entitled *True Stories Behind Famous Portraits*.
- Back away from the chess set and turn right. Look at the dusty table. Use the brush on the dust. Look at the book in the drawer, entitled *Atlas of the United States*.
- Back away from the table and turn right. Move forward into the corner. Read the book on the right entitled *The Diary of Hans Axel von Fersen*.
- Back away and go right to the globe.
- Set the dial to 90 degrees and click on the finial at the top of the globe. Look at the paper in the globe. Close the globe, back away and read the book on the floor entitled *The Purple Hearted Queen*.
- Put the book down and go right to the fireplace.
- Look at the plaque above the fireplace until it opens.
- Move your cursor to the left to get an arrow that will move the pointer to the right. Move your cursor to the right to get an arrow that will move the pointer to the left. Enter -15, 10, -5. Move the cursor to the left and click once making the pointer point to -15. Click on the green button at the top. Move the pointer to 10 and click on the green button. Move the pointer to -5 and click on the green button.
- Back away from the fireplace and turn right. Go upstairs and turn left. Enter the secret room.
- Move forward to the desk. Pick up the lighter on the right. From your inventory, use the lighter to light the candle. Once the candle melts, take the key.
- Back away from the candle and look at the poem on the right. Click on it to read it.
- Turn around and look at the books on the desk behind you to read about the good and bad Dexter.
- Exit the secret room.
- If you have the brush with dust go downstairs and use the brush on the keypad next to the door. If you do not have the brush with dust, exit the Library through the ventilation system. Go back down the stairs and get back in the elevator. Exit the elevator and go back to the office where Jacques works. Pick up the paintbrush and go back to the Library. Go down the stairs. Move forward and turn left. Look at the desk with all the dust. Use the paintbrush on the dust.
- Back away from the desk and go right to the double doors. Approach the keypad on the left. Use the paintbrush with the dust on it on each button on the keypad. Enter 3, *, 7, 2.
- Exit the Library through the double doors and use the elevator to go up to the second floor.
- Exit the elevator and turn right. Move forward and hear the sound of typing. Turn around to the left and go to room 214. Knock on the door and talk with Professor Hotchkiss. When the conversation is over, use the boots in your inventory and leave them on the floor by the door.
- Back away from the door and turn right. Go forward and turn around to the right to go to the elevator. Go downstairs.
- When the elevator gets stuck, exit the elevator through the ceiling. Get down and look at the box on the floor. You are able to use the box to stand on to open the elevator door on the floor above and get out.
- Exit the elevator hallway to the left, turn left, go forward and left to the stairwell down to the main lobby. At this point, you may need to make sure of the time. Most people sleep at night. You may need to set the alarm in your room to make sure Dexter is awake.
- If Dexter is not at the counter, you can read the steno book behind the counter and see that his "To-Do" list includes fixing the elevator and the lights.
- Leave the counter and go out the exit in the back of the Lounge. Turn left and follow the hallway to a stairwell. Take the stairwell downstairs towards Jacques' office. Stop at the circuit breaker box, open it and move the top left triple switch to the left and the top three single switches to the right. Close the door, back away and click on the red handle.



- Go to the elevator by Jacques' office and go upstairs to the lobby. Talk with Dexter.
- Go to Professor Hotchkiss' room to get her dinner order. Go back to Dexter.
- Go back to Professor Hotchkiss' room and knock on the door. Slip the menu under the door.
- Once the Professor has ordered, go back to Dexter.
- Go tell Jacques to defrost the chicken legs.
- After you talk with Jacques, go back to your room and take the oil can next to the radiator. Set your alarm for 3:00 am.
- Go to the lobby and around the back of the counter. Look at the bottom left drawer above the steno pad. Open it and take the key to the Library.
- Go to the Library.
- Making sure that the elevator is on the first floor, turn and use the key to open the Library door. Turn immediately around the enter 3, *, 7, 2 in the key pad on the left of the double doors.
- Go to the vent you crawled out of once before.
- Go forward to the elevator shaft and climb down the ladder. Turn around twice and see a handle that is stuck. Use the oil can to free the handle.
- Enter the grate and follow the hallway to a bolted door on the left.
- This puzzle is random. Click on a bolt. If it stays out, it is the correct one. If it does not, choose another bolt and continue. Continue this until all the bolts stay out. Whenever the bolts slide back in the wrong bolt has been chosen and you must begin again.
- Enter the corridor and hear sawing. Move toward the noise. Go left, right and left and find Jacques.
- Talk with Jacques.
- When Jacques leaves, turn around and look at the Knight. Move your cursor to the tip of the lance and take it.
- Go back upstairs to the first floor.
- Take the elevator to the basement.
- Go into the locker room and turn left. Enter 2, 6, 6, 5 on the lock on the door.
- Look at the letter on the door, the letter on the bottom shelf and the magazine about diamonds. Take the medallion on the top shelf.
- When you wake up in your room, answer the phone.
- When the conversation is over, check your voice mail.
- Check the time. Make sure it is at least noon.
- Go downstairs and talk with Dexter.
- Be honest with Dexter.
- Go to the basement.
- SAVE YOUR GAME HERE.
- Exit the elevator and go through the locker room and out the back door.

- Go to the shed and enter it.
- Go down the stairs, forward and turn left.
- Go forward to the tool bench in the alcove.
- Look on the right and find a key. Take it.
- SAVE YOUR GAME HERE.
- Exit the shed and move toward the back door twice.
- Turn around and go to the left of the green sign. If you are unable to go to the left of the sign, go back inside and ask Dexter about the garden.
- When you see the vines, click on them to move them aside.
- Click on the center of the gate three times. Click on the handle and open the gate.
- Enter the garden and turn left. Look at the urn with the arrow on top. Turn the arrow to point at the bust in the niche.
- Go to the bust and pull the handle in the back of the head.
- Look at the box. Use the key you found in the secret room to open the box. Take the red medallion.
- Exit the garden and go back into the basement.
- Go upstairs and talk with Lisa in the lounge.
- Once you have exhausted all conversation with Lisa, go back to the basement and outside. As soon as you get outside, turn around and find that you are locked out.
- Go to the shed.
- Go to the machine on the right and take the green medallion.
- Back away from this machine and go to the ski lift controls on the left.
- Look at the control handles on the far left. Number the handles from left to right 1, 2 and 3. Pull handle number 3 twice and handle number 2 once.



- Once you have talked with Dexter, go back to the dungeon. On your way to the Library, make sure the elevator is on the first floor. Go into the Library, silence the alarm, go through the vent shaft, down the elevator shaft, turn the handle on the grate behind you, follow the stairs and solve the lock on the door on the left again.
- Go forward, left and then right. Move forward to the room with the Knight and use the key you found in the shed to open the gate.
- Go into the room with the chains. Number the chains on the right from left to right, 1 through 5. Pull the chains in this order – 5, 5, 3, 2, 2, 1, 4 and 4.
- Go straight ahead and turn left. Go forward to what appears to be a chess set. The object is to move the disks to the matching squares. Hold your cursor just to the left, right, top or bottom, to move the disks. Move the green piece left, blue up, blue left, blue up, blue left, purple left, purple up, green right, green down, green left, green up, green left, purple right, purple up, purple right, blue right, blue down, purple down and purple left.
- Go up the stairs.

- Enter the room and go to the gold leaf design to the right of the portrait. This is a screen shot of the completed puzzle. The squares may be picked up when the magnifying glass is red around the edges. They may be rotated by holding the cursor over a corner until you get a circle arrow.



- Go to room 214 and talk with Professor Hotchkiss. She will ask you a question. The question is random. In this game she wanted to know how many windows are on the face of the castle not including the towers. The answer is 15. There are reference books in the lounge.
- Go to your room and set the alarm for 3:00 am.
- When the alarm goes off, go down to the lounge and talk with Professor Hotchkiss.
- Exhaust all conversation with the Professor. Once you have given the journal to her, go to your room and set the alarm for 3:00 am.
- Go search Professor Hotchkiss' room.
- Go to the lounge and talk with the Professor.
- Go back to room 214. Look at the translation in the red book to the right of the typewriter. Look at the decoder to the left of the typewriter above the plate of chicken bones.
- Watch the tape in the camera on the dresser. When it quits, take the battery out and put it on the charger.
- Go to your room and set the clock for 3:00 am.
- Go back to the Professor's room. Remove the battery from the charger and put it in the camera. Watch the tape.
- Look at the sofa and click on the pillow. Take the blue medallion.
- Exit the Professor's room and turn right. Follow the hallway to the portrait alcove. Look at the peep hole. Use the green, blue and red medallions in turn to look three more times.
- Go talk with Professor Hotchkiss. Check the time. She should be in the Lounge.
- Go to the Tower. Look closely at the floor. Place the red medallion on the left, the green in the middle and the blue on the right.
- Look closely at the purple flower in the portrait.
- Use the point you found on the Knight in the dungeon and chip away the tiles. Take the diamond key.
- Once the conversation is over with the thief, open the door and click on the square on the wall on the left twice. You have trapped the thief.

Nancy Drew: Ghost Dogs of Moon Lake

By Southern Belle



Some things in this game must take place at night. You can change from daylight to darkness and vice versa by going up the stairs in the cabin. Some items can be rotated. Hold your cursor in the upper right or left quadrant until you get a circle arrow. There are certain points in the game where the Second Chance option may be useful. Save often. Junior and Senior Detectives play the same.

A dreamy summer cabin at Moon Lake becomes a nightmare for you, as Nancy Drew, when you are surrounded by a pack of shadowy dogs. Will you turn tail and run? Will you solve the mystery? Start finding out now by ...

- Moving forward three times and clicking on the cooler. Take the water bottle to the left of the cooler.
- Back away from the cooler and go to the sink. Take the gloves.
- Look at the cabinet above the sink and take the flashlight and the map of the forest.
- Read the note from Sally just left of the sink.
- Move away from the sink. Answer the phone.
- When the conversation is over, read the note next to the phone.
- Turn around and open the door. Move forward twice. When the conversation with Red Knott is over, turn left and move forward to the shed on the left. Open the door and enter the shed.
- Look at the shelf with the Gnome on it and take the key between the iron and the box.
- Back away from the shelf and turn right. Look at the chest. Look closely at the lock. Use the key on the lock.
- Return to the cabin and enter.
- Exit the cabin through the door by the kitchen.
- Turn left three times and look closely at the blue tarp.
- Take the board.
- Lower the tarp and back away.
- Turn right toward the cabin.

The following sequence is infinitely easier to do if it is daylight.

- While standing in front of the cabin, turn left and enter the forest.
- Go straight and then left to find a tree stump on the right. Take the board on the stump.



- Using the map, make your way to the Cemetery.
- Enter the Cemetery and take the board on the path.
- Exit the Cemetery and go back to the cabin.
- If it is dark, go upstairs and switch to "a.m."
- Go in the living room and look at the cabinet above the sofa.
- Turn the dogs and find that the second one is stuck.
- Exit the cabin using the door by the clock.
- Move forward and turn left twice.
- Go the pump. Look closely and use the bottled water to prime the pump.
- Back away and look down. Take the bucket.
- Look up, turn left and move forward to the dock.
- Look at the boat. Use the bucket four times to bail the water out. Take the screwdriver and the life jacket.
- Look at the motor and note that a spark plug is missing.
- Leave the dock and turn right. Go forward to the shed.
- Enter the shed and turn right. Use the screwdriver to remove the screws from the top of the lid.
- Take the hammer and nails. Take the gas mask.
- Exit the shed and go back to the cabin.
- Enter the cabin and go into the living room.
- Look at the floor next to the stairwell.
- Use the three boards in your inventory on the floor. Use the hammer and nails on the boards. Read the note on the wall.
- Go in the kitchen and read the note above the sink about testing the water.
- Use the telephone in the living room to call Sally. Exhaust all conversation.
- Go upstairs and change to "p.m."
- Exit the cabin by the kitchen door.
- Move forward and turn right. Follow the path to Red Knotts' tree. Climb the tree and talk with Red.
- When the conversation is over, return to the cabin and change to "a.m."

- Enter the forest and take pictures of a blue bird, yellow bird and an orange bird.
- Look for the tanager in the upper left of the map and see that it will fly away.
- Exit the forest and go to the boat dock.
- Open the motor.
- Use the spark plug in the round hole toward the top of the screen.
- Use the screwdriver on the top left screw and set it all the way up. Top right is set at the middle setting. Bottom left is all the way down. Bottom right is all the way up.
- Back away and then click on the motor. Pull the cord on the right.
- Go to Em's Emporium and talk with Em. Exhaust all conversation. Take the cassette player.
- Exit the Emporium and go to the Park Ranger's Station.
- Enter the Ranger's Station and talk with Jeff Akers. Exhaust all conversation. Take the test kit.
- Combine the tape player with the cassette tape and listen to the birdcalls.
- Exit the Ranger Station and go back to the cabin.
- Go to the well pump. Put the bucket under the pump and pump water into the bucket.
- Use the test tube on the water in the bucket.
- Return the test kit to the Ranger Station.
- Go back to the cabin, change to "p.m." and go talk with Red Knotts.
- Take the sandpaper.
- Go to the cabin and enter the living room.
- Open the cabinet above the sofa and use the sandpaper on the second dog from the left.
- From the left turn the dogs facing left, forward, right and away from you.
- Using your flashlight, go through the secret door and down the stairs.
- Go straight forward and take the picture on the wall.
- Turn left and open the door.
- Go through the door, turn left and go towards the wall. Put the flashlight away.
- Click on the square just to the right of the beam on the right. Click again until you find a safe.
- Look closely at the dial. Look at the hole to the right of the dial.
- Back away from the safe, turn around, go forward and exit through the metal door.
- Pick up the newspaper clipping on the stairs and read it.
- Continue up the stairs and click on the cellar door. The door remains unlocked.
- Enter the cabin and change to "a.m."
- Go to the Ranger Station and talk with Jeff Akers. Exhaust all conversation.
- When the conversation is over, turn left and move towards the computer.
- Look closely at the box next to the computer.
- Arrange the envelopes in the following order:



- Read envelopes MCMXLI, MCMXXXII, MCMXXV and MCMXCVII. In order to put an envelope down, back away from it.
- Back away from the box and go talk with Jeff Akers again.
- Take the pin.
- Return to the cabin and go down into the basement.
- Go to the safe and use the pin on the tiny hole.
- Enter 012932. You must click on the button on the right side of the dial after you set each individual number. Clicking on the center of the dial resets the puzzle.
- Use the gas mask and gloves in your inventory.
- Read the journal and take the map you find in it.
- Close the journal and the safe. Put the gas mask and gloves into your inventory.
- Go upstairs and go get the water test results from Jeff Akers. Exhaust all conversation.
- Go to Em's Emporium. Exhaust all conversation with Em.
- Exit Em's and go to Sally's cabin.
- Enter the living room and make a phone call to Sally. Exhaust all conversation.
- Call Vivian Whitmore. Exhaust all conversation.
- Go upstairs and change to "p.m."
- Exit the cabin and go talk with Red. Exhaust all conversation.
- Go back to the cabin and switch to "a.m."
- Go to Em's Emporium. Exhaust all conversation.
- Leave Em's, return to Sally's and go look at the cellar door by the blue tarp. Click on the compass stone in front of the cellar door. Take two worms.
- Enter the forest and look under all the rocks for critters. When you have five critters, return to the cabin and change to "p.m."
- Go back into the forest and look for bugs again. You will find three glowworms and two crickets.
- Once you have twelve critters, change to "a.m." and go get the camouflage from Em.
- Return to the forest and take pictures of the last two birds that appear in the forest.
- Go back to the cabin and change to "p.m.". Go talk to Red.
- After you have talked with Red, go back to the cabin and change to "a.m."
- Go out by the tree stump near the dock and SAVE YOUR GAME.
- Take a picture of the Red-Tailed Hawk.
- While you are in the burning shed –
 - Kick the gnome.
 - Kick the rake.
 - Kick the tank against the left wall until the rag on the rake is burning.
 - Kick the rake again.
 - Kick the jack with the gnome on it until the can rolls and the scythe is untied.
- Go to the water pump and get a bucket of water.
- Return to the shed and throw the bucket of water on the fire.
- Go back to the cabin and change to "p.m."
- Go to Red's tree and ask about the gas cans. Give him the camera.
- Go to the cabin and change to "a.m."
- Take the picture you found in the basement to the Ranger Station for mailing. Exhaust all conversation with the Ranger. Talk with him a second time.
- Go back to the cabin and up the ladder on the side of the house. The speaker is gone.
- Using your map, go out to the cemetery.
- Go toward the crypt and look at the four tall tombstones nearest the crypt. Each one is for a dog.
- Notice the paw prints on the crypt.

- Go to the Ranger Station and get the key Vivian sent you.
- Go back to the cemetery and use the key on the Waldo headstone.
- You must change Waldo to Baldo. Click on each letter twice in the following order: D, W, U, E and U.
- Go down the stairs.
- When the flashlight goes out, turn around and move toward the entrance. After you have moved two or three times, you will be able to get a left arrow. When you have the left arrow, move the cursor near the center of the screen until it is outlined in red. Click to open the entrance.
- Go to Em's and ask her for some batteries.
- Arrange the display in the following order:



- The 6 packs may be picked up by clicking on them. They may be rotated by putting your cursor in the upper left corner of a six pack. Number the 6 packs of cola 1 through 20. Move 17 to 16, 16 to 17, 12 to 7, 7 to 12, 4 to 3, 3 to 4, rotate 9, rotate 5, rotate 15, 14 to 20, 20 to 14, rotate 19.
- Go get the batteries from Em and return to the cemetery. Change Waldo to Baldo again.
- Go down the stairs, turn on the flashlight and follow the tunnel until Nancy says "uh oh". Use the right path.
- Follow the path until you find a metal door. Open the door and find the speakeasy.
- Look closely at all four dog pictures. Notice the color of their collars. Iggy has a yellow collar, Xander's is red, Vitus is wearing a blue collar and Lucy has a green collar on.
- Move to the double doors and remove the board.
- Go behind the bar in front of Iggy's picture. Turn around and find the spigot puzzle. You must set the spigots to X, V, I and L. You must click on each spigot 3 times in order to change the letter and acquire the correct letter for that spigot. Begin on the left. Click on the spigot once and then on the red button. Repeat this two more times for the left-hand spigot. Continue this for the rest of the spigots.
- Turn left and look as closely as you can at the picture of the two dogs on the porch and you will open the door to the passage.
- Move forward ten times and turn right. Move forward twice and turn right to see Iggy's mosaic.
- Move forward twice and see Vitus on your right.
- Move forward twice and see Lucy on your right.
- Move forward three times and see Xander on your right.
- Turn around and go back once. Look at the shoreline mosaic on your left.

- Number the columns of tiles 1 through 12. Number the rows 1 through 6. Lucy is in row 1, column 7. Vitus is in row 3, column 11. Izzy is in row 4, column 9 and Xander is in row 5, column 7. Press these tiles and the passage will open.
- Enter the passage and go all the way down to the door. Try the door and find it locked.
- Turn around and exit the passage. Turn right and go down the passage past the mosaics. When the tunnel splits, take the right fork.
- Enter the room at the end of the right fork and turn left. Look at the dogs.
- Go past the dogs and turn left. Look at the items on the table against the back wall. Make sure you take the key. Turn around and look at the items on the table on the right.
- Go back to the shoreline mosaic and press the same four tiles again.
- Enter the passage and use the key on the door at the end.
- Enter the well room. Turn around and pick up the wheel.
- Turn back around and move toward the wheels by the back wall. You will see two wheels on the left and one on the right. Look closely at the space next to the wheel on the right. Place the wheel in inventory on the pipe next to the right wheel. Look at the gauge in between the right wheel and the one you just placed, but not too closely. Use the screwdriver in inventory on the hole behind the wheel you just placed.
- Back away and look closely at the far-left wheel. Turn it. To turn the wheels, hold your cursor in the upper left quadrant of the wheels until you get a circle arrow, then click.
- Back away, turn right and turn the wheel you just placed.
- Back away and turn the far-right wheel.
- Remove the screwdriver and then the wheel you placed and put it in your inventory.
- Back away twice so that you are facing the well door.
- **SAVE YOUR GAME HERE.**
- Enter the well and go all the way to the bottom.
- Turn around and look at the door.
- Look closely at the door. Set the first pair of numbers to 50, the second pair to 10, the third pair to 05 and the fourth pair to 01. Setting the last pair causes the third pair to move so go back and set the third pair to 05 and then readjust the last pair to 01.
- Use the wheel in your inventory on the pipe.
- **SAVE YOUR GAME HERE.** If you forget to save, use the Second Chance option.
- Enter the room and look at the gold.
- Turn around and start up the ladder.
- When Em appears, turn around and go back into the room with the gold.
- Look down at the grate and click on it to remove it.
- Enter the pipe, go up the other side and through the grate.
- Turn around and close the door on Em.
- Go up the ladder and enjoy the end game cut scene.

Final Thoughts and Something Extra...

It's been quite a month trying to get this issue out. We were a little short staffed, but somehow we managed to do it. We hope that you enjoy our October issue. As a special treat for Halloween, we're ending this issue with a touching (and a little supernatural) original short story by our very own Ugur Sener. The man has some serious skills!!

Until next time.....

---Wendy

The Cabin

By Ugur Sener

Clark recognized the guard at the front gate. Thompson had worked in Block C for fifteen months. Clark had been forced to stay there for eleven years. During the time Thompson worked in his block, they had barely exchanged a few words. But Clark still knew the guard hated him. Just like the other guards and maybe even most of the other convicts... Approaching the gate, Clark could see the disapproving look on the guard's face.

"I can't believe they are letting you leave. You deserve to rot here."

Clark did not acknowledge the comment. He quietly walked outside and breathed the fresh air. His term was finally over. What Thompson or the other guards thought was not supposed to matter. He was free. He was supposed to be happy.

He surveyed the parking lot. He was looking for Alice, even though he knew she would not be there. She had refused to talk to him after the trial. She had a new husband now. She had a seven-year-old son. Clark was out of her life, just an unwanted memory.

It had been a long time, but he still remembered it clearly. He had wanted to fight. Despite the evidence, despite the unabashed animosity, Clark had wanted to prove his innocence. He remembered seeing Alice for the last time. She had looked at him with such anger, such resentment. How could anyone believe him if she didn't? Clark had given up the fight, accepting the guilty verdict, accepting his sentence.

He took a bus to the nearest car rental office. He told the sales clerk he did not want anything fancy. Just a simple car to get him out of the city... There was nothing left for him here.

He drove north along the highway. He caught a brief glimpse of the ocean on the right side of the road. It was a beautiful afternoon. Clear skies and a pleasantly warm summer day... Clark was no longer bound to the prison. He wanted to feel happy, liberated. But staring at the road ahead, he felt empty, rejected, and diminished. Where could he hope to find a new beginning? Who would want to hire a convicted murderer? It had been eleven years. What would he be qualified to do anyway? Then he noticed her...

A little girl was standing on the side of the road. Clark could see her in the distance. She appeared to be alone; there were no other cars to be seen. As he got closer, Clark noticed that she was holding onto a picnic basket. Was she smiling at him? Was she waiting for him?

Clark did not want to stop the car. This seemed too suspicious. How could she have gotten here? Where were her parents? He had just gotten out of jail. No, Clark did not want any trouble. He drove past the girl, trying to avoid eye contact.

He looked into his rearview mirror to see how the girl was going to react. She had disappeared! He had driven past her only seconds ago. Where could she have gone? Had it just been his imagination?

Confused, Clark shook his head and tried to concentrate on the road ahead. And he saw her again... It had to be the same girl. It was the same white dress. It was the same straight blonde hair. She was holding onto a picnic basket, waiting on the side of the road. How could she have gotten ahead of him?

He could not ignore it this time. Clark nervously stopped the car next to the girl. She opened the passenger door and sat down. She was holding her picnic basket in her lap. She could be no more than eight years old. How could she be so calm sitting in a stranger's car?

"It is not far from here," she said. "Just take the first exit."

"What isn't?"

"The cabin, of course! Hurry up. We were supposed to be there already."

"But who is expecting us?"

"Oh don't be silly! Nobody is expecting us. This is our trip. Just the two of us."

Who was this little girl? Did she really know him? Was she really expecting him? She had been waiting to go somewhere... No, she had been waiting for him to take her somewhere. On a pleasant summer day, when the skies were clear... If he could just remember. Clark tried to concentrate. That picnic basket. She had been so excited to buy it. A weekend retreat at the cabin... It was going to be her first time to visit it. The beginning of a tradition. No, he had not forgotten. No, they had not taken this away from him. Not this memory. This one was innocent. This was his. Clark tried harder... Lisa... Her name was Lisa.

"Have you been waiting for long?" he asked.

"That's not important. You are here now. Just like you promised."

He had been so busy at work. He had made Lisa wait for several months before finally taking the trip. But he had not failed her. He had kept his promise. And she had been so patient, so understanding despite her young age. Then again, Lisa had always been amazing...

He took the exit off the highway as she instructed. He started asking her where he needed to go next.

"You don't need directions," she said. "Just drive, you will remember."

The abandoned gas station on the right... A few houses scattered in the distance. Trees on either side of the road and virtually no traffic. Very little had changed in the past eleven years. There were a few more houses, but the area was still vastly underdeveloped. A hidden seaside gem. Yes, he remembered it well. It would not be long before they reached the cabin.

Clark parked the car close to the beach. Lisa rushed out and carried her basket down to the seashore. She waved for him to join her. Opening the basket, she gave him one of the sandwiches she had made. He smiled, remembering how many hours she had spent to prepare the food. As they ate, Lisa talked about her summer vacation and going back to school. She had missed her friends. She was excited to go back in a few weeks. For a moment, Clark allowed himself to forget about the past eleven years. Nothing had changed. They were together again. Finally in front of the cabin, on this trip she had been so excited to take.

They worked for two hours to build a sandcastle. They swam in the sea. They walked along the shore looking for seashells. For a moment he allowed himself to laugh, he allowed himself to be happy.

As the sun started to go down, they sat in front of the ruined cabin. Clark could feel that their time together was about to end. He remembered... It had happened during the night. He had fallen asleep at the end of a perfect day. Lisa calmly looked at him.

“I never blamed you, dad.”

“I tried to reach you Lisa. I swear, I tried to reach you.”

Clark looked at the charred remains of the cabin. His arms were still deeply scarred from the fire. He remembered the heat and the smoke. He remembered the pain. Why hadn't he been able to wake up sooner? In time to reach her room... In time to save her...

“I never blamed you, dad. It wasn't your fault.”

Clark had started to cry. She put her arms around him. Suddenly, he felt tired. So very tired. A weekend retreat with his daughter... Eleven years in prison... But she was back now. She was with him again. He had to hold on to her this time. He had to remain conscious. He had to...

He woke up in the morning. Lisa was gone. He would not see her white dress or neatly arranged picnic basket again. They would not be able to come to this cabin every year.

He stood up and walked to the seashore. The sandcastle was still intact. Next to it, he saw the pile of seashells they had collected. He took a deep breath, feeling the gentle morning breeze. The sound of the waves hitting the sand... It was so peaceful. The rays of the sun felt warm, soothing him. It was a new day, a new beginning.

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