Adventure Lantern

Life in the Dorms Interview

Reviews:
- **Salammbo: Battle for Carthage**
- **The Dig**
- **The Book of Unwritten Tales**

Editorial

The EUFA Europa League is an annual soccer tournament. Each year, qualifying European teams compete to win the prestigious cup. Qualification is based on the competitors' performance in their national leagues during the previous year. For me, the 1999-2000 season of the tournament was particularly memorable. The competition featured a number of excellent games and truly gifted soccer players from all over Europe. Sadly, the tournament also involved great tragedy, with two Leeds United fans killed in Istanbul during the semi-finals. The competition ended on May 17, 2000 with the final played in Copenhagen between the Turkish team Galatasaray and the British team Arsenal. Galatasaray emerged as the winner, becoming the first Turkish team to win the tournament.

The final was an excellent game, with great performances from both Arsenal and Galatasaray. However, it is not my favorite part of the tournament. The game I remember with great fondness is the quarter-final match between Galatasaray and the Spanish team Mallorca on March 16, 2000. That also happened to be the night before I had to take a spoken English test. The exam was required for one of my college applications.

As the game began, I was sitting in a bus with my mother. We had just spent the weekend visiting my grandmother in Izmir, which is a city located along the western shore of Turkey. We had to take an overnight bus trip to return to Istanbul, so I could be on time for my test the following morning. It was a cold, rainy, and all-around miserable night. I was anxious about the upcoming test and uncomfortable in the rickety old bus seat. I was angry with myself for agreeing to take a road trip the weekend before an important exam. Showing up at the exam room sleep deprived and weary from a long journey was probably not the brightest idea.

I could tell that my mother was very agitated as well. She was accustomed to driving her own car. It was difficult for her to let the bus driver be in charge of the vehicle. The other passengers also seemed uncomfortable, if not downright miserable. Two passengers behind me were in the midst of a heated argument. A woman to my left was staring out of the window with a worried look on her face. With the

storm raging outside, there was a feeling of gloom that hovered around the bus.

Two hours into the journey, one of the passengers walked up to the bus driver and asked if he could turn on the radio so we could listen to the game between Galatasaray and Mallorca. The driver initially declined, reminding us that some passengers might be sleeping. However, when a few other passengers insisted that the radio be turned on, the driver complied. An hour later, the atmosphere in the bus had completely changed.

Galatasaray was on top form that night. The game was taking place in Spain, at Mallorca's stadium. However, Galatasaray's players seemed at home and in control of the match. Scoring several excellent goals, they managed to win the game 4-1. It would have been difficult for any fan Galatasaray not to be uplifted by that performance. Yet on our bus, even those with only a passing interest in soccer seemed to be elated.

Listening to the game had made many of us forget about the storm. The nighttime journey suddenly seemed easy. My concerns about the upcoming exam seemed distant. "Galatasaray is the only thing that's right with the world right now," a passenger remarked. It felt as though Galatasaray had played and won the game solely for our sake that night.

Eleven years later, the December 2011 issue of Adventure Lantern brought me a similar moment. As I worked on assembling our September and October issues, it became clear that I would not be able to sustain the monthly publication of our magazine during the school year. However, I wanted to avoid another period where Adventure Lantern would be largely inactive. As such, I turned to our long-time contributor Jonathon Wisnoski for assistance.

If you have been following Adventure Lantern during the past several months, you will have noticed that Jonathon was a regular contributor, providing reviews for every single issue. During that time, Jonathon also proved himself to be an excellent friend, offering me assistance in just about every aspect of the magazine. Given his tremendous reliability and dedication to our publication, it seemed natural to ask

him to take a bigger role in the production of the magazine. Thus, Jonathon graciously agreed to take on editorial responsibilities during the months I will not be able to focus on our PDF. This will hopefully enable us to maintain our monthly schedule.

The PDF you are reading at the moment is the first Adventure Lantern issue assembled by Jonathon. As always, it contains several reviews focused on new and old adventure games. We also have an interview with the developers of the upcoming adventure game Life in the Dorms. It may not span a hundred pages or contain a dozen reviews, but the December 2011 issue does represent our continued effort to keep Adventure Lantern going.

Reading the magazine helps me believe that

Adventure Lantern is here to stay. Perhaps one day, with a larger staff, we will have the ability to assemble robust issues loaded with a ton of content again. For now however, it is enough for me to see our PDFs published regularly. It is sufficient to see our light burning. Many thanks to Jonathon for making that possible.

I know that Jonathon assembled this issue for all of our readers. However, reading through the magazine, it feels as though he put together the issue solely for me. Here's hoping you will find something to enjoy in the following pages as well.

Until next time,
Ugur

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

To receive an 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

Life in the Dorms Interview
with Paul Franzen and Ted Hung
conducted by Ugur Sener

Life in the Dorms is an upcoming independent Xbox Live adventure game from Moment Games. In the game, players to assume the role of Dack Peeples as the young man begins his college education. Between an annoying RA, a roommate that just might be a serial killer, and cases of ramen noodles, Life in the Dorms is shaping up to be a fun and whimsical adventure. As the game is gearing up for release, we met up with Paul Franzen and Ted Hung from Moment Games to discuss Life in the Dorms.

Adventure Lantern: I'd like to learn a little more about your company, Moment Games. How did the development team come together?

Ted Hung: Well, I had been working for several years for various game companies, and during that time, I never felt like I had a chance to make something that I really cared about…something meaningful and truly story driven. I've always been passionate about story-driven games, but my talents are mainly in programming as opposed to writing.

Paul Franzen: I joined up with Ted during the spring of 2010—I played his first indie game, *Office DisOrders*, loved it, and decided to look up the guy who made it and ask if I could work with him. I'd never actually published a game before, but thankfully, I was able to trick Ted into working with me. We later brought my friend Colin Greenhalgh (formerly of Budcat Software) on as our artist, and Josh Davis (singer/songwriter of the indie rock group SEACATS) as our music guy.
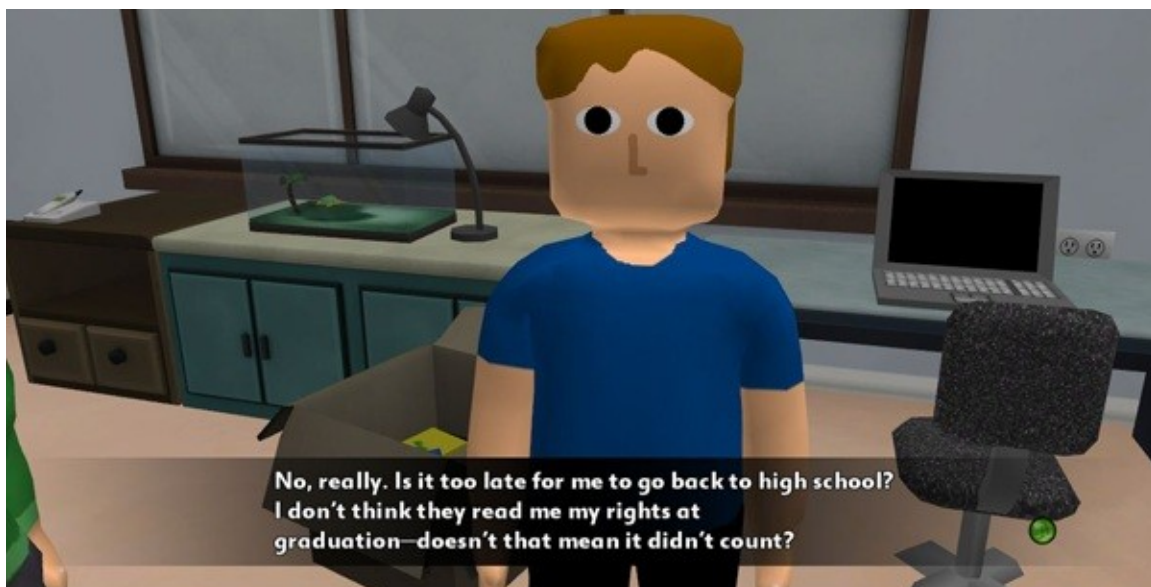
[AL]: What can you tell us about your previous project, *Office DisOrders*?

Ted: *Office DisOrders* was done on a shoestring budget with a lot of volunteer work from various writers and some paid help from a musician, but all of the programming, game design, and artwork was done by me. It was a comedic simulation/adventure game that really mirrored some of my own (and I'm sure many others') experiences in the workplace. There are a lot of indie game developers that dream big and never deliver. I figured, if I showed the world that I could really finish and release a game, it would be the first step toward getting together other people who were passionate about the same things as me.

[AL]: Judging from the screenshots, both *Office DisOrders* and *Life in the Dorms* have a distinct and pleasantly whimsical look. How did you come up with this format?

Ted: To be honest, the look came from necessity more than anything. As I said before, my talents are mainly in the programming side, and it was hard to find an artist to help me out. So I chose a simple style that I knew I could pull off. Luckily, it turned out to be a style that people liked!

[AL]: How long have you been working on *Life in the Dorms*?

Paul: Since around the spring of 2010—or at least, that's when we started exchanging e-mails about the kind of adventure game we'd like to make together. But it wasn't much later that I was off writing goofy dialogue and puzzles and Ted was off magically turning it all into a videogame.

[AL]: What were some of the obstacles you faced during the development of the game?

Ted: I guess the main obstacle with any indie game project is keeping everyone motivated and in the loop. Since

we are a small indie game group with a small budget, each one of us is doing this out of passion for the game. Add to that the fact that we are scattered all around the world, and it's a real challenge to keep up the communication.

[AL]: Tell us a little about yourselves. What do you do when you are not working on Life *in the Dorms*?

Ted: Professionally, I've been teaching programming, though now I'm working for a social games company. But other than that, I enjoy the outdoors, eating, and my other passion, which is traveling.

Paul: By day I'm a copy editor with a human resources consulting firm based in New Jersey, but fans of obscure videogame review sites might know me as the Editor-in-Chief of GameCola.net, a videogame-comedy website I founded back in 2002. I also have a yardsale blog, and I spend the rest of my free time annoying my two pet bunnies, and also playing adventure games with my wife.

[AL]: How long have you been playing adventure games? Do you have a favorite adventure?

Ted: Adventure games were the first games that I ever played. They were the games that showed me what games could truly be. Like Paul, I really loved all the old LucasArts adventure games, especially *Secret of Monkey Island*, and to a lesser extent the Sierra games like *King's Quest* and *Quest for Glory*.

Paul: I've been playing them for all my gaming life, or pretty close to it. I was weaned on the classic LucasArts adventure games—you know, the *Secret of Monkey Islands* and *Day of the Tentacles* that everyone else played. My personal all-time favorite adventure game (and probably my all-time favorite game, period) is *Curse of Monkey Island*, though I've also very much been enjoying this bounty of new adventure games we've been blessed with over the past several years, like *The Whispered World*, *Book of Unwritten Tales*, and everything

ever by Telltale Games.

[AL]: What made you interested in designing a game about college life?

Paul: Initially, we were just trying to pick a setting that would minimize the amount of art assets we had to create, since we didn't yet have a dedicated artist on board. It was between a game about dorm life and a game about apartment life, and I pushed for dorms because I wanted to tell a story about a kid wrenched away from his friends and forced to live with all these weird strangers, like I and so many other shy high school kids have gone through. College-centric movies and games like to focus on partying and girls, but so few of them talk about the horror of having a roommate who, at any moment, could potentially just pee on you. …Not that that's ever happened to me, or anything.

[AL]: Did you draw upon your own college experiences in writing the story for Life in the Dorms?

Paul: Absolutely! I started off college much like Dack, our main character: apprehensive and lonely, and wanting to go back home pretty much right away. But while Dack is (spoiler alert) able to overcome this in a matter of days, it took me several years to learn how to be open to the possibility of friendship. (To my credit, we didn't have the *My Little Ponies* cartoon back then to teach us that friendship is indeed magic.)

[AL]: What can you tell us about the game's story and atmosphere?

Paul: It's all about, well, life in the dorms—particularly as an incoming college freshman who has no idea what to expect, yet expects everything to go wrong. Early parts of the game focus on the early parts of college life: meeting your creepy R.A., playing "get to know you" games with your floormates, and valiantly trying to unpack

your boxes despite near-constant interruptions to go out and interact with people. It's only after Dack's (somewhat) settled in that we progress to less typical experiences, like investigating possible serial killers and performing open surgery. The atmosphere is, in a word, "awesome." In two words, it's still "awesome," but pronounced all long and drawn out like it's two words.

[AL]: Who are some of the other characters we can expect to encounter? Does character interaction play an important role in the game?

Paul: Dack's roommate, Vincent, plays a huge role throughout the game—first as the mysterious roommate that Dack's afraid is going to kill him with an axe, and then…ah, but that would be a spoiler. There's also Dack's R.A., Brian, who appears to be in love with all of his students; a violently intense copy editor who is *in no way* a Mary Sue for myself; two pre-med students and their sickly mother; the guy working the front desk who's kind of a Nazi stickler for the dorm's rules; and a student who *really* likes dinosaurs. Plus a whole lot more! …Well, at least three more.

[AL]: What can you tell us about the game's interface? How will players control Dack?

Ted: The interface was specifically designed for the Xbox 360 controller. There have been a bunch of console ports of old adventure games, but I've always felt that they lacked a lot in terms of their control schemes. In this interface, all interactions are brought up by a circular interaction menu, and selections in it can be made by simply pressing the left joystick in the direction of the interaction. I wanted to keep the control scheme simple, so everything can be done with the use of only two buttons and the left joystick.

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

Paul: A lot of traditional adventure game puzzles: combine x with y in order to fashion a make-shift candelabra in order to burn the rope that's holding the safe so you can drop it on someone's head and then steal their wallet so you can get enough money to use the laundry machine and clean the shirt that you need to enter the shirt contest so you can win a solid gold armoire, melt it down, and forge the gold bricks you need to complete the gold house in order to make this gold-loving goblin happy so he'll help you out. Stuff like that.

We also tried to branch out a little by introducing a new (or at least, new to us) interaction type to the adventure game oeuvre. In addition to "look at," "pick up," and "talk to," Dack can also "Flitter"—that is, post updates on his social networking website, Flitter—about anything and anyone in his environment. We found a few ways to integrate that into the game's puzzles that we think players will enjoy, assuming they figure out what to do, and don't just get mad at us for designing weird puzzles.

[AL]: Do players need to be familiar with the latest surgical techniques?

Paul: If they aren't, they will be by the time they're finished this game! (DISCLAIMER: Moment Games does not condone the use of *Life in the Dorms* as a replacement for a working knowledge of medicine.)

[AL]: Were any ramen noodles hurt during the making of *Life in the Dorms*?

Ted: Yes. Several cases.

[AL]: The *Life in the Dorms* Web site indicates that the game is being developed for Xbox Live. Are you planning to release the game for other platforms?

Ted: It is definitely something that we are looking into, but at this moment, we are just planning on release for Xbox Live.

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

Ted: Hmm…that's a tough question, but let's say early 2012.

Adventure Lantern thanks Paul Franzen and Ted Hung for taking the time to give us more information about their upcoming project Life in the Dorms. Judging from the initial screenshots and the information Paul and Ted provided, Life in the Dorms could turn out to be a highly entertaining and charming comedy adventure. To find out more information about the game, be sure to visit the official Life in the Dorms Web site.

Salammbo: Battle for Carthage
review by Jonathon Wisnoski (originally appeared on Jonathon's blog)

In this article I want to talk about a great game I recently finished, Salammbo: Battle for Carthage. Salammbo is a 2003 point and click adventure game designed mainly by Phillippe Druillet and based on the the book entitled Salammbo, released in 1862, and written by Gustave Flaubert. At times it really feels like a classical Myst clone, but at the same time the gameplay is so well balanced and genre defying that it also seems like a game from the early graphical adventure period with numerous arcade sequences; A game without the many issues epitomized by the Myst era and without the many strict guidelines that haunt the genre.

" **The brazen arms were working more quickly. They paused no longer. Every time that at child was placed in them the priests of Molach spread out their hands upon him to burden him with the crimes of the people, vociferating: "They are not men but Oxen!" And the multitude round about repeated: "Oxen! Oxen!" The devout exclaimed: "Lord! Eat!"** "

Chapter 13 ("Moloch") of Salammbo: Describing the burning of children inside the huge, hollow brass statue of the Baal Moloch

What first drew me to Salammbo was the dark, brutal, and fantastical graphics (as well as the beautiful scantily clad women); But it was the equally dark, brutal, and fantastical story that really drew me into the game. And as a pleasant surprise the gameplay is an enjoyable difficulty comprised of constantly changing, unique, and interesting challenges and puzzles, perfect at keeping the game constantly new and fresh. Part of this is due to the fantastic log system that keeps track of what you have done and records important information that is needed in future puzzles.

Since they are the first thing that anyone will notice, and definitely the most immediately impressive aspect of this game, I will start by talking about the graphics of Salammbo. These graphics are fantastic and distinctive, and are comprised of three main types that you will see while playing Salammbo.

Normal game graphics that are moderately low resolution, but still very good, and composed of static 2D backgrounds in the full 3D, node based, first person view, with some animation where applicable. The second type of graphics are the numerous CGI sequences; These CGI cutscenes are very well done and I do not think they could of made them look any better then they already do. And it is not just the visuals of the CGI that are great, but also the content; They never got boring and always added to the experience. And lastly, but not least, the graphical novel style log book that is used to tell the story at some parts of the game and as a record of your events for the others; I will talk about this logbook more later, but suffice it to say it contained gorgeous visuals.

What really compliments these visuals are the sounds, music, and voice overs. The game is completed voiced, and the user in only forced to read his own responses in the conversation trees; And I believe that a wonderful job was done in this department, I was normally too engrossed in the story to pay much attention, but I never noticed any odd sounding voices and I did notice a few particularly nice sounding ones, notably the narrator. The sounds and music also both seemed good and never distracted form the experience, nor did I notice anything wrong with either of them. But I did notice that the music did a fair job of inspiring some tense emotions when the game was obviously trying to put

the player under stress to finish quickly or to be afraid of getting caught at any time.

One of my favorite features in this game, the log, was used quite a lot, for multiple reasons. Firstly it is used as a story telling device, to fill in the gaps when gameplay could not correctly portray a scene. In this it does a wonderful job, I easily found the story told through the log the most moving parts of the entire game. Also, and ingeniously, it is also used to record important pieces of information and visuals that you need to remember for latter puzzles. In this it does a far better job then I have ever seen done before, you simply do not have to write anything down or have a good memory, the log is a perfect replacement. This log, as mentioned previously, is done in the style of a comic book or graphic novel and is voiced by the narrator; and it also shows the same attention to detail as the rest of the graphics and the game overall, it looks great, it sounds great, and the story told through it is simply superb. One notable feature of the log is that it records the entire story of the game, even many parts that are never used in game to tell story to the player or for puzzle hints.

The puzzles and challenges of Salammbo are both top notch and incredibly diverse; There is not a chapter of the game that goes by without introducing a new and interesting challenge. These challenges are in addition to the core game which is inventory,

dialogue, and logic puzzles. And what an exciting bunch of challenges; Among other things you will be commanding armies, waging war and laying siege to enemies, avoiding assassination, and performing espionage and sabotage. All of these puzzles and challenges are well integrated into the story and contain logical solutions; And are quite easy overall, but then most great adventure games are at least a little on the easy side. What really helps with the difficulty is a complete lack of pixel hunting. I have never played an adventure game that is so lenient when it comes to finding objects. For the most part you simply do not have to look around in every node, if it makes sense to look around then do so, the important interaction zones and objects are always clearly marked and easy to find even with just a glance.

In particular the mini-game challenges are very unique. While the game starts you off with a fairly simple, though well integrated with the game, reflex based arcade sequence you soon move into more entertaining fare. For a few puzzles you get to wield a bow against moving and stationary targets in a FPS style challenge and, even better, latter in the game you get to command armies in a strategic simplified version of chess. These and more are available throughout the game, and are perfect at making the game feel constantly fresh and new.

Now onto arguably the best part of the entire game, the story. And this is not your usual fare, like mentioned previously it is based on the book Salammbo. Which itself is based on factual historical events and myths, and is a great mature and dark tale involving love, revenge, death, destruction, war, and greed; And in it you play as Spendious, a Carthage slave. Early in the game you escape your imprisonment, and along the way you encounter Salammbo, the beautiful, and scantily clad, head priestess; She helps you escape in exchange for your help in delivering a message to the leader of the barbarians, Matho. The message states that while they met last time she had fallen hopelessly in love with him and asks him to ask for her hand in marriage. With her help, Spendious escapes Carthage, but is still in a country obedient to Carthage and slave hunters will be looking for him. Escaping the city was a bold and lucky accomplishment, but any logical look at the facts gives him little chance in running, so hoping to find an ally he can only try to deliver his message and use all of his skills to endear himself to anyone with the power to protect him.

One unique aspect of this story is the extremely mature subject matter that is included. Like any great classical story, Salammbo includes many vices: nudity, drinking, war, prostitution, sex, murder, and torture, to name a few. All of these subjects are handled in a mature fashion, and do not really make the game unsuitable for young children as no attention is really drawn to this subject matter.

There is not a single thing in Salammbo that I would change. It is quite possibly the best adventure game I have ever played and without a doubt the most stylish commercial title I have ever seen. It is simply a fantastic experience with many aspects that I wish other adventure games copied.

" **"Give free course to your wrath like a runaway chariot," said Spendius. "Shout, blaspheme, ravage and slay. Grief is allayed with blood, and since your cannot sate your love, gorge your hate; It will sustain you!"** "

Chapter 4 ("Beneath the Walls of Carthage") of Salammbo: The insidious words of Spendious nurturing the hate within Matho

Technical Note: I needed to install the patch to get it to work on my Win7 machine.

Salammbo: Battle for Carthage   PC Adventure

Bright moments:
The game log that provides a great way to tell the story and remember needed information for latter puzzles.

Fumbles in the dark:
A few of the NPCs that you only interact with once did not have nice looking close up views.

Verdict:
One of the most unique adventure games ever created.

★★★★★

Developer: Cryo Interactive Entertainment
Publisher: The Adventure Company
Release Date: May 2003
System Requirements:
- OS: Windows 98 or newer
- CPU: Pentium II 333 MHz
- RAM: 64 MB
- Video: 3D

The Dig
review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The Dig is a 1995 2D graphical adventure game by LucasArts. It is a notable exception to other titles in their library as it is a serious title, and this is mirrored in all aspects of the game: the dialogue, story, art, music, and puzzles. The game was created by many talented and famous people; Including the well known science fiction write Orson Scott Card, creator of the Ender's Game series, and Steven Spielberg, the almost legendary film director; And The Dig, unlike many games, almost feels like a triple A film, with an amazing long and involved story, great dialogue and voice acting, attractive visuals, and atmosphere setting music.

The Dig has been criticized by fans of LucasArts adventure games because of its serious atmosphere, too challenging Myst likely puzzles, and pretty much every other aspect of the game; calling it the weakest in the developers library. Personally, I did not see any of this; And I can only come to the conclusion that they are blinded by it being different from the many other wonderful LucasArts games. And it is a a very different game; But no matter how great The Secret of Monkey Island's witty humor was, every game cannot use humor; And no matter how stylish The Curse of Monkey Island looked, every game cannot just copy those graphics and hope to catch some of the magic that was in the game. So yes The Dig is different and unique, but that is where the potential for greatness comes in.

The Dig is a epic science fiction tale of mortality and immortality, of aliens and humans, of technology and ruins, and ultimately of life and death. In the story a team of three astronautics are sent to save the earth from a gigantic asteroid on a collision course with earth. The team saves the earth, but gets transported to a seemingly abandoned alien world filled with mystery and dangers. They must then explore the planet looking for a way home, or at least for a way to survive. They soon discover the ruins of a ancient, technologically advanced, race of aliens; With nothing showing where the aliens went or what happened to them. The team must delve deeper into the alien world to discover what happened to the long absent civilization and continue searching for a way home.

And now to the gameplay. The gameplay is mostly divided between three main types: logic puzzles, inventory based puzzles, and exploration. The logic puzzles revolve around the alien technology; Figuring out how specific control panels and devices function, sometimes how to fix them, and then how to use them. The inventory puzzles are a pretty recognizable fair, similar to other classical adventure games, but particularly well done; Staying logical and entertaining throughout. The third and arguably the most entertaining aspect of the gameplay is the exploration. Exploring the alien landscape and discovering the alien technology and hidden chambers is just awe inspiring in its own right.

What really makes the game great in my opinion is how well all the parts are fit together. The story, as mentioned previously, sets the over arching tone of mystery and wonder. This feeling is compounded by the graphics, particularly the alien environment and technology. The interesting gameplay and puzzles help to draw the player into this world. The great music grows this atmosphere, with a sometimes eery, sometimes alien, sometimes mysterious, and always epic score. And it is the superb and believable dialogue and voice overs that really solidifies it. It is a rare sight to see all of a games attributes come together and work in concert to create such a great atmosphere and ultimately incredible game.

The Dig   PC Adventure

Bright moments:
How well everything fits into the cohesive whole.

Fumbles in the dark:
The overly happy ending slightly distracted from the seriousness of the game prior to that moment.

Verdict:
An imperfect, but still highly enjoyable adventure.

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

Developer: Lucas Arts
Publisher: Lucas Arts
Release Date: November 1995
System Requirements:
• OS: DOS, Mac OS
• CPU: 66 MHz processor
• RAM: 8 MB
• Video: 256 color VGA
• Disk Space: 1 MB

The Book of Unwritten Tales
review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The Book of Unwritten Tales (tBoUT) is probably the most anticipated mainstream adventure game to be released in recent history and really shows off how far ahead the German point and click industry really is. Its main selling point is, and always has been, its fantasy adventure (MMORPG) like plot and allusion to other games and gaming in general.

The game, like you would expect from any professional offering, is fully voiced and has a good musical score. While I don't want to say that any of it was particularly amazing, it was all of professional quality and a pleasure to listen to. The voice acting in particular can often seem overlooked in many titles, but not so here, with its huge cast and obvious attention to detail.

Most unexpectedly is the inclusion of a classic, but far too absent feature, the action sequence. In tBoUT you will brew a potion, influence the weather with a DDR style dancing segment, and even trace out the route of an ancient fairy adventurer on a map; And each and everyone of these sequences are well done and adds to the experience.

Not that it is all good. There are a few errors, bugs, and inconsistencies spread throughout. Some dialogue that did not make sense when compared to other dialogue; At least one graphical glitch; And while not technically bugs, a few nonsensical puzzles. The good part is that these are few and far between, with no serious infractions.

The plot and dialogue of tBoUT is simply superb and the best example of metafiction I have personally seen. In addition to the normal intermittent in-game awareness of it being a game, there is a lot of references to fantasy literature and MMORPGs, including (the very notable example of) at one point having to become a level 98 blacksmith to repair some magical equipment.

In the game you play all of the main characters; Ivo, an Elvin princess who is drawn into the "affairs of foolish mortals", as she would put it, when she witnessed the capture of an old gremlin professor who had uncovered a long buried secret that could change the course of a huge war between good and evil; Wilbur Weathervane, an obvious ode to Frodo Baggins and a Gnome with more then a little wanderlust who is given a chance for adventure when a old gremlin falls out of the sky and gives him a magic ring; And Nathaniel Bonnet, a human rogue who travels with a furry pink creature called Critter.

Every single one of these characters, including Critter, is playable in the only example of multiple playable characters done right I have ever seen. All of them have specific strengths, weaknesses, and a different way of seeing the world. As you progress in the story you get to control different characters, and often multiple characters; And for the most part you need a particular character to solve a particular puzzle but at least in one main instance you get to

pick which character to use and that decision makes the solution very different.

As I see it, The Book of Unwritten Tales has two main strengths and no real weaknesses. It has some very welcome action sequences, some of the best done multiple playable characters I have ever seen, and if I am being generous I might even include the fully

voiced cast as a noteworthy feature. And that is not to say that the rest of the game is not worthy of praise; the fantasy/meta plot and dialogue is better then most and enjoyable, the puzzles are similarity not quite great but better then average, and last (but certainty not least) the graphics are a very well done animation style.

The Book of Unwritten Tales   PC Adventure

Bright moments:
The uniqueness of all the playable characters.

Fumbles in the dark:
Most notably, the black vertical line in the first section of the Orc camp and the archery puzzle.

Verdict:
The Book of Unwritten Tales is, all round, a great adventure title.

★★★★☆

Developer: King Art
Publisher: HMH Interactive,
    Crimson Cow, Lace Mamba
Release Date: October 28, 2011
    (April 2, 2009 in Germany)
System Requirements:
- OS: Windows XP or newer
- CPU: Pentium 2 GHz
- RAM: 1 GB RAM (WinXP)
    | 2 GB RAM (Vista/Win7)
- Video: 128 MB, DirectX 9,
    Pixel Shader 2.0
- Disk Space: 6 GB HDD