

Issue #52
August 2014

Adventure LANTERN



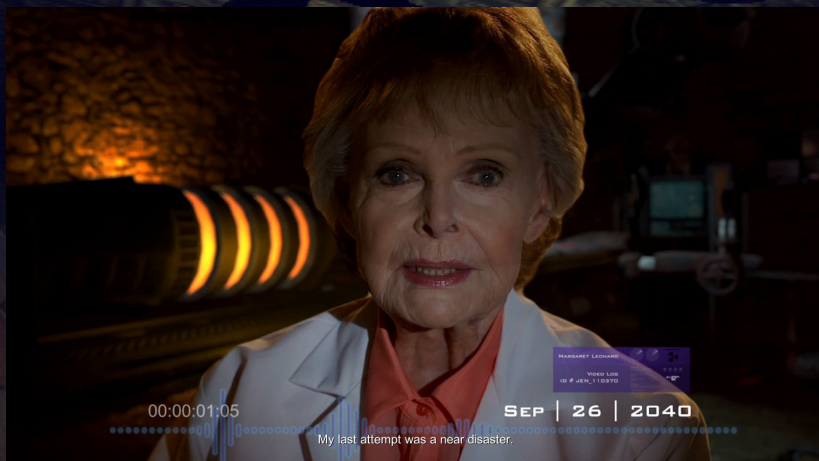
Reviews:

- GOODBYE DEPONIA
- JOURNEY OF A ROACH
- STRANDED
- THE WOLF AMONG US.

EPISODE 2: SMOKE AND MIRRORS

The past couple of months brought major changes to my family and me. With me starting a new job, the children attending a new daycare, and all of us adjusting to life in a different city, things have been in a great deal of flux. While learning our way around a new town, we also tried to hold on to some things that are familiar, whether it is a restaurant or a store we visited often back in Oklahoma, or something as simple as finding a familiar show on TV. I felt blessed to have an old friend named Tex Murphy come for a visit during such a time of change.

Without a doubt, Tex Murphy is among my all-time adventure game series. I first met Tex while playing *Under a Killing Moon*, which was the first Tex Murphy game that featured live actors. I was immediately taken by the game's compelling story and inher-



ent charm. It mixed an elaborate science-fiction tale with highly entertaining detective work, while throwing in a healthy dose of goofiness. Played by Chris Jones, Tex Murphy was the quintessential down-on-his-luck hard-boiled PI. It was clear that Mr. Jones truly embraced the character, bringing Tex to life in a very visceral way.

By the time I played through the sequels called *The Pandora Directive* and *Overseer*, I was a Tex Murphy fan for life. I loved the over-the-top, but consistently intriguing stories crafted by Aaron Connors. I loved exploring Chandler Avenue, Tex's neighborhood and home to a plethora of memorable characters.

When I wrote a review of *Over-*





seer in August 2006, I was certain that I had seen the last of Tex. I could always go back and play the old games again, but I was sure there would never be a new case for the PI to solve. We would never see the resolution of the cliffhanger ending to Overseer. Fortunately, Chris Jones and Aaron Connors never gave up on the franchise. They continually tried to find ways to fund a sequel and finally succeeded through Kickstarter. I was absolutely overjoyed when I first saw the Project Fedora campaign on Kickstarter in May 2012. I gladly backed the project and waited for the sequel, which was eventually named Tesla Effect.

It was during my last week of medical school that I finally had a chance to play the new game. I was excited, but also a little apprehensive. I wasn't sure how the new

Tex would compare to the legacy of the previous games. I had not played any of the old Tex games since 2006. Had I built them up too much in my memory? Could a new case possibly live up to my expectations after years of waiting? Would my attachment and feelings of nostalgia toward the earlier games make it impossible to enjoy Tex's latest adventure?

When I first started the game, my worries were partly allayed. Yes, the graphics were updated and the controls were a little different, but at its heart, this was absolutely a Tex Murphy game that proudly

followed the tradition of its predecessors. From walking around Tex's office to seeing the sights around Chandler Avenue, playing the game felt like a homecoming. It wasn't long before I ran into a few familiar faces. Chris Jones was once again on top form as Tex. It is hard to imagine another actor that better personifies a video game character. It was equally great to walk into the Brew & Stew to see Louie and to walk across the street to meet Rook Garner. Many elements of Tesla Effect paid tribute to the adventures that came before. From the familiar surroundings to the objects triggering flashbacks to cutscenes from previous games, Tesla Effect was clearly a game made for Tex Murphy fans.

Of course, paying homage to the earlier games also meant that the game was somewhat uninviting to newcomers. It is hard for me to imagine someone launching Tesla Effect for the first time and not knowing any of the characters, the background story, or the surroundings. The game does begin with a video that explains the climax of Overseer and tries to bring new

players up to speed on the Tex Murphy legacy. However, many of Tesla Effect's most charming moments would likely fall flat for the uninitiated. After all, little things like hearing Louie exclaim "Murph!" has a lot more mean-



Years ago, after Chelsea disappeared, you came to me looking for leads to some valuable items.



ing if you have already been to the Brew & Stew on Tex's previous adventures. Seeing that a former chocoholic has become a successful business owner is a lot more special if you first met him when he lived in a dumpster. However, *Tesla Effect* was a game funded by fans of the series. It was hard to find fault with a game that truly embraced its supporters and included a number of things that made them feel at home.

I had a great deal of fun playing through the first few days of *Tesla Effect*. It was great to see the familiar faces, conduct interviews, and start to uncover another Tex Murphy mystery. Like the previous adventures, *Tesla Effect* had players stay close to Chandler Avenue during the early parts of the game. Then, as Tex uncovered more information, he had to visit various locations in the greater San Fran-

cisco area. The focus shifted from conducting interviews and looking for clues to solving puzzles. It was during that transition when I felt the game begin to falter.

On the surface, the escalation of the story and the move to environments outside Tex's neighborhood were similar to the way *Under a Killing Moon*, *Pandora Directive*, and *Overseer* played. However I could not invest as deeply into the story of *Tesla Effect*. The puzzles felt more artificial and forced. Rather than flowing naturally from the story and the surroundings, some of the puzzles merely felt as nuisances. The dramatic tension did not feel as strong either. While I was still eager to see the end of the game, I was not nearly as excited as I had been upon reaching the final chapters of the previous Tex Murphy adventures. I wanted there to be more interviews, more

meaningful interactions with other characters, and more detective work. Tex simply did not build as strong relationships with the old and the new cast as he did in the previous games. In a way, that missing connection precluded me from fully enjoying the exploration and puzzles that came afterwards.

In the end, I finished the *Tesla Effect* with somewhat mixed feelings. I couldn't help feeling disappointed in some of the later puzzles and the way parts of the narrative unfolded. I felt that I was more connected to the characters and storyline of the previous games. I wanted to love *Tesla Effect* just as much as *Under a Killing Moon*, *Pandora Directive*, and *Overseer*, but something was missing. The previous games were not without flaws, but in addition to having memorable casts and intriguing mysteries, they had an extra spark that at

least in my eyes set them above a cut above most other adventures. Tesla Effect had the beginnings of something amazing. It had the makings of a game that could potentially rival its predecessors, but just fell a little short. What Tex said about Coit Tower in Tesla Effect summed up my feelings for the game perfectly: "Coit Tower, once one of the great landmarks of the city, is now a broken down monument symbolizing the world that's passed us by." Tesla Effect wasn't a broken game by any means, but for me, it didn't feel like a truly great game either. Like the old tower, it served as a symbol of something extraordinary, something that is now long gone.

On the other hand, I knew it was unfair to compare Tesla Effect to its predecessors. For one thing, it had been almost eight years since I last played Pandora Directive and Overseer. The games were no doubt falsely perfected in my hazy memory. The flaws and frustrations were diminished by time, replaced

with a rosy memory of the games that have come to hold a special meaning for me. Just as importantly, I had changed as a person during the past eight years. I went from finishing multiple games each month to playing only a handful of games in a year, which in turn modified what I value in a game. It's hard to imagine what I might think of the Tex Murphy classics if I encountered them for the first time today.

It is due to my admittedly skewed perspective as a fan of the franchise and due to the fact that I was a backer of Project Fedora that I chose not to formally review Tesla Effect. However, having now completed the game and stepped away from it for several days, I am very thankful for having had the chance to play through it. Despite my reservations about the investigation and the puzzles, it was an absolute blast to see Tex in action again. It is simply delightful to have another chance to wander around the nooks and crannies of Chan-

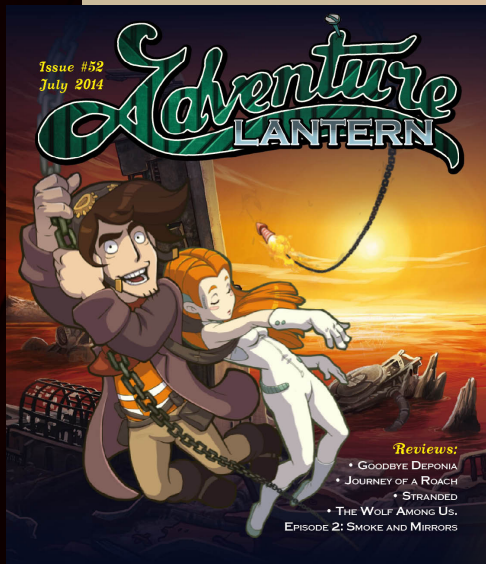
dlar Avenue. Seeing the familiar faces and walking into the familiar locations is tremendously fulfilling. Even if Tesla Effect falls a little short of its predecessors, it is still a highly entertaining and engaging game for anyone that would call themselves a Tex Murphy fan. It's hard to say if Tesla Effect will generate enough income to allow Tex to have another adventure in the future. However, I would personally be thrilled to follow the detective into more cases.

Many thanks to all the Tex Murphy fans who gathered to support Project Fedora and made Tesla Effect possible. My nitpicky misgivings aside, I am forever thankful to have had Tex's company during such an exciting yet hectic time in my life. Here's hoping you will find a game that will hold a special place for you this summer.

Until next time,

– Ugur Sener





Cover Image:
GOODBYE DEPONIA

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NEWS

UPCOMING RELEASES	9
NEW RELEASES	10
UPDATED RELEASES	11
NEWS FROM THE BIG BLUE CUP	12

INTERVIEWS

PATRICK JOHNSTON ON 3DTEXTADVENTURE	16
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ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

GOODBYE DEPONIA	22
JOURNEY OF A ROACH	26
STRANDED	28
THE WOLF AMONG US. EPISODE 2: SMOKE AND MIRRORS	30

Grim Fandango Retrospective

King's Quest VI Commentary with Jane Jensen
Does Kickstarter need a kick start for adventure games?

More Than Nostalgia: In Defense Of Remakes & Re-Releases

Procedural Quest: Why there are so few police procedurals in gaming

Future Imperfect: The Lost Art of Westwood's Blade Runner

Anceint Dos Games: Full Throttle

Bundle in a Box Closing

Ign's Year of Adventure

The AGS Bake Sale 2

LucasArts Post-Mortem: GDC 2014

Postmortem - Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs

Steam Selling Text Adventures

ScummVM 1.7.0

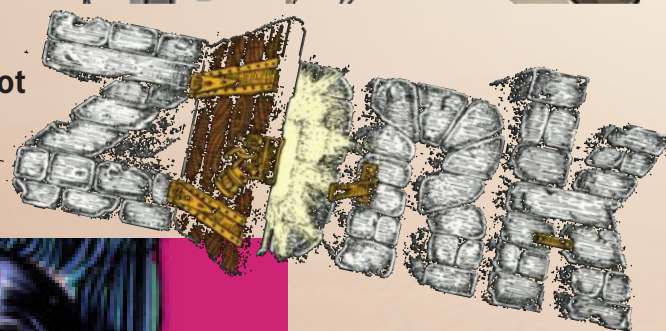
Proteus And "Walking Simulators"

The 7th Guest 3: The Collector Cancelled

The 12 Best Adventure Games You Might Not Have Played (Jayisgames)

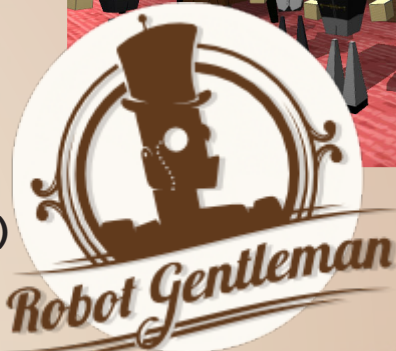
Zork Post Mortem: GDC 2014

The Case for Nancy Drew



Upcoming Releases

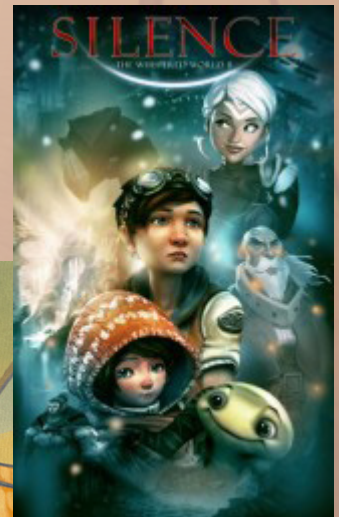
- Nelly Cootalot: The Fowl Fleet
- Tormentum: Dark Sorrow
- Subject 13 (Paul Cuisset , Microids)
- The Journey Down: Chapter Two
- The Starry Expanse Project
- The Detail
- The Mystery of Oak Island
- SUNSET (Tale of Tales)
- Metal Dead: Encore
- Dreamfall Chapter
- A Golden Wake (WadjetEye)
- Tales (Screen 7)
- Fragments of Him
- Kaptain Brawe 2: A Space Travesty
- Earthling Priorities
- Shadowgate (Zojoi)
- A Song for Viggo Interview
- Epoch (Anas Abdin)
- NoseBound
- Ithaka of the Clouds
- The Devil's Men (Daedelic)
- The Vanishing of Ethan Carter
- Tales from the Borderlands (Telltale)



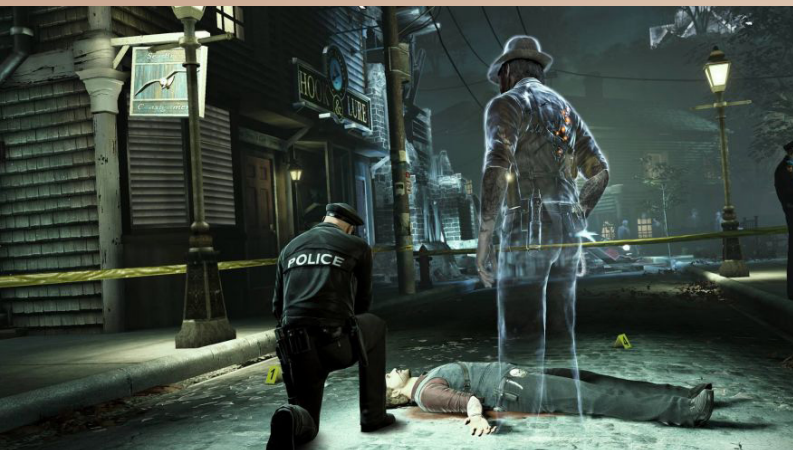
Karaski

Mr. Pancake

- A Song for Viggo
- Karaski
- The Talos Principle
- Mr. Pancake



New Releases



Murdered: Soul Suspect



The Fall

Lifeless Planet

Among the Sleep

Wayward Manor (Neil Gaiman)

3DTextAdventure

Chained (DigiPen)

Nancy Drew: The Shattered Medallion

Murdered: Soul Suspect

Three Fourths Home

The Wish

Following Freeware: April 2014 Releases

Following Freeware: May 2014 Releases

The Forest (Early Access)

The Whisperer in Darkness

CastleAbra

The Long Rain

Sorcery! 2: Kharé: Cityport of Traps

Lancelot's Hangover

Shadows on the Vatican: Act II

Ossuary

Memento Mori 2:
Guardians of Immortality

The Moon Sliver

Updated Releases

Grim Fandango Remastered

Blackwell 1, 2, 3 on iOS

Bosch's Damnation: A Carol Reed Mystery

Broken Age: Act One for iOS

Telltale Physical Copies

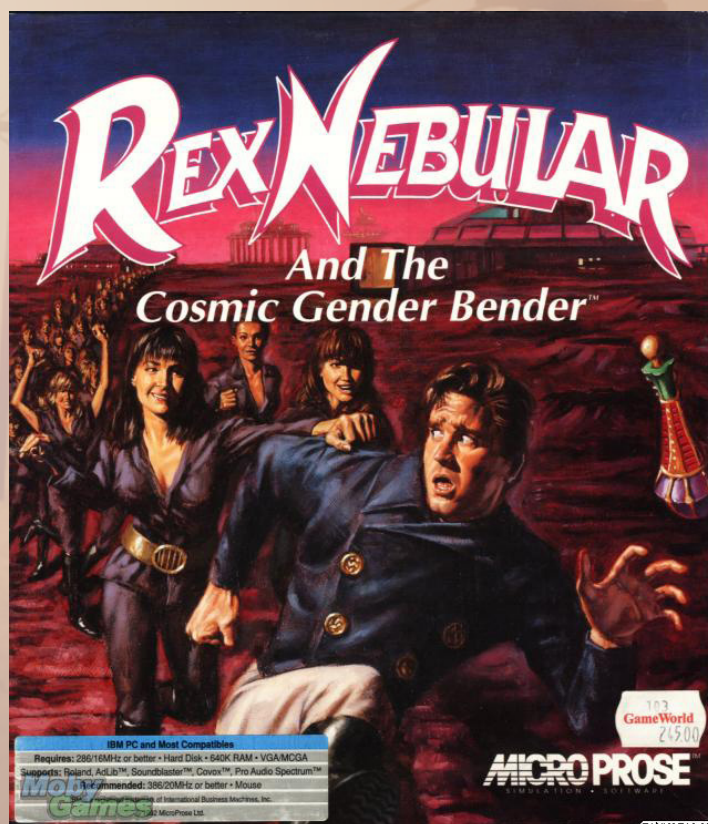
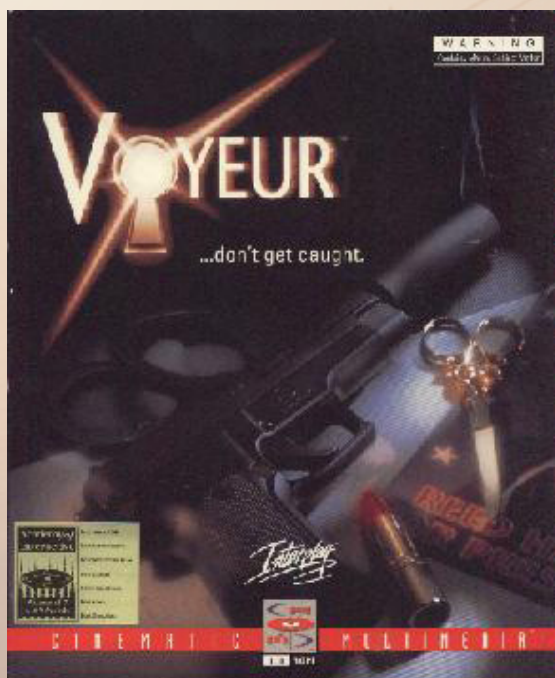
ScummVM: Dreamweb

Dream Chamber for Android

ScummVM: Voyeur

ScummVM: Rex Nebular and the Cosmic Gender Bender

The Lost Crown





News From the Big Blue Cup



May

Cale Quest (Amuzo Arts) - Journey through Matlock, U.S.A. on your quest to make the finest sandwich in all the land.

Oceanspirit Danish (Crystal Shard) - A Shakespearean adventure! Watch Oceanspirit Dennis and his companions Ray and Mr. Cheeses as they stumble through the plot of Hamlet, order too much room service, and make a general mess out of Denmark. As befits the Oceanspirit Dennis series, there are lots of combat scenes with a special rune engine, and as befits a Shakespearean tragedy, most of the cast dies like mayflies. With dialogue written by The Bard himself, how can you resist a game like this?

Beer! (Crystal Shard) - Created for the second AGS Bake Sale, Beer! is a collection of frantic minigames where you have to grab the beer in each level under a very short time limit. Easy to pick up and difficult to master, this game rewards quick and out-of-the-box thinking. It comes with a cheerful cafe-style soundtrack, and assorted cast of bears and deer.

That DAMN Dog! (Tzachs) - It's the show you all love and cherish, "THE SCHMENDERSONS!"

And on tonight's episode, "THAT DAMN DOG!", Ron is finally fed up with Stephan's dog, Don Piano, and decides to do something once and for all.

(This game is part of the AGS Bake Sale)

The Schmendersons
in



Like A Dream (Junkface) - A short game about the twentieth century and the broken promises of modernism and the machine age. It's designed to rely more on mood and imagery than puzzles, but is designed to be responsive to player input (through sound and colour effects), while maintaining the sense of inevitability of a dream.

Beer!

Written by Pieter Simoons

Best Score:
73000

Start Help Quit

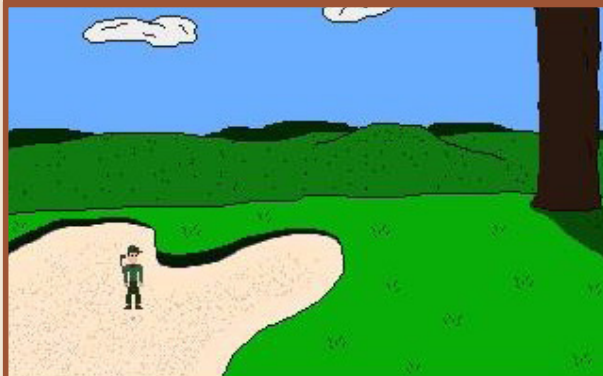
Pick of the Month: The Bunker

Great, just great. These days a man can't play golf without a wizard miniaturizing him! Thank you Man-locke, now I am stuck in this bunker!

The garish palette of this game will immediately bring you back to the 90s, along with some great humor, a desert to explore, sassy skulls and many other quite talkative but less than cooperative characters.

Help Ronan club his way out of the bunker!

Chosen by cat, bicilotti
Developed by Erenan



Lema Sabachthani (Billbis)

Oceanspirit Danish (Crystal Shard)





News From the Big Blue Cup



June



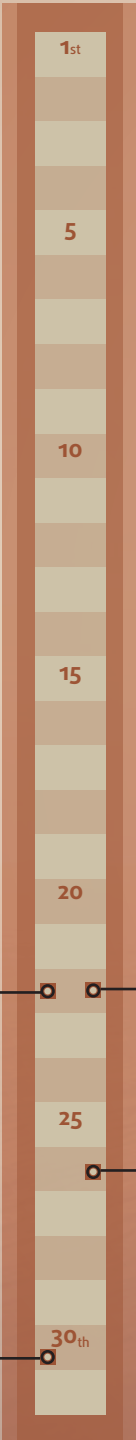
Narcoleptic Weight Loss Expert (ddq)



Comedy Quest (Trav Nash)

8 (GeorgeQGreg) - From the creator of the outstanding hit, Bubble Wrap Popping Simulator 2013, comes 8! 8 is a game about the number 8. Press the button to hear and see the number 8.

Runestones! (ROOKMAGE) - A puzzle game where you must align magical runestones with matching runes on the ground. Runestones keep rolling until they encounter an obstacle (apparently friction doesn't exist much), meaning you'll have to move the rocks in interesting and challenging ways to complete each level.



8 8 8

8

Alt-X to quit

Narcoleptic Weight Loss Expert (ddq) - Narcoleptic Weight Loss Expert is a strategic button clicking game in which you must help a man get fit, whilst struggling to stay conscious. Using calorific transubstantial technology you are able to trade the calories burned by your client to purchase new items to stay awake and keep motivated.

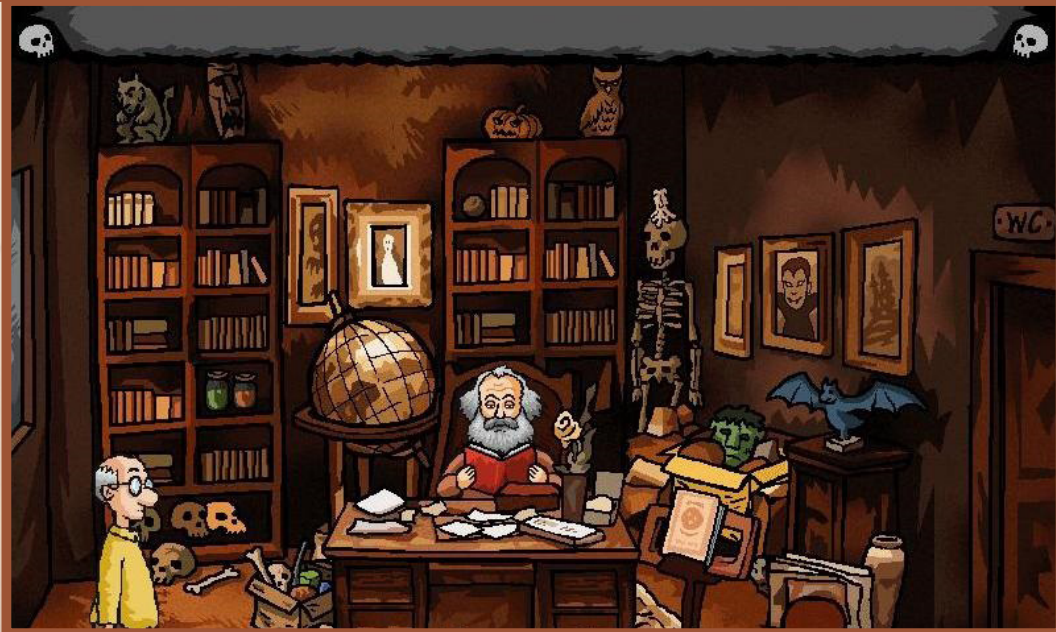
But really it's all about the music.

Comedy Quest (Trav Nash) - Comedy Quest is a point and click adventure game set in the exciting world of stand-up comedy. Can you become the greatest comedian of all time in just 3 gigs? or will you become just another hack

Pick of the Month: Donald Dowell and the Ghost of Barker Manor

Donald sat with glazed eyes. He was retired. He rocked in his chair. His wife shouted at him to paint the fence. He rocked. He read his favorite books over and over. His wife shouted at him to do something, anything. Donald rocked. And as he rocked a spark grew under the chair in which he sat. With every rock the spark found kindling in the recesses of his still youthful mind. That kindling grew into a fire which could not be stopped. Donald knew he had to go back to work! But not just any old menial work. The work he had dreamed of since he was a kid! Donald stood up from his rocker. And then at last: HE ROCKED!

Chosen by cat, Mandie
Developed by AprilSkies



Patrick Johnston on 3DTextAdventure

Website: <http://www.indiedb.com/games/3dtextadventure>

Released June 20, earlier this year, *3DTextAdventure*, a short three puzzle adventure game, was developed by Patrick "Auspaco" Johnston. Fully playable and enjoyable, with a surprisingly detailed and intriguing story for such a short game. *3DTextAdventure* is primarily an experimental tech demo and proof of concept for a first person, 3D, adventure game with text input controls. With fully modern 3D graphics, *3DTextAdventure* is set in a future scifi world where people travel with teleporters and flying cars. Your substandard teleporter suit has just malfunctioned and sent you to an empty lab, out of power your only companion is the suit's zany artificial intelligence. You move around just like any ordinary FPS, and "look" with the left mouse button. Looking causes the AI to analyze the video feed and tell you what objects are in front of you can be interacted with. You can then type commands like "examine datapad", "take banana", or "use plant".



Interview by Jonathon Wisnoski

[Adventure Lantern]: What are some of your favourite text and graphical adventure games, any games that inspired *3DTextAdventure*?

[Patrick Johnston]: My all-time favourites are the first three *Leisure Suit Larry* games by Sierra. After that they abandoned the text-interface and the graphics were starting to lag behind other modern games. I really loved *Grim Fandango* as well, which was beautifully written and executed.

[AL]: Did you have any experience making games going into this project??

[Patrick]: I've programmed all my life, and while I have written a ton of software, and always wanted to write a game, I never quite got around to it. One of the big issues is that I'm terrible at art, which when contemplating creating a game of this type is a problem. I have worked on a few minor games, that were never released.

[AL]: What did you need to learn to complete this project? What engines/tools/languages did you use?

[Patrick]: When I started with the game, I had all of the tools I needed. I used the Unreal Development Kit (UDK), which is also used by a lot of AAA first-person shooter games and had the graphical pedigree to achieve what I was after. The programming wasn't going to be an issue, and luckily I found someone else who was able to provide the graphics. The biggest thing I had to learn was how to make a game fun, and interesting. Lots of beta-testers were invaluable in that regard.

[AL]: When did you start actively developing *3DTextAdventure*? How many hours have you put into the project?

[Patrick]: I started on the game in late 2013, and spent about five months putting everything together. All of it was done in my spare time, as I have a family and a busy day job. It's hard to estimate the exact number of hours, but I'm guessing around 300 hours.

[AL]: You stated that the level was not designed for this game, but was developed separately by the 3D artist Tor Frick, how much did the level influence the game design?

[Patrick]: When I started thinking about putting a game together, I knew from past experience that I wasn't able to do the graphics myself. For this game to work however it really needed something amazing in that department. The whole idea was to combine a text-interface with modern graphics, to try and capture the best of both worlds. I had begun looking for a world that I could use to slot my concept into, and I ran into the Sci-fi Lab by Tor Frick. Now Tor Frick is a top-level artist who has worked on some amazing titles, so his work is some of the best in the world. He's also very generous and had provided the level (in UDK) for download. Suddenly I had this beautiful 3D world that I could work with.

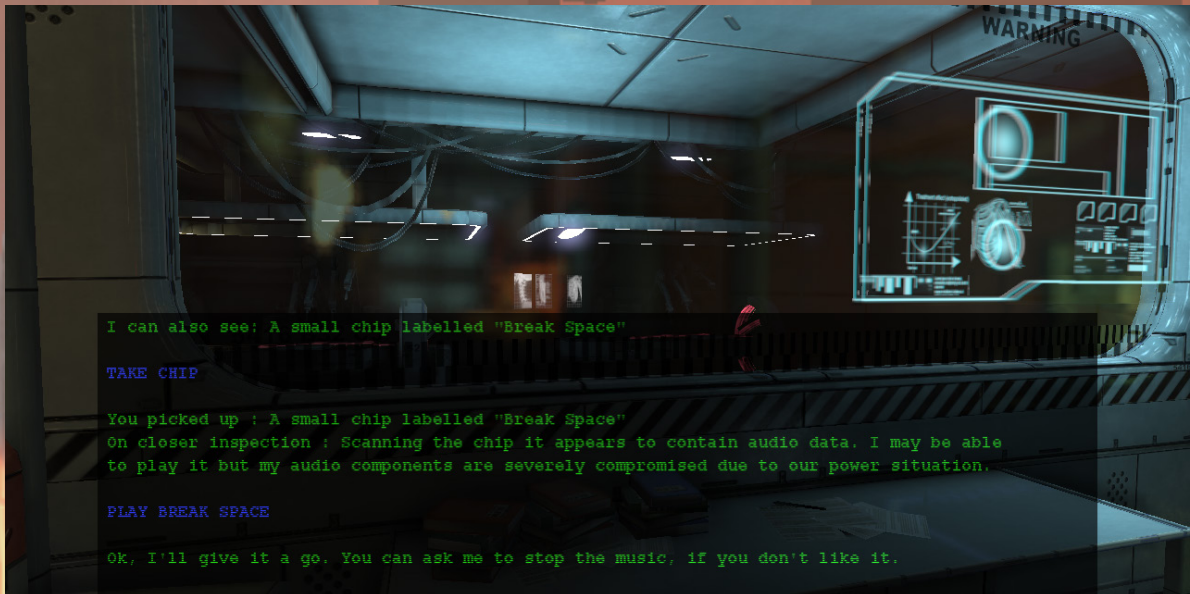
So how much of the design was dictated by the level? All of it. I basically started from what I had and thought about what sort of story and puzzles might be fun to play. In some ways it was a really good way to do it - It's easy to get bogged down in a universe of infinite possibilities when you have a blank slate, but I had all sorts of limitations. I had a corridor, boxes, and a few rooms. Inventing a plausible story that was also entertaining was very challenging, but also a lot of fun for me.

[AL]: *The level itself is apparently a tech demo, made with an extremely limited number of textures. Was this simply a coincidence or did you like the idea of using such a level? Did this affect the game in any way?*

[Patrick]: That was just a coincidence. I guess people like Tor Frick get so good at producing incredible work that they need to challenge themselves. To be honest though if he hadn't done something so insanely difficult, he probably would never have released the level itself for people to verify what he had done. A lot of artists produce stunning levels as part of their portfolio, and you get to see some amazing screenshots and videos, but it's rare for them to release everything into the wild.

[AL]: Instead of the standard cursor select for first-person based interfaces you went with the unique whole-window select/look. Can you walk me through your reasons for this design decision?

[Patrick]: One of the difficulties with this type of game is that you can't look at something and click on it



to see if it's something that can be manipulated in the game. You have to describe it in text. I didn't want people to be hunting for the correct noun when describing something so having the AI list everything it has detected was a convenient way to give people a hint. It was a tradeoff though. It would have been nice to have people not be able to shortcut things by just randomly looking everywhere, but it would also have been incredibly frustrating.

[AL]: You have stated that this game is an experiment to see if this combination of features works. Do you consider it a success? Do you think this adventure style could ever be commercialised, turned into a fully-fledged subgenre, or ever be more than simply a one(or two)-off experiment?

[Patrick]: I'd like to think that it was a success, but it's such a hard thing to measure. Most people enjoyed the experience of playing it, and a lot wanted it to be longer or see more games of this type, so I think it is a success in that regard. Unfortunately it hasn't had as many downloads or spiked as much interest as I would have liked. I could have done a lot more marketing but I was hoping that the adventures out there would like it and spread the word. I'm immensely proud of it though, whatever happens.

Would it work commercially? I think it could, especially if it was made by a team rather than a solo developer. One of the reasons I made it was that it was the style of game I'd really like to play. It's definitely a niche market, however I was surprised by the response from some of the younger players who weren't that familiar with text adventures. They tended to compare it to things like *Half-Life* and *Portal*, which still retain a strong sense of story while having a beautiful first-person experience.

[AL]: What do you think games like this specifically offer the adventure gamers? What sort of experience/gameplay/story are they specifically suited for, in your opinion?

[Patrick]: I remember reading an article about the evolution of adventure games. Early on they were the ONLY games around, and the graphics (for the time) were amazing. They were what you'd show your friends to impress them how good your new computer was. While it is contentious, I much prefer a text interface to a simple point-and-click. I feel it offers a certain richness, and introduces more puzzle types. I'm not suggesting guess-the-verb is a good puzzle, but I remember in *Leisure Suit Larry* having to type «make rope from hemp» and being thrilled when it was correct. It seemed more satisfying to me than dragging one icon onto another. The limitation of the text-interface is that it's useless for anything real-time. You can't go around fighting zombies by having to type «shoot» all the time.

The ideal experience offered by this type of game is the same as most adventure games: A leisurely puzzle. In particular this type of game has the potential to offer a more immersive experience, as well as harnessing modern graphics so that it can be something you can amaze your friends with. Combining this with some of the new VR technology like Oculus has huge potential for adventure.

[AL]: *3DTextAdventure* is a very short game with generally simple puzzles. Do you have any examples of puzzles that would really take advantage of the power of the text input, specifically wed to 3D graphics, that you would like to see or use yourself?

[Patrick]: Unfortunately as a sole developer, with a game driven by the available level there were a lot of things I didn't get to put in to really leverage the text interface. I'd really love to put in a few more things like «make rope from hemp» that challenges the player to know what they are trying to achieve by using items. I'd also like to put in more puzzles that require some real-world knowledge, like mixing baking-powder and vinegar to create a mini explosion, or maybe even something really bizarre like needing to make a sponge-cake from the ingredients. The text interface could be used to force the player to know the rough amounts and the method – like separating the eggs, whipping the whites, adding flour etc. In a standard point and click you'd just drag things onto the bowl and keep clicking the “use” button. The text-interface version would force you to know a bit about the recipe, and require more effort to solve the puzzles.

[AL]: And finally the question that I have been most dieing to ask. So what is in the future for you and *3DTextAdventure*? Will we be seeing more games from you in the future, any chance of commercial titles? Are you or do you plan to work on another 3D text adventure; And if so will we see more of that eccentric teleporting suit?

[Patrick]: Working on the game was a lot of fun, and I'll continue to work on other games for sure! At the moment I'm working on another game, which is not adventure or text related. It still has a strong story

however. I would like to do another *3DTextAdventure* (and maybe even come up with a proper title!) at some point in the future. If I can find an inspired artist who can do the graphics then it may become a reality.



*For a short window, mostly during the industry's transition from text adventures to the modern point and click graphical adventures, there were adventure games that joined a game world displayed graphically with text input commands. From the 1980 adventure *Mystery House*, known for being one of the first adventure titles with graphics; To *King's Quest*, four years later, featuring player-character movement on screen paired with text commands. This concept was tried, tested, and expanded upon; And ultimately lost to history, until now. Both of these examples have similarities to *3DTextAdventure*, but with its fully explorable, in real time, 3D world and first person perspective, it is in a class all of its own.*

*Whether you have nostalgic predilections for text adventures, always wanted to try one but was worried about the steep learning curve, or just love adventure games and a good story, you should try *3DTextAdventure*. It is a free, small, quick download, and only a 30 minutes to an hour long game; So there is literally no reason not to. After that, you have a few other options if you want to try some other games heavily inspired by ancient text adventures: The first person point and click *Dead Cyborg*, the heavily multimedia modern text adventure *Cypher*, or the partial remake of the original *Zork* into an *Oblivion mod*. And there are many others, including thriving, if niche, freeware text adventure communities.*

Goodbye Deponia



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: Daedalic Entertainment
Release date: October 17, 2013 Platforms: Windows, Mac OS X
Website: <http://www.deponia.de/en/>



Goodbye Deponia is the third and final title in the *Deponia* trilogy of comedy adventures by *Daedalic Entertainment*. Released in late 2013, *Goodbye Deponia* concludes Rufus's quest to save his planet, with his lengthiest adventure yet.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Deponia, the series first entry, and *Chaos on Deponia*, its second, introduced us to most of the game's major characters, its villains, its main plot elements, and its humorous style. In both of these previous games Rufus got incredibly close to his dream of escaping the surface and making his way to Elysium, the floating



city of luxury and ease. But in each instance he had to abandon his dream to save the planet. So *Goodbye Deponia* starts on pretty equal footing, without too much required knowledge. There are many returning characters, but little reminiscing, and I never felt too confused or left out, having forgotten most of the specifics of the previous events and minor characters. The plot of this latest game follows the same basic style, with Rufus on a wild, impossible, mission to both save the world and make it to Elysium with his love interest Goal. We get the same wacky comedy you will be used to, but this time with three times the Rufuses. In my opinion, this chapter, with regard to the story, is the best of the series; With a lot more backstory and character development than both previous games combined. Throughout this entire series I have had the opinion that the writers have been very good at endings, and this last chapter is no exception, with an absolutely fabulous ending to the series.

The basic premise of the *Deponia* series is pretty simple. You play Rufus an almost completely unlikable but sometimes charmingly sincere rogue, an overconfident self-obsessed idiot, and an incredibly lucky bumbling fool, who has an inexhaustible supply of dangerous and foolhardy schemes. He manages to screw up pretty much everything, but in the end it always works out. He lives on the surface of Deponia, a world covered completely by garbage, but dreams of making it to Elysium,





the existence of the Deponians, but Goal is having none of it. Eventually, she and Rufus team up with a bunch of other Deponians against Cletus and the Orgonon; All while Rufus attempts to get with Goal and make it to Elysium.

Goodbye Deponia follows the previous games with generally non-linear gameplay; At least you always have a few separate puzzle arcs to choose from. You also get a wide assortment of minigames, and puzzles of every variety. These are generally decent and logical, and do not stand out from the rest of the series too much at all. But there are a moderate amount of just completely strange puzzles, I think a little

the floating city where the upper class live. The Elysium citizens are completely unaware of what goes on on the surface, and in fact are not even aware that anyone lives there. These Elysians have a plan to blow up Deponia, to fuel their journey to a new fertile planet. But these people are not without compassion, so they have sent a team down to the surface to verify the total absence of life. This team goes in with the Orgonon, sort of the military of Elysium. The Orgonon

know about the Deponians, and in fact interact with them quite a bit, taxing them and whatnot, generally making themselves a nuisance. This team is composed of both Cletus and his fiancée Goal. Cletus has been convinced that he must hide



more than we had in previous games. I do not think any of the previous games had anything quite as ridiculous as using a salt shaker with

a pelican, for example. The one significant change to the gameplay





is a significant section that has you switching back and forth between three Rufuses, interacting a little, but mostly playing parallel puzzle/story arcs. The sound effects, music, voice cast, hand-drawn graphics, and cinematics continue the series convention of being of a great quality, and quantity, universally polished to a shine. But they are also somewhat bland, and every-so-slightly lacking in character.

This third and final chapter finishes the story of *Deponia* with a bang, in very much the same style as the rest of the series. It is a great ending to the series, and is all round a good adventure (not great, but quite good). It is a long adventure, being slightly longer than the previous games, coming in at about ten and a half hours of gameplay. But I really struggle with how bland it can be at times. The graphics are good, but there is just something missing; And we have a 25 hour plus adventure here, but there is less story than you will find in some six hour games. ●



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The backstory and character development.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

Somewhat professionally bland.

VERDICT:

A really decent, lengthy adventure.



Journey of a Roach



Genre: adventure Developer: Kobold Games

Publisher: Daedalic Entertainment Release date: November 4, 2013

Platforms: Windows, Mac OSX

Website: <http://www.koboldgames.ch/game/journey-of-a-roach/>



The latest game from Daedalic Entertainment, *Journey of a Roach (JoAR)*, is not your average Daedalic game, not your average point and click adventure. This is because the game was developed by a new studio, *Kobold Games*; Who have created a game that in very much reminiscent of the style of *Double Fine*.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Journey of a Roach is a sort of puzzle platformer mixed with a point and click adventure. There is no jumping, or platforming per se; Instead you have full 3D movement on the walls and ceiling of a fully 3D underground world. There are many obstacles that restrict where you may go, but otherwise you can go anywhere. This unique movement is an integral part of the gameplay, and taken full advantage of, with finding out of the way routes and items and location based puzzles being one of the most used



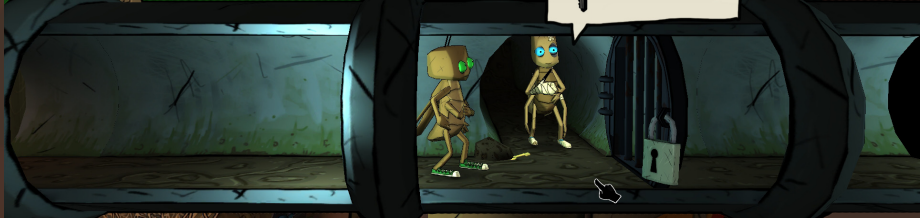


gameplay features. But other than this movement feature it is a pure point and click adventure, with item based puzzles for the most part.

The story of *JoAR* is quite simple, as it is completely without any dialogue. In a post apocalyptic wasteland, Jim and Bud are two giant cockroach buddies, living among other giant insects. The story has something to do with a flower, but basically you, playing as Jim, accompany the awkward and bumbling Bud, and save him from a series of predicaments. It is really short, and pretty meaningless.

The presentation is quite charming. With child-centric, cartoony, stylized 3D graphics; A good soundtrack; And thought bubbles with simple diagrams instead of speech. While the gameplay reminded me of something that *Double Fine* could of done, the presentation is even more similar, with a style very similar to many games that *Double Fine* have done.

The whole experience just did not feel all that polished. It is a fine game, with a unique premise, and I love the *Double Fine* vibe; But I did not love this game. The gameplay and story in particular were just not very engaging, and failed to hold my interest. It has an interesting and unique premise, but I do not believe that it lived up to its full potential. ●



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The cartoony 3D graphics.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The underdeveloped story.

VERDICT:

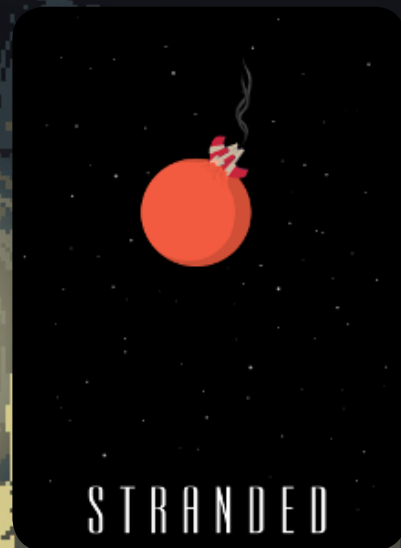
A unique adventure, that comes out rather bland.



Stranded



Genre: adventure Developer: Peter Moorhead
Publisher: Curve Digital Release date: May 20, 2014
Platforms: Windows, Mac OSX, Linux
Website: <http://petermoorhead.com/stranded/>



Stranded is a short indie adventure recently released by Peter Moorhead. The game features a minimalistic interface, pixel graphics, and polarizing gameplay. In the words of the developer *Stranded* "focus[es] on atmosphere, mystery, and exploration". *Stranded* fits in the recently branded genre, with the tongue-in-cheek if accurate name, of walking-simulators; Sitting beside such greats as *Proteus*, *Gone Home*, and *Dear Esther*.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

S*tranded* is advertised using emotion filled language; But, at least for me, the complete lack of player agency striped it of any possible emotional ties. If my character is not even allowed to interact with the gameworld in the slightest way, how can I feel fear or excitement? If I die, if I gain, if monsters jump out of the shadows, it matters not, since there is nothing I can do to prevent any of these things or deal with the consequences; You

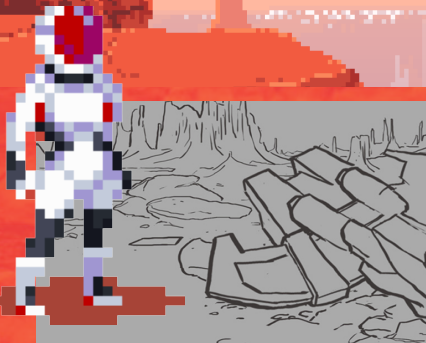


In the social sciences, agency refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices.

do not even have enough control of where you character walks to make use of that in any way.

The game features such slow and unresponsive walking that it turns a five to ten minute game into a fifty minute dragging experience. In these fifty minutes you traverse over and over again about fifteen different screens, featuring terrific pixel art graphics, though only about ten of them are fully unique. The game also lacks all story and dialogue, and indeed it feels like nothing even happens because of the total lack of agency; Though indeed a total of two things do happen over the course of the game, but it is never shown why they happen, not do I know why I should care.

Stranded feels like a one of those indie game jam games; Something that someone spent 24 or 48 hours on. Maybe with a little potential, but that is about it. Where the game goes from interesting curiosity, and perhaps a charming indie game, to controversial and polarising is the price. The game is currently being sold for eight dollars on both Steam and the Humble Store, which makes no sense whatsoever based on the content you get. Honestly, no price really makes sense for it, but if it was to be a commercial product I would have to criticise it for anything over three dollars. ●



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The minimalistic pixel graphics.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The complete lack of player agency cut all emotional ties I might of otherwise had to the story.

VERDICT:

Very little value for your money.



The Wolf Among Us

Episode 2: Smoke and Mirrors



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: Telltale Games
Release date: February 4, 2014 Platforms: Windows, Xbox 360,
Mac OS X, PlayStation 3, iOS, PlayStation Vita
Website: <http://www.telltalegames.com/thewolfamongus/>



This second episode of *The Wolf Among Us* (TWAU) is just more of the same, the main problem being how little more it is. *Telltale's The Wolf Among Us* is based on *Bill Willingham's Fables* comic book series; In which a colony of *Fables* from classic children's tales are living incognito in the middle of New York City. Episode one commenced with the introduction of the main characters, including Snow White and the sheriff, The Big Bad Wolf, called Bigby Wolf. The plot revolved around two ritualistic murders, and included elements such as prostitution, slumlords, and visceral and gory violence. *Episode 2: Smoke and Mirrors* adds torture and nudity to this list, as you interrogate persons of interest and explore a brothel/stripclub.



Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

This episode continues the series heavily stylized graphics, which are still very good. The gameplay also continues similar themes, with a small quicktime fighting scene, a small amount of point and click

style investigation, but mostly just a lot of timed dialogue sequences.

If you liked the first episode you should like this one. But its extremely short length, of just a little over an hour, further highlights the simplicity of the game, and the lack of player input. You could just about start the game, go on an extended bathroom break, come back

and find that the game completed itself; Which is reflective of both the game's length and the gameplay simplicity. It is really just one cutscene, with quick time events, and the complete inability for the player to lose or even get stuck. All that said, this episode does get you more substantially stuck into the story, even if it is a shorter experience. ●



Upper West Side Precinct

© The Following Afternoon



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

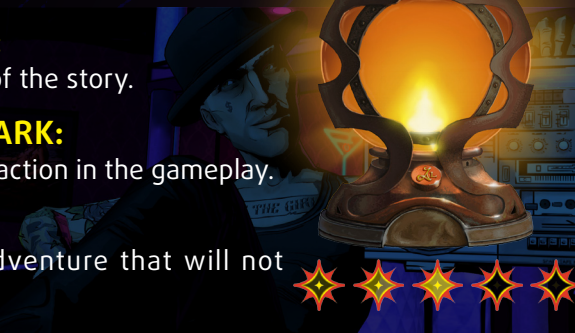
The mature grittiness of the story.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The lack of player interaction in the gameplay.

VERDICT:

A unique breed of adventure that will not appeal to everyone.



Adventure Lantern

