

Adventure Lantern



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Editorial

I drummed my fingers on the balcony's rail as I tried to think of an answer. It was practically the beginning of the game. I was annoyed to be stuck even before the plot started to unravel. It was a gorgeous summer day in Istanbul, but I hardly took notice of it. I had to get past this section. I would go out and enjoy the weather later.

At the time, adventure games were still new to me. The puzzles were all fresh. The storylines had not started to feel familiar. Interacting with the game at my own pace, being challenged to think rather than to rapidly tap buttons was exciting. I hadn't even made up my mind about what styles I preferred or what I considered a good adventure.

The game I was struggling with was Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller. Many years and many games later, I would look back and consider Hell a somewhat unfortunate early adventure gaming experience. But on that summer day, I was intrigued. The game was set in a dystopian future, where the punishment for disobeying the government was a one-way ticket straight to hell. Demons walked among humans. The society was corrupt. Moral decay and relentless oppression was forging a world devoid of hope and compassion.

The game opened as the two main characters were targeted by what appeared to be a police squad. After barely surviving the incident, the couple was looking for answers. Why were they being hunted? How could they clear their names while trying to elude a government that controlled the very gates of hell?

Before I could find out more about the story however, I had to come up with the answer to an imp's riddle. I went back into my room and pulled out a dictionary. I was hoping to see something that would help me as I flipped through the pages. I tried typing in a few words... No luck. I revisited the handful of available locations and talked to all the characters. I had to be missing something. It could not possibly be this hard. Frustrated, I decided to stop playing for a while and went to the bathroom to take a shower.

Five minutes later, I had the answer. It had to be right; it was so obvious. It should have been the first word to

come to my mind. I hurried over to my computer and launched the game. Bingo! The answer was correct. Now I could finally see more of the story.

The excitement was incredible. I had all but forgotten my frustration at getting stuck. It had taken a while, but I had figured out the solution on my own. Other types of games rarely offered this kind of satisfaction. I knew I would be an adventure gamer for a long time.

It was more than two years later when I finally finished Hell. Several days after my Eureka moment in the shower, I was hopelessly stuck at a different spot. I eventually gave up on the game and picked up different adventure titles. If I hadn't stumbled upon a walkthrough, Hell would quite possibly still be sitting in my growing pile of unfinished games.

On occasion, I stumble upon comments on forums asking why we have reviews of older games in Adventure Lantern issues. During our first year, a big part of the reason was to build up our archives. But the magazine also gave us an excuse to revisit some old 'friends' we hadn't pulled down from the shelf in years. We got to see how some older titles stood the test of time and watched some team members newly experience a few classics we had grown to love.

Hell however is unlikely to be one of my archive reviews featured at Adventure Lantern. It was while playing through this game that I fully realized how enjoyable adventure titles could be. Later I looked for similar games that offered a great deal of dialog and put the emphasis on the story. Even though Hell frustrated me to the point that I put it away until I found a walkthrough, I will always be partial to that game and its cyberpunk universe.

It would be easy to point out flaws with Hell. Yet nearly two decades later, I still remember it with a certain fondness. Looking through my oversized collection, there aren't many other games I could describe in the same way. Here is hoping you will find one this season; perhaps amidst these pages. January 2012

Until next time,
Ugur

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

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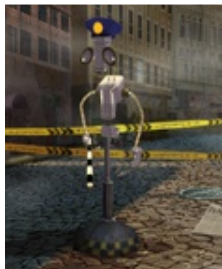


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Murder in the Abbey

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Murder in the Abbey, or simply The Abbey originally (outside of North America), is a Spanish point and click adventure based on the classic novel The Name of the Rose. It has garnered some quite diverse reviews with more than a little dissent between them.

I am not sure if adaptation is the right description for it; It does not so much adapt the story of The Name of the Rose to a video game format as take some chunks of plot from the original story, without even seeming to acknowledge the source. I have never been a fan of unnecessary changes adaptations, and would always prefer a completely new idea to a completely changed old idea. But the game is still worth playing and will provide both nostalgia and surprises for lovers of the original work.

The Name of the Rose is a novel written by Umberto Eco in 1980. It tells of a historical murder mystery set in a Italian abbey in 1327 and of William of Baskerville's search for the truth accompanied by his novice Adso of Melk. In addition to The Abbey, there are many other works that have been based on this story. One of the best adaptations, in my opinion, is the 1986 film by the same name, that even surpasses the original work in some respects. Another adaptation, considered to be very good, is an adventure game called The Abbey of Crime that was originally released for the Amstrad CPC 6128 but has since received many ports to both old and new hardware. Less illustriously, there are numerous plays, a board game, and two radio dramas.



So where else to start but at the beginning with the novel. It is 1327 and Europe is clouded with superstition and filled with the poor, while religion and the inquisition permeate and control everything. William of Baskerville, a Franciscan friar, (called

Brother Leonardo in this adaptation) and his young novice Adso of Melk (called Bruno) are travelling to a remote abbey to take part in a debate between representatives of the pope and of the Franciscans; The Franciscans are arguing that Jesus advocated poverty and so the church should not horde wealth, an opinion that that pope feels is heretical (as the church has one of the biggest concentrations of wealth in the world). Arriving at the abbey they learn that a monk has just died under suspicious circumstances and that the devil is suspected. Because William is renowned as a investigative genius he is soon asked to investigate this death.

William approaches this investigation, and all of life it seems, with an unusual logic and an almost omnipotent gaze that seems to pick up on the details other men miss. In this, he is very much like Sherlock Holmes, with Adso taking the place of Watson. William soon uncovers the circumstances of the death but that only leads him to a larger more sinister mystery as more people start dieing.

The Abbey, more or less, follows this story, with far less attention paid to the debate and philosophy and an ending that is far different from the original. Overall, it is surprisingly accurate in generalities and contains many identical specific events, but it is wildly different in the themes and feelings of the original. Compared to the original work, The Abbey really seemed uninspired and simple, but held up on its own it really is not a bad game. Actually, I would say it is a decent to good game, with respect to the story.

One of the best parts of the game is its nice cartoon graphics that really make the game look like a children's movie, which I have not seen done before quite so well in a game. It has been said that the macabre setting and events of The Abbey is not suited to this graphical style, but while these graphic are used almost exclusively for children's movies I did not feel that they were out of place or that they were inherently childish and lively in any way. But, there are also a few problems with the visuals; More than once there were no visual clues on how to proceed, once with a keyhole being invisible and another time with no way to see within a cupboard that you must take objects from, both of which I relied on a walkthrough to get me past.



Another thing that The Abbey does moderately well is the dialogue. There is quite a few of the original members of the story scattered about the abbey and you get to talk to them in a moderate amount of depth about many things. Quite a lot of these conversations are reminiscent of similar ones in the original work and quite a few of them are very well done with likable characters. Mostly they are exaggerated versions of the people found in the original work and as such are less believable and in some instances so excessively exaggerated that they became my most hated aspect of the game.

The biggest problem is an absence of common sense and realism in how the game portrays some of the characters and specifically Bruno. While some parts of the game stick to the realistic importance and strictness of religion in this medieval world, huge parts of it completely ignore this with the protagonist often committing sins without batting an eye and with sometimes no one else even caring. But one of my biggest problems with the game is the novice Bruno. In the original work, he was more or less the protagonist's Watson; Naive to the finer points of deduction but able to help in his own way and occasionally showing flashes of insight; While in The Abbey, the novice is portrayed as someone with

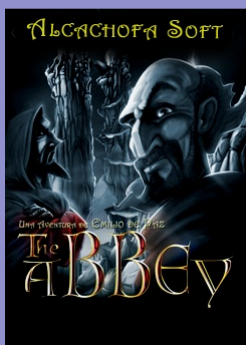
obvious and extreme mental disabilities with Leonardo treating him as below consideration and with extreme beratement if he does not perform unthinkingly, immediately, and perfectly (even with the game going out of the way to show that many of these orders go against his conscience). In The Abbey he seems to play the role of the fool, to be laughed at and abused, and I can only assume that it was cultural differences that made the developers want to put him into this role. Because, to me Leonardo just comes off as a egotistical bully and what he does to Bruno as abuse, but the game did not seem to acknowledge this as a right way of thinking. Leonardo might be right, he might save lives, but he is also not a very nice guy.

While Murder in the Abbey might not be a good adaptation of its original inspiration, The Name of the Rose, it is still a good game and worth a play-through, particularly if you are as huge a fan of the original work as I am. So far I have left out mentioning the gameplay and that is because it is very normal; It is a inventory heavy fare that does not do anything particularly great, but also does not screw up too often or too horribly. Lastly, while I still have you here, I just want to say that if you have not read The Name of the Rose or watched the film adaptation, then you really should do at least one of these things.



Murder in the Abbey

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

The detailed and stylish cartoon graphics and the fact that it is based on a classic detective novel.

Fumbles in the dark:

Bruno in general and game stopping graphical glitches.

Verdict:

A decent adventure that has a few problems but also a few nice features.



Developer: Alcachofa Soft

Publisher: Crimson Cow
The Adventure Company

Release Date: August 2008

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows XP or newer
- CPU: 1.4 GHz
- RAM: 512 MB
- Hard Drive: 3 GB

What Makes You Tick: A Stitch in Time

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

A *Stitch in Time* was an absolute pleasure to play and is a fully realised and full length sequel to the freeware adventure *What Makes you Tick?*, with both of them being designed and created by Matthias Kempke. *What Makes you Tick?*, itself, is a fantastic adventure but now in the much longer and far more substantial adventure *A Stitch in Time*, there is just that much more to love, particularly the expanded plot.

The *What Makes You Tick?* universe is set in a Franz Kafka (German literary genius of the early 20th century) inspired Victorian style world filled with ingenious inventions, inventors, and villains. In the first game, you play Nathan who is in search of the retired professor and famous inventor Dr. Coppelius to warn him of some unknown impending danger. But will you be able to reach the professor before this danger gets to him? To not ruin it for you, I will just say that the story revolves around the famous Smith Institute, which was a group of world renowned scientists who collaborated on numerous incredible projects and of which Dr. Coppelius was a member, and ends with Nathan and a few others chasing the nefarious villain, who has kidnaped someone, by boat.

A Stitch in Time takes place immediately after the end of this first game and continues on from there, eventually ending the immediate story arc but leaving the ending open enough to continue in the future. This time around, you play as Nigel Trelawney, completely unknown until now and the son of one of the Smith Institute scientists, Dr. Anthony Trelawney. Most of the game is comprised of you trying to settle your recently deceased fathers estate in Ravenhollow, the town that the Smith Institute is set within. And for the most part this involves your quest to find the insignia rings of the nine members of the Smith Institute.



But all is not well in Ravenhollow, Thugs from the castle have taken over the town and are enforcing tyrannical rules and taxes on the people; People have disappeared, and other nefarious things are occurred. This and a continuation of the first game's plot stay separate but happening at the same time and place for most of the game, with little more than a few peaks into each others' worlds until the end, when they inevitably merge. But even greater than the overarching stories are the superbly-crafted local dialogue and happenings that drive the player forward.

The most impressive aspect of the entire game is the presentation. The graphics are simply a superb, detailed, hand-drawn, masterpiece; There is so much detail put into each scene, with numerous objects that are never used other than simply to be there, all of them being fully realised with beautifully drawn and detailed graphics and descriptions. The soundtrack is similarly well done and a pleasure to listen to, but quite restrained and obviously not meant to take center stage. The one thing missing is voices, of which there are none. But I, for one, did not mind this.

So what is there to say about the puzzles? There are a lot of them. They are all of a highly professional quality. The entire world, for the most part, is open from the very beginning and many extended puzzle arcs can be attempted at the same time or in any order. You can even rest in a few places flipping the time from day to night and back again which is needed to solve many puzzles. And in each time period you have a full, moderately different, world to interact with. At night some people go to sleep, others come out, and some objects and animals appear or disappear depending on what time it is; And you are not artificially restrained to a small section at night, sure there are a few shops that are closed, but other places open up. One very impressive feature is that I cannot remember a simple puzzle that I liked less than any of the others. They are all good, and they all fit well within this amazing world.

There is just so much to like about *What Makes you Tick: A Stitch in Time*. I don't think that it contains a single element that I disliked, relative to the rest of the game, and none of them were anywhere close to what I would consider average quality. The entire game is fantastic and in my opinion the best commercial adventure game to be released in the last few years.



What Makes You Tick: A Stitch in Time

PC Adventure



Bright moments:

The beautifully and perfectly realized world.

Fumbles in the dark:

If I had to pick, how much of the game focused on a goal that was oblique to the overarching story-line of the game.

Verdict:

An adventure game with no real problems, a lot of polish, and even more to love about it.



Developer: Lassie Games

Publisher: Lassie Games

Release Date: September 2010

System Requirements:

- OS: MAC OS X v10.6 (or newer), Windows XP (or newer)
 - CPU: 2.33GHz x86, 1.6 GHz Atom, Intel Core Duo
 - RAM: 512 MB (1 GB rec.)
 - Adobe AIR (free program)
 - Resolution: 1024x768
 - Possibly Android, iOS, and BB
- See the specific [requirements](#).

Voodoo Chronicles: The First Sign

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Voodoo Chronicles: The First Sign is the first title of the independent development team Space Monkey Games. To be completely honest, I decided it was a bad game within seconds of the intro cinematic ending and never saw a single reason to change that opinion throughout the rest of the game.

The game starts with some backstory in the form of a cutscene. An expedition was launched to a faraway jungle island to recover some all powerful artifact; While the explorers are there ,they decide to massacre the indigenous population. The resident shaman, overwhelmed with revenge, curses the expedition, causing it to be destroyed with only a few escaping. Later, back in civilization, Mr. Coins, the owner of the expedition, is murdered and detective Voodoo is asked to take on the case. Which is where we begin.

Strangely the shaman has already taken notice of you. He casts some magic spell through your window, involving lots of green lightning and creating some sort to demon on your desk. And what do you do in this impossible and dangerous situation? Well you realize that your cat is in need of a feeding. Strangely enough, this cat plays a rather big, strange, and completely improbable role in the entire game along with the shaman, not that I can figure out why he should care about you at all. The rest of the game plays similarly, with complete strangeness and illogical happenings; It is not at all entertaining and makes absolutely no sense.

The gameplay is a mixed bag but overall very simple and easy. I really did not mind the hidden object puzzles. You also have what might be described as

action sequences. They are not losable and cannot be considered a challenge.

The graphics and setting are another assortment of good and bad elements. In general, the graphics are decent to good, but there are scenes that are less polished. But what really brings down my opinion of them overall is how random they can be. There is a single scene with robotic policeman type thing, another with some mechanical coal shovelers, and an entire small village that does not seem to live in much past medieval times. Later on you encounter some Cthulhu monsters, and then magical guardians and gods. There seems to be a place in the game for pretty much every story genre, time period, and stereotypical location ever conceived.

But if I was going to pick one element that surpassed every other in over-dramatic, illogical, unpolished, badness then that would have to be the voice acting. It is by far the worst I have ever seen and makes the game significantly worse overall. It is so incredibly over dramatized and just plain horrible, that no voice acting at all would have provided a significantly better experience..

So in case you have not picked up on it yet, I don't like The First Sign all that much. Parts of the story are not bad, but they are completely overshadowed by the utterly illogical other parts. Some of the voice acting is actually fine but the bad voice acting is so horrible and memorable that it obscures all others. I actually enjoyed a few of the locations taken singularly, they just do not fit into any semblance of a whole.

Voodoo Chronicles: The First Sign

PC Casual Adventure



Bright moments:

The game's short length, because at least the horribleness does not last very long.

Fumbles in the dark:

The voice acting was by far the worst I have ever heard and it significantly dragged down the entire experience.

Verdict:

Unequivocally and totally horrible.



Developer: Space Monkey Games

Publisher: Space Monkey Games

Release Date: November 2011

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows XP or newer
- CPU: 1.4 GHz
- RAM: 512 MB
- DirectX: 9.0
- Hard Drive: 898 MB

The Tiny Bang Story

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The Tiny Bang Story is a hidden object game that takes the genre to a never before seen peak. It shows that hidden object games do not have to simply appeal to a casual audience and that searching for hidden objects does not have to mean a disconnect from realistic puzzles that fit well within the plot.

In The Tiny Bang Story you play on a small world that has recently been devastated by a meteor strike and shattered into many puzzle pieces. You travel the unaffected lands collecting these pieces and restoring your world. And it really is a small world; The game is over in an very short period of time and raises the question of how much you are willing to pay for a not really repayable 3-4 hour game.

The graphics of Tiny Bang are what should draw most players to the game because they are simply fantastic. These visuals are 2D and are quite fantastical in nature with slight hints of steampunk. And come across as very alive which is only helped by the fantastic sound track.



The gameplay is equally well polished and I believe it is some of the best the genre has to offer and by far the best I have ever played. Every single puzzle and hidden object you are directed to find makes sense in the plot, even when considering the number of objects that you are asked to find. In addition to the hidden object puzzles you will also be solving many logic puzzles and a few mini-games, which are all quite well done and I found them fun if somewhat ambiguous at times.



In summary, The Tiny Bang Story is a solid stylish hidden object adventure. But it is still a hidden object game and as such it is not the place to look for challenging and unique puzzles or a long and involved plot.

The Tiny Bang Story

PC Casual Adventure



Bright moments:

The fantastical and detailed graphics that really bring the world to life.

Fumbles in the dark:

Its rather short length.

Verdict:

Quite possibly the best hidden object game yet created.



Developer: Colibri Games

Publisher: Colibri Games

Release Date: April 2011

System Requirements:

- OS: Windows XP SP1, MAC OS X Leopard 10.5.8 or newer
- CPU: 1.5 GHz
- RAM: 512 MB
- DirectX: 9.0c
- Hard Drive: 180 MB