

# Adventure Lantern

September 2007

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Undercover: Operation Wintersun

## Reviews:

Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened

Carte Blanche: For A Fistful of Teeth

Aura: Fate of Ages

Nancy Drew: Ghost Dogs of Moon Lake

Myst

Fate

Shadow of the Colossus

God of War

Hitman: Blood Money

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# Editorial

The beginning of 2006; the beginning of Adventure Lantern... A domain purchased on an ordinary winter evening. Another gaming site occupying disk space on a distant server. A simple page design put together with the most rudimentary tools. No dynamic content, no flashy graphics. But a lot of heart and a lot of love. The realization of a dream that was all but lost eight years ago.

Ten months and nine issues of Adventure Lantern later... The airplane is headed towards Dallas, a city that was once home. The early morning sky is beautiful. I stare into the distance and think of a different dream. Could it be possible to halt everything? Change direction and head towards a different career, a different life? Would it be possible to afford it? How much effort would it take? How much time?

The plane lands at the Dallas Love Field Airport. As I get into a cab and head towards the office, I try to remember. How long have I wanted to become a doctor? A childhood dream abandoned at the age of eighteen. Is it too bold to pursue it now? Is it too late?

Work during the day, school in the evening... Would it be possible to attend classes without quitting my job? Do I have it in me to see it through? Too many questions, too many unknowns... Yet this path, this journey feels right. Hope still lingers. Is it too bold to hold on to it?

It is two months before things begin to take shape. It will take at least two more years of undergraduate classes before I can even apply for medical schools. If I manage to get in, it will be years before I can actually practice. The campus is far from home. The days will be long, hardly any time left to study. It will be difficult... It might be impossible. But somehow I know this is worth the struggle.

As 2007 begins, I realize it will not be possible to hold everything together. Work and school occupy the bulk of my time. I completely stop gaming. It gets increasingly harder to keep up with Adventure Lantern. Articles come in steadily. Supportive as always, my teammates agree to handle the bulk of our editing tasks. But it still takes me nearly three months to find enough time to put together a single issue.

I keep hoping things will get better in the following months. Every week I try to find just a few hours to dedicate to the site. Just a little time to do some gaming, some writing, or editing... We have a great selection of articles to release an issue. Just a year ago, it would have taken me all of two weeks to put it together. I keep hoping I will find the time. But as the summer drifts by, the reality of the situation is quite clear. As painful as it is

to accept, I am simply not the right person to be in charge of the magazine. I may have to let go of one dream to pursue another.

Several days into August, an e-mail from Wendy curiously appears in my mailbox. While I was busy keeping up with work and school, Wendy has taken it upon herself to learn how to format the magazine. The sample she has sent me looks fantastic. We must get this in front of our readers. And I have no doubt Wendy is the right person to assume leadership of the magazine and the Web site.

I reply to Wendy, asking her to become Adventure Lantern's Chief Editor. It is a difficult e-mail to send. Admittance of defeat... Realization that I will not be the one to put our issues together... But we may finally get back to our monthly issues. We may finally release the articles that have been waiting to be published for weeks. It is hard to let it go, yet I am tremendously grateful to know that Adventure Lantern may not need to end. There is a gifted and dedicated team that can keep the site alive...

Several weeks later, a new issue of Adventure Lantern is finally here. Thanks to Wendy's remarkable efforts, the magazine looks better than ever. A great selection of articles is finally ready for our readers. And as the production of our magazine is resumed, we have many changes to announce.

Since the release of our last issue, we went through some restructuring to delegate editorial responsibilities. As of August 2007, Wendy Nellius is the Chief Editor of Adventure Lantern. Wendy will be responsible for the publication of our magazine and release of our Web articles. Having worked with her since the earliest days of the Web site, I have no doubt Wendy will be a tremendous asset to our team in her new role. And if our new layout is any indication, Adventure Lantern may see some great improvements in the near future.

Also taking a leadership role on our editorial team, Thaumaturge will be assisting Wendy in preparing our content for our readers. Among our long-time contributors, Thaumaturge has continually proven his dedication to the Web site with his strong articles. On a more personal note, during the long months we were unable keep up the magazine, Thaumaturge has been a greatly supportive friend. The magazine will be stronger thanks to his diligence and commitment as an Editor.

We have expanded our Copy Editor team to include Gnome, La Primavera, and Southern Belle as well as Drantin. I met Gnome when he sent me a kind e-mail supporting Adventure Lantern several days after the

release of our first issue. After discovering his excellent witty writing style with a quick trip to his blog, I knew AL would benefit from his articles. Since then, he has made great contributions every month despite his remarkably busy schedule. And now we will occupy even more of his time with editing responsibilities.

La Primavera and Southern Belle joined AL with our September 2006 issue, quickly proving to be valuable team members with great articles published in the following months. When it became clear I would not be able to manage editing responsibilities alone, La Primavera and Southern Belle readily agreed to take a more active role on the team. We believe our expanded copy editing team will improve the quality of our content while alleviating the burden on Drantin. Southern Belle also helps out as a forum admin.

With our new issue, we are also welcoming several new contributors to Adventure Lantern. Vhayste, Nuggy, Helen L. Alexander, and Gordo are bringing us their first reviews on this issue. While Vhayste reviews God of War, Nuggy is covering Shadow of the Colossus. Gordo brings us an article on Hitman: Blood Money, while Helen reviews Ghost Dogs of Moon Lake from the Nancy Drew series. It is a great pleasure to finally publish the first articles from our newest members.

Our older team members have also provided great articles for this release. As usual, Gnome brings us news from the adventure gaming world as SirDave continues his series of articles on playing old adventure titles. Wendy takes a look at Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened while Neetie delivers an article on the newly released Undercover: Operation Wintersun. Delving into an old classic, Thaumaturge reviews Myst. Southern Belle and Gnome provide this month's walkthroughs on Keepsake and Sam & Max Episode 3. Our interviews give us insight on Anacapri the Dream and the sequel to Adventures of Fatman. Many thanks to the entire team for their patience as our magazine releases suffered endless delays due to my hectic schedule.

As a number of new writers join our team and some of our members assume new roles, Adventure Lantern is here to let you know that we are going to keep on going. I believe the site has come a long way since the first issue I clumsily put together months ago. Under Wendy's leadership, I am confident that AL will continue to get stronger. But I should say you are not completely getting rid of me either. While I must step into more of a background role at least for several months, I intend to at least continue writing our editorials (per Wendy's kind request). Who knows; if I find some time to game, I might even write the occasional review.

As I conclude this month's editorial, I am seated at a table outside Price Hall at the University of Oklahoma. It is a beautiful September night. The gentle breeze is soothing. I can hear the trees rustling and students talking in the distance. For a moment, I forget about the test I have to take the next day, the lab I need to finish up, and the work assignments hanging over my head. Writing this means Adventure Lantern is back; it means all our work from 2006 has not been in vain. And once again, with confidence, I can tell you to come back next month for a brand new issue. It will be our second special Halloween edition.

Until next month,  
Ugur

## Adventure Lantern

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To subscribe to our magazine and receive and update when a new issue is released, send an email to: [subscribe@adventurelantern.com](mailto:subscribe@adventurelantern.com).

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# In the News...

Ah, yes, the news bit of your beloved adventure obsessed gaming mag is apparently still here (or should I say back) bringing you yesterday's news today. Hoorah! Then again, better be frank. The rebirth of Adventure Lantern should be all the news you'll currently need. Anyway, here's the rest with an emphasis on the "not necessarily latest" but most interesting stuff.

-Gnome

## Nancy Drew coming to the DS

Remember those average Nancy Drew adventures Her Interactive keeps churning out for the PC? Good, better forget them though, for this DS title is being produced by Gorilla Systems and should already be available somewhere near you....possibly at a store. The game happily features 13 chapters, stylus point-and-click gameplay, a clues journal and a variety of mini games.



## Sam & Max Season 2

I know it's both astonishing and shocking, but Telltale is about to release a whole new Sam & Max season this very fall. Rumor has it adventurers will have to endure no more Bosco impersonations, will finally get to visit Stinky's Diner and ultimately gawk at an improved graphics engine. Oh, and the episodes will probably feature a more cohesive over-arching storyline. Visit the Telltale Games Sam & Max website (<http://www.telltalegames.com/samandmaxseasontwo>) for more info, screenshots and a trailer.



## Resonance



Xii games (<http://xiigames.com/>), the creators of such innovative gems as Anna and What Linus Bruckman Sees When His Eyes Are Closed have announced Resonance, a brand new commercial –yet very indie- point-and-click adventure. The game will feature the music of Nikolas Sideris, character graphics by Shane Stevens, backgrounds by Nauris Krauze and game design by Vince Twelve. Just don't expect less than 3 playable characters and 12 inventories. Yes, twelve, as in xii.

## Machinarium announced

All we have are a few fantastic screenshots (or concept art thingies), a website (<http://machinarium.com/>) and a description of Machinarium as a full-scale adventure game, but we can all feel confident that the creators of Samorost I and II will come up with another indie gem. For now all we can do is wait. Sigh.





## CSI: Hard Evidence

Another one by Telltale apparently, though definitely neither humorous nor particularly cartoony, the latest CSI will be hitting stores this fall. Expect something along the lines of the previous 3D CSI adventures but this time available for PC, Xbox 360 and the new adventure gaming darling Wii.



## Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure

Zack & Wiki does indeed bring Monkey Island to mind, what with being all piratey and humorous, but it probably will also bring triple A fully 3D cartoon adventures/puzzlers to the Nintendo Wii. Complete with gesture gameplay and puzzles, no less. Oh, and Capcom promised mankind the game will be available before 2008.



## Blackwell: Unbound Released

The beautiful looking sequel to The Blackwell Legacy has already been released and is available for download –along with a nice demo- over at Wadjet Eye Games (<http://www.wadjeteyegames.com>). It's an excellent independent game production sporting lovely pixel-art graphics, an impressive soundtrack, great puzzles and an intriguing story. And, it's got a Ghost.

## A Vampyre Story Update

The desperately anticipated humorous cartoon adventure by Bill Tiller, Autumn Moon and a host of ex-Lucasarts adventure maestros got a new richer site. Check it out @ <http://www.vampyrestory-game.com/> and don't forget to have a look at the mouth-watering freshly released trailer too. Now, if you must know, the game is about a lovely opera singing vampire lady refusing to accept her state. It features 25 characters, hand-drawn graphics, over 30 locations vampiric abilities and some all around impressive production values.



# Interview with Gey & Silvio Savarese on Anacapri the Dream

Conducted by Ugur Sener



If you ever wanted to travel to a beautiful location (and some adventure) without all the expense, then perhaps you took a chance a few years ago on an Indie game called "A Quiet Weekend in Capri". Set on the island of Capri off the coast of Italy, the game combined thousands of photos with intuitive puzzles to create an experience unlike any other. The magic of the game was in creating a feeling of actually being in Capri and providing the game with rich and accurate history of the island. Now, the two-man team has joined forces to bring us back to the island for a whole new adventure.

This interview was originally conducted back in March in anticipation of the game. However, since the game has just recently been released, the timing seems just about right to find out more about this fascinating duo and their latest venture.

**[Adventure Lantern]:** Could you tell us a little about yourselves? Who is the team behind Anacapri the Dream?

**[Gey & Silvio]:** The team is made up of two people: Gey Savarese (father) and Silvio (son). We are both graduated in Electrical Engineering. Gey is a former R&D Director of Texas Instruments Italy and Micron Technology Italy, and contract professor at the University of Salerno, Italy. Silvio is PhD in Computer Vision, Beckman Fellow at the University of Urbana Champaign, Illinois. Occasionally, we have friends who help us in developing the games, such as Laura Mac Donald, or some professional company such as Nucleosys.

**[AL]:** How did you become involved with developing adventure games?

**[G&S]:** Gey started early to develop games on Texas Instruments' TI99/4A Home Computer in the early 80's while Silvio was programming games similar to Scott Adams' textual games on his Commodore. Recently we decided to develop a game for PC just for fun. The first game – "A Quiet weekend in Capri" – received unexpected success. Many adventure gamers loved this game. A short article appeared also in Time Magazine. So, we have been encouraged to develop the second game – Anacapri the Dream. This game is not

the sequel of the first one. It is a completely new game, albeit set in the same island.

**[AL]:** What can you tell us about the style you have used in A Quiet Weekend in Capri and Anacapri the Dream?

**[G&S]:** The story is key in our games. It is also key that the game is set in a real place, as much as possible with real characters. The story has to fit with the place and is inspired by what is available in the real world. We set a well defined methodology to shoot the pictures so that the navigation is smooth. We share the tasks: Gey shoots pictures and executes the computer programming and Silvio writes the story and composes the music. However, this is not a clear-cut separation. There is continuous interaction between us. Particularly, we discussed a lot about the ending of the Anacapri game. Each of us had a very different view. After two months of debate, we came out with a third solution, better than our initial ones, and surprisingly fulfilling both our requirements... but it is your turn now to discover (and select) the ending of the game!

**[AL]:** What were some of the challenges in putting the images together? Do you have any interesting stories you would like to share?

# FEATURED INTERVIEW

**[G&S]:** To get 8000+ useful shots has been a huge undertaking. I guess we shot 30,000+ pictures to select the good ones. Almost all shots have been photo-edited. The most challenging work was to get images of a place empty in the game but in the reality full of people, cars, taxis, buses, and other moving stuff. Often the story requires that the places are empty. It is not realistic if a person appears in a scene and, when returning there after a few hours, he/she is still at the same place and in the same position. So each time there is a trade off: wait with patience until the place becomes empty, or take a shot then spend the time to edit the picture with a photo editing tool.



**[AL]:** How has the development experience changed moving from your first project to Anacapri the Dream?

**[G&S]:** There have been many changes, all related to the complexity of the game and the new advanced 2D technology. Developing Anacapri has been extremely more difficult than Capri. But the fun in doing it... was exactly the same.

**[AL]:** Could you give us an overview of your latest project?

**[G&S]:** Anacapri is an adventure game featuring innovative 2D technology with a few 3D scenes. There are full screen images, cross-fading pictures, panoramic views, and 2.3 GBytes of animations. Particularly, we found a new technique to animate the sea and the water effects in the game. The movement of the waves is blended with wet sand and rocks along the shore. But mostly, the story is so complex and beautiful that we are going to publish a novel : "The Legend of the Obsidian Disk".

**[AL]:** What details can you provide us about the story?

**[G&S]:** Actually there are 3 stories blended in the game: The Dream, the Reality, and the "true" myths, legends and history of the island of Capri. There are 42 characters: Capri townspeople interpreting themselves, computer graphics animals, historical characters and few actors. We covered 5 ages: Neolithic, with the ancient shaman at Grotta delle Felci; the Greek, with Oebalus, king of the Telebois; the Romans, with the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius; The '500, with Red Beard the Pirate; and finally the '800, with the British and the Frenchies. Where the Dream becomes the Reality and vice-versa? The player will discover it.



**[AL]:** What can you tell us about the mysterious Obsidian Disk?

**[G&S]:** At the beginning of the game, you will soon get a copy of "The Anacapri Enquirer". Let me report here an excerpt of one article found in this newspaper. "Regardless of how far back you search, historical events are so mixed with fiction, that in the end all we really have left is the myth. According to the stories, the Gods, bored with the monotony of eternity, placed a bet: if humans were given infinite knowledge and intelligence, would they handle these gifts wisely? To test them, the Gods forged a marvellous Disk from obsidian and threw it to Earth, where it landed in Capri. Then they had great fun, betting between themselves on the outcome. Legend then speaks on the folly of men, those who tried to use the Disk, thinking they could master its gifts and the dire consequences that followed. But is this merely an allegory, or fanciful story reserved for children and dreamers? Or is there more? For as we all know, any legend, no matter how fantastic, just might conceal the truth..."

**[AL]:** How is it forcing the villagers to leave the island?

**[G&S]:** The Disk provided great power to the Shaman of a Neolithic tribe, to Oebalus, King of the Telebois, to the Roman Emperor Tiberius, to Red Beard the Pirate and to the English during the battle of Capri in 1808 against the French. They were fascinated by the power of the Disk but used it selfishly to increase their personal power. So they inevitably received great misfortunes for themselves and for their people. If the Disk now would fall in unscrupulous hands, it could bring great problems to the Anacapri townspeople, so they are scared and many of them are leaving the island.

**[AL]:** Can you describe Nico Fredi, the character we will be controlling throughout the game?

**[G&S]:** Nico Fredi is a neuro-scientist. But you will be controlling also Nico N, who is an expert of ancient civilizations. Are they relatives? Or is it a case of double personality? What is the true relationship between these two characters? It's up to you to discover the truth.

**[AL]:** Who are some of the other characters we will meet during the adventure?

**[G&S]:** The most important are Ms Giulia MacKowen, daughter of John Clay MacKowen, a Southerner American colonel who really lived in Capri years ago; Norbert Hadrawa, an Austrian antiquarian and former archaeologist; Nereus and the Nereids; the enchanting siren; Nelson, lieutenant of the British Army; Mirta Marconi, writer and columnist; Professor Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, owner of the Philosophical park; Monk of Cetrella and his guardian; the Giant Turtle... Amazingly, you will not always be able to distinguish between "fantasy" characters and "true" characters. For example, Gunnar the Philosopher is the real owner of the Philosophical Park in Anacapri (see: [www.ebson.se/hemadmin/philopark/](http://www.ebson.se/hemadmin/philopark/)). If you visit Capri in the spring, you may meet him and visit the Park. Many other characters in the game are true people living in Anacapri.

**[AL]:** Can you describe the location? What makes the island a good setting for an adventure game?

**[G&S]:** If you go to Capri, at the first glance you get the very vivid feeling that you are in a magic and enchanted island. There are wonderful landscapes, story and legends blending their charms. Many adventures games are set in dark places. Here we are mostly in the open air, surrounded by incredible and varied scenery. In the walk of the Forts there is a wooden and iron bridge linking two sides of a hill. It is so charming that it seems invented and drawn. It is not: it is a real bridge.

**[AL]:** What kinds of challenges can we expect to encounter?

**[G&S]:** There are plenty of original puzzles well embedded in the story. You will need to learn how to play Scopa, a typical Neapolitan card game, and win against 'O Riccio, the owner of a restaurant. Only if you win he will lend you a boat to enter the Blue Grotto. And you need to bring back the right arm to the Augustus' statue. And find how to escape the sirens' trap. And prepare a bottle of Limoncello. And solve the Sphinx' riddle. And open one by one the Forts, to eventually find the Obsidian Disk. But... was it the real object of your search? Or maybe you were looking for something else? In any case, don't get scared. We provided a bypass if you give up at the most difficult quiz. For example, in case 'O Riccio is too strong to be beaten or if you don't want to spend your time to align the tiles of the Mesola Fort because you are eager to know how the game ends.

**[AL]:** What can you tell us about the game's atmosphere? Can we expect a strong sense of mysticism?

**[G&S]:** The tunnel joining Damecuta to the Blue Grotto is dark and scaring. Many disquieting creatures dwell there. There is a claustrophobic site I cannot reveal now. And a beach shed by the moonlight. Otherwise, this is a solar game.

**[AL]:** What are the underlying themes the game will explore?

**[G&S]:** There is one very important theme: know yourself.

**[AL]:** What are some of the key differences between Anacapri the Dream and A Quiet Weekend in Capri?

**[G&S]:** There are huge differences. Anacapri is a step function better than Capri. For the complexity of the story: the depth of the characters and the technology. Many of the criticisms received about Capri have been well accepted and considered. Here the story unfolds smoothly. You don't have to wander in large areas without knowing what you are looking for. The game is largely non-linear, but only locally. The areas of the game open one after the other. Anacapri extends in a large territory, but you don't need to walk around too much to solve your puzzles. Mainly we intended to tell a story, so we tried to simplify the life of the players.

**[AL]:** Will the game feature a similar interface to the one in A Quiet Weekend in Capri?

**[G&S]:** Basically it is the same interface but largely restyled. The maps are now well readable, also showing in which direction you are looking to. All the sentences of the characters are recorded and organized by characters. Many jumps are allowed as long as you access new areas, avoiding wearing out your shoes walking over and over along the same paths.

**[AL]:** Who would you expect to enjoy your latest project?

**[G&S]:** People keen to spend 50+ hours to solve a complex and addicting adventure game set in a fairy but true island.

**[AL]:** When can we expect to get our hands on Anacapri the Dream?

**[G&S]:** We are basically on schedule to get the game on the shelves within this spring. Or at least to sell it via internet.

*[Editor's Note: Anacapri the Dream has been released this month and can be purchased through [Got Game Entertainment](http://GotGameEntertainment.com) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)]*

**[AL]:** What are your plans after releasing the game? Do you have any other projects in the works?

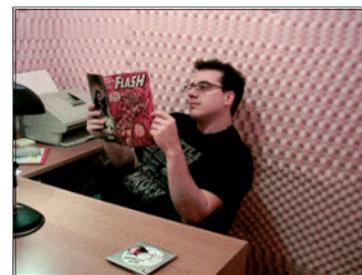
**[G&S]:** The game comes in Italian and English languages only. Localization efforts for other countries will keep us busy for the rest of the year. However, a great new idea is in our minds... no more in Capri, this time. All corners of this island have been covered by our two games. We have so many beautiful places here in Italy, and we have plenty of fresh ideas...

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Thank you to both Gey and Silvio Savarese for allowing this interview. We are always grateful to find out more about those who work so hard to bring us new experiences in the gaming world. For more information on Anacapri the Dream, please visit the official website at [www.anacaprithedream.com](http://www.anacaprithedream.com). If you missed A Weekend in Capri, you can check the game at [www.weekendcapri.com](http://www.weekendcapri.com).

# Interview with Michael Doak from SOCKO! Entertainment

Conducted by Ugur Sener



Back in 2003, a newcomer appeared on the independent gaming scene with an atypical, quirky (and very overweight) superhero in tow. That man was Michel Doak of SOCKO! Entertainment and the game was "The Adventures of Fatman: Toxic Revenge". Fatman's primary duty was in safekeeping the town of Shadowlawn. A severe lack of recent crime resulted in Fatman's portly and unflattering physique....that and the "all you can eat" diet he was on. However, crime did reappear in the form of a new super-villain by the name of Toximan. What followed was a unique and entertaining romp through Shadowlawn. The game was received quite well and there were hopes from fans for a sequel. But, what happened to cause Michael and SOCKO! Entertainment to disappear from our little corner of the world?

Well, Michael is back on the gaming scene and ready to fill in the all the blanks and bring us some great news.

**[Adventure Lantern]:** Can you tell us a little about yourself? Who is behind SOCKO! Entertainment?

**[Micheal Doak]:** My name is Michael Doak and I'm the guy behind SOCKO! Entertainment. At the moment I'm working with another artist and the composer from Screen 7, other than that, it's just a one man show.

**[AL]:** How did you become involved with developing adventure games in the first place?

**[MD]:** When I was about 10 my dad came home with a used Tandy computer. That computer's whopping 20meg hard drive contained all of the old classic Sierra games. My dad promptly deleted LSL of course, but we played all of the others again and again. From that moment, I tried my hand at making my own adventure games. The closest I got was a text adventure. Then around 2001 I discovered AGS (Adventure Game Studio). I was in heaven and after a test game, set about making a full blown commercial game.

**[AL]:** How was our ever-popular oversized hero Fatman conceived?

**[MD]:** I wanted to make an adventure game about superheroes from the beginning. However, I kept running into problems. A game about superheroes doesn't lend itself very well to puzzle design. It's hard to make a puzzle about a locked door if Superman can just bust it down, right? So Fatman was born, the guy who thinks he's a superhero.

**[AL]:** What is the size of your comic book collection?

**[MD]:** Let's just say I have so many comics that my wife, Robin, decided to cut up a stack of my old ones and wallpaper my office with them. :)

**[AL]:** What was the player response to the first Fatman game?

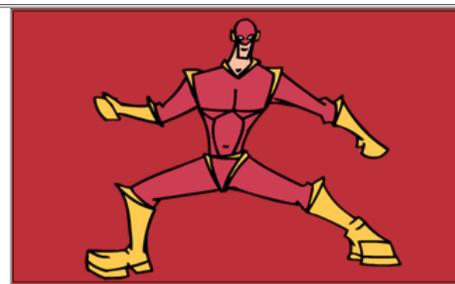
**[MD]:** I've gotten a lot of great response, mostly all positive reviews and no shortage of people pestering me to make a sequel.

**[AL]:** It has been several years since the original release of The Adventures of Fatman. Why did SOCKO! Entertainment disappear from the adventure gaming scene?

**[MD]:** After Fatman was released I sold enough copies to break even and then released the game as abandon-ware. I took a break from the scene for a while. Fatman took me a little over 2 years to produce and I was just burnt out. After a year or so I got the itch to create again. I wanted to get away from a sequel and raise the bar for my next game. I got carried away and lost my perspective because nothing ever became of those attempts.



# FEATURED INTERVIEW



**[AL]:** What made you decide to continue to develop adventure games?

**[MD]:** Adventure games are the only style of game I ever see myself creating. Call me strange but to me creating a game is more fun than actually playing one.

**[AL]:** Can you give us a brief overview of the next chapter in the Fatman series? What can you tell us about the storyline?

**[MD]:** Without giving away too much of the plot we'll rejoin Fatman and the city of Shadowlawn in the midst of a huge epidemic. One by one all of the city's superheroes have been disappearing! Fatman and some other rag-tag superheroes will have to get to the bottom of who is doing this and why. It's entitled S.O.S! (Save Our Superheroes).

**[AL]:** How about the game's atmosphere? Will the tone of the adventure be similar to the original?

**[MD]:** The game is going to involve four main player characters, each with their own abilities. This will lend itself to a less linear style of puzzle solving. Also, I must admit that I designed the original Fatman's characters entirely on voices I thought I could voice act myself or find for cheap. This time around the game design has come first and I'll worry about finding the perfect voice actors later.

**[AL]:** What kinds of challenges can adventurers expect to overcome? What kinds of tools will be at Fatman's disposal as he fights crime?

**[MD]:** It will be strictly logical inventory and team based puzzles. My puzzles have always been a bit on the easy side because I refuse to incorporate pointless or obscure puzzles just for the sake of extending the game play. What fun is it to be stuck for hours on some unfair puzzle combination?

**[AL]:** Can you give us details about a few of the characters we can expect to meet?

**[MD]:** The majority of the games interactions are going to be between the four main player characters. I really want to

bring them to life and flesh them out with original back stories and unique interactions.

**[AL]:** What will be some of the key differences between the first Fatman game and its sequel?

**[MD]:** The main difference is going to be the graphics. The game will be 640x480. My own art skills have vastly improved since the last game and I'm also working with another artist.

**[AL]:** Will players be required to play the first game in order to appreciate the sequel?

**[MD]:** No not at all, there will be a few jokes about the last episode, but nothing that would ruin the experience for someone who has never played the first.

**[AL]:** How has been the development experience so far?

**[MD]:** It has been going better than expected. Dave Gilbert of Wadjet Eye Games in particular has been extremely helpful on helping me get back into the business with plenty of advice and contacts. Also, if anyone wants to help out they can purchase the original game at [www.socko1.com](http://www.socko1.com) to help me fund the new project or they can email me at [socko@socko1.com](mailto:socko@socko1.com). I'm always on the lookout for talented voice actors or artists looking to lend a hand.

**[AL]:** What is the expected release date for the new game?

**[MD]:** If everything continues as planned it should be late fall of 2007.

**[AL]:** What about life after Fatman 2? Do you have any other projects planned?

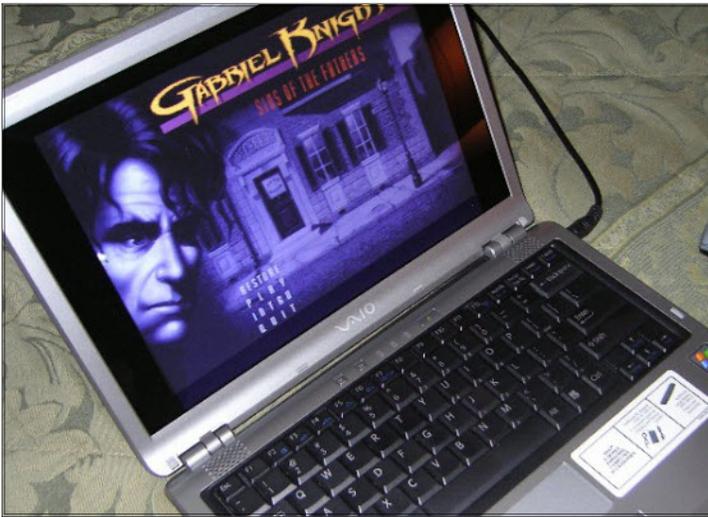
**[MD]:** I have several projects on the back burner at the moment. The most promising of which involves an adventure game based around NYC rats. To me rats are the perfect adventure game characters. Their entire existence revolves around finding and using everyday items. I could really have some fun with this.

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Adventure Lantern thanks Michael Doak for taking the time to update us on Fatman 2 and SOCKO! Entertainment. Welcome back!! We are certainly looking forward to a reprisal. For those who wish to keep apprised of Michael's progress, check out his website & blog at [www.socko1.com](http://www.socko1.com). You can help fund the project by purchasing the re-released version of the original Fatman.

# Playing Old Adventure Games

Part 5 in a series of articles by SirDave



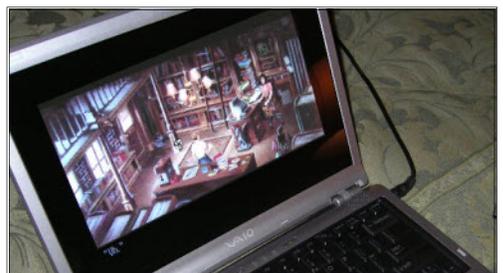
In the last two articles, we explored the premise of using older workhorse laptops running Windows 98SE to play the older classic adventure games. Except for a brief return to that subject, let's once again address the general subject of playing adventure games under Windows XP by taking on the challenge of Gabriel Knight 1: Sins of the Fathers and Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within.

Gabriel Knight 1: Sins of the Fathers was released in December of 1993. (It is of particular interest to me that Gabriel Knight 1 and Myst, the icons of the two main genres of adventure gaming – 3<sup>rd</sup> person, story-driven and 1<sup>st</sup> person, puzzle-driven – were released within a few months of each other.) It, along with its sequel, 'The Beast Within', is considered by many to be Jane Jensen's tour-de-force in adventure gaming and an example of classic adventuring by which all others should be measured.

It is a third person, story-driven game that was very much ahead of its time. There is no text parser; the ingenious use of icons is applied to accomplish various actions (talking, examining objects, opening doors, etc.) and a map is used to transport Gabriel to various locations quickly and easily. In addition, it was the first adventure game to use established actors for the voices (something that would be used in the Tex Murphy game by Access, Under A Killing Moon, two years later): Tim Curry (best known for The Rocky Horror Picture Show) does an astounding job in the lead role, and unknown to many is the fact that the voice of Detective Mosely is that of Mark Hamill of Star Wars fame and the voice of Wolfgang is that of the famous actor Efrem Zimabist, Jr.!

Gabriel Knight 1 is emblematic of a game produced during the transition from the more text- and snapshot-graphics-based games to the so-called multimedia gaming era. In the attempt to bridge the gap, the game was released in both floppy disk and CD-ROM formats, the latter allowing Sierra to incorporate the new concept of full digital voiceovers. In addition, there is support for both 'standard' MIDI and 'extended' MIDI synthesizers for what was, at that time, called 'multimedia windows'. However, just as in the case of the Access' 'Under A Killing Moon', the attempt to make the most of the computer hardware of the time made Gabriel Knight 1 a particularly hard game to run under Windows XP.

## Gabriel Knight 1: Sins of the Fathers & Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within



# FEATURED ARTICLE

Many fans of the Gabriel Knight series believe that 'Gabriel Knight 2, The Beast Within' not only improves on 'Sins of the Fathers', but, in fact, is the best game of the series. To some extent that applies mainly to Jane Jensen's script, the actors' performances and the music, since the game itself used then-new techniques involving real-time full-motion video using blue-screen backgrounds and photographic 'virtual sets' that were loved by some, but not everybody, at the time.



In this sequel, Dean Erickson plays Gabriel Knight and Robert Holmes composed the exceptional soundtrack. Incidentally, 'The Beast Within' cost in the realm of four million dollars to produce (a million dollars over budget) and was an example of the financial gamble that developers and publishers were willing to take during the high-flying adventure-gaming era of the mid 1990s. It was an era that was going to be very short-lived as these high production cost games, for the most part, failed to result in much of a profit and, often, resulted in a major losses.



Before discussing running Gabriel Knight 1 and 2 under Windows XP, let's return briefly to the subject of the last two articles: playing an old classic such as Gabriel Knight 1 on older laptops running Windows 98SE. Having been developed two years before the arrival of Windows 95 and, as mentioned above, being a game that challenged the hardware of the time, Gabriel Knight 1 has, until recently, been one of the more difficult games to run on Windows XP, the only real solution being the use of Dosbox. Running it on the hardware systems of the time even under Windows 95 was never easy to begin with; in fact, the original documentation suggested using DOS if there was any problem setting it up under Windows.



However, using the mini-laptops, the Libretto 100 (under Windows 95) and the Libretto 110ct (under Windows 98SE), setup and running Gabriel Knight was effortless- you don't even need to run it from a CD-ROM. Simply transfer the entire CD-ROM contents over to a directory on the hard disk and run **Setup.exe** from there. But one warning: Don't allow the install program to test the hardware (as it will request to do)- it will likely crash the system even though the hardware is just fine!

## Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers and The Beast Within Under Windows XP

Running Gabriel Knight 1 and 2 under Windows XP is no longer the challenge it was just a few years ago and we can thank one person, Enrico Rolfi, who runs a website (under the name Hendroz) dedicated to running these games using installers he created. Before doing anything else, go to his website: <http://vogons.zetafleet.com/gkpatches/>

Look for 'Downloads' to the left on the webpage and under 'Gabriel Knight XP Installer 1.03', select: - English 1.48 MB which is the file **SetupGKXP103.exe**, and under 'Gabriel Knight 2 HD/DVD Installer', select: - English 1.01 (1.34 MB) which is the file **SetupGK2.exe**. Note: the installers work only for the English CD-ROM versions of the game.



Don't be confused by the use of the term 'patches'- these files are full installers for the games. Likewise, don't think that installing these games is going to require some sort of advanced computer experience. Enrico has done such a good job that nothing could be simpler. Not only do these installers practically do everything so that all you have to really do is feed your CD-ROM the game disks on request, but they also will automatically install all the required patches issued since the games' release! By the way, for the purposes of testing these installers, I used a Sony Vaio VGN-S460 laptop running Windows XP with Service Pack 2.

## Installing Gabriel Knight 1: Sins of the Fathers

Installation is as simple as loading and starting the **SetupGKXP103.exe** file. The game, loaded from a single disk, occupies about 420 MB for the main game, 574 MB if you also install the optional 'Making Gabriel Knight' video. At the end of the main installation, a Configuration Wizard is launched which only consists of a 'Full Screen Mode or Windowed Mode' selection and a selection for 'Extended Midi Synth (recommended)'. You may want to consider selecting the 'Windowed Mode' if your computer screen is on the large size. Gabriel Knight 1 runs at a resolution of 640x480 pixels and can look rather pixelated on a large screen in full screen mode. For comparison's sake, my Vaio has a 13-inch widescreen and the full screen game was reasonably acceptable, though a little on the pixelated side. Note that even in full screen mode, the cutscenes will run at less than full screen.



## Installing Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within

1, installation is very simple and basically consists of loading and clicking on the **SetupGK2.exe** file and loading the six game disks as requested. The full install occupies about 3.1 gigabytes of hard disk space. If you find there is any problem with the full install, there is the option of a 16MB minimum install. Note that if, when inserting disks during a full install, the 'CD autostart or autoplay' is activated, you will get a message such as 'Do you want to Play?' or 'To Play The Beast you must insert CD #1'. If this occurs, simply click on 'Quit' to return to the installation routine. The documentation says that you can hold down the 'Shift key' while inserting the CDs to disable CD autoplay, but it didn't work for me- I kept getting one of the messages above and had to click on 'Quit' every time, though the installation proceeded smoothly otherwise.



At the end of the main installation, you will be asked, as with Gabriel Knight 1, to select the display mode, full screen or windowed. Then, you will be offered the option of selecting the original 'interlaced mode' or not. Not selecting the interlaced mode will activate a patch that Enrico wrote to remove the original interlacing that tends to have a negative effect on the GK2 movies on modern systems. I installed the non-interlaced mode.



The Gabriel Knight 2 installer allows you to create a DVD of the full game, but be aware that you have to do the full hard disk installation first. To create the DVD, simply copy the contents of the Gabriel Knight 2 full-install directory on the hard disk to the DVD using a program such as Nero (note: do not copy the directory itself, just the contents).

I highly recommend making a DVD whether you think you need it or not. Once you have it, you'll be able to install again if for any reason you want to install to another computer or if you want to change this installation (i.e., if you wish to change the video mode or some such). Installing from the DVD is as simple as inserting the DVD and clicking on the file **Setup.exe**.



If you are trying to install from the DVD to a computer that already has GK2 installed, you must uninstall the game first. On my system the Setup.exe program would not start until I did! The Setup from the DVD allows for 3 setups: A minimum 16MB install that requires the DVD to be in the drive, a medium install that installs all the data files to the hard disk, but depends on reading the cutscenes from the DVD and a full install that allows you to put the DVD away as a nice backup.

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## Final Thought...

If you are lucky enough to have never played one or both of them, take your time playing the Gabriel Knight games. Allow yourself the time to treasure and get lost in these classic gems. They are long enough that it's pretty hard not to, especially when it comes to Gabriel Knight 2 which is, overall, one of the longest games ever made. Oh yes, and whatever you do, stay away from those walkthroughs!



# Undercover: Operation Wintersun

By Neetie

According to the introduction in the game manual you are “Dr John Russell, a shy but highly intelligent professor. You must go undercover with agent MI6 to prevent the Nazis from executing their lethal plan to detonate ‘the’ bomb. You will need your keen observation, stealth and puzzle solving skills to survive a series of perilous situations. Brute force is not an option. The fate of the world rests on your shoulders.” So, no pressure then!

War games and shoot ‘em ups are not generally my thing, being a soft and gentle girlie who much prefers fluffy bunnies... (yeah right!!). But the idea of ‘observation, stealth and puzzle solving’ caught my attention straight away. “Ah”, I thought to myself in my usual smug way, “its like another ‘Stolen’ only set in Nazi Germany”... I couldn’t have been more wrong....

It installed easily on my XP driven machine, claims to run as low as W98SE and installed in less time than a Windows



update. It needs 2 GB of hard drive space. An option to run the movies from the CD might have reduced that, but the added speed of having the movies on the hard drive is well worth the extra space.

I love this kind of game – plenty of time to work out the puzzle and no ‘bad guy’ sneaking up on you when you least expect it. (Can you tell I’m speaking from experience?) To those familiar with the genre it leans heavily on forerunners like Broken Sword or Black Mirror with a similar almost ‘cartoon’ graphic style. This gives you an immediate feeling of comfort and the ability to jump immediately into the game without spending time working out the controls is a definite advantage.

Speaking of controls, Undercover is your standard point and click adventure. But, it does deviate from the norm with the right mouse button controlling interaction and the left for examining...takes a bit to get used to. Inventory sits at the bottom of the screen and can be scrolled through. Combining items can be done with a right-click and a drag. Running is activated by a double click which is always appreciated.

As for puzzles, there are a lot of them. The ever so bright professor handles everything from homemade chemistry experiments, breaking codes,

**Developer:** [Sproing](#)  
**Publisher:** [Lighthouse](#)  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** Sept 2007



cracking safes to devising various diversions. It's a varied mix of mechanical, logical and inventory puzzles. When it comes to inventory puzzles, the professor is an adventure game specialist.....meaning he takes everything that's not nailed down. And, you won't even use everything you take.....what a waste. It makes it more difficult too. Most of the puzzles make sense. But, there are a couple that will have you scrunching up your face at their illogical nature.

The game itself is a confusing mixture of fast and slow moving gameplay. The move from MI6 headquarters to the street outside the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute (KWI) passes by as a line on a map, whilst moving around inside the buildings is fraught with difficulty as you might expect. I can't help feeling that it might have provided a little more continuity of revelation if travel between locations were also part of the game – maybe some sort of map puzzle

Perhaps the game feels slow in portions due to the animated transition cutscenes. For example, if you move from one node to the next, you may have to wait for John, the professor, to walk to the current location. And, let me tell you, he's not built for speed. At times, it can be a bit torturous. You want to give him a kick in the bum to move him along. It happens at other times as well. These types of transitions could have been handles with a fade. It felt like it was done that way to add length to the game.

On the flip side, there are quite a few little stealthy puzzles to deal with -- Stealth in the way of ducking into shadowy areas to avoid being seen. One such puzzle involves getting from one end of a library/archive room to the other without being seen by 2 guards

patrolling. To do this, you need to turn on the lights in one section and immediately turn off the lights in another section. Ann will take the path through the unlit sections. There can't be 2 lights turned off at the same time. Timing is of the essence here. You need to keep an eye on the movements of the guards, proceed at the correct time and get the correct lights off and on. If they see you, you're caught. No worries about any detrimental outcomes. The game will immediately re-start where you left off.

The storyline is not, in itself, particularly unbelievable, though some of the dialogue would have benefited from some decent inflection... and maybe even a better script writer... Having said that, it is amusing, (in a Mr Cholmondley-Warner kind of way) rather than annoying and really doesn't detract from the game play. The professor, in particular, really takes his time speaking. Sometimes you'll wish he'd just spit it out already. In each location, you'll solve puzzles to get to some vital piece of information which will lead you to your next location and advance the story.

Don't worry about going it alone. You will have trusty agents Ann and Peter to accompany you. But, don't expect them to help out too much. They pretty much leave all the hard stuff to you. It seems kind of odd to put a mere professor up to things that a skilled professional would handle, but, it wouldn't be much of a game for you if the agents did it all themselves. Unless, of course, you get to play as each of them during the game. That would've been fun. There are a couple of other characters throughout the game that you'll get brief interaction with.

All of the locations are quite dark. You'll spend a lot of time sneaking around in the dark. But, each location is nicely

detailed, but perhaps a little generic to the genre. In one of the rooms, the floor is highly waxed and you can see yourself and everyone else in the reflection. Nice touches with the use of shadows and streaming sunlight through the darkness.

All in all I wasn't that impressed. I enjoyed the game and technically it is extremely typical of Lighthouse – well put together, brilliant backgrounds, and quality sound; but there was just something about the way it was put together that made me think 'not quite'. Speeding up the some of the gameplay and transitions would have helped a lot.

If espionage thrillers are your scene, or if you are a WW2 aficionado then you will probably like this game a whole lot more than me. It's not a bad game, just not for this reviewer. If you are looking for something to while away the winter nights that are fast approaching then I'd say go and buy it – if nothing else it will keep your gaming/puzzling mind ticking over.



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 98SE, 2000, XP  
 1 Ghz Intel Pentium Processor  
 256 MB RAM  
 64 MB DirectX 9 video card  
 4x CD-ROM Drive  
 Hard Drive space of 2 GB  
 Direct X compatible sound card  
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

# Sherlock Holmes The Awakened

By Wendy Nellius

Frogwares just keeps them coming with the release of this third game in the Sherlock Holmes series. This is not my first foray into the Sherlock Holmes games. I did play *Mystery of the Mummy* quite a long time ago. I never did get to the *Silver Earring*. Not sure why. Nevertheless, Sherlock is back in this depressing and twisty little tale that delves into the occult with the inclusion of a bunch of wackos.....oops.....I mean devotees of Cthulhu. Cthulhu is a monstrous human/octopus/dragon abomination created by H.P. Lovecraft in his 1928 short story "The Call of Cthulhu"

[Note: The game does contain some scenes of blood and gore.]

## And so it begins....

Watson tosses and turns in bed. A horrifying nightmare plagues him. "Help me Holmes, I beg of you" he calls out. With a gasp, Watson bursts upright. What could this dark nightmare mean?

Ah, something a bit lighter. Lilted violin music plays as the camera takes us on a tour through the streets of London. Oddly, it's a very pristine London, but no matter. We see Watson on his way to the home of the Great Detective Sherlock Holmes. As Watson and Holmes have a morning chat, Holmes is distracted. He's bored. There hasn't been a case for him to work on in quite a while. Watson assures Holmes that this can't possibly last long. Something is bound to happen that will allow him to exercise his mental prowess again soon.

It doesn't take very long. A certain Captain Stenwick is worked up into a twitter. It seems his manservant, Baowpa, has gone missing, although Captain Stenwick's concern is more for himself than his servant. However, it seems that there have been other recent cases of immigrants from impoverished families disappearing,



This, of course, is much more interesting to Holmes than just the standard runaway. Perhaps there is more here than meets the eye. The trail begins here and takes Holmes on a journey to Switzerland, New Orleans (USA) and Scotland. This isn't any ordinary missing person case. Delving deeply, the trail will ultimately point to a dangerous evil entity. How deep is the madness? It will be up to Holmes to dig up clues, question everyone and underestimate nothing in order to solve this mystery.

I chose to download the game directly from Frogwares. Now, usually I prefer to have a pretty little box on the shelf but I made an exception this time. Besides, the shipping time was too long and I can be quite impatient in that respect. I don't recommend the download option unless you have high speed internet. The game comes in 4 downloadable sections. The first one is the installer and loads in a matter of seconds (quite deceptive). The next 3 sections take an extensive amount of time to download. Plan to walk away for a while. The 2<sup>nd</sup> download alone is 650 MB. You are given a serial number that can be used only 3 times. After that, you have to contact customer service for additional serial numbers. Some would consider this to be a severe downside. But, everyone is different. The choice is yours.

The load time has been masked with a very interesting technique. It is a fade-in starting from the original pencil drawing, then the first stage of color and finally the actual scene. It was actually a cool way to do it.

**Developer:** [Frogwares](#)  
**Publisher:** [Focus Home](#)  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** Feb 2007



**“The load time has been masked with a very interesting technique.....”.**

You have the option of using the mouse to control game play, keyboard controls or a combination of both. I've got to be honest here. I looked at the keyboard controls and realized I would never remember half of them: E for dialogues, N for Reports. Forget it. I used the mouse for most of the game. It takes a while to get used to, but it worked better for me in the end. I also used the arrow keys (instead of the WSAD) to back away from locations. It was a pain to accomplish this with the mouse. But, this is purely a personal preference. The keyboard controls can be configured to use the keys you prefer. I'd rather just get to playing.

Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened is a 1<sup>st</sup>-person adventure/mystery, although you will get to see plenty of Holmes as a lot of the longer conversations take place in the cut scenes.

The entire game is fully rendered in 3D which is certainly an undertaking in itself. This is a game that would most certainly fall into the “eye candy” category - you will want to take time and check everything out. The 360° view is not my favorite. Let me be clear. I'm not downing the 360° view. I fully comprehend the beauty of it and all the extra work it must take to have every crevice of the entire gaming environment detailed to the hilt. It's just that I always feel like I should have taken a motion sickness pill beforehand.

In London, you'll get a chance to visit the port. A confusing maze of warehouses awaits you there. You'll have a great time trying to find hotspots there. Once you get past London, the locations become even more fascinating. The mental hospital in Switzerland paints a sad existence. Of course, what are the chances of finding a blissful one? The hallways are dark and the

doors are formidable. You will be able to talk to some of the patients and see inside their depressing cells. There will be some stealth involved here. Getting caught means you have to start over.

In New Orleans, the port comes complete with a floating warehouse. Isn't that special? It's interesting to see the difference between the rich and poor sections of town. Both are represented and you will be searching both. It is also when a thief steals your bags. This is a tour you will not soon forget. This isn't just running. You'll need to solve a couple of puzzles along the way. Fortunately, it is impossible to lose sight of the thief. You'll especially love searching through the swamp in a boat...in the dark.

A map is provided which will allow you to transport to other locations easily. However, you can only go to locations as the storyline allows. You also cannot leave locations until you have found everything you are supposed to find. I have to admit it was fun running through

all the various 3D locations (as long as I didn't spin around too much). Double clicking the mouse and then holding the left mouse button down will cause Holmes to run. And, I must say that this is a decent running speed. It's tricky to get the hang of at first and in the beginning I hit walls, people, and everything in between. But, once you have it down, the way the environment reacts as you run down a street is almost like being there. Granted, I haven't actually performed the act of running since high school. I prefer to run only when chased. But, this is what I imagine running looks like. One problem encountered while working with Watson is that he always seems to be right in your way with that stupid “What do you make of this Holmes?” A great deal of time was spent yelling at Watson, “I don't make anything out of it and get out of my way already!” Really! How can I run if he's continuously glued to my back pocket?? Another downer was trying to get Holmes up the staircase in the mental hospital basement. It took me around 10 tries and I eventually managed it by running





so close to the wall that I couldn't see where I was going.

This brings us to the first frustration factor in the game. The 3D environment is great, but there's a whole lot of environment to search for hotspots. The problem is that you have to be virtually on top of them in order to locate them. Sometimes you're too close, sometimes not close enough. And,

since you can't leave until you find them all, it can make you want to scream. The 2<sup>nd</sup> frustration point comes when investigating clues. The game forces you to find clues in a specific order. You see obvious footprints. Ooh, a clue! You want to look at footprints. You can't. Not until you've done other things first. And, you have no idea what you're supposed to find first. This happens many times throughout the game. You may want to investigate a specific location that Holmes just commented on as being important. But, you can't. Again...same situation. The final stinker in the frustration category was getting completely stuck near the end. I had neglected to pick up an item that would be necessary to make a torch. Once I passed that point and actually needed the torch, I was unable to return to that area. So, ultimately I had to load a previous save and replay again. Not Happy!!

With the exception of getting stuck, the puzzles are wonderfully varied and flow with the storyline. There is a nice mixture of inventory and logic puzzles (heavier on the inventory). You'll get to decipher codes and symbols, pick locks, make bombs, create diversions, perform chemical analysis and locate hidden rooms just to name a few. The inventory screen can be accessed with a right click of the mouse at any time. Combining items can be done in one screen with a click and drag. Along with items and documents collected throughout the game, Holmes also keeps track of all conversations. These conversations are extremely important and will ultimately be scrutinized every time you get the TEST. Yes, a test. At random points in the game, Holmes will ask you a question. The answer must be typed in and the game will not progress until you get it right. All I'm going to say is that when it came to these questions, someone must have hit me with the "dumb" stick. I wish you all better luck.

The characters' faces as well as the era appropriate clothing are quite impressive. How about the bodies? While some of the body movements seem to be okay, for others: open the little red curtains and let the puppet show begin. But, this really doesn't detract from the game too much. You'll just wish it was a little better, but still be happy overall.

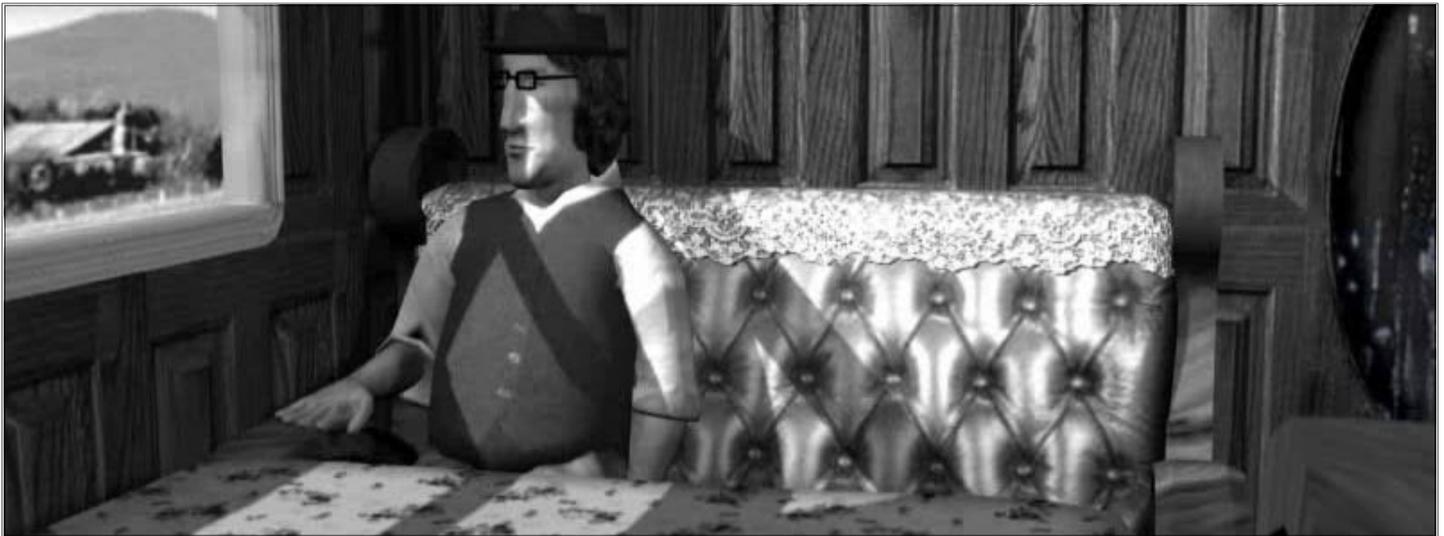
Having said that, one thing did stick out in the opening scene when Watson is having his nightmare. That has to be the most doggone ugliest set of feet I have ever seen. Can we get Watson some slippers?

Vocally, high marks should be given. The voice acting was truly enjoyable. Sherlock sounds sufficiently snooty without being overbearing. Watson and the rest of the characters were also voiced well. However, the paperboy did sound like a paper "man". There is a lot of conversation, but the majority of it is completed through animated cut scenes. So, you won't have a lot of options in this respect.

The story takes a lot of twists and turns with a whole lot of information thrown in. I didn't completely understand all of what was going on, but Holmes' summary at the end did clear up a lot. Overall, I found myself enjoying the game. More flexibility in finding clues and a better interface for finding those hotspots would have garnered this game a higher score. But, this is still a beautiful game (the 3D undertaking was impressive) that is worthy of purchase and your time. Just make sure your computer is up to the task first.



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 2000, XP  
 Pentium III 1.3 GHz or Higher  
 512 MB RAM  
 64 MB Video DirectX 9 compatible  
 DirectX 9 compatible sound card  
 4X DVD Rom/0 if Downloaded  
 Hard Drive space of 3GB  
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers



## Carte Blanche Episode I: For a Fistful of Teeth

By Ugur Sener

Edgar sat in the compartment alone, deep in thought as the train drew closer to Montreal. Why had his parents been so adamant about him moving to the big city? Why couldn't he remain in his familiar and comfortable hometown? He had just graduated from college. He was naïve and inexperienced. What kind of work could he hope to find? Was he going to make it in Montreal?

Upon arriving at the city, Edgar made his way to his uncle's apartment. It had a single room. Edgar was going to have to share a community bathroom with the other tenants. The creepy landlady seemed to have made a habit of spying on the residents. But it was still a place to stay. It would have to do for now.



Sitting on his bed, Edgar flipped through the pages of the newspaper. A curious employment ad caught his attention. The advertisers were looking for someone that had a knack for research. Knowledge of weaponry was considered a plus. Having been a student of history, Edgar considered himself to be more than qualified for the job. The fact that he had no idea what he would actually be doing was just a minor detail.

A quick phone call got Edgar an interview. By the time he understood that the position was for a private investigator, Edgar was already hired. Evidently, as far as his new employer Gaspard Lemaitre was concerned, lack of experience and training was of no significance. After the briefest introduction to the world of private investigation, Edgar was given his first assignments.

Edgar had not exactly aspired to become a detective his entire life. Being a private investigator had not been his dream job as he studied Humanities in college. His tiny desk and minimal income were not exactly glamorous. Nevertheless, this was a beginning...

Carte Blanche: For a Fistful of Teeth is the first episode of an adventure game series from Absurdus. True to the development company's name, For a Fistful

of Teeth is an off-the-wall adventure game that delivers a series of obscenities while attempting to invoke a film noir atmosphere. The game does have a series of problems and its style will not appeal to all gamers, but if you are looking for a somewhat unusual adventure gaming experience, Carte Blanche certainly delivers.

The game begins as Edgar arrives in Montreal and finds a job as a private investigator. As he does not have any experience in detective work, Edgar will initially be assigned a couple of seemingly simple cases to investigate. However, this being a video game and knowing that players having a tendency to get bored while performing mundane

**Developer:** [Absurdus](#)  
**Publisher:** [G2 Games](#)  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** Dec 2006

tasks, events will quickly escalate. Edgar will find himself responsible for a lot more than what he originally anticipates.

The storyline will not exactly keep you on the edge of your seat or give you an adrenaline rush. The game does not weave an intricate plot that will keep you guessing until you reach the end of the episode. However, the storyline does have a few twists and turns, stepping outside the initial premise. More importantly, the first episode drops hints about the bigger plot and sets the scene for the rest of the series. It may be interesting to discover where Edgar's journey will lead him as future episodes are released.

One of the key elements that set Carte Blanche apart from many other adventure games is the overall atmosphere. While it has a humorous theme, For a Fistful of Teeth is not your average comedy adventure. Many of the situations are purposefully over the top. The dialogue often feels strange and there is something odd about each character you encounter. Throw in black and white graphics and put it all against the backdrop of a corrupt city in the 1920's and you have one weird game.

To a certain extent, For a Fistful of Teeth manages to make the atmosphere and the setting work, delivering a few humorous moments. But the oddness of the events and the characters can also leave you confused and unable to relate to what is happening in the game. It is hard to appreciate some of the jokes as they just don't seem to hit the right tone. At times the game feels like an inside joke among the development team that players may never fully comprehend.



It doesn't help matters that the dialogue is not always written in the most effective format. Some of the interaction feels awkward beyond the intentional feeling of absurdity the developers tried to create. The voice acting also seems to miss the mark on many occasions, diminishing the believability of the characters.

In addition to its unusual tone and atmosphere, Carte Blanche attempts to distinguish itself by incorporating a skill system into the game. As you proceed through the adventure, Edgar will acquire and develop skills based on key conversations and events. For instance, one of his employer's friends will introduce Edgar to the art of the scam. He will also have a chance to learn the basics of ventriloquism. Once Edgar acquires a skill, he will have various opportunities to practice it on different characters or objects. Each time you successfully use a skill, Edgar's proficiency will improve. As such, it is possible for Edgar to become quite adept at using some of his newly acquired talents.

It can seem as though the skills intro

duce an unnecessary level of complexity to the game. To a certain extent, the developers have managed to keep things simple enough where this feature is enjoyable. However, repeatedly practicing the same skills on different characters for no apparent reason does become tedious. The comical results of Edgar's attempts aren't always enough to make up for this tedium. Fortunately, the proficiency level required to overcome many of Edgar's challenges should not be difficult to attain, often coming naturally through interactions during the regular course of the storyline.

Despite some problems, the skill system adds a welcome level of depth to Carte Blanche. Trying to improve Edgar's talents can even become something of a fun side-quest. All your hard work in teaching Edgar some new tricks will not be wasted either. Once you complete the game, it is possible to make a save file that can transfer your ratings to future episodes of the game.

Players interact with the game primarily through the mouse. Depending on the





scene you are viewing, For a Fistful of Teeth alternates between first and third person camera. Labels describing objects of interest appear as you drag the mouse over them. A left click on the object brings up a context-sensitive menu listing all the possible actions Edgar can attempt. A left click on the menu items instructs Edgar to perform the indicated action.

A right click brings up a screen resembling a file folder. This view is used for saving and loading the game or taking a look at the items in Edgar's inventory. Unlike many other adventure games, players do not have the option to select items from inventory and attempt to use them on other objects. Instead, items appear as possible actions Edgar can perform when you click on the appropriate objects in the environment. This prevents players from resorting to using every single item on every object when they are feeling stuck.

Edgar's investigation takes him to various locations throughout Montreal. Each time you leave a place, a map of the city will be displayed. All the available places Edgar can visit are displayed on this map. A single click takes Edgar to his destination. For the most part, individual locations are small, often consisting of a single room. While it may feel like you are not thoroughly exploring each of the available locations, this structure does make it easy to return to each site and look for items of interest you may have missed on your first visit.

Much of the progression of your investigation will be based on conversations

with the game's characters. There are a relatively limited number of inventory items to be found. The challenge often comes from finding the right people to give you the bit of information that will unlock a new location. Edgar will also find himself in need of gaining entry to different buildings or trying to pry information out of certain characters. During a significant portion of the game, it should be relatively clear what Edgar needs to do in order to proceed. You will not find mind-bending challenges that will stump you for days. Carte Blanche keeps the puzzles very simple. Experienced adventurers should breeze through the game.

However, there are several times in the adventure where it is not all that clear what you are supposed to do next. Without so much of a hint of which character might provide some guidance, you are left to wander around the city, hoping to eventually stumble onto something that will advance the plot. Thankfully, this does not happen too many times and does not detract significantly from the experience.

The first episode of Carte Blanche certainly has some flaws. The atmosphere is unusual, characters are downright weird, and conversations are strange. But the game does not always maintain a balance between its supposed absurdity and humorous tone, leaving players distanced and confused. It is hard to figure out what you are supposed to be doing from time to time. The conversations are not always structured well and the voice acting leaves something to be desired.

Yet Carte Blanche deserves credit for attempting something original. The skill system brings some depth and makes for a number of interesting situations. There is promise of an intriguing greater plot that will hopefully unfold in future episodes. Its style and atmosphere will not appeal to the tastes of every gamer. But if you are looking for something that is a little different from your average adventure game, For a Fistful of Teeth does have a few things to offer. If the developers manage to improve upon significantly weak elements of the first episode, the series can still be quite successful.



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 98S, 2000, XP  
 900 MHz Processor  
 256 MB RAM  
 DirectX 9  
 CD-ROM Drive  
 Hard Drive space of 400 MB  
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

# Aura: Fate of Ages

By La Primavera

## Clueless is the word

*Aura: Fate of the Ages* is the first game from Canadian-based developer Streko-Graphics. This point-and-click game, played from the first-person perspective, has beautiful graphics, seamless integration of cut scenes, and a few interesting puzzles. But what strikes me most about this game is the unfortunate mismatch of various game components, which renders the whole game into a series of disjointed scenes and keeps you forever clueless and disengaged.

## Game starts in a low gear, never shifts

Unbeknownst to us, the ignorant and lowly masses, the universe is guarded by the secret cadre of wise men (apparently no women) who call themselves the Keepers. The Keepers train the next generation so that their hold on the universe will continue. You are Umang, the best and brightest student of Arakon, who sends you to Ademika to continue your studies with the master Grifit. However, something seems to have gone amiss, and when you arrive at the house in Ademika the master is not there. You find a cryptic note from him telling you to prepare the ship and the navigation map (without telling you how). You are left alone there, with a journal with a few pages of drawings of some elaborate machinery.

You look around in the house and you find some gadgets whose purpose is not evident just by looking at them. Step outside, and you can discern several large structures under the night sky that clearly need some type of activation. NOW WHAT? You are left alone in this place with no master to guide you, and you are not sure what you are supposed to do. So far not so exciting. I am starting to regret my purchase. At this juncture, a good adventure game offers you some kind of motivation to solve puzzles



and get you going on their "adventure". It could be in the form of a villain appearing out of nowhere, or an explosion outside that precipitates some event, or a manuscript that prompts you to explore hitherto hidden places. None of that is offered in *Aura*. The pace of the game is very pedestrian. The game starts in a low gear, and never goes into a higher gear. There is no compelling reason within the game for you to proceed.

Near the end of the Ademika non-adventure, your mission is sort of defined. You are to travel to other worlds and collect certain rings and tetrahedrons - whatever those are - so that they don't fall into the enemy's hand. Despite the threat from which you are supposed to be fleeing, the game does not pick up the pace there. The story never quite develops beyond this point, and you soon forget why you are doing what you are doing.

## What's with the rings and tetrahedrons?

What holds the game together is supposed to be the quest for the sacred rings and the tetrahedrons held by the elders. "Great power and immortality await those who possess the sacred rings." So says the box that contains the game CDs. Am I playing *The Lord of the Rings*? The game manual also says "...the elders of the clan are able to travel to parallel worlds and even create new worlds with the help of these rings..." Or maybe I am playing *Myst* or *Uru*? Oh and what is this tetrahedron?

What's so special about it? It is never explained in the game. Since the game abandons any effort to further develop the story or the character after the initial world, you don't fully understand what these rings and tetrahedrons are about, and what your role is in trying to collect them.

Besides, when you hear "rings", don't you picture a ring that you put on your finger? That's what I did, but the "ring" in this game turned out to be more like a puzzle piece made of concentric metal loops, a rather clumsy looking object that you can't possibly carry close to your body (definitely not on your finger). Not just the rings, but many of the inventory items simply do not look like what they say they are. For example in Ademika, you will pick up a "generator", but it looks like a cigar with bumps along the outer surface. You know it is a "generator" because the screen tells you it is a generator when it magically floats into your inventory bar. Ditto for the

**Developer:** [Streko-Graphics](#)  
**Publisher:** [Adventure Company](#)  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** June 2004



“navigation map”. It is not a map per se, but it is a rigid-looking, square tablet with destinations programmed in. Things are not what you think they are, and that adds to the overall befuddled feeling you get throughout the game.

**Beautiful but disjointed worlds**

Thanks to the very linear nature of the game, the airship takes you from Ademika to Dragast with snow-peaked mountains, then to Na-Tieux. You have no choice in the matter. In Na-Tieux, there's a room with four mirrors from which you can now embark on a pseudo-nonlinear (but buggy) exploration of four different worlds – Astrology World where you meet the Astrologer, Spirit World where you meet the Spirit Woman and her underling, Children's World where you meet ungrateful children (or you could say Crystal Cave World where you find a cave with crystals), and Magical World where you wonder what's magical about this world. After solving puzzles in these worlds, you get to go to your final destination, Island of Unity.

I haven't a clue why, after a linear travel through Ademika and Dragast, we suddenly get this mirror room where you are required to go to four worlds to solve puzzles. I find no compelling reason why the setup of the worlds needs to change so drastically in the mid-game as it does in this game. The Island of Unity doesn't make sense either. What kind of unity is it? Judging from the name, it is perhaps to unite the previous four worlds – Astrology, Spirit, Children (or Crystal), and Magic. Or is it supposed to unite the mechanistic worlds of Ademika and Dragast with the esoteric

worlds of Na-Tieux? That makes more sense, but it is such a dated idea and such a cliché you can only shake your head and laugh.

What's more, as I just mentioned above, the journey in Na-Tieux is “pseudo-non-linear”. If you go to the Spirit World first, for example, certain important events are never triggered. It turns out that to receive your tasks in these worlds you have to go to the Astrology World first. However, after the Astrology World and the Spirit World, you are left on your own. The Astrologer doesn't bother to tell you what you're expected to do in the Children's World and the Magical World. Not even a hint.

The game has some superb, dazzling graphics to illustrate these worlds. My favorite is a sparkling starry sky as you climb up the stairs in the Astrology World, a subset of Na-Tieux. (I had the screen capture for the wallpaper of my computer for a while.) However, you get this feeling of not really being immersed in any of the worlds. The biggest reason is that you don't know what you are supposed to do in these worlds. You are not sure why you are there or what you



are doing. The worlds are full of strange machines and contraptions and you cannot even guess what they are. You are an insecure visitor. You are there just to solve puzzles and collect certain objects without fully grasping why. (It could be done equally in underground dungeons for all I care.) The worlds are beautiful to look at, but that's about the extent of your interest.

**Brightest but clueless protagonist and Keepers bored to death**

You will be very disappointed playing the character Umang. He is supposed to be the best and the brightest, but in the master's house in Ademika he is totally clueless as

to what to do and what to expect. That's not surprising in itself, because you, playing Umang, are clueless. When you see Umang in a cut scene, he looks like a deer in a headlight. Unfortunately, this cluelessness just continues throughout the game. In every world that you (Umang) visit, you only have a vague idea, if any at all, about what the world is about, and what you are supposed to do and with what. Nothing propels you or compels you to do certain things. You just bumble along.

You will be further disappointed when you hear Umang speak. It's a rather silly story, but the characters in the game don't know that and they have to play their parts. Umang, however, speaks with zero gravitas, as if the clan's crisis and his mission and everything else are no bigger deal than going to a fast-food restaurant to order a burger.

And these Keepers. The wise masters that Umang encounters in different



worlds all talk as if they were over-worked employees at a municipal office. "No, no. You used the wrong application form. Can't help you. Next!" As Umang, you don't learn anything from them, as they are busy doing whatever paper-shuffling they do. The person you encounter first in Dragast is so absorbed in his jigsaw puzzle, all he cares about is whether you can bring him the missing pieces. Where is a sense of urgency? Isn't the clan of the Keepers facing the gravest crisis of its existence?

**Puzzles without context and logic**

Puzzles in this game are hard, not because they require trigonometry or calculation in the base-4 number system (trust me, such a game exists, and I have played it), but the puzzles are given without any context to let you figure out how you may approach them in order to solve them.

Let me give you one example. In the Astrology World, the Astrologer tells you he can help put together the Star Dust if you find the Grain of Life in the Spirit World. So you find the Grain of Life and go back to the Astrologer. Now he tells you to clean the Grain. You are expected to somehow know how to clean it. There is no use trying to ask the Astrologer because he is busy (i.e. he is not "clickable"). There is absolutely no way you know how to solve the puzzle without further information. The method to clean the grain turns out to be so foreign and so totally devoid of any semblance of logic, all you can do is to just watch how it happens and scratch your head. You attempt to clean it simply because you are told to do it.

What is more puzzling to me in this particular puzzle is why the Grain becomes the Star Dust. It doesn't make any sense. The rest of the puzzles in the game are pretty much like this example. The developer's logic and mine were each in a separate parallel universe, and the two never met throughout the game.

**Cause and effect don't match**

This is particularly true with the puzzles in the initial world of Ademika. You are presented with puzzles that involve complicated-looking machines. You are to supply the missing parts or codes. In most cases you can't tell what the machine is supposed to do just by looking at it. So-called hints in the journal are more hindrance and frustration than help, because you can't figure them out. You somehow come up with the correct

code combination and the elaborate machine starts to do what it is supposed to do. However, the input doesn't seem to match the output. For such a miniscule input (like inserting the key or programming the code), the result is often a gigantic and elaborate operation of a large machine the purpose of which you have no idea.

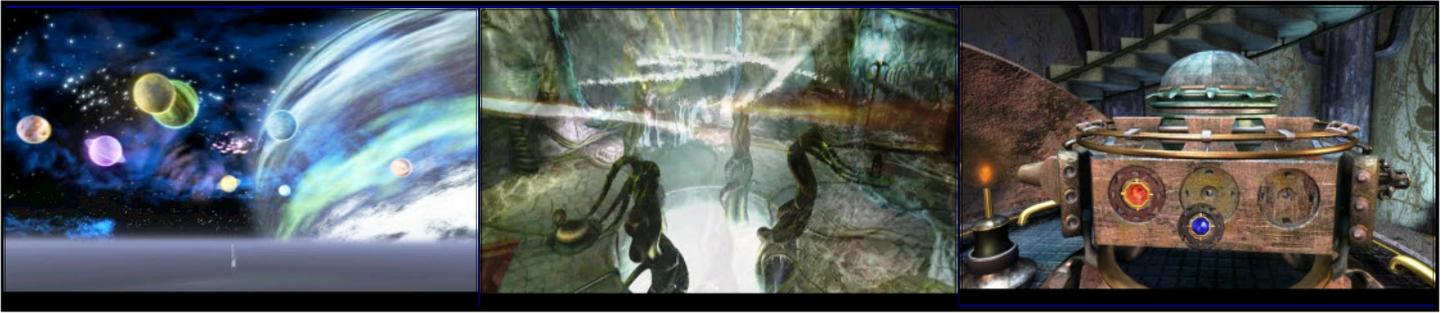
The other extreme is the Children's World. Here, there is no clue of what your goal is. You pick up certain items and solve puzzles made almost impossible by lack of information, so that the children can hear the bird sing. After all that trouble, do you get thanks from the children? NO. These two ungrateful brats who live in a crystal cave ignore you and continue to stare into the horizon. Without any feedback as to whether I did things right, I went back into the cave to see if there was anything I missed. Well, there wasn't. Again, after consulting several walkthroughs, these children are ungrateful and unresponsive like that.

**Game mechanics**

The game comes on 3 CDs and installs completely on the hard disk, although you need to have CD 1 in your CD-ROM drive to play and save the game.

Navigation is easy. You have an almost 360-degree freedom of view to examine your environment, but you can only move in a pre-determined path, one step (click) at a time. Right clicking the mouse gives you access to the inventory bar. At the right end of the inventory bar you have a journal, which will shim





mer when a new hint is stored in the course of the game. (But as I have said elsewhere, this journal was more hindrance and frustration than help.) The game's menu is accessible by hitting the Esc key, and has options for sound control and subtitles. Hitting the space bar will end the cut scenes.

Throughout the game, the hot spots are not very accurately defined. When you are walking on a path, for example, a clickable spot to go forward on that path does not often appear straight ahead. It appears slightly to the left or right of the path. The hot spots for people you are supposed to interact with don't appear unless you are at a particular angle to these people. In Na-Tiexu for example, even if you see the Spirit Woman's assistant right in front of you, you have to take a step further forward and turn left to speak to her. In order to talk to the Astrologer you have to go around to his right side.

### Bugs!

The game, at least on my computer, is very unstable. It often decides to quit on its own without any warning. This happened to me several times earlier in the game, and each time I was forced to start from the beginning as there was no saved file. I almost quit the game right there.

It could just be my copy (which I bought brand-new), but I also encountered serious bugs toward the end of the game, in the mirror room of Na-Tiexu. When I didn't go to the world closest to the entrance door, the whole game crashed, and it crashed my computer. After I somehow managed to go through all four worlds and was ready to open the back door one last time, to my sheer frustration the hot spot on the back door completely disappeared! I did all that

was necessary and now this! I saved the game there anyway, and abandoned the game for a few days. To my surprise, when I started the game again from the saved file, the hot spot miraculously re-appeared. After consulting several walkthrough sites, the problem seems to be a common one.

### What's with the name?

Forgive me for being very picky, but I have lived in Asia (east, south, south-east) long enough to know that Umang is an Indian name. I remember a small island resort in Indonesia also named Umang. And the world of Na-Tiexu. From the very spelling of the name, it feels oriental – south-east Asian, or Chinese. It is possible that adventure game developers have run out of names to put to their characters and their worlds, but still we expect the game worlds to be named differently from what is readily recognizable in our world, and to be inhabited by people with names we don't associate with our own.

### Can't shake off this déjà vu feeling...

The game sadly belongs to the "stunning graphics but what else?" genre of adventure games that often come out of Eastern Europe. So much so that as I was playing the game I kept thinking about another, totally forgettable game with great graphics – Sentinel: Descendants in Time from a Polish developer, Detalion (the game review is available from our site). The flimsy story, which feels like The Lord of the Rings and Myst/Uru combined in a haphazard way, never develops into anything interesting. I go from world to world, collecting objects I don't recognize. I don't learn anything about the world I am exploring, and nothing I do makes any impact on

the world. What the hell am I doing? This is no adventure. (I even said the same thing in the review of Sentinel!)

In the end, I couldn't care less if there was a rebellion by a disgruntled Keeper. If there was, I'd say good for him. Rebellion and destruction seem so much better than maintaining their beautiful but disengaging worlds. If you want an adventure, don't waste your time on this one. With annoying technical problems (as described above) I cannot recommend this game. The sequel has just been released (March 2007), but from what I've heard so far, don't hold your breath; only the die-hard puzzle fans need to apply. My final score is 35, the only point-getters being decent graphics and some good cutscenes.

Oh how I long for a good adventure game these days... I think I will now go play Uru again and see if my tree has grown taller...



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 98SE/ME/2000/XP  
 Pentium III 800 MHz or Higher  
 64 MB RAM (128 Recommended)  
 2 GB HD Free Space (2.5 GB Rec)  
 32 MB Video DirectX 8 compatible  
 DirectX 8 compatible sound card  
 16X DVD Rom (24x Rec)  
 Hard Drive space of 3GB  
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers

# Nancy Drew: Ghost Dogs of Moon Lake

By Hlalex

The game begins as Nancy receives a desperate call for help from her friend Sally. No details of what the problem is, just to come as quickly as possible. So, off Nancy goes to visit her friend Sally McDonald's house out at Moon Lake. Sally just recently bought the house which belonged to an old Gangster Mickey Malone. He built the house back in the 20s as his country getaway and lived there most of his life with his dogs. The house is in need of major "fixing up" as Sally calls it.

When Nancy arrives things seem to start happening. The old Maple tree next to the road falls and blocks her in so that Nancy can't leave. Sally leaves Nancy a note on the door announcing that she had left the area. Of course her friends always keep leaving before Nancy arrives. As Nancy settles in, Sally calls Nancy and begs her to leave the house and go home. It turns out that Sally is very afraid of the ghost dogs. She's afraid that the ghost dogs will hurt Nancy. What dogs? As expected, Nancy isn't afraid of the Ghost Dogs and plans to stay. She can't leave anyway. Remember, the fallen tree blocks her car. Are the ghostly dogs true or are

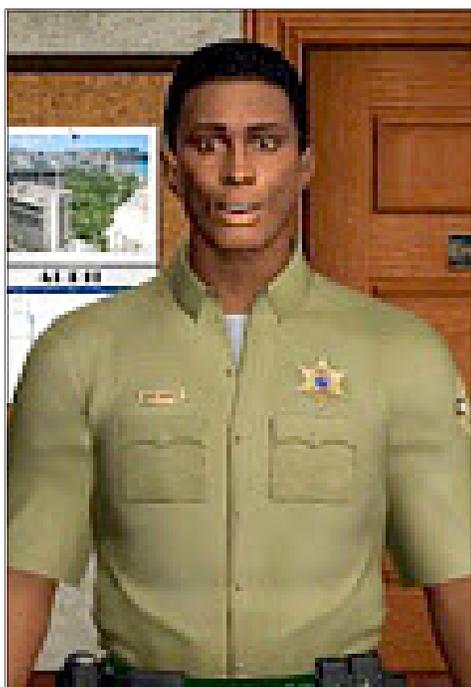


they flesh and blood? Why are they after Sally and you?

You will meet some very interesting and strange people along the way. There is Jeff Akers, the Park Ranger, who is very suspicious. Then there is Red Knott. He is a bird watcher who has some strange ideas. He belongs to a bird club and wants you to get him some pictures. Red would rather Nancy leave, as he doesn't seem to care for people very much. Then there is the lady at the store "Em's Emporium". Her name is Emily Griffen and she's more than happy to help Nancy out, but can't figure out why Sally would ask Nancy to come stay at that old house or why Sally would stay there herself.

are tasks to be completed. The old house is indeed in need of repairs. Fixing the house will involve rummaging through the junk outside and searching through cupboards inside in order to perform makeshift repairs. Notes found in various locations provide important clues so it is important to not to miss any of them.

Nothing is ever free. Nancy will do a lot of running back and forth. It seems that everyone wants something from Nancy. Red wants you take some pictures of the birds for him in payment for a spark plug and he needs items picked up from



Nancy's main mode of transportation is Sally's boat. You'll use it to get to around the lake, to Em's Emporium and the Ranger Station. Nancy also gets to explore the area around the house using her own two feet. Navigation is classic Nancy Drew. Clearly marked arrows provide direction. A magnifying glass will show you which items/areas can be further examined.

As with all Nancy Drew games, there

**Developer:** Her Interactive  
**Publisher:** Her Interactive  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** Nov 2002



Em's Emporium. Nancy can't seem to get the pictures until she has a camouflage suit. When you get to Em's Emporium, Emily is in need of some bugs to sell for bait, so now you need to get some bugs before she will give you the camouflage suit.. Jeff, the park ranger, won't give you a water testing kit until you put some files in order for him. But,

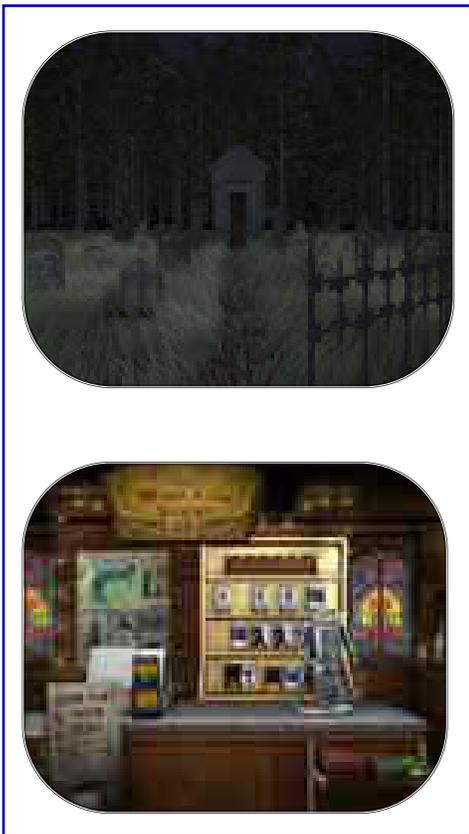
there is some pay-off to completing all the trades. People tend to share more information. For example, you'll get to read all the Ranger's files after you put them in order. They are very interesting and can give you a lot of information about the story and the game.

There is a forest maze that is a little hard to get around in. The maze is corner, corner, corner, and no steps in between. You do have access to a map (once you find it) which will help you. Birds' sing and bugs makes noises also. Noises play importance in completing some of your tasks. At the top of the forest maze is a cemetery that you will visit several times. The gangster Mickey Malone is buried in there along with his dogs. Puzzles are everywhere including on one of the head stones.

The game can be played in either Junior or Senior Detective modes. Junior mode is a bit easier and allows more phone hints from Nancy's friends, Bess and George. There are 2 points in the game that will require quick reactions to avoid death. However, a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance option allows you to keep trying until you get it right.

This point and click adventure is game number 7 for Her Interactive. Released in 2002, it is much better than the other 6 were as far as graphics go for the time period. Voice acting was better than

average, again for this time period. The game has a good story and is very interesting and exciting. The inventory puzzles work well with no illogical usage. I feel the older Her Interactive games are more aimed at all age groups rather than just the younger age group. I think if you like Adventure games then this one is very worthwhile to play. I for one have enjoyed it very much. I gave this game a B. It has a few problems, but it is a decent game.



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 95,98, ME, XP  
 Pentium 166 Mhz Processor  
 16 MB RAM  
 150 MB Hard Disk Space  
 16-bit DirectX 7  
 CD-ROM Drive  
 Video Card  
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers



# Myst

By Thaumaturge

The book lands before you in the starry darkness, hitting with a brief flare of soft, jagged blue, followed by a glow that highlights it against the black. You take it, and find the weathered grey-brown cover faintly titled: "Myst". You open it, and find on one page what might seem at first to be a photograph. This image, however, is moving. The image begins depicting a view showing only ocean. It swoops over the water, up and around to look down from high above at an island: a place of great trees and strange constructions, and, on the near side, a pier. It is to this dock that the image dips, and, just above, rests, looking down the wooden platform from eye level.

You touch the image, and a strange sound surrounds you. The page is gone, but not the image – for you now stand on the pier that you saw in the book, at the edge of the island that it just revealed to you. From this pier your journey begins. Along the way you will discover other books. Some books are gateways to other worlds, yet you will always find yourself returning to this island at which the path began – the island called Myst...

As you wander Myst Island you will find that it holds a number of unusual structures and contrivances: an elevator cut into a giant tree, a tower that can be rotated to look out over certain important points on the island, and a planetarium that allows one to view parts of the night sky, to name a few. Perhaps most important, however, is the library. Most of the books there have been all but destroyed. However, a few remain. Some tell parts of the experiences of Atrus, the man behind the books that provide entry to these strange worlds (called "ages"), and his sons, SIRRUS and Achenar. The books offer hints about "the Art", which allows Atrus to introduce things into an age by writing it into that age's book. And yet he is an explorer in these worlds himself, not knowing what to expect, even less how an age might develop after his first encounter with it.

Two books are different, however. On either side of the library is a stand. Each holds a book, one red and one blue.

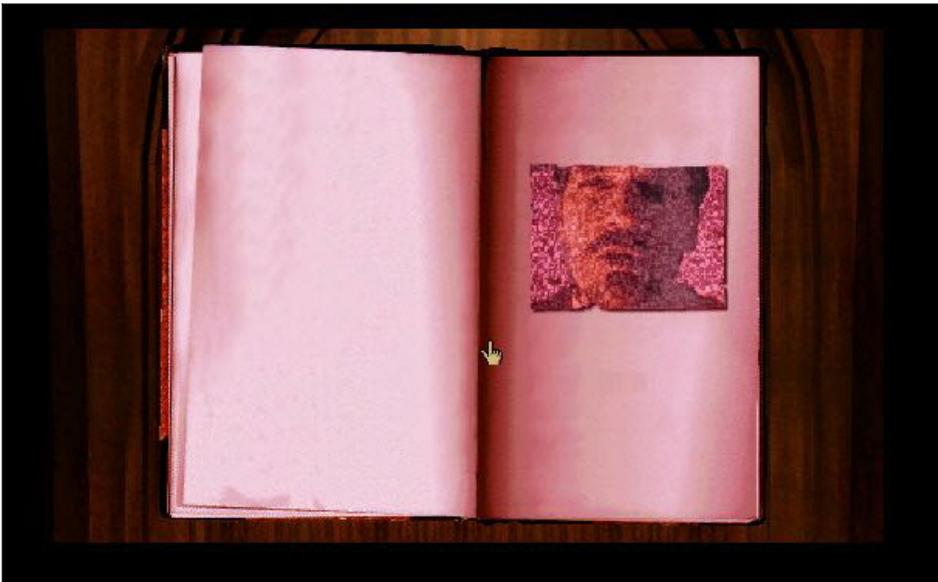
Like the book that brought you to Myst, each book contains a window to some other place. All that these windows reveal at first, however, is static and noise, similar to an un-tuned television. But beside each book is a page colored to match that book. Placing that page in its corresponding book will improve matters a little. The faces of two men will come through amidst the chaos, introduce themselves as SIRRUS and Achenar, and ask of you a task: retrieve more pages like the ones that you found beside their own books.

The more pages you bring to the brothers, the clearer their respective images will become, and the more they will reveal to you. Of perhaps greatest importance, each urges you to free him, but not his brother, mentioning the excesses or deviations of the other and the fate of their father at that brother's hand.

To find these pages you will travel to four ages whose book-doorways are to be found scattered about Myst. However, while the library is readily found, discovering these "linking books" is less easily done. A linking book is revealed once a set of puzzles has been solved. The puzzles in some way relate to the world which is contained in the book.

Exploration of the four main ages outside of Myst itself – and especially those areas of each age in which the brothers made their homes – should turn up the

**Developer:** [Cyan](#)  
**Publisher:** [Ubisoft/Red Orb](#)  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Adventure  
**Release Date:** 1996



missing pages to the brothers' books. It can also provide clues to the natures of Sirrus and Achenar, and perhaps inform the choice to come. Which brother is telling the truth? Which can be trusted?

Once a book has been fitted with each of the relevantly-colored pages taken from the scattered ages, the brother in that particular book will reveal the location of the final page to his book – and that of his brother. Upon reaching that place, you will be faced with a final choice. What have you learned on your travels? What course will you take? Choose wisely...

The journey of *Myst* is in some ways a lonely one. Most of the ages to be visited seem to be entirely unpopulated; the people mentioned in the journals are seemingly gone. At most some creature, either small or distant, is briefly seen, and seems to not touch your journey or tasks in any noticeable way. The brothers are the primary revelators of the story, whether by their own testimony or that of their writings and effects which can be found in the places that they occupied during those ages.

*Myst* is, ultimately, a story of characters, more than events. The discoveries made through the worlds of *Myst* describe the brothers and, to some extent, their father. Eventually, the final puzzle is one of trust and a test of how well the player has connected all the pieces of information. While the story and the characters are fairly simple, they are, I

would say, nevertheless well-wrought and well integrated into the player's journey.

One negative point that I found in the story presented in *Myst* comes at its finale. While it is appropriate, it perhaps lacks drama, and there are questions left unanswered. In addition, the final reward given to the player's character, although highly desirable, can feel a little disappointing to the player. This produces, to me at least, a conclusion that feels unsatisfying.

While the characters define the story, they are not the basis of the gameplay. Instead this is a game of puzzles. The linking books to the four main ages are each effectively "locked" away. Accessing each requires solving a puzzle before the book will be revealed, and these puzzles themselves require some task to be completed before the "lock" can be opened. In one case, for instance, the puzzle that reveals the book's location calls on information found elsewhere, and that, together with yet more information discovered in another location, is used to determine the appropriate combination for the book-revelatory puzzle. In each case the puzzles used to open the way to the linking books are in some way appropriate to the theme of that book's destination, or to the destination itself.

The ages themselves present further puzzles to be solved. In each case the exit is blocked somehow; a locked door

in one, elevators lacking power in another, flooded passages and no light in a third and a locked staircase in a fourth. In order to leave the age, and, in some cases, in order to fully explore the age's offerings, the player is tasked with discovering the workings of the machines contained in each age. With that knowledge, they can unlock them. None of the ages have a great many tasks to be completed, but each has something to offer, visually and in terms of mental challenge. They are all different as well. For example, the tasks might involve directing flow, targeting specific places, recognizing sounds, or finding a way to get a short chain to reach a distant object. As with the age of *Myst* itself, completing the tasks may furthermore call on information from elsewhere: a combination or code may be given somewhere else in the age (or even, potentially, another age), and acquiring *that* may in itself require the solution to some other puzzle.

Almost all of *Myst*'s puzzles are logic puzzles. In fact, the player has no conventional inventory, and there are very few cases in which an object is taken to be used elsewhere (the case of the brothers' book pages being such an exception). In the case of those pages, the player is allowed to carry only one





at a time. Taking another page returns the one already held to its former position.

While the puzzles are not very many, I at least would call them interesting. They are most often some type of locking mechanism, but they differ enough in form, distribution through the age and manner of solution from their peers that they should hold the interest of those inclined to such puzzles for the duration of the game.

There are, however, a few problems. Perhaps most annoying is that certain objects (specifically certain switches) are placed in dark areas, and do not stand out well from the shadows around them. Thus, in playing there were a few times in which I found myself stuck. I was not sure how to activate a machine when the problem lay in my simply not seeing a switch or button that lay in shadows.

Myst also has one maze puzzle. This, at least, is mitigated by the fact that an observant player might notice the clues available to determine the way out, and it is cleverly implemented. On the other hand, should one want to retrieve both pages from the age in question, there is no apparent way to skip the maze on the second journey through.

Perhaps worse for some might be the sound puzzles. There are a few places in which sounds, either in terms of notes or distinct noises, are the key elements of a puzzle. Those who have trouble distinguishing sounds might find these puzzles frustrating.

The game's sound, overall, is good, if not always wonderful. Sound effects are generally appropriate to their function, although a few sounded a little generic. I found some to become a little annoying if heard too often.

Music is not omnipresent. In many cases its place is taken by environmental sound, such as a hollow wind or gently lapping water. When music is used it often has a technological feel (consistent with the devices encountered about Myst and the ages) and is generally in keeping with the setting and mood. Both music and ambient sound manage to convey a sense of loneliness

very appropriate to the player's position in the game and the worlds in which he finds himself – not to mention the positions of the other characters encountered.

Better than the music and sound, I would say, are the visuals. Each location in Myst is represented by static 3D-rendered images, viewed from (presumably) the protagonist's eyes. Moving to a new area or looking in a new direction presents a new image, in the now-classic "slide-show" fashion. There are no animations between perspectives. The image simply changes from one to another with an optional transition between images. Although, on my computer it was too fast to be of much use; it seemed to be some sort of dissolve effect.

On first reading this may seem to be an awkward or unpleasantly disjointed system, with images simply replacing each other. I found it to work well as it increased the ease of getting turned around which was helpful as you could not always see the destination very well when its access lay away from the center of the image, and there was no animation to show the path that the character took.

The graphics themselves, while outdated now, were undoubtedly good for their time, and continue to look good, if not always convincing. Machines and books, appropriately enough, seem to be especially well-represented – including some lovely illustrations in the books found in the library – while trees (or at least their foliage) look less convincing to the eye.

Unfortunately the backdrops are also largely unmoving, without very many animated sections, at least of any size. The ocean, for instance, has a rippled surface but does not move, which at least in part reduces the effectiveness of its representation. On the more positive side, this does help to increase the lonely atmosphere of the game, if only by default.

Myst is controlled quite simply and entirely by the mouse (aside from such things as entering names for saved games.) The main cursor is a hand, pointing upwards. While movement has



no special cursor, turns to the left or right, and to look down are represented respectively by hands pointing to the left, right and down. They appear when the cursor is moved to the appropriate part of the screen. Looking up is again represented by the hand pointing upwards.

Movement is effected simply by clicking on the portion of the image that lies in the direction in which one wants to go. So, if you wanted to go towards a certain building, a click on that building should take you towards it (presuming that an open path lies in roughly that direction). Very often a click somewhere near the center of the screen will take you somewhere, unless there are no ways forward ahead of you. However, you will not necessarily be going in a straight line, so clicking rapidly through screens might get one a little turned around!

It is perhaps worth noting that the game does not indicate whether an object or

area is operable or not, with the exception of a few cases in which the player drags the mouse to achieve the desired effect. In these exceptions, the cursor changes to become an open hand, and changes again to a closed hand when the mouse button is clicked and held. This indicates that the object may then be "dragged" (or moved) within its limits and released when the mouse button is released.

There are a few cases in which other cursors become available. For instance, the cursor changes when a page is picked up to represent a hand holding a page of the appropriate color. One or two other actions have their own cursors.

Overall, I would say that the system used in Myst is an efficient, elegant and intuitive one. An additional cursor to distinguish looking up from normal actions might have been an improvement, but this is a minor quibble.

It is perhaps worth noting that I found no circumstance in Myst where one could not proceed due to having missed something previously, or otherwise painted oneself into a corner. And, there does not seem to be any way in which to die in the game. Thus, this is one game for which the maxim of "save often" is not important, unless of course one is worried about software crashes or hardware failure.

As one final positive, the game comes with a potentially useful built-in hint

system. On request it will offer either specific or general help, based on the player's location and tasks yet to be completed. It also often provides more than one level of hint, from slightly cryptic advice to specific instructions, hopefully allowing the player to get a hint without a spoiler. It provides more direct aid should the player want it.

As one final negative, Myst is not a terribly long game, time spent thinking about puzzle solutions aside.

In the end I would call Myst a good game. It has since been surpassed amongst its kind, I would say, but remains a strong and interesting play with a decent (if not long or overly complex) character-based story, interesting puzzles and an efficiently minimal interface.

The graphics are good, in some places very good, while music and sound does the job, if seldom little more.

Of course, this is not a game for those with a strong preference for either inventory puzzles or long dialogs – Myst has neither an inventory system (as has been mentioned) nor a dialog tree system – when one of the few characters speaks you more or less have the choice of listening or leaving.



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 95/98,  
 Pentium 75 MHz , 16 MB RAM  
 Minimum 30 MB Hard Disk Space  
 640x480 Monitor at 24-Bit color  
 DirectX 6.1 or Higher  
 DirectX 6.1 Comp. Sound/Video  
 4x CD-ROM Drive  
 Quicktime 4.0 or higher  
 Mouse, Keyboard and Speakers



# Fate

By Ugur Sener

You have traveled far to reach here. Something drove you away from your family and away from your home to this small village at the gates of a treacherous dungeon. It wasn't a desire for riches or glory. You did not come here seeking vengeance or justice. No, the irresistible draw was something deeper. It was destiny.

The clothes on your back, a small sum of gold, and a crude weapon were your only possessions. Your only companion was your trustworthy pet. You could not rely on a strong blade or finely crafted armor. You could not seek protection from arcane spells. Yet you stood at the entrance of the dungeon, ready to face the dangers inside, ready to meet your destiny.

Fate is a third-person action-RPG developed by WildTangent. With customizable characters and randomly generated levels, Fate manages to deliver a charming dungeon-crawling experience that can be enjoyed at a casual pace. While the game will not appeal to players looking for an engaging storyline, Fate's casual atmosphere and solid gameplay mechanics still make it worthy of your attention.

You play Fate as a small boy or girl that has just arrived at the village. The character creation process is extremely simple. You have to select a gender, configure your character's appearance, and come up with a name. You also determine whether you want to start the game with a dog or a cat as your pet. Once you give your pet a name, you can enter the village and begin your journey.

Fate's gameplay mechanics are highly comparable to those of Diablo and Diablo 2. You will spend the bulk of your time exploring the dungeon. You will have to overcome an onslaught of monsters as you make your way deeper and deeper into the dungeon. The monsters will get tougher with each consecutive level. Along the way, you will gain in experience, learn new skills, and find better equipment to overcome your challenges. You will also have to make regular trips into town to look for new weapons and armor or to sell the excess equipment you are not using.

The basic controls will also be familiar to those who have played the Diablo games. You move your character or attack enemies with your primary weapon by left clicking. You cast spells with a right click. Potions can be assigned to the number keys on your keyboard while spells can be assigned to the function keys. Holding the control key down will make your character run whereas holding the alt key down high-

lights all the items on the ground that are available to pickup.

Similarities can also be found in the types of equipment available and how you customize your character. Even some of the ambient sounds will likely be familiar. Fortunately, Fate is more than a glorified carbon copy of Diablo and Diablo 2. For one thing, the atmosphere in Fate is significantly different than what you would experience in Diablo. Fate has a relaxed fantasy setting. You are not a holy hero battling against hell-spawned demons to save mankind. You are just a young boy or a girl looking for adventure and trying to find your destiny. The fact that you play as a child alone gives the game a casual feeling. Add the cartoon-like graphics and you are looking at a lighthearted action-RPG experience.

Another aspect of Fate that sets it apart from the other titles in the genre is your

**Developer:** [WildTangent](#)  
**Publisher:** [WildTangent](#)  
**Platform:** PC  
**Genre:** Action RPG  
**Release Date:** May 2005

pet. Your pet will join you in combat as you engage your enemies. While your pet may not be as effective as your character, it can still keep a number of the monsters occupied as you deal with the rest. In addition, you can put items in your pet's inventory and send it to town to sell them. This is extremely useful if you do not have any need to visit the town to shop for new potions or items.

It is also possible to transform your pet into different creatures by feeding it fish. At various points in the game, you will come across spots where you can go fishing. If you successfully catch something, you can feed it to your pet and watch the transformation take place. Depending on the type of fish you catch, the transformation may be temporary or permanent. You will also come across the occasional vendor in the dungeon that can sell you fish thereby eliminating the worry of catching them yourself. The transformations do make your pet significantly stronger and add some depth to the game.

At the outset of the game, your character will not be specialized in any particular area. As you defeat monsters in the dungeon and complete quests for the villagers, you will gradually grow in experience and gain levels. Each time you gain a level, you will have an opportunity to spend attribute and skill points. The way you spend these points determines what type of character you will develop by the end of the game.

The attributes include strength, dexterity, vitality, and magic. While increasing strength will improve your effectiveness in melee combat, adding points to dexterity will enhance your accuracy with bows and your ability to dodge blows from your enemies. Your vitality score contributes to your health points whereas your magic score dictates the size of your mana pool. Whether you eventually want to play as a melee fighter, an archer, or a sorcerer should determine how you spend your points.

As you gain levels, you will also want to improve your skills. For instance, you can increase your proficiency with various types of weapons. The categories include swords, axes, and staves. You can also raise your chances of landing

a critical hit or shorten the time it takes your character to cast a spell. Another group of skills determine the effectiveness of your spells. The spells in Fate fall under one of three categories. While attack magic primarily deals with inflicting damage on your enemies, defense magic includes healing and protective spells. Charm magic on the other hand contains a series of summoning spells that will provide you with allies as you explore the dungeon.

The collection of skills available allows you to develop your character in numerous different ways. You can completely become a powerful swordsman that can aid himself with the occasional healing spell. Alternatively, you can turn into a sorceress that can bring down lightning or fire to crush your enemies or summon monsters to do your bidding. The options you have in customizing your character adds to the replay value of the game.

You will have a noticeably different experience whether you play as a fighter or a sorcerer. While the melee fighter will be able to meet the enemies head on and shrug off a significant amount of damage, the frail sorcerers will have to keep their distance from the monsters while unleashing their spells. You will likely come up with several different tactics depending on how you develop your character.

Players will also have to pay attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the monsters. For instance, your trusty flaming sword may not be the best weapon to use against a lava beetle with a high fire resistance. Your offensive spells will not help against a magic elemental that is immune to your sorcery. Especially when you are done with the first few levels of the dungeon, it is a good idea to have a backup plan in case your primary form of attack does not work against some monsters you encounter. While you do have a great deal of freedom to develop your character in several different ways, Fate does encourage players to concentrate on a small number of skills. Too highly diversified characters will not be able to overcome the monsters encountered in the deeper levels of the dungeon. As such, it is important to make a decision about what type of character you want to play



early in your journey. When you are not hacking at monsters in the dungeon, you will be spending your time at the village. In typical action-RPG fashion, the village contains a series of stores that can supply you with potions, spells, weapons, and armor. Specialized stores are also available if you feel like gambling for an enchanted item or browsing a selection of more exotic equipment than what is available at the regular stores. In addition, there are a few villagers that can provide special services like enchanting weapons or removing magical gems from artifacts.

A number of the villagers will have quests for your character to perform



**“Fate offers fluid gameplay mechanics that can become quite addictive. The combat is easy to learn, but it is still challenging enough to keep you occupied”.**

from time to time. These quests typically involve retrieving a powerful artifact from the dungeon, defeating a group of monsters, or killing a single powerful boss enemy. The completion of these quests is entirely optional. It is quite possible to go through the dungeon and ignore the requests of the villagers. However, players are given a strong incentive to pay attention to the quests.

First of all, you will gain a significant amount of experience each time you successfully finish a quest. But more importantly, gaining experience is only one way to enhance your character in Fate. Players can also improve their renown rankings to acquire extra skill points. Each time your renown rank increases, you will be awarded four skill points. Since you gain renown points for each completed task, you may want to check with the villagers for new quests regularly.

Fate offers fluid gameplay mechanics that can become quite addictive. The combat is easy to learn, but it is still challenging enough to keep you occupied. The levels are randomly generated, but many of them manage to be entertaining to explore. Especially during the later stages of the game when you are encountering tougher opponents with various different resistance levels, you may have to vary your tactics and implement different strategies. Sometimes things can get a little too

have a good supply of healing items and avoid engaging too many enemies at the same time.

Despite its strengths, Fate does have a number of aspects that will prevent it from appealing to all gamers. First of all, if your primary motivation for playing a video game is to enjoy the storyline, you should overlook this title. The story never truly progresses beyond the information given to you during the introduction movie. The quests you get from the villagers do not add any kind of depth as they are usually very simple tasks with virtually no plot line. Even though it is clear that the developers were not trying to deliver a game with a deep and engaging storyline, there should have been a little more to the game than just a young adventurer exploring a massive dungeon. Some players may also have problems with the overall design of the dungeon. By the time you get through a few dozen levels of the dungeon, things do start to get repetitive and you will have seen just about everything the game can throw at you. Some monster types tend to appear a little too often and you get accustomed to all the different tactics you may need to employ. If you have carefully developed your character, your encounters should not be all that challenging either.

The gameplay experience may have been better if players could change locations and explore significantly different

environments rather than simply going deeper and deeper into the same dungeon. Even though the dungeon levels feature several different styles, a little more diversity would have been appreciated. It also doesn't help things that the style of dungeon levels change randomly. You can see volcanic textures in one level and proceed to explore furnished hallways befitting a mansion in the next. There is no consistency and the abrupt change from one style to the next seems a little awkward.

Fate takes many great elements from older action-RPG games and throws in a few unique twists to deliver a casual and fairly addictive dungeon-crawling experience. Players have a good deal of liberty in customizing their characters. The randomly generated levels and the various customization options give the game a good deal of replay value. The game does lack a strong story and it can get repetitive after a while. But if you are looking for a charming action-RPG to satisfy your desire to defeat hordes of monsters while developing a powerful character, Fate is worthy of your attention. The solid gameplay and the casual atmosphere add up to an entertaining experience.



**Minimum System Requirements:**  
 Windows 2000, 98, ME, XP  
 800 Mhz Processor or better  
 128 MB RAM (256MB for XP)  
 16 MB 3D Graphics Accelerator  
 DirectX version 8.0 or above  
 Mouse and Keyboard

# Shadow of the Colossus

By Nuggy

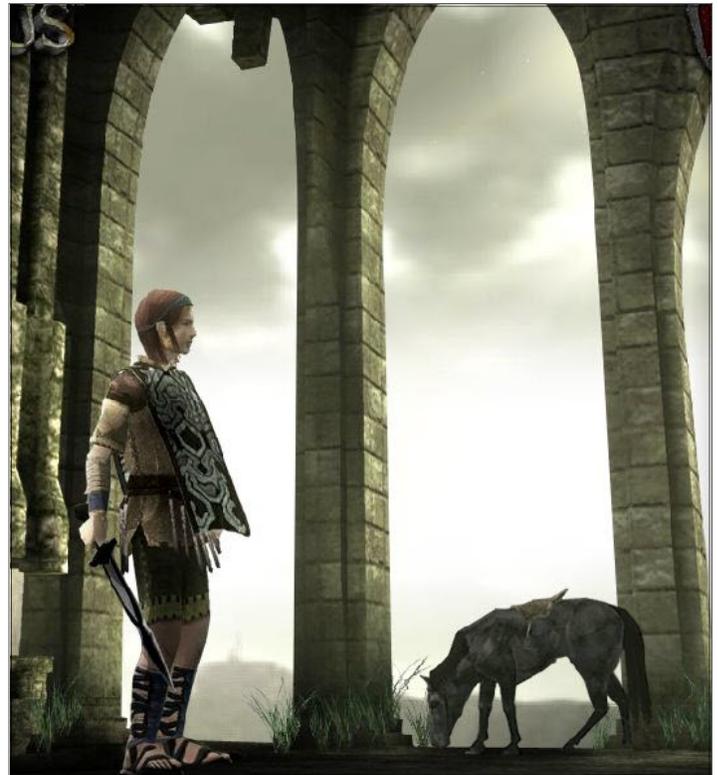
It is refreshing to see a game released that actually surpasses the potential that was assumed during its pre-launch hype. Sony Computer Entertainment grants PlayStation 2 owners *Shadow of the Colossus*, a third person, action adventure (you know, one that's actually creative). Weird, huh? Since its initial release, the game has even incited heavy debates on the very definition of art itself. But should it really be called a masterpiece? Is it even enjoyable?

## Gameplay - 9

The gamer plays as Wander who (along with his trusty steed Agro), must defeat 16 colossi in order to resurrect lost love Mono in accordance with an agreement with the enigmatic spirit, Dormin. It is the gamer's job to take down every unique giant by frequently using those problem solving skills that were hopefully learned in junior high. First and foremost, players have to traverse the forests, lakes, caves and valleys of the forbidden land in order to get to one colossus using their magic sword as a compass and their horse Agro as transport. The travels can range from 5 minutes to 2 hours since the land itself is quite large, seemingly going on forever. This is good because it allows players the time to perfect actions with Agro's sometimes erratic controls. Gamers can fire arrows while riding, aim their magical sword in the intended direction and even ride while standing on Agro's back. This can be bad because too often the player can wander off course due to initial readings of their sword, camera alignment, and again, Agro's sometimes erratic controls. Though it's wise to use the sword periodically, I often found myself lost and wandering through deserts when I needed to be at a lake. Though a tad frustrating, the gamer can check their map in order to backtrack.

**Developer:** [Sony Computer](#)  
**Publisher:** [Sony Computer](#)  
**Platform:** PS2  
**Genre:** Action Adventure  
**Release Date:** Oct 2005

The land itself is useful as well, allowing for many save points, stat boosting opportunities to hunt animals, and even the freedom to re-battle fallen colossi. But, gamers itching for any kind of fight will have to travel some distance before arriving at the enemy.



These gaps in between, although allowing for anticipation of upcoming fights, would have been great opportunities for Sony Entertainment to have placed other kinds of beasts (besides ankle high lizards) for gamers to fight. Even a "surprise colossus" or two would have added to the experience. Though this could have taken away from graphical elements of the game (explained below), there are times when players will dive off of cliffs just to reset the game at the temple's starting point in order to search again. Basically while searching, something exciting to do would have been nice.

The most engrossing part of the game, of course, is when fighting a colossus. Each menacing goliath has a weakness that the gamer must quickly exploit. However, not all of these weak spots are easy to find which is where the true brilliance of this title lies. Players must constantly use their brains in order to force down the monoliths, an effort that could take hours. After first finding a way to climb these walking mountains (which in itself is a task), gamers have to stab the enemy's weakness and hold on for dear life using the R1 button as the colossus shakes, stomps and rears in pain before they try again (if they haven't fallen off). Did I mention that sometimes the horse gets in on the action? While some are easier than others, most colossi won't take a beating from some 5 foot runt with a sword so nicely. Each battle is well thought out and epic in its own right; however the camera could be more cooperative.

It is sometimes difficult to negotiate with the camera when it swings the gamer between a colossus, its armpit and a hard place, especially during critical moments. Each battle spotlights a colossus' strengths and personality, making it necessary for players to keep an eye on what their opponent is

doing before making a move. The battles are so massive that they no longer remain as mere boss battles, but become exciting adventures and escapades.

## Sound - 9

It's strange to realize how much sound plays such a heavy role in entertainment nowadays. Take for instance the high score for sound that you see above. How does a game score a 9 when in fact 70% of the game lacks any soundtrack altogether? The player rides on Agro through the forbidden lands solely to the sound of the wind, the call of eagles or the rapid clip clopping of Agro's hooves. The statement before clearly noted, SOTC uses a simple method of anticipation, allowing players a sense of ease as they traverse the bumpy terrain. The sound effect symphony consisting of colossal head butts, thunder stomps, energy blasts, explosions and epic music is one of the biggest strengths of this game.

For example, the Geyser Turtle Colossus is one of my favorites. Everything is silent. The gamer nears a cave shrouded in the deepest of shadows. The colossus awakens, stomping forward and snarling as the adventure music starts up. Nearly every crack and grinding of its mountainous hide can be heard as it advances. When the player finds a way to knock over the colossus, the music goes silent again... right before hitting its height as the mighty brute hits the ground and quakes the area. It's all about presentation and Sony Entertainment hits the mark with sound synchronization scenarios like this. The one drawback is the silence while traveling just to get to the colossus. Though the ambience prepares the player mentally for their next battle, it gets a little boring hearing Agro's neighing as the only audio until players reach their objective.



## Graphics - 8

Believability is SOTC's greatest strength and greatest weakness. Gamers will find the world surrounding them is gorgeous, full of soft light and dust particle effects. Seeing Wander being blown away by energy blasts is glorious thanks to the rag doll effect, allowing for wind and gravity to take their physical toll on the character model. The colossi themselves are the most convincing elements of the game. The amount of fur and rock texture on these giants is astounding and considering the PlayStation 2's age, it's amazing how each colossus is unique in every way, as if each has its own history. And when you gamers actually take one down, prepare to feel like a total tool because they all die in the most sad and undeserving of ways. However, since the game runs so much information all at once, the



frame rate stutters in various points, especially during a colossus fight.

The game lives and breathes off of the concept of creating an epic story. Everything from crevices, trees, birds and tiny lizards to the skies, rock formations, cloud effects, textures, lighting effects and colossi are simultaneously running in real time. It is a miracle the PS2 doesn't explode when the opening sequence starts. Even when players are riding with Agro, textures will pop up out of nowhere, creating an obstacle that they'll abruptly have to ride around. I stupidly found myself asking, "Where'd this wall come from?" more times than necessary.

It is also mentionable that the fog effect coupled with lighting will sometimes blind the gamer from seeing their goal. They can raise the majestic sword to cut the intensity a bit but they still have to steer Agro through the "still loading"



landscapes. Realism may have been the intended objective but some separation of environments could have helped the game run more smoothly. Fade-outs and fade-ins of area entrances and exits could have been accomplished seamlessly while still retaining the cinematic feel of the game. Though the idea here was to create one continuous journey without breaking or cutting from-camera often, the PS2 can only handle so much at one time. Instead the journey, though gorgeous and very convincing, can seem sporadic and uneven as opposed to continuous.

## In a nutshell...

It is a rarity to find a game that immerses the gamer so dramatically as SOTC. Each colossus battle can seem like a fight for sheer survival with the great music and sound added to the highly detailed (though spastic) graphics. It is unfortunate the director himself doesn't consider this to be a work of art (he hired Concept ARTists, ART directors and animators right?). But art is in the eye of the beholder anyway, isn't it? And, imagine what another installment could look like on the PS3, running smoothly with all the detail and action displayed at once. But even with its flaws, the game lives up to being as captivating as it is ambitious. Though not a masterpiece, it is indeed a work of art.

**It's like \$20 now. Get it.**



# God of War

By Vhayste

## By the Gods!

Yes, we know that God of War II is already out and kickin' ass with all its superb thrills and features. But its first installment, the same that appeared two years ago, still hasn't lost its allure and is still rightfully considered as one of the best action adventure games ever created. As Zeus said, "Don't play GoW II without playing this first installment!" Nah, maybe not.

An enraged and insane God of War named Ares is ruthlessly destroying every city in his path. Bound by mighty Zeus' law prohibiting the divine siblings to engage in a direct clash, the Gods of Olympus can do nothing to stop all this mayhem and destruction. Mortal pleas remain unanswered as their patron cities are burning and people are slaughtered. And then came the chosen one; the man tasked to obtain the power of the gods and kill the murderous deity.

Enter Kratos, a bloodthirsty, merciless Spartan general who lives only to conquer. He kills enemies without hesitation, burning everything that he comes across, only to have his reign of terror terminated when he suffers a bitter and brutal defeat at the hands of barbarians. Near death, Kratos summons Ares and



A little sightseeing before the killing...

sells him his soul, binding himself to the god as a servant. Then, mutilated bodies brushed aside, Kratos rises from the corpses of allies and foes and begins his newfound life doing his new master's bidding.

Released in March 2005, God of War was a hit. You should not consider yourself a gamer if you haven't played it; even less so if you've never actually heard of it. But, what is it that makes GoW so special besides the sexual innuendos, gore, blood, torn limbs, and thrown corpses? Well, read on...

Smooth and flawless, that's what this game is. The developers have created a very impressive engine that defines GoW's environment to the minutest detail. Thanks to that, players have the chance to sightsee while controlling our hero. From ancient ruins, intricate hallways and burning cities to mighty statues of heroes and gods, expect sharp detail. Every stage is a stunning piece of art.

Another great thing to note and probably something all games should feature is the elimination or reduction of loading times. GoW's quick loading and non-lagging system allows you to concentrate on mutilating, slashing and dismembering hordes of enemies without suffering latency or slow performance.

Battles are all fast paced and players

can create their own attack patterns while swinging those crafty chain-daggers (or wachamacallits) rather than the more conventional sword. Along the way, Kratos meets different gods and gets access to new powers and abilities, provided he has enough orbs to purchase them. Orbs can be extracted from enemies. Oh, and killing is beneficial, too.



**Developer:** Sony Computer  
**Publisher:** Sony Computer  
**Platform:** PS2  
**Genre:** Action Adventure  
**Release Date:** Mar 2005



“I’m so gonna turn you into fish food!”

As for the controls, well, they are PERFECT. You can combine “heavy” and “light” attacks with “magic” and “special” attacks. Kratos can even execute such combos in mid-air without any problems. Killing large bosses? No problem either. The game is brilliantly designed to allow Kratos to execute amusing moves to defeat the huge guys, while making sure the player doesn’t lose track of our protagonist, who is apparently dwarfed by most bosses.

What’s unique to Kratos as a character is that he is not on his quest to fight for any noble cause like the typical hero would be. He is selfish, murderous and quite definitely mad. The plot itself is twisted, so our character blends in perfectly. One reason why people are at-

tracted to him is because of his dark side. He doesn’t care much if innocent people get slaughtered or cities get burned down.

The quest for Pandora’s Box, the only artifact that can defeat Ares, and the game’s goal, is not a walk in the park. Kratos must face monsters of all types and sizes. From the common skeletons to the hulking Cyclops, he must overcome those hordes single-handedly. But the game is not all about fighting. Puzzles are scattered everywhere. You need to combine wits, agility and instinct to properly navigate the map and complete your goals.

Don’t be afraid of large bosses; the developers were wise (and kind)

enough to include “finishing moves” in a way that Kratos will use everything in the surroundings (and his arsenal) to finish and/or deal massive damage to the enemy. These include a series of buttons to be pressed, rotating the analog stick or just good ol’ button mashing. The prompt to initiate said “finishing moves” appears only when sufficient damage has been dealt to the beast.

I personally hate the game’s puzzles. But the sheer entertainment value of the game just overcame the boredom of finding a stupid key and or enduring through mundane tasks of the ilk. Actually, the puzzles are not that hard. And, thoroughly checking out places in order to uncover the clues and solutions is just plain rewarding.

If God of War is ever made into a movie, I am sure it will be a major box office hit. The musical score is perfect both during battles and while casually exploring. It’s not all about a shiny exterior though, as the excellent gameplay helps create a really impressive and gory whole. Blood gushes out on every slash wound, body parts fly off when a critical blow has been inflicted; you name it. The CG scenes are just stunning too and you can be fully absorbed in the ancient land that Kratos traverses.

God of War is a major achievement in the action-adventure genre. Not even *Chaos Legion* or *Drakengard* comes close, and as the world slips into the hands of a savage warrior, expect a lot more than a handful of death and destruction. A must-have for any PS2 owner.

**[Editorial Note:** Our regular readers will know that we normally only assign one final grade to each game. But when one of our new team members Vhayste turned in his grades in the categorized format you see below, we decided to keep it. In future issues we are considering grading all games in a similar manner and probably varying categories depending on the genre.]

<b>Graphics:</b>	<b>100/100</b>	Stunning graphics, fine and rich details
<b>Sound:</b>	<b>90/100</b>	Great musical score adds intensity and breathes life into the game
<b>Controls:</b>	<b>85/100</b>	Controls respond beautifully. Players can combine different attacks in order to maximize their damaging capabilities.
<b>Playability:</b>	<b>80/100</b>	Getting familiar with the game is not difficult. Easy to control and pretty much won’t challenge your common sense.
<b>Replay Value:</b>	<b>75/100</b>	Finishing the game once unlocks a lot of extras including super hard mode. Players may find repeating the game more than twice is not that exciting anymore.

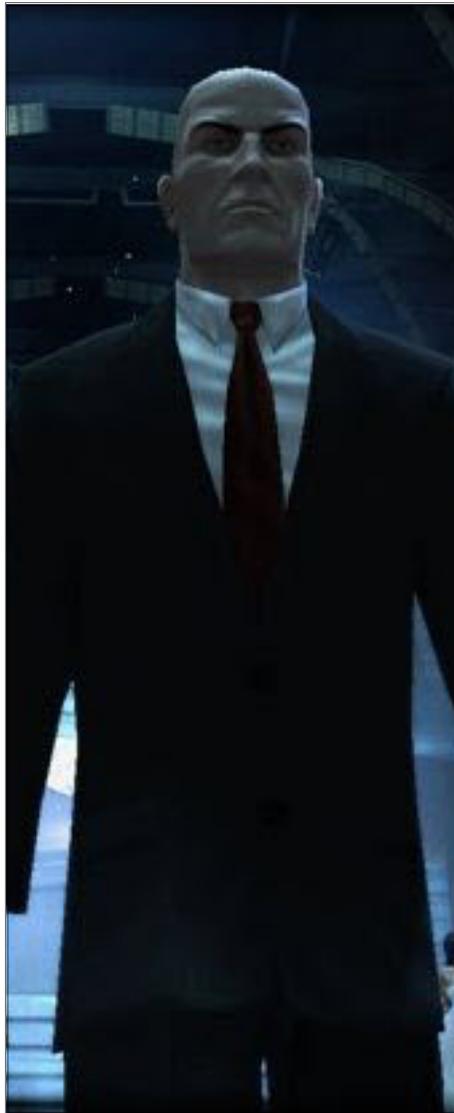


# Hitman: Blood Money

By G. Gordon Brown

Agent 47, the perfect assassin, returns in this fourth installment of IO Interactive's M-rated, stealth-action Hitman series. And in Blood Money, business is good. So good, in fact, that there's a new agency on the block looking to make a killing at your expense. As 47, it's up to you to discover the secret behind this mysterious group before you find yourself on the business end of someone else's sniper scope.

The game begins a few years in the past and introduces you to the controls and methods of the game as you make your way through a dilapidated amusement park en route to your target and gradually brings you back to the present as you progress. The opening mission is a little misleading, because its linearity stands in stark contrast to the open-ended nature of the levels to follow. It's in player freedom where the real beauty of Hitman stands revealed. You can choose how you deal with your marks. All of them are suitably degenerate, so you don't feel bad about ending their miserable lives (thanks IO!). If you want to kick down the front door for a bit of the "run-and-gun", go crazy, though it isn't advisable for reasons to be discussed later. If you don't like guns, or are just allergic to gunpowder, you can leave'em at the hideout. If you're patient enough and willing to wait for opportunities, you can successfully complete your missions with subtlety. It's all up to you.



This is thanks in no small part to the exquisitely detailed level designs. Locations are imaginative and painstakingly rendered, like one level that takes place on the packed streets of New Orleans during Mardi Gras. This one was particularly fun and exciting, even for a grizzled old Hitman veteran like myself. There's nothing quite like the feeling of stalking your quarry through a sea of humanity as they revel, oblivious to your passing, knowing full well that one false move on your part will send them all scattering like a flock of pigeons and bring the fuzz running. But I digress. Architecture feels real and is logically

designed, while bystanders mill about fluidly. ICS stashes, placements for hiding bodies, and points of interest are seamlessly placed into each level so that everything feels organic, acting and reacting, like a living, breathing entity that you must think about and adapt to in order to overcome. Completing a professionally executed (pun intended) hit in Blood Money makes you feel more artist than assassin. And, professionalism pays off too.

As the title implies, this game is all about the cold, hard cash. After every mission you get paid, and the amount is directly

dependent on how well you perform your tasks, not all of which involve assassination. If you dive in headfirst, with guns a-blazin', you'll leave a big mess that the agency is going to have to clean up. And who receives the dry cleaning bill? The guy with all the blood on his hands strangely enough. You know what they say about karma...

And it gets worse, because witnesses and videos of your heinous deeds left unattended will lead to a spike in your Notoriety (another new addition to the series). Notoriety is rated on a scale from 1 to 100 and signifies your bad rep in the world at large. The higher it is, the more likely you are to be recognized as the cold-blooded killer that you are by guards and the general public, making it that much more difficult for you to complete your assignments. On a side note, you get a little run-down of how you performed after completion of each mission in the form of a newspaper article all about your little adventures. These can be downright fun to read and hilarious when you see some of the sketches of 47 with middling notoriety. So, don't pass them up.

But all is not lost, notorious ones. Thanks to a little bribery, all that heat you've built up can be cooled off with some of that blood money you've been saving. But of course, this cuts into your resources, too. And that means you'll have less for what it was really intended: customization and intelligence.

**Developer:** IO Interactive  
**Publisher:** Eidos Interactive  
**Platform:** PS2 (Reviewed)  
 PC, XBOX,  
 XBOX 360  
**Genre:** Action  
**Release Date:** May 2006



This time around 47 can purchase new additions and upgrades for his custom weapons and equipment. A variety of additions like silencers, extended clips and specialty ammo, laser sights and precision scopes, and a plethora of other gadgetry can be bought for your firearms. Even 47 himself can be pimped out with better lock picks, binoculars, painkillers and adrenaline for health boosts, Kevlar vests, etc. There are a whole lot of options, so many that you'll probably have to decide which weapons are your faves so that you can funnel the majority of your cash into those. Another cool little addition is that you can actually view your little friends, complete with all their new attachments, before going into action and drool over just how sweet they look.

Another thing you can purchase, in mission, is intel on your target and the level itself. Basically you can purchase little tips (for a pittance each) that can help you get through the mission more smoothly. None of it is earth-shattering information and you could probably figure most of it out yourself through experimentation, but the tidbits can be helpful



from time to time by opening your eyes to new possibilities you may be neglecting when rushing to finish the level.

But, why rush when you've got such great ambiance. I can't say enough about the music. Jesper Kyd and IO have managed to create some truly inspiring tunes that not only add to the dark tone of the environments, but adapt to the situations you find yourself in, and change as the pressure waxes and wanes (the opera house still gives me chills). The voice work is some pretty good stuff, particularly in the CG cutscenes between levels. And I'd be remiss if I mentioned the cutscenes without hailing the writing. The dialogue is excellent and well delivered lending all the more to its believability. Seeing and hearing as much as we all do about cloning and stem-cell research in the real-world news just makes the cutscenes seem that much more plausible. You could see this stuff happening in real life.

There are few things to complain about in Blood Money, and those few things are minor annoyances at best. Though there's finally bare-hand fighting (I found it funny that a genetically-engineered killing machine couldn't throw a punch), it's too repetitive. 47 only has two or three moves when he's not armed. A little more variety there would have been nice. Also, when you actually "do someone in", they ragdoll in the strangest fashion with limbs flailing at all angles. There are some ways that attached human limbs just don't move. I'd like to see the bodies react a little more realistically in future iterations of the

series. And now that next-gen system capabilities are here, the physics will no doubt improve in the coming years.

Open windows, while providing quick egress into a building, can be ticky when attempting to gain access. Sometimes I've had to pass in front of them several times to get 47 to actually go through...Kind of a pain in the backside when you've got guards coming and going and you need to be fast. It's really a crapshoot in a situation where you need a sure thing. Another place where a bit more efficiency is needed is the item handling. I find accessing your stuff can be cumbersome. The problem comes when you're trying to juggle more than one item at once and you've got to cycle through your entire inventory to get it. It sucks to pull out your detonator when you wanted your silenced silverballer and then have to rifle through your inventory only to find yourself out of position by the time you get the item you wanted. The only time you have an onscreen indicator of your active item is when it's in your hand. It would have been much better to have the indicator stay up at all times as a reminder. Again these are all minor points, but it's enough to cause ruin when the game you play is won by inches.

So what's the final verdict, you ask? Without a doubt, Blood Money for the PS2 is the best Hitman of the series for the system. It's easy to tell a lot of work went into the new engine. The major new additions are all, in my opinion, for the better and I hope that they remain for future installments of the Hitman franchise. With a few minor fixes (and future advances in next-gen technology) they can be virtually flawless. If you've played Hitman before, and enjoyed it, don't even hesitate to hunt this one down, because you'll enjoy Blood Money too. If this is your first walk down the shadowy path of the assassin, welcome aboard. There's never been a better time to get into this amazing series.



# Sam & Max 3: The Mole, The Mob and The Meatball

By Gnome

*[Dear readers, not-particularly-brave adventurers and hapless passers-by,*

*What follows is obviously a walkthrough to the brilliant Sam and Max episode 3. You don't really need it though, as it's an easy game. Give it another try. Still stuck? Ok, read on...]*

## The Beginning

Right, the introduction just finished and Max dropped a card; an Ace of Spades. Pick it up and leave the office. Ride the Desoto to the Casino, where Lovey Bear will greet you and give you some tokens. Insert one into the whack da ratz thingy and shoot at least 20 of the orange rats. You've just won a Ted E. Bear refrigerator magnet. Pick it up, pick it up.

Now head over to the poker table where Leonard is waiting. Have a go at his Indian Poker and lose. Know why? Well, he's a cheating little bastard! Leave the game and proceed towards the exit. Notice the huge clown's shiny nose right above the door? Lovely. Stick the Ace of Spades on it, return for another hand of poker with Leonard and win 10 million tokens. Hurrah!

Leave the casino. Go to Bosco's Inconvenience Store. Ignore his French disguise and marvel at the installed anti-delivery system. Ask him what he's got to sell. Buy the miniature listening device/bug and return to the casino.

Walk towards the guard guarding (as nature intended) the Back Room Door. Talk to him. Use the organic listening device/bug on him and go play a game of one armed bandit (insert a token). Pick up the listening device and learn the password ("Leave the gun. Take the cannolis"). Say it to the guard and he'll let you pass.

## Joining the Mafia

In the Back Room, ask to join the Mafia. You'll be assigned 3 tasks: deliver a teddy bear to Bosco's, whack Sybil (now a pro-witness) and recover the original Meatball Sandwich.

## Getting the sandwich

Head back to the Sam and Max office. Leonard will be waiting. Switch to Max and ask him "Is that a cap gun?" It is, apparently. Now interrogate the guy and torture him using yo' mama jokes. Sam will be saying the first part (the setup) and Max will be delivering the punch lines. Here are enough correct combos to reduce Leonard to a sobbing sad wreck:

- Yo' mama's so fat ... she has more folds than an origami accordion.
- Yo' mama's so radiant ... if she fell in nuclear waste no one would notice.
- Yo' mama's so punctual ... she showed up early for her own funeral.
- Yo' mama's so vulgar ... her mouth would make a longshoreman blush.
- Yo' mama's so perky ... only time she's low is at a limbo contest.

You've got the cap gun and the one armed bandit's single arm. Go to the casino. Use the arm on the one armed bandit, enter a token and pick up the famed sandwich.

### Whacking Sybil

Visit Sybil's place. Chat a bit. Take her precious coffee cup and bring it to Bosco's. Off to the condiments now. Use the coffee cup on them and fill it with ketchup. Return to Sybil's and give her back the cup. Now take out your gun and shoot the cup. That's that.

### Bosco's Delivery

Drag the duo back to Bosco's store. Talk to him and tell him, "Look, it's the Toy Mafia!" He gets completely distracted. Now, put the Ted E. Bear refrigerator magnet on the anti-delivery camera. Place the teddy bear box on the Sale Table and voila... you're mafiosi.

### The final Countdown

Enjoying the mob initiation celebrations? How about the car chase? To survive it, take out your gun and shoot one of those hanging signs as you approach it. The following pic should help:



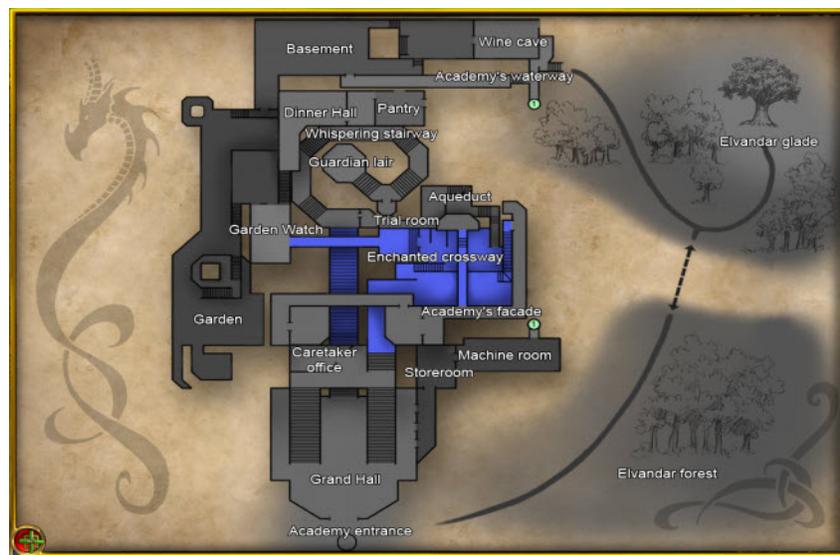
Back in the Back Room (heh), enter through the sinister door into the factory. The boss will try to hypnotize you and you'll need to convince him he actually did. Shoot Max using the cap gun and avoid injuries. Now, walk to the one armed bandit. Pick up the screwdriver and use it on the one armed bandit. Get the voice box. Place the voice box in the hopper, take the altered teddy bear and use it on the boss (a.k.a. Harry). Now pull the lever.

**That's it. Game over.**

# Keepsake

By Southern Belle

This beautifully crafted game has an integrated hint system for both the next action to take and for help in solving the puzzles. When you are close up view on a puzzle, click on the question mark for hints. The system will give you three hints and then the game will solve the puzzle for you if you ask it to. Use the question mark when you are standing in a particular room and the system will tell you what action to take next. This walkthrough follows the path that the game would naturally take you on. The map feature is very handy for those of us who get lost easily. Use the salmon colored button below the green plus to activate the map. At some points in the walkthrough, you will find that you are asked to take actions that don't really seem to do much of anything. However, they are important triggers for later puzzles in the game. If at any time you make a mistake on a puzzle, back away from it. Most of them will reset. Remember to exhaust all conversations.



## Prepare to be captivated.

- Listen to and follow Mustavio through the tutorial.
- After the conversation with Mustavio is over, move forward and go down the hill.
- After the cut scene, go down the stairs and go right to the path in the forest.
- Move forward down the path until you find Mustavio.
- Click on Mustavio to talk with him. Exhaust all conversation.
- Leave Mustavio and go back to the front of the academy.
- Go up the stairs on either side of the tower in the center of the courtyard. Note that the puzzle is on the side away from the front doors of the academy.
- Look at the wall. Click on the circle with the blue ball.
- Click on the Minotaurs in the following order: Top right, bottom left, top left, bottom right.
- Leave the tower and enter the academy.
- Go to the right past the staircase and out onto the walkway outside.
- Go to the right, up the stairs and down the walkway.
- Enter the Storeroom and talk with Zak inside the cupboard that is third from the far right end.
- Click on the rune above the door.
- After the cut scene, turn around and open the other cabinet door. Take the keys.
- Leave the Storeroom and go back to the Entrance Hall.
- Go all the way up the staircase on the right and turn right at the top.
- Go forward and go down the stairway to the room below.
- At the foot of the stairway, go around to the left and go up the stairway in the background.

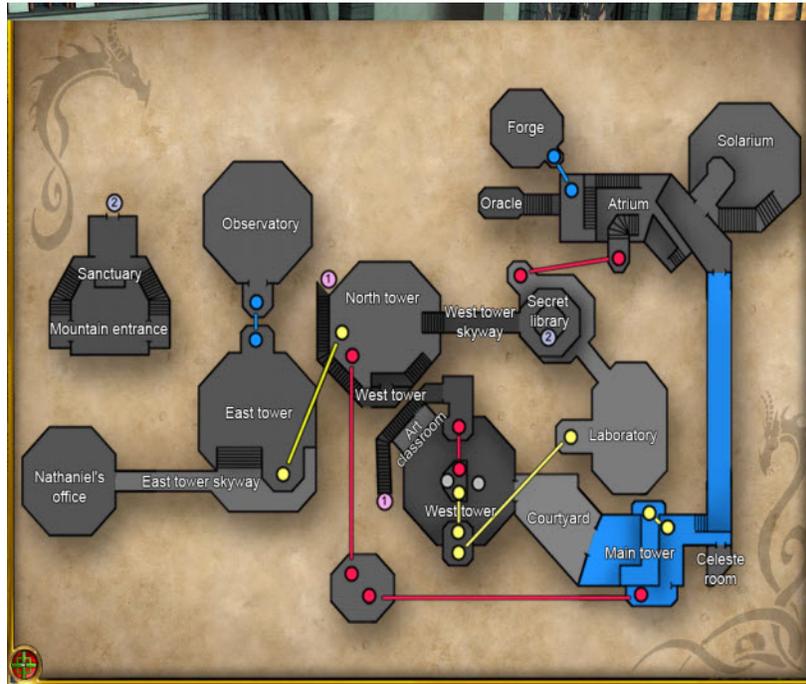
- After the cut scene, go forward up the stairs. Continue down the Enchanted Hallway and pick up the book on the floor.
- Continue across the Enchanted Hallway Footbridge.
- Once you have crossed the footbridge, turn right and go to the left past the stairs (the ones that are going up).
- Go down the stairs and around to the right.
- When the vision is over, go up the stairs on the right and continue all the way back to the garden. Continue to the end of the path and go down the stairs to the door on the right.
- Open the door and enter the Basement.
- Go down the stairs and go forward.
- Go down the stairs and turn right.
- Enter the alcove.
- Go around the boxes to the left and look at Mustavio's crates with the green labels.
- Exit the alcove and go down the stairs.
- At the bottom of the stairs, turn right at the first opening and go down the next set of stairs.
- Move forward three times and find a secret opening.
- Go through the opening.
- Continue along the walkway and go down the stairs.
- Exit the basement and go down.
- Go to the right and look at the mechanism on the wall.
- Click on the right wooden wheel at the top.
- Click on the lever which is on the left side of the same wheel.
- Click on the lever which is on the left side of the left wooden wheel.
- Click on the lever which is on the left of the right wooden wheel.
- Click on the right wooden wheel.
- Click on the lever which is on the left of the right wooden wheel.
- Click on the circle in between the two weights.
- Walk to the left in the direction of the basement exit.
- Go forward to the door of the Machine Room.
- Click on the tools to move them away from the door.
- Click on the door to open it.
- Go down the stairs and look closely at the stand next to the base of the stairs. Click on the Roman numeral III.
- Back away from this stand and go left to the stand by the staircase going up. Click on the Roman numeral III.
- Leave the stand by the staircase and go down and then down the stairs. Click on the Roman numeral II.
- Move away from the stand and go up the stairs to the staircase and go up to the landing. Click on the stand and set the handle to Roman numeral III.
- Go up the stairs.
- Look closely at the stand on the little balcony. Click on the Roman numeral II.
- Turn around and look at the stand behind you. Click on the Roman numeral I.
- Move away from the stand and go to the right. Go to the uppermost stand and click on the Roman numeral I.
- Look closely at the final stand to the right and click on the Roman numeral III.
- Exit the Machine Room through the Store Room door located to your left.
- Go through the Store Room and back to the Entrance Hall. Go up past the dragon statue to the gates. Look closely at the handle to the left of the gates. Pull it.
- Go up the stairs.
- When the cut scene is over, continue all the way up the stairs to the Guardian's door. Knock on it.
- Enter the Guardian's Lair.
- Speak with all of the Guardians. Exhaust all conversation.
- Exit the Guardian's Lair and go downstairs.
- After you pass the Dining Room, go down the next flight of stairs and pick up the Caretaker's key lying on the floor.
- Continue down the stairs and back to the Entrance Hall.

- Go up the Entrance Hall's left staircase.
- Turn right down the hall and enter the Caretaker's office.
- Pick up the parchment on the Caretaker's desk.
- Pick up the scroll on the Caretaker's desk.
- Pick up the staff by the cupboard in the corner.
- Click on the safe in the corner on the right (second shelf up).
- Number the windows with zeros in them 1-5.
  - Click on the mechanism under the fourth window so that the number four shows up.
  - Turn the second mechanism to four.
  - Turn the third mechanism to three.
  - Turn the fifth mechanism to five.
  - Turn the key to the upper right.
  - Take the circlet.
- Exit the Caretaker's office and return to the Entrance Hall.
- Read the plaque at the base of the dragon.
- Go around behind the dragon statue, through the gates and up the stairs.
- Turn right and look at the Trial Room door.
- Go left up the Whispering Stairway to the Guardian's Lair. Speak to the Guardians. Ask them how to open the Trial Room door.
- Exit the Guardian's Lair and go downstairs to the Trial Room door you just looked at.
- Click on the door.
- Click on the lion head. When the cut scene is over, click again.
- First Answer: Wisdom, Strength, Balance
- Second Answer: Time
- Third Answer: He learned that absolute power without proper wisdom has no true value
- Leave the Trial Room and go back down the stairs to the Entrance Hall.
- Go up the right staircase.
- Turn right and go up the stairs on the right. Continue up the stairs and open the door at the top.
- Go left.
- After the cut scene, go left and enter the next door.
- Continue down the Enchanted Walkway and pick up the papers on the floor.
- Go down the stairs to the Trial Room and open the door.
- Click on the handle in the floor on the right twice.
- Exit the Trial Room and go out into the forest to find Mustavio. Exhaust all conversation.
- Leave Mustavio and go back to the Entrance Hall.
- Go up the right staircase, turn right, and go down the stairs to the lower room. Go around to the left and up the stairs in the background.
- Go to the left, out to the Garden and into the Basement.
- Go forward, go downstairs, go downstairs again, and go forward toward the second alcove.
- Go around the covered crates to the back wall.
- Click on the wall. Click on: m, b, t, f, c, x
- Enter the Wine Cave.
- Go up the stairs and turn right. Go toward the large keg on the far wall and look at Mustavio's kegs which are located to the left of the large keg.
- Exit the Wine Cave and go down the stairs under the arch.
- Go forward twice and go out through the opening in the wall.
- Go forward and exit the Academy's Waterway.
- Go down and back to the weight puzzle in the wall.
- Go down the stairs and follow the path to a sign post.
- When the cut scene is over, go left down the path and back to the sign post.
- Look closely at the sign post and pull on the vine.
- Cross the bridge and talk with Mustavio.
- Leave Mustavio and go back to the Academy. Go in the Entrance Hall and all the way up the right stairs. Turn right and go down the stairs to the lower room. Go up the stairs in the background and go forward to the Garden Watch.

- Go forward to the table on the left.
- Click on the table and play the Minotaur Maze.
- Move your piece in the following order: Up 2, down 3, right 5, up 3, left 1, up 2, right 2, up 1 and left to the stairs.
- Go right and down into the Garden.
- At the bottom of the stairs, go forward and up the other set of stairs. From the top landing by the dragon on, go down the set of stairs at the bottom of the screen.
- Cross the little bridge. Click on the center of the circle with three symbols.
- Go back across the little bridge and up the stairs by the dragon.
- Go up left and click on the Light Puzzle on the wall.
- Click on the knobs in the following order: 1) Second from the top on the left, 2) First and second on the right.
- Go down the stairs and back up to the Garden Watch.
- Go back across the bridge, through the hall and all the way down the stairs.  
Go down and then down another set of stairs. Continue going down the stairs and open the door to the Water Pump Room.
- Click on the table on the right and then on the black handle at the bottom.
- Number the squares 1 – 16. You are moving squares from one place to another. Click on the squares in the following order: 12 to 14, 16 to 10, 8 to 9, 12 to 5, 8 to 1, 16 to 6, 16 to 7, 4 to 11 and 2 to 15.
- Go up the stairs to the landing. Then go all the way down the stairs and pull the lever.
- Go back to the Garden and pull the lever by the little bridge.
- Leave the Garden and go back up to the Garden Watch. Go over the bridge and all the way down the stairs. Go forward to the next staircase and go up. Go right and all the way up the stairs. Open the door.
- Go all the way left past the next door and enter the Study. Click on the door on the left wall.
- You are moving all the green pieces to the right and the white pieces to the left. Number the pieces from left to right 1 – 6. Move the pieces in the following order: 3, 4, 5, 3, 2, 1, 4, 5, 6, 3, 2, 1, 5, 6
- Go through the door, down the hall and out onto the balcony. Look at the tree. Take the fruit.
- Go through the entrance to the Winterowl Study on the right. Pick up the papers on the table in the lower corner.
- Go back to the door you opened to get out onto the Academy Facade.
- Go downstairs to the lower room and talk with Mustavio.
- Leave Mustavio and go back to the Entrance Hall.
- Go to the Store Room where you found Zak and take the tools located on the top shelf to the right of the chair.
- Go back to Mustavio and ask him to repair your pendant.
- Exit the Academy and go into the forest where you found Mustavio. Cross the bridge and follow the path to the right. Talk with Elvandar, the tree.
- Go back to the Academy and up to the Garden Watch. Go right and up the stairs. Open the door to the Dining Room.
- Go forward past all the tables and down the stairs on the right. Pick up the papers on the table on the left.
- Exit the Dining Room and go back to the Entrance Hall.
- Exit the Academy and go to the bridge in the forest. Cross the bridge, turn left, and head back to the Academy Waterway. Go up the stairs, left and enter the door on the right. Go up the stairs and pick up the flowers on the floor next to the barrel.
- Go back down the stairs and out. Enter the Machine Room door at the top of the screen.
- Go all the way upstairs in the Machine Room and enter the Store Room.
- Leave the Store Room and go to the Entrance Hall. Go up the right stairs and go to the Garden Watch.
- Turn right and go up the stairs to the Dining Room.
- Go past the tables and down the stairs on the right.
- Move straight ahead into the Pantry.
- Go left and click on the hovering fire.
- Go right to the far wall and look closely at the elevator. Click again to use it.
- Go down and then go down the stairs.

- Open the door on the left. Look at the handle and pull it.
- Go down. Look at the cauldron.
- Return to the door on the left of the stairs. Open it and pull the handle again.
- Climb the stairs on the right of the door and click on the cauldron.
- Click on the blue button on the right side of the elevator.
- Exit the Wine Cave and go down the stairs under the arch. Go through the basement and out the opening in the wall. Follow the walkway, go down the stairs and out. Go into the Machine Room.
- Leave the Machine Room and return to the Dining Room and Kitchen via the Garden Watch.
- Go through the Kitchen and go right. Go to the elevator and click on the cauldron.
- Once you have moved the cauldron, click on it.
- After the cut scene, move forward and open the door to the Academy Façade. Go right, open the door, go down the stairs and go to the Garden Watch.
- Go to the Dining Room and then through the Kitchen towards the elevator. Click on the table under the window on the left hand side.
- Click on the window.
- Look at the lever next to Lydia and click on the conversation in the following order:
  - “Let’s have Zak try something.” Once you have done this, move Zak to the other side of the bridge and have him look at the lever there.
  - Once he has looked at it, choose “I’ll try this lever”.
  - Have Zak look at the lever again and choose “Let’s have Lydia try something”.
  - Move Lydia up the stairs, look at the lever and choose “Let’s have Zak try something”.
  - As Zak, look at the lever and choose “I’ll try this lever”.
  - Have Zak look at the lever again and choose “Let’s have Lydia try something”.
  - Once Lydia has looked at the lever, choose “I’ll try this lever”.
  - As Lydia, look at the lever and choose “Let’s have Zak try something”.
  - Move Zak down the stairs and have him look at the lever. Choose “I’ll try this lever”.
  - Have Zak pull the same lever again by choosing “I’ll try this lever”.
  - Zak should look at the lever again and choose “Let’s have Lydia try something”.
  - Lydia should go down the stairs, look at the lever and then choose “Let’s have Zak try something”.
  - Have Zak pull the lever one more time.
- Lydia should cross the bridge and look at the altar.
- The left lever moves the riddle. The right lever moves the books.
- Read the riddle under the books.
  - Click on the right lever twice. Click on the blue stone under the book “Aetern”.
  - Click on the left lever once and read the riddle under the books.
  - Click on the right lever three times. Click on the blue stone under the book “Kyros”.
  - Click on the left lever once and read the riddle under the books.
  - Click on the right lever six times. Click on the blue stone under the book “Dria”.
  - Click on the left lever once and read the riddle.
  - Click on the right lever five times. Click on the blue stone under the book “Slund”.
- Go back across the bridge and exit the Trial Room.
- Cross the next bridge and open the door.
- Move right to another door. Open it, go down the stairs and make your way back to the Entrance Hall.
- Go through the gate behind the dragon and up the stairs.
- Turn left and go up the stairs, past the Dining Room, to the third Trial Room on the left.
- Open the door and enter the Trial Room.
- When the cut scene is over, click on the girl in the window. Once Lydia stops talking, click on the front door. Continue clicking on the girl and then the door. Lydia will eventually run to the door and the trial will be over.

- Exit the Trial Room and continue up the stairs to the Guardian's Lair.



- Exit the room and go up the stairs to the left.
- Go down the hallway on the right and enter Celeste's room.
- Move further into the room.
- When the cut scene is over, go right to the footbridge. Cross the footbridge and enter the Laboratory.
- After the conversation with Zak, read the plaque on the left wall.
- Go through the opening to the right of the plaque and stand on the yellow transporter disk.
- You will be teleported. Walk forward onto the yellow teleport disk in front of you.
- Now, step on the black teleport disk.
- Notice that there are four unlit obelisks in the room. Starting with the top right obelisk and continuing in a clockwise fashion number them 1 through 4.
  - Look at the third obelisk. Click on the ring.
  - Look at the second obelisk. Click on the ring three times.
  - Look at the first obelisk. Click on the ring.
  - Look at the fourth obelisk. Click on the ring.
- Stand on the teleport disk in the center of the room.
- Use the red teleport disk.
- Move away from the teleport disk and out onto the balcony. Go through the blue force field.
- Go up the stairs on the right and enter the Art Classroom. Go to the circle on the wall which is to the right of the windows. Look closely and then click on it. Zak will tell you not to. Do it anyway.
- Exit the Art Classroom and go down the stairs in front of the blue force field. Continue walking on the stairs and go through the next blue force field.
- Go through the opening and up the stairs to the North Tower.
- Use the yellow teleport disk.
- Go left and across the footbridge to Nathaniel's office.
- Go around the desk and pick up the papers on the desk.
- Leave Nathaniel's office and go back to the East Tower where you came in. Go to the other side of the statues and use the blue teleport disk.
- Move to the right and look at the circle on the wall. Click on the rune to activate it.
- Leave the Observatory by using the blue teleport disk.
- Go past the statues and step on the yellow teleport disk.
- Go down the stairs directly in front of you and across the bridge.

- Move forward.
- Click on Master Nightingale.
- Exit the Sanctuary Entrance by using the blue force field.
- Go back across the footbridge and click on the floating blue ball surrounded by rings.
- Click on the square frame in the center of the room. The object of this puzzle is to have one star, one planet, one sun and one moon in each row, column and diagonal.
  - Top row – planet, star, sun, moon
  - Second row – sun, moon, planet, star
  - Third row – moon, sun, star, planet
  - Fourth row – star, planet, moon, sun
- Use the red teleport disk.
- Move forward to the red teleport disk in front of you.
- Go through the opening and to the left. Use the yellow teleport disk.
- Go through the opening and toward the back of the room. Turn right and look at the game console. Click on the floating blue ball to deactivate the protection spell. Number the squares 1 – 16. Click on the squares in the following order: 1, 5, 1, 2, 5, 6, 2, 6, 2, 3, 6, 7, 3, 7, 11, 12, 7, 11, 10, 11, 11, 12, 12, 16, 6, 7, 3, 7, 6, 10, 5, 6, 10, 11, 6, 10, 6, 7, 7, 11, 10, 11, 11, 12, 5, 6, 2, 6, 6, 10, 10, 11, 1, 5, 1, 2, 2, 6, 5, 6, 6, 7, 3, 4, 3, 7, 1, 5, 1, 2, 2, 3, 2, 6, 1, 2, 1, 5, 5, 6, 6, 10, 2, 3, 2, 6, 14, 10, 10, 6, 6, 7, 5, 6, 6, 10, 10, 14, 6, 7, 6, 10, 2, 6, 3, 7, 3, 4, 2, 3, 3, 7, 6, 7, 2, 6, 5, 6, 6, 10, 10, 14, 14, 13
- Return to the yellow teleport disk and step on it.
- Go up the stairs, across the landing and left to the Atrium.
- When you get to the courtyard, go up and enter the Solarium on the right.
- Look at the circle on the wall to the left of the opening.
- Click on the circle to activate the rune.
- Leave the Solarium and go through the archway across the courtyard.
- Go up the stairs.
- Turn right and go up the stairs on the right hand side.
- Continue left up the stairs.
- Stand on the blue teleport disk.
- Enter the Forge Classroom. Go to the right wall and look at the circle in between the two dragon heads. Click on the rune to activate it.
- Look at the large circle on the wall above your head.
- Leave the Forge Classroom by stepping on the blue teleport disk.
- Go all the way down the stairs and enter the archway in between the two staircases.
- Continue down the stairs until you reach the stone. Click on the floating blue ball to deactivate the protection spell. Look at the marks above the dragon. The first one is off. The other two are lit. This is how you get through the islands. Where you are currently standing is the location of the first dragon/mark. Leave this dragon turned off as instructed by the marks. Continue down the path to the second stone and make sure the dragon is on. Go down the path to the third stone and make sure the dragon is on. Concentrate on the immediate task and continue turning the dragons off or on. Do not be confused by thinking that you have been to an island before. The fourth stone has more marks – on, on, off. This will be your next set of directions to follow. Turn this dragon on and the next one. Make sure the third one is off. The seventh stone has marks on it. Turn the dragon on at this stone and the next one, but make sure that the following two are turned off. Once you have completed this sequence, you come to a stone with markings, on, off, on, off. Turn this dragon on, the next one off, the third one on and the fourth one off.
- Follow the path to the Oracle.
- Take the path down right. Continue to follow the path while ignoring the stones.
- When you get back to the first stone, go all the way up the stairs. When you come out of the archway, go up the stairs on the left and use the red transport disk.
- Go right and right again to the footbridge. Cross it and enter the Laboratory.
- At the lower end of the table, click on the cauldron that is up and right.
- Brew a potion using Oracle Moss, Headen flower and Nigilis fruit.

- Leave the Laboratory using the yellow transport disk through the archway on the left.
- Use the upper yellow transport disk.
- Use the red transport disk.
- Go out onto the balcony and go through the blue force field.
- Walk straight down the stairs and go through the next blue force field.
- Go through the archway on the right and all the way up the stairs.
- Go down the stairs at the lower left, cross the bridge, go around the right or left side of the tower and enter the Library.
- Take the ball in the railing behind you.
- Go to the door at the top of the screen and look at the small sliding door on the left. Click on it to open it. Click on the indentation to place the ball there that will open the large door.
- Enter the room and take the ball from the pedestal.
- Exit the room, take the ball from the opening on the left of the door and enter the room directly across the stair well from your current position. You must use two balls to open this door.
- Enter the room and take the ball on the pedestal.
- Use the ball to open the door at the top of the screen.
- Enter the room and look closely at the tapestry on the far wall.
- Exit this room and the next room to go back to the stairwell. Take all three balls.
- Go to the room behind the railing where you picked up the first ball and open the door using two balls.
- Go left to the door on the far wall and open it.
- Enter the room and look closely at the tapestry on the far wall.
- Exit this room and the next room remembering to take all three balls.
- Go back to the first room you entered, open the door, enter the room and open the door on the right.
- Click on the tapestry on the far wall.
- Exit both rooms. Take all three balls.
- Enter the room next to the opening to the stairwell.
- Enter the room at the top of the screen and take the fourth ball.
- Exit this room and go all the way across to the room on the opposite side. Enter and look closely at the tapes try on the far wall.
- Exit this room and the next room to go back to the stairwell. Check your inventory to make sure you have all four balls and all four tapestries.
- Leave the Library, go back across the footbridge and use the yellow transport disk.
- Deactivate the protection spell behind the yellow transport disk.
- Enter the Statue Hall, go around the statues and look closely at the globe. Change the seasons in the Solarium a few times. Before you leave, make sure the season is set on Summer.
- Use the blue transport pad to your right to go to the Observatory.
- Enter the Observatory and go up the stairs on the left wall.
- When you get to the landing, look closely at the pedestal overlooking the classroom. Click on it to display the constellations. Move away from the pedestal and continue up the stairs to the telescope.
- Step on the moon on the floor to make it dark.
- Save your game here.
- Click on the telescope. This puzzle is quite tedious and complicated. Consult the in-game help system for information on how to manipulate the rings. This puzzle does not reset so telling you the steps I took will not help. In my humble opinion, this would be a perfect place to let the game solve this puzzle.
- The first coordinates are 33, 46, 62 and 25. Enter them in no particular order. Make sure the gold ball is next to the row with the coordinates in it.
- Click on the eyepiece up and left of the rings. Click on the bright star nearest the top to light the 33 and back away from the eyepiece.
- The next coordinates are 47, 11, 32 and 95.
- Click on the eyepiece and then on the lower left star to light the 47.
- The next coordinates are 87, 25, 68 and 95.
- Click on the eyepiece and then on the upper most star to light the 87.
- The last coordinates are 86, 59, 73 and 68.
- Click on the eyepiece and then on the lower left star to light the 73.
- Go downstairs and step on the blue disk.

- Exit the Statue Hall and go across the footbridge to Nathaniel's office. Deactivate the protection spell next to the ship in a bottle.
- Look at the bottle. When the cut scene is over, click on the bottle.
- There is a map next to the bottle that will show you how to follow the path to the office on the ship. Clicking on the bottles scattered throughout the maze will send you back to Nathaniel's office where you can start over.
- Click on the door. Move up left, up right, down right, up right, up left, up left, up right.
- Enter Nathaniel's office.
- Click on the drawer on the right side of the desk. Click on the handle. Open the drawer.
- Look at the bottle on the desk. Click on it again.
- Open the drawer and take the portrait. Open the drawer again and press the blue button in the side of the drawer.
- Step on the hidden disk.
- Take the scroll on the desk and attempt to deactivate the protection spell.
- Look at the books.
- Use the transporter disk.
- Leave Nathaniel's office and go back to the Statue Hall. Use the yellow transport disk.
- Exit using the stairs at the top of the screen.
- Go all the way down stairs, through the blue force field, all the way down the stairs and into the Art Classroom.
- Look at the canvas on the easel by the archway where you entered the room.
- Click on the large paint containers in the following order: red, yellow, blue and green.
- Look at the stand with two frames by the windows.
- Click on the inset in the top right of the screen.
- Click on the picture that looks like a flame in the second niche from the left at the bottom. Click again to pick it up. Click on the inset in the top right of the screen.
- Click on the empty frame on the left. Click on the inset. Click on the blue dragon in the center of the middle niche. Click again. Click on the inset. Click on the right frame.
- Get the landscape picture at the top of the first niche and replace the rune in the left frame.
- Get the silhouette in the fifth niche and replace the dragon slayer in the right frame.
- Get the picture of Celeste in the fourth niche at the top left and replace the forest in the left frame.
- Exit the Art Classroom and go up the stairs. Go through the blue force field.
- Go through the archway and use the red transport disk.
- Step on the yellow transport disk.
- Use the yellow transport disk in front of you.
- Exit the Laboratory, cross the footbridge, go around the tower and use the red transport disk.
- Go down the stairs and then up the stairs on the right.
- Use the blue transport disk.
- Enter the Forge Classroom. If Zak is not in the form of a dragon, go to the Laboratory and brew a potion to change him to a dragon.
- Move to the right wall and look at the large circle on the wall above your head.
- Click on the top left flame.
- Click on the empty niche between the two flames on the right.
- Click on the empty niche directly opposite.
- Click on the empty niche directly below the one you just clicked on.
- Move to the forge in the upper right hand corner. Number the forges 1 – 4 starting at the lower left corner. When the cut scene is over, look at the pedestal at forge three (where you are standing) and then click on it. Continue in the following order: 3, 3, 2, 2, 4, 4, 2 and 4.
- Look at the table in the center of the room. Click on the circle in the bottom left corner. Now click on the center circle, the center circle in the right column, the bottom left circle and the center circle in the bottom row.
- Exit the Forge Classroom by stepping on the blue transport disk.
- Once the cut scene is over, exit the Sanctuary by going through the blue force field.
- Go across the footbridge to the tower and use the red transport disk.
- Use the red transport disk at the bottom of the screen.

- Go through the archway and talk with the ghost.
- Leave the ghost and go through the archway to the right. Use the red transport disk.
- Use the red transport disk.
- Use the yellow transport disk.
- Exit the Statue Hall and go to Nathaniel's office. Use the yellow, red and blue transport disk behind Nathaniel's desk.
- Deactivate the protection spell.
- Look at the books. On the bottom shelf, click on the violet book on the right of the blue book. Click on the red book next to the blue book. Continue clicking on the books next to the blue book in the following order: green, red, green, red, violet, red, green, red, red (right) and violet.
- Use the disk and then exit Nathaniel's office. Go to the Statue Tower and use the yellow transport disk.
- Use the red transport disk. Use the red transport disk at the bottom of the screen.
- Go through the archway, past the ghost and up the stairs.
- Go down the other side and take the walkway to the courtyard. Enter the courtyard and then enter the Solarium on the right.
- Go up. When the cut scene is over, click on the alcove on the left.
- Click on any pot until there is a violet plant growing.
- Leave the Solarium, go back down the walkway to the Main Tower and use the red transport disk on the balcony outside. Use the red transport disk at the top of the screen. Step on the yellow transport disk.
- Go around the statues and click on the globe to change the seasons. Change the season to winter.
- Return to the Solarium and click on the alcove.
- Leave the violet flowers alone. Click on the pots to grow white in one pot and blue in the other.
- Leave the Solarium and go back down the walkway. Give the book from the ghost's library to him.
- Go to the Laboratory and click on the upper most cauldron on the lower end of the table.
- Click on the cauldron again. Mix a potion using Aleunder root, Nigilis fruit and Yewlock leaves.
- Click on the cauldron a third time. Mix a potion using Yewlock leaves, Headen flower and Nigilis fruit.
- Click on the cauldron a fourth time. Mix a potion using wolf dribble, cat hair and dragon claws.
- Go to the North Tower. Go all the way up the stairs, across the footbridge and around the right side of the Library Tower. Go through the wall to the Sanctuary.
- Go up the stairs on the left.
- Enter the archway and click on the plaque above the four niches.
- From left to right place the strange objects in the following order: meteorite, pearl, soul dust, and flame.
- Go to the large circle on the door to the Sanctuary. The ten objects on the circle rotate by clicking on the center. Refer to the picture for the proper position of each of the objects.



- Enter the Sanctuary.
- Click on the balls lined up next to the doll. Number the balls from left to right 1 – 6. Click on the balls in the following order: 3, 6, 2, 1, 4 and 5.
- Watch the final cut scene.
- End Game

# Final Thoughts...

As we close out our September issue, I would like to take a moment and give my thanks.

Formatting this issue has been a very enlightening experience. Sure, I make my own greeting cards and do funny things to my husband's pictures on the computer. But, formatting an entire magazine is a whole different ballgame. Great software certainly helps. However, great teammates make all the difference in the world.

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## **A special thanks to:**

Ugur for trusting in me to take this on and help alleviate some of his stress. I truly appreciate all the hard work he's put into the magazine from the very beginning. I don't think you can understand just how much work it actually is until you do it yourself. Ugur is still very much around and has been there to answer all my goofy questions and provide me with needed insight. I look forward to seeing his well written editorials and maybe, if we're lucky, a review here and there. He's an amazing guy. You're the best, Boss!

Ian (aka Thaumaturge), my partner in crime, for all the late night messenger meetings as we worked out all the final details for the magazine. He is my second set of eyes and sometimes, my first. His opinion is invaluable to me and I'm thankful that he stayed on as Editor, Reviewer, Dark Master of Magic, etc..

Gnome, Southern Belle, La Primavera who stepped-up to take on additional duties at Adventure Lantern in addition to providing articles. I am forever grateful for your support and willingness to stick around.

All the other members of the AL team, new and existing, who have contributed to our September issue. Neetie came to the rescue to do a last-minute review. Sir Dave, with his articles on running old games, will be saving countless gamers from banging their heads on their keyboards in frustration. Drantin continued his excellent work as a copy editor. Hlalex, Nuggy, Vhayste and G. Gordon provided us with great reviews.

My husband for not complaining that I'm doing all this. Of course, his Xbox 360, Forza 2 game and Xbox Live help diminish any emotional pain.

Readers of our little magazine. Thank you for waiting for us to get ourselves back on track. Without you, there wouldn't be a reason to do any of this.

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We, at Adventure Lantern, hope that you have enjoyed our September issue. I personally can't wait to work with the entire Adventure Lantern team as we move on towards our October, "Halloween themed" issue.

Until we see each other again....

---Wendy