

Adventure Lantern



Reviews:

- **Slip Space - The Burma-Shave Analogy**
- **Lost Horizon**
- **Knights in Shining Armor - Episode 1**
- **Dracula Resurrection**
- **Dead Meets Lead**

Editorial

Perhaps the most fulfilling part of working on Adventure Lantern issues is the feedback we receive from our readers. The occasional encouraging e-mail or blog post truly makes our efforts seem worthwhile, driving me to keep producing our online magazine. I received such an e-mail shortly after releasing our June 2011 issue. Beyond encouraging me to keep working on AL, the e-mail also brought an extraordinary adventure game to my attention.

Our reader described a puzzle adventure called Slip Space. It was originally released in 2010 and designed by a single person. I vaguely remembered reading a review about it at Just Adventure, but the game had long fallen off my radar. If not for Marina's e-mail, I probably would have never purchased a copy and missed out on a highly immersive puzzle adventure. This issue would not feature Slip Space as the cover article either.

After having such a good experience with playing and reviewing Slip Space, I would like to encourage all of our readers to take a few moments and let us know if there are games you would like us to cover. Even if the game is several years old and requires some work to run on a modern system, we will be glad to find a copy and write about it. Since we have been absent for a good chunk of 2011, this would be a good way for us to prioritize reviews and cover games that might be of interest to you. If you have any suggestions, please drop me a line at ugur@adventurelantern.com and we will include the game in a future edition of the magazine.

Browsing through the rest of this issue, you will find an interview with Mike Morrison about the upcoming science-fiction adventure called Prominence. The

game is yet another independent development effort that looks highly promising. In the interview, Mr. Morrison pulled back the curtain and gave us plenty of exciting details about the adventure.

Moving on to the rest of our reviews, you will notice that Jonathon enjoyed playing Lost Horizon and Dracula Resurrection. The Dracula review is Jonathon's first article covering the series. We will feature his reviews of the sequels - called The Last Sanctuary and The Path of the Dragon - in the following months.

We also looked at a couple of misfires this month. Gnome reviewed Dead Meets Lead (DML), which is an arena shooter that was released just a few months ago. Sadly, despite a couple of innovative ideas, Gnome found that the game was an exercise in frustration.

Finally, there is the review of Knights in Shining Armor: Our King's Tale – Episode 1. In my eight years writing game reviews, I do not remember being more disappointed by the first episode of a series. After completing the episode, I sincerely wondered if it was even worthwhile to write a review. Knights in Shining Armor received the lowest rating I have ever given, leaving me with very little enthusiasm about the rest of the series. Hopefully things will turn around with episode 2.

Here's hoping you will find something to enjoy in our short August 2011 issue. Be sure to tune in next month for a new PDF

Until next time,
Ugur

For all your questions and comments about the magazine, send an e-mail to: ugur@adventurelantern.com

To receive and update when a new issue is released, send an email to: subscribe@adventurelantern.com. Please make sure the subject line of your email includes the word "Subscribe".

Follow us on [Facebook](#).

Contents

Adventurer's Ravine



- **Prominence Interview with Mike Morrison** **page 4**
Prominence is a first-person, point-and-click PC adventure game set in a science-fiction world where the player is cast as a crew member on a colonization mission. The mission teeters on the brink of disaster and the future of the colony and its people are in the hands of the player.



- **Slip Space – The Burma-Shave Analogy review** **page 7**
You are not asked whether or not you accept the mission. If you have any chance of returning to your previous life, you simply have to do as the agency orders. After the briefing, SIA agents unceremoniously teleport you to the mysterious building. Slip Space beckons...



- **Lost Horizon review** **page 10**
Fenton Paddock, the main protagonist, is a lovable rogue with a heart of gold. He has been dishonorably discharged from the British military and is now a small time smuggler in Hong Kong. The adventure starts off with his friend, Richard, disappearing during an expedition into Tibet, but soon turns into a world-spanning, apocalypse-preventing grand journey.



- **Knights in Shining Armor – Episode 1 review** **page 11**
Prince Rupert is on his way to the capital of some kingdom. Once he reaches the city, Rupert is supposed to marry a princess. Evidently, the wedding is going to put an end to the war that has been raging between the two nations, presumably allowing everyone involved to live happily ever after.



- **Dracula Resurrection review** **page 13**
Dracula Resurrection is chock full of content and actually has a very open world. While for the most part you have to approach the puzzles in a linear fashion, it never seems forced and you always seem to have many avenues to explore at the same time.

Uncharted Waters



- **Dead Meets Lead review** **page 14**
Dead Meets Lead is -at heart- an indie and definitely innovative arena shooter, that might not feature much shooting, but does try to make up for it by sporting both pirates and zombies. Sadly though, innovation isn't a priori a good thing; some things haven't been attempted for the simple reason that they just don't work.

Prominence Interview with Mike Morrison

conducted by Ugur Sener

Prominence is an upcoming science-fiction adventure game from Digital Media Workshop. The game invites players to explore a space colony that belongs to an advanced civilization known as the Letarri. After years of drifting across space without a home, the Letarri discover a habitable planet. An advance ship is sent to the planet to begin the colonization process. However, something goes wrong with the mission. It will be up to the players to find out what happened to the colony. As Prominence nears completion, we caught up with Mike Morrison from Digital Media Workshop to find out more about the adventure.

[Adventure Lantern]: How would you describe Prominence?

[Mike Morrison]: Prominence is a first-person, point-and-click PC adventure game set in a science-fiction world where the player is cast as a crew member on a colonization mission. The mission teeters on the brink of disaster and the future of the colony and its people are in the hands of the player.



[AL]: What can you tell us about the storyline?

[MM]: It's about the fate of a race of people called the Letarri. They've been refugees for hundreds of years and now they've finally discovered a remote inhabitable world. The player is part of a small vanguard crew, and their mission is to go to this far-off planet and build the first base on the surface for the incoming colonists.

There are just over 30 members in the vanguard crew, but their vessel is designed to travel to the planet and then become an orbital factory, using nanotechnology to fabricate structures and components that are shuttled down to the surface and assembled by the small crew with help from a variety of vehicles, robots, and machines.

Unfortunately, the mission has gone awry and bad things have happened. The player has to unravel the clues, determine what went wrong, and then decide what they want to do about it.

Meanwhile, millions of Letarri are slowly making their way to what they believe will be their new home. Their fate rests in the hands of the player.

[AL]: What kind of a setting did you create for the game?

[MM]: Well, it's a science-fiction game, but we wanted it to be based – at least somewhat – on reality.

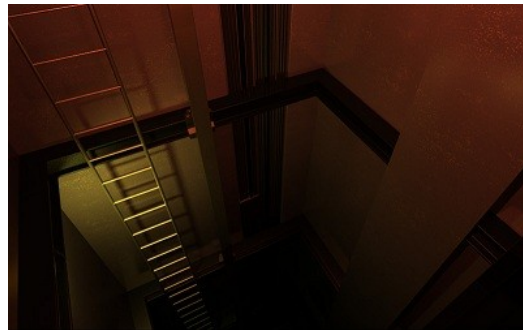
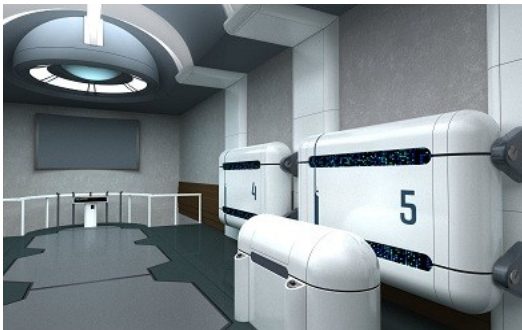
A few years ago, I was working on a team in a visual effects guild. We had a client who needed 3d visualizations to support a proposal for the long-term colonization of Mars. It was a fun project and gave me the opportunity to learn about the real-world challenges and necessities of real interstellar colonization.

Of course, we don't have the technology level that the Letarri have. I think when you say, "science-fiction", people expect a certain amount of "future" in what they experience. So we worked hard to try to give real meaning to most of what you see in the game, even if it's much more advanced technology than what we might have here on Earth. Whenever possible, every object – whether it's a room, prop, machine, computer system, or other object – was designed for a purpose. It has a role or meaning to the mission.

[AL]: How will the players interact with the environment?

[MM]: Each environment in the game has been fully built in 3D, and as players move through each area they'll experience it via animated transitions, which really give a sense of scale and dimension to each area. Rather than just clicking to move forward and jumping to a new location, they'll get to see what it's like as they move from one location to the next. So right away we're really trying to put the player into the world.

Then we have various times in the game where the player changes the environment through their in-game actions. They might restore power, make some repairs, activate some machinery, blow something up, etc. which may change one or more environments – sometimes quite drastically.



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

[MM]: Prominence includes a tasty mixture of puzzles. There are the classic use-inventory-object-on-environment type puzzles in a myriad of flavors plus some variants that may require construction or deconstruction of items. Sometimes inventory items are used in conjunction with some other type of environmental interaction. And then there are a couple of "gotcha" puzzles where that classic adventure gamer tactic – running around picking up everything that's not bolted down – can come back to bite you. Kevin will get mad at me if I say much more about that...

We also have many GUI puzzles. How could a science-fiction adventure not have some cool touch-screens and interfaces and other goodies to play with, right? Computer systems, both graphical and text-based, appear in Prominence and the player will get to use them to do all kinds of neat stuff to help them on their adventure. Many are unique, some are used a few times with varying levels of difficulty as the game progresses, and there's a really cool holographic system where you get to go into a – hmm, I better not ruin the fun.

As the game progresses, the player also gets some additional tools/abilities that they can use to help them solve puzzles and unravel the mystery of what happened (and what they can do about it).

Thinking about it now, I'm realizing that we rarely use only one mechanic in a given puzzle. We have lots of hybrid cases where a puzzle uses both inventory and GUI steps on the way to being resolved. I think the reasons for that are, first, the game world was built around the sense of realism that I mentioned earlier, so the systems and interactions required are understandable because they're rooted in reality. Second, they're based on the events of the story – not based on arbitrary puzzle counts or obscure mechanics. By following the story, you'll generally have a good idea of what needs to be done and usually a basic idea of how it might be possible.

[AL]: *The Prominence Web site indicates that the adventure will have multiple endings. Could you elaborate on this?*

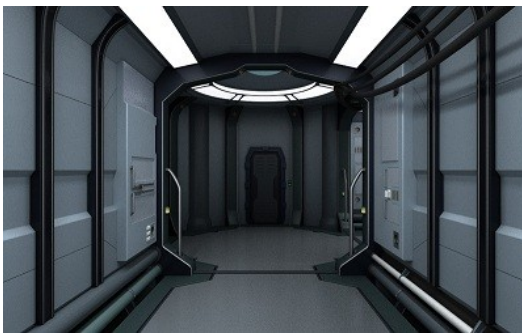
[MM]: At a key moment in the adventure, the player will make a critical choice that will take them down one of two possible routes. Each of those routes is separate and has different content, puzzles, and gameplay, and also contains multiple outcomes. So there are several ways that the story can “end”.

[AL]: *Can you tell us a little about the development team?*

[MM]: The core team since development first began has been Kevin [McGrath] and me. Kevin handles the programming. I'm responsible for all the art, along with the business, PR, and other operational duties for the studio. Story and design are shared between us.

About once per week, Tom [Griffith] and I get together in the studio to work together on the audio. We're longtime collaborators on a variety of audio projects.

We've had other help over the years at various times from freelance and volunteer supporters, and we are currently assembling a crack team of beta testers for the final push toward completion.



[AL]: *How long have you been working on the project?*

[MM]: About five years, including pre-production. It mostly came down to the old rule: fast, good, or cheap – pick two. We didn't want fast and cheap because it wouldn't be good, and we couldn't afford fast and good, because it wouldn't be cheap. So we chose good and cheap and it wasn't fast.

[AL]: *What were some of the challenges you faced while designing the game?*

[MM]: Budget and scope were two of the biggest challenges. Because we're such a small team, we had to come up with creative ways to approach various hurdles in development. Finding balance in every detail of the game became a very important part of the development process.

[AL]: *When can we expect the game to be released?*

[MM]: Prominence is scheduled for release on Windows PCs (XP/Vista/Win7) later this year.

Adventure Lantern thanks Mike Morrison for taking the time to answer our questions. Judging from Mr. Morrison's responses and the initial screenshots, Prominence is shaping up to be a very compelling science-fiction adventure. Exploring the colony and working on the multi-layered puzzles Mr. Morrison described sounds exciting. If you like sci-fi themes, Prominence is most definitely worth putting on your radar. To find out more about the upcoming adventure, visit the official [Prominence Web site](#).

Slip Space – The Burma-Shave Analogy

review by Ugur Sener

You do not volunteer to be an SIA agent. The job is forced on you. The Strategic Intelligence Alliance secretly implants a chip in your brain. Initially, the chip is dormant. However, when the agency needs your services, the chip is activated and you are instantly transported to the SIA headquarters. Before you even have a chance to take in your surroundings, an agent gives you the briefing for your first mission.

According to the agent, a building with the sign 'The Golden Age of Advertising' has been disappearing and reappearing across the globe. The agency suspects scientist Webster Wotsletter and his five sons are behind this strange phenomenon. SIA has developed a protocol to predict where the building will appear next. Your job, as an SIA agent, is to go to the building and assess the potential threat posed by Wotsletter and his family.



You are not asked whether or not you accept the mission. If you have any chance of returning to your previous life, you simply have to do as the agency orders. After the briefing, SIA agents unceremoniously teleport you to the mysterious building. The front door appears to be locked. Walking around to the back of the building, you see a strange contraption. There are flickering lights and levers. Does this mechanism open the front door? As you start tinkering with the device, you get the feeling that you stepped into a surreal and mysterious world. Slip Space beckons...

Slip Space - The Burma-Shave Analogy is an extraordinary adventure game designed by Dan

Markosian. The game thrusts players into a bizarre world full of strange devices waiting for you to unlock their secrets. It may not feature cutting-edge graphics and the themes explored may be a little too exotic for some players, but with its clever design and innovative puzzles, Slip Space offers a challenging and highly entertaining gaming experience.



The game takes inspiration from the advertisements used by Burma-Shave shaving cream in the 1920s. The Burma-Shave advertisements consisted of a series of small billboard signs that were placed along highways. The signs were intended to be read in sequence, often delivering a humorous message involving the shaving cream. Some of the signs also contained messages against speeding.

In Slip Space, Dan Markosian compares the Burma-Shave ads to our perception of reality. As explained in the game, our perception of reality can be likened to viewing a series of signs on the highway. Among the infinite number of inputs constantly surrounding us, we only perceive a limited number. Piecing together those snippets, we form our sense of reality. The game asks how that perception might be altered if we experience the fragments of information in a different way. Would the overall image be radically different? Would time and space have the same meaning?

Asking similar questions, Wotsletter and his sons eventually develop a technology that can warp reality. Using this technology, the scientists are able to make 'The Golden Age of Advertising' building disappear and reappear. However, at the beginning of the

adventure, Wotsletter's motivation for teleporting the building is unclear. It will be up to you to discover what the scientist is truly seeking.

Slip Space is played from a first-person perspective, using a very intuitive mouse-driven interface. The game is designed as a series of slideshow images. You can turn to the left or right by clicking the left mouse button on the edges of the screen. On some screens, it is also possible to look up. The mouse icon changes to indicate that you can walk in a particular direction or interact with an object. The game does not include an inventory system. In fact, Slip Space does not have any inventory-based puzzles. In order to overcome the game's challenges, you need to carefully examine your surroundings and determine how you need to interact with the various contraptions you will encounter.



The game begins just outside 'The Golden Age of Advertising' building. It turns out that the building belongs to Wotsletter's son Uber. Once you solve a couple of puzzles, you arrive at an area called 'The Shave'. Designed by Wotsletter and his sons, 'The Shave' makes up the central hub of Slip Space. From here, you need to solve several puzzles to gain access to realms dedicated to Wotsletter's four other sons. In each of these realms, you will need to tackle additional challenges. The game's story gradually unfolds as you explore each area and solve puzzles.

The Shave and the areas dedicated to each Wotsletter son are a joy to explore. Mr. Markosian has carefully designed each location to have an otherworldly feel. Whether you are aligning planets or stepping on platforms surrounded by clouds, each setting feels unique and foreign. This fits very well with the game's theme of altered perceptions. You never know what to expect from the next realm,

making your exploration very fulfilling.

However, where Slip Space truly shines is in the puzzles department. The game is full of cleverly designed logic puzzles. Between The Shave and the realms dedicated to each son, there is a great variety of challenges. For the most part, solving these puzzles involves examining your immediate area and trying to understand how various devices work. You will need to decipher patterns, understand connections, and figure out how several machines work together. While some of the puzzles are very straightforward, others may leave even the most experienced adventurers scratching their heads for a while. Slip Space is not the kind of game that would be recommended to someone new to adventure gaming. However, none of the challenges in the game are unfair. Hints are sometimes available in the immediate area and there is no penalty for trial-and-error. With a little patience and perseverance, all of the puzzles should be doable.



The most important aspect of the puzzles is that they feel original. Do not expect generic slider puzzles or jigsaws in Slip Space. You will not have to put up with annoying time limits or slide a piece of paper under a door to recover a key. Mr. Markosian has avoided trite puzzles experienced players will have seen many times in other games. Instead, what we get is a remarkable collection of unique logic puzzles. At least for me, many of the challenges in Slip Space felt rather fresh. It was very nice to actually figure out how the puzzles worked from scratch and get immersed in the strange world of Slip Space. It is hard to find many other games that successfully implement so many novel challenges.

Despite its clever design and outstanding puzzles, Slip Space is not a game every adventurer will enjoy.

For one thing, the unusual theme about how we perceive reality may not appeal to all gamers. The strange environments and the odd imagery during the story sequences may be too outlandish for some players.



Adventurers looking for a deep and branching storyline will also be disappointed. Beyond the initial information you are given about SIA and Wotsletter, there is little plot development in the game. You discover more details about the scientist and the agency as you travel through each realm. The game's ending also does a nice job of explaining the purpose behind your explorations. However, if you are looking for a significant amount of character development and a richly detailed storyline, Slip Space will not deliver. At its core, Slip Space is a game of solitary exploration. It is about discovering foreign lands and tinkering with strange devices. If that's not your cup of tea, you will be frustrated with this game.

Slip Space's approach to some of the puzzles might also represent a problem. Especially during the early portions of the adventure, Slip Space is good at giving you feedback when you successfully solve a puzzle. However, as you delve deeper into the adventure, the game does not always indicate that you have found the correct solution. Similarly, it is not always clear what, if anything, happens when you press a button or pull a lever. This was probably a deliberate design choice to prevent players from randomly stumbling on the correct solution without fully understanding how a given puzzle works. Nevertheless, the lack of feedback can be frustrating in certain areas and should have been avoided.

In the end, Slip Space - The Burma-Shave Analogy is a unique and enjoyable adventure offering. The game features a variety of surreal locations that are a joy to explore. There are a substantial number of logic puzzles, many of which feel original. The limited plot development and the lack of feedback on certain puzzles can be irritating. However, despite its issues, Slip Space is still a triumph. It is remarkable that a single person is responsible for designing this game. It is not the kind of game that will appeal to everyone, but if you are looking for a good puzzle adventure, do not miss Slip Space. You can purchase a copy from the [game's official site](#).

Special thanks to Marina for bringing Slip Space to my attention.

Slip Space – The Burma-Shave Analogy

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

Interesting locations. Numerous original puzzles.

Fumbles in the dark:

Limited plot development. Little or no feedback on some of the puzzles.

Verdict:

A highly enjoyable puzzle adventure. Recommended to gamers that enjoy solitary exploration.



Developer:

Dan Markosian

Publisher: Dan Markosian

Release Date: April 2010

System Requirements:

- Windows® 7/Vista™/XP (SP2/SP3)
- Intel® Pentium® IV or equivalent AMD®
- 512 MB RAM (1 GB Recommended for Windows® Vista™)
- 128 MB DirectX® 9.0C Compatible Video Card
- 16-bit DirectX® 9.0C Compatible Sound Card

Lost Horizon

review by [Jonathon Wisnoski](#) (originally appeared on [Jonathon's blog](#))

Lost Horizon is a point-and-click adventure developed by Animation Arts and released in late 2010. Even from the game's main menu, it is obvious that the story draws a lot of inspiration from action movies, in particular Indiana Jones. True to this prediction, the game is set in gorgeous far flung locations throughout Europe and Asia and filled with puzzles, fights, action, and of course, adventure.

The story is arguably the best part of Lost Horizon, which is loosely based on the classic 1933 book of the same name. The game is set during the height of the British empire, with the empire in control of China (along with most of the rest of the world). In the game, Fenton Paddock, the main protagonist, is a lovable rogue with a heart of gold. He has been dishonorably discharged from the British military and is now a small time smuggler in Hong Kong. The adventure starts off with his friend, Richard, disappearing during an expedition into Tibet and Fenton going in search of him, but soon turns into a world-spanning, apocalypse-preventing, damsel-in-distress-saving, grand adventure that revolves around the mystical city of Shambala.

There are many good, and sometimes very ambiguous, puzzles in Lost Horizon. But these puzzles often, at least for me, degenerated into trying every inventory object with everything in the game world, or consulting a walkthrough. However, adventure gamers are likely used to hard and non-obvious puzzles, and the ones in Lost Horizon did not distract from the overall experience that much. One

good thing about this game's puzzles are the action and cooperative parts, which are somewhat unique. The action parts do a good job of projecting the tension and danger of the scene. It's not that you do anything groundbreaking in these sections - you just solve moderately normal puzzles - but they are presented in a way that drives the player's interest. Additionally, there are no logic puzzles in the game, which makes Lost Horizon quite easy compared to many other games in the adventure genre.

The presentation was just spot on the entire game, featuring believable voice acting, mood setting music, and often fantastical visuals to match the story. Where these visuals really shone was in the more fantasy-based environments. Another good feature of the game that is worth mentioning is the length. I believe it is slightly longer than the average adventure title and the longest adventure I have played in quite some time, taking quite a few days to complete, all of them enjoyable. However, and unfortunately like too many games, the ending is a little anticlimactic, the last few "puzzles" are increasingly simple. It would have been better if they were replaced with quick time events. The closing cinematic was average at best.

All in all, Lost Horizon is a solid adventure title, with sometimes beautiful graphics, sometimes great puzzles, and always an interesting story. It has its faults but nothing too serious. And the good far outweighs the bad. So if you are at all interested in adventure games and in action adventure movies, then this might be a game you should check out.

Lost Horizon

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

A great action adventure story, reminiscent of Indiana Jones.

Fumbles in the dark:

Some of the puzzles can be quite unintuitive.

Verdict:

A great action adventure story with good puzzles, nice graphics, and interesting locations.



Developer: Animation Arts

Publisher: Deep Silver

Release Date: September 2010

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows XP or newer
- CPU: 2 GHz
- RAM: 512 MB
- DirectX: 9.0
- Hard Drive: ~4.5 GB

Knights in Shining Armor: Our King's Tale – Episode 1

review by Ugur Sener

The episodic gaming format is no doubt an appealing option for development companies. Periodically releasing relatively small chunks of a game allows developers to bring in revenue and recover some of the costs before the entire project is completed. Player feedback on each installment is also crucial, allowing the team to make targeted improvements on future releases.

At the same time, episodic games present a unique challenge. In order to keep players interested, each chapter needs to provide a satisfying experience. Individual episodes need to feel relevant, adding something substantial to the overall story. Similarly, each chapter needs to provide sufficient playtime and entertainment value to justify the money players are expected to spend on the game.

Designing the first episode of the series presents an even bigger challenge. The first chapter has the difficult task of introducing the main characters, setting the game's tone, and laying the groundwork for the story that will be completed in future episodes. With its opening chapter, Knights in Shining Armor (KISA) faces all of these challenges. Sadly, the first episode of the series fails to rise to the occasion. With its dull conversations, lack of puzzles, and unacceptably short length, KISA delivers a disappointing and shallow experience.

The story behind KISA is very simple. Players take control of Prince Rupert, who is on his way to the capital of some kingdom. Once he reaches the city, Rupert is supposed to marry a princess. Evidently, the wedding is going to put an end to the war that has been raging between the two nations, presumably allowing everyone involved to live happily ever after.

The idea of a young prince making a difficult journey through a war-torn country is certainly an acceptable setup for a game series. Unfortunately, KISA fails to introduce this relatively straightforward story in an effective manner. The game's awkward conversations do not clearly convey the overall theme and do a poor job of making players care about Rupert's travels. Problems with plot development and conversations

emerge during the very first scene of KISA. The game opens at an inn, where Prince Rupert is chatting with an unnamed character. It seems that the goal of this scene was to introduce players to the game using some witty banter between the pompous prince and a commoner. However, what we actually get is a conversation that is incoherent and difficult to follow. Even though the dialog lasts several minutes, very little valuable information is revealed. The attempts at humor do not really hit the mark either. For instance, it's not exactly hilarious to hear Rupert argue about how he doesn't need to know his future wife's name. The dull introduction fails to get you excited about the rest of the episode.



After the initial chat, you take control of Rupert. KISA is played from a third-person perspective, using a simple mouse-driven interface. The default mouse icon is a silver ring. When you hover the mouse over a hotspot, the icon turns into a gold ring. A single click on the left mouse button is used to interact with the hotspot. The inventory is accessible from the top portion of the screen, though you will only need to use it a couple of times during the game.

The entire episode takes place inside the inn. You only get to explore the dining area where the game begins and a single guest room. Along the way, you meet the innkeeper and a girl who is staying at the inn. Keeping in line with the opening sequence, Rupert has needlessly long conversations with each of these characters. Once again, it seems like the game is trying to be witty and humorous, but at least

for me, the attempts at levity missed the mark. Instead, the dialogs seemed dull, taking far too long to communicate a small amount of useful information. There was also very little development with regards to the game's background story.

Unfortunately, boring dialog is not the only issue with the first episode of KISA. The game is also severely lacking in content. It is bad enough that you only have two rooms to investigate. On top of that, the episode offers only three puzzles, two of which are very simple inventory-based challenges. There is also a single logic puzzle, which is a generic slider puzzle. Rupert can pick up several additional inventory items, but they are not used during the game. Presumably, these items will be useful in future episodes.



It is a real shame that more challenges were not included in the episode. There just isn't enough for players to do besides enduring tedious conversations. From start to finish, the first episode of KISA takes

less than an hour to complete. If you discount the dialogs, the actual playtime is probably around ten to fifteen minutes. The episode abruptly ends once you spend a night at the inn and get ready to leave. There is no buildup for the next chapter or foreshadowing of future events either. As such, you may well finish the game with very little interest to see what happens in the next installment.

To be fair, there are some nice aspects of KISA. For instance, the background music is pleasant and fitting for the medieval setting. Similarly, the graphics are decent and the few locations you visit are nicely detailed. However, these features are not enough to make up a good game. Boring chats with poorly-developed characters and a couple of random inventory puzzles simply do not add up to a satisfying gaming experience. There is just not enough plot development to get excited about Rupert's journey or start caring about the characters.

As it stands, the first episode of KISA is very difficult to recommend to anybody. The episode plays more like a demo for a bigger game than a fully-developed and complete product. There are numerous commercial and freeware adventures that provide a substantially better experience.

Here's hoping the developers will learn from their mistakes and deliver a more complete game with future installments of Knights in Shining Armor. The first episode is a bust, but Rupert's journey is far from over. With significantly more content, better executed conversations, and a richer storyline, future episodes can still turn this saga into a fun medieval adventure.

Knights in Shining Armor: Our King's Tale – Ep 1

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

Pleasant background music that fits the game's theme.

Fumbles in the dark:

Far too short for a commercial release. Conversations are dull and tedious. Lacks imaginative puzzles.

Verdict:

A disappointing game that is difficult to recommend to anybody.



Developer: Fluff Entertainment

Publisher: Corbomite Games

Release Date: September 2010

System Requirements:

- Windows 98/2000/XP/Vista
- 3D accelerated video card compatible with DirectX 8
- Requires installation of .NET Framework 2.0

Dracula Resurrection

review by [Jonathon Wisnoski](#) (originally appeared on [Jonathon's blog](#))

Dracula Resurrection is the first game in the Dracula trilogy. It is the direct predecessor to The Last Sanctuary, but completely unrelated to the third title, The Path of the Dragon. I have really enjoyed every one of these games and it is now one of my favorite classical adventure series. However, Dracula Resurrection is the obvious best title in the entire series. And like the other titles in the series, it is of the fully 3D node-based variety.

Dracula Resurrection is chock full of content and actually has a very open world for an adventure game. And while for the most part you have to approach the puzzles in a linear fashion, it never seems forced and you always seem to have many avenues to explore at the same time. In fact, the game is so open that it is separated into just two main areas, Dracula's castle and the surrounding village. With both of areas being so big that I would be surprised if you did not get a little lost at times.

All of these locations are filled with great looking, classically low res, horror-themed visuals. But almost as often as you see these normal in-game visuals, you will be seeing a unimaginable number of cut scenes. For almost everything you do, you will see a new one: Traveling to a new location, there is probably a cut scene. Opening a particularly important chest, another cut scene. Pulled some lever, even more cut scenes. Not that this is a bad thing, the cut scenes are great, with improved visuals

and of course a different perspective giving the game the ability to better convey emotion and action. Overall these cinematics are wonderful, but they do contain some corny dialogue and bugs. Not that this dialogue does not fit the plot, which is really uninspired and contains far too much stereotypical overconfidence by Dracula (especially considering how incredibly easy it is to defeat him and his minions at every turn). But of course, the horror genre can be somewhat self-parodying at times.

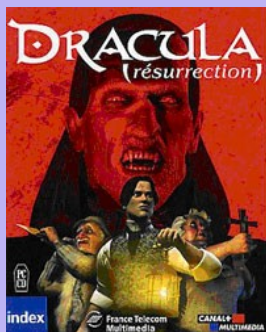
One of the main things you will be doing, of course, is solving puzzles, and this is by far the best part of the game. There are a wide variety of logic and inventory-based puzzles, all of which are simply fantastic. Most of the puzzles are intuitive (I did not really get stuck at any point in the entire game). They can also be challenging and quite unique at times. Some of these puzzles are also obviously a little broken, but happily not in a way that should impede your progress.

In summary, Dracula Resurrection is a completely fantastic classical point and click adventure, with only a few small insignificant problems weighing against the great polished behemoths that are the good parts. So if you like vampires and point and click games this is a title you have to check out.

Technical note: Newer systems might need to run the game in Windows 98/ME compatibility mode.

Dracula Resurrection

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

The fantastic puzzles, particularly the big multi-step puzzles.

Fumbles in the dark:

The story could have been more serious and used better dialogue.

Verdict:

One of the best 3D, node-based, classic, adventures.



Developer: Index+, Canal+

Publisher: Microïds

Release Date: 1999

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows 98 or newer
- CPU: Pentium III 500 MHz
- RAM: 128MB RAM (256MB for Windows XP or latter)
- Video: Video card compatible with Direct X, 8MB
- Sound: Sound card compatible with Direct X

Dead Meets Lead

review by Gnome (originally appeared on [Gnome's blog](#))

One of the reasons I don't usually review games I haven't particularly enjoyed is that I often can't be bothered to properly play them, let alone take the time to actually write the review. Apparently then, Dead Meets Lead is quite an exception. I never particularly enjoyed it, it most obviously is not an adventure game, I didn't play it exhaustively, yet here I am writing about it. Why? Because it does have some redeeming features, you see.



Dead Meets Lead is -at heart- an indie and definitely innovative arena shooter, that might not feature much shooting, but does try to make up for it by sporting both pirates and zombies. Sadly though, innovation isn't a priori a good thing; some things haven't been attempted for the simple reason that they just don't work. Melee arena combat is apparently one of those

ideas. Then again, things could have been better if the controls, the camera, and the hits each enemy can take were balanced in a better way, but this is not the case. Enemies can take ages to defeat, more often than not the action takes place hidden behind a building or something, and the WASD-mouse combination isn't ideal for sword-based arena shooters. Oh, and don't get me started on the zombies that restrict your movement by ensnaring you in the most frustrating of ways...

To the game's defense though, one could add that by featuring a shotgun it does turn itself into a rather lovely yet more traditional arena-shooter. One would of course be only partly correct, as the ammunition for the shotgun (and the rest of the firearms that are eventually unlocked) is far too sparse and in certain levels simply absent, which is a crying shame. Shooting the zombie hordes as a cursed pirate on a bleak exotic island is immensely enjoyable and goes on to show just how great Dead Meets Lead could have been; especially if it had bothered to include a few save-points in its brutally hard levels.

Sadly, as it is, all the game manages is to more or less waste the potential its setting, plot, graphics, music, interesting upgrade mechanics and overall polish had created. Still, I'm pretty sure that you dear reader might just enjoy Dead Meets Lead more than I did. Guess you should have a look then. The demo should help you decide whether this is for you or not.

Dead Meets Lead

PC Action



Bright moments:

Well it does look good and sports a few interesting and absolutely new ideas.

Fumbles in the dark:

Said new ideas just don't work; unbalanced combat and infuriating design choices.

Verdict:

A quality indie production with some interesting touches, that has sadly been let down by its core gameplay mechanic.

Developer:

Keldyn Interactive

Publisher: Keldyn Interactive

Release Date: May 2011

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows® XP SP2 / Vista / 7 (32-64 bits)
- Processor: 2 Ghz Dual Core
- Memory: 2 GB RAM
- Graphics card: 256 MB DirectX® 9.0-compliant card with Shader Model 3.0 or higher
- Hard drive: 1 GB free space