Adventure Lantern

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It is around 6:00 AM in the morning on Saturday April 15th. Tired and more than a little stressed, my wife and I are somewhere on the road between Oklahoma City and Dallas. It has been a busy week and the weekend promises to be even more hectic. But driving along the freeway, we both notice how incredibly beautiful the morning is. To the left the sun is just rising and casting light on the trees. At the same time, to our right the skies are still dark blue. The full moon is still gleaming as if to rival the rising sun. The contradiction of the evening and the morning skies creates a feeling of timelessness. And for a few minutes, the petty problems of everyday life just do not matter.

Releasing the May issue of Adventure Lantern almost seems like a small miracle. Things seem to have been extremely hectic for the entire team this month. Almost every staff member has in someway or fashion told me that they were going through an unusually busy time. And I was not faring much better either. Due to an extended illness and a general lack of time, we have well over twenty walkthroughs waiting in line for formatting publish. Here's a special thanks to their authors for their incredible patience. But fortunately we were still able to put together a few previews and a solid selection of reviews for our May issue.

As usual, we covered a selection of old and new games. While you can read our take on Keepsake, Crime Stories, Bone: The Great Cow Race, and Tomb Raider: Legend, we hope that you will also enjoy reminiscing about Under a Killing Moon in our first review covering the Tex Murphy series.

Some of you may notice that a handful of the articles in our May issue are already published on the Adventure Lantern Web site. We have decided to offer some of our articles as soon as they are written rather than holding them for the next issue of the magazine. While we will only do this with a small number of reviews, we hope that it will provide some articles to our readers who check the site frequently. These reviews will still be included in the magazine.

With our fifth issue, we are welcoming a new staff member to our team as well. Dusan Radojevic will be providing us coverage on a number of independent games. You can find his review of Dead City in this issue along with articles on a number of other independent games we have covered.

Glancing over the articles that made it into this issue, I am glad to bring a hectic month to a close. Here's hoping that despite your busy lives, all of can find a peaceful moment to enjoy. Just like my wife and I did on the road to Dallas on a beautiful spring morning...

-Ugur Sener

Tale of Hero - Preview

Written by Ugur Sener

Young Olaf grew up with stories of heroism and bravery. His father had been the greatest hero of Green Kingdom. The valiant warrior had spent many years fighting terrifying monsters. Risking his own life to protect the people, Olaf's father had been revered by the citizens as a truly noble, awe-inspiring hero.

Yet the brave man had fallen out of favor upon refusing to lead his nation into a meaningless war. Shunned by the monarch, Olaf's father took his family to a small village. The untimely death of his beloved wife forced the great hero to raise Olaf alone. He wanted to make sure Olaf would learn to fend for himself and understand the value of helping others in need. Unfortunately, the brave father passed away when Olaf turned twenty years old, leaving the young man completely alone.

Rather than seeking grand adventures like his father, Olaf spent the next five years living as a fisherman. The quiet and peaceful life greatly appealed to Olaf, even though he had a few small quests of his own. The fisherman eventually fell in love and got engaged. Olaf seemed to be set for a happy life. But when he was least expecting it, adventure came and found the young fisherman.

One day a witch came to Olaf with a grave message. A snow giant had awakened from his long slumber spanning thirty years. Called Krugell, the snow giant had discovered that Olaf's father was responsible for slaying one of his brethren upon the king's orders. Krugell sought vengeance. The snow giant had already captured princess Erea. But this was just the beginning. Krugell was planning to track down all the members of the hero's family and kill them. With Olaf's father dead, the Green Kingdom did not have a hero that could defeat the giant and save the princess. Olaf had a difficult decision to make.

Was he going to run away from Krugell and spend the rest of his days in hiding? Would it be better to try to avoid the giant and let someone else deal with rescuing the princess? But Olaf knew that was not what his father would have done. The princess had been the only one who spoke in his father's defense

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when he refused to go to war. Could Olaf really leave her in the clutches of the terrible creature? Could he really constantly cower in fear of being discovered by Krugell? Perhaps it was time to rise up to the challenge. Olaf had been taught to protect people. He had been taught to bravely face evil creatures. The young man knew that sometimes in life people have to stand up and fight for what is right. Deep in his soul, deep in his blood, a true hero was waiting to be released. Olaf simply had to reach in and open the doors.

Tale of Hero is a fairy-tale fantasy adventure game that is currently being developed by Future Games. The game will utilize the AGDS (Advanced Graphic Development System) engine that was originally developed for the horror adventure Black Mirror. Future games also used the engine for their more recent NIBIRU project. Tale of Hero features a traditional point and click interface and it will be played from a 3rd person perspective. As illustrated by the available screenshots, the stylish high-resolution graphics should make Tale of Hero quite a visual delight. The lushly colored environments seem to be very fitting for the fantasy setting and create a light-hearted tone for the game.

The game will span across four chapters and boasts seventy different locations. Gamers should expect a number of different environments during what might be quite a lengthy adventure. Character interaction should also play a significant role in Tale of Hero. The game features twenty five non-player characters and the dialogues span fifty pages. Players should have an opportunity to interact with a number of interesting and colorful fantasy characters through the course of the adventure.

While the setting and the tone of the game might be noticeably different from the previous Future Games offerings, Tale of Hero can end up being yet another successful title from the development company. The seemingly whimsical fantasy theme, the large number of locations to explore, and the promising concept might make for an interesting adventure game. Olaf's journey to rescue the princess and his transition from being a humble fisherman into a true hero might make Tale of Hero a quite memorable adventure game.

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Safecracker - Preview

Written by Ugur Sener

Released in 1997, the original Safecracker offered quite a unique adventure gaming experience. Players assumed the role of a security expert that was given a unique job opportunity. Crabb & Sons Safe and Security Systems asked you to break into their headquarters. Your task was to piece together the clues hidden in more than thirty safes in order to unlock the final master safe. If you completed the task successfully, you would be given a job as the head of security development at Crabb & Sons.

While the original game may not have appealed to adventurers interested in a deep plot, engaging storyline, and heavy character interaction, Safecracker was a real treat to players who enjoyed an adventure game heavily focused on puzzles. The game successfully managed to make the act of breaking into a considerable number of safes entertaining. Now, nine years after the release of DayDream Software's Safecracker, Kheops Studio and The Adventure Company are getting ready to release a new game with the same title and a similar concept. The new Safecracker will not be a direct sequel to the original game. However, the game's producer Yann Tisseyre expresses that the new project is indeed inspired by the 1997 release.

The Safecracker that is currently in development offers a different premise than the original game. This time around, you play as a security expert hired by a wealthy family to conduct an investigation at an impressive mansion. The eccentric billionaire Duncan Walter Adams has recently passed away, and his relatives are unable to locate his last will. Since it would have been all too easy to leave his will and the deed to his property at an easily accessible location, the billionaire has hidden the documents through an intricate network of safes. The mansion is home to an impressive thirty-five safes. Your job is to figure out a way to crack every single one of these safes and find the deed to

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Duncan's property. But these safes will likely need more than your average three-digit combination or brass key to crack. You will have to overcome plenty of challenges before you can open up the elusive master safe.

Kheops Studio's Safecracker spans across the entire luxurious mansion. The game is played from a first-person perspective. Safecracker will utilize the familiar node-based navigation system with 360 degree panoramas. Players will have an opportunity to explore forty different rooms throughout the adventure as they try to crack the thirty-five safes. Yann Tisseyre informs us that the stylish mansion will span across two floors, also featuring a cellar and an attic. Unlocking the safes will put your observation skills and deductive reasoning ability to test. Clues will be available around the mansion and hidden inside the various safes. Breaking into the earlier safes will give you the hints you need to unlock the final master safe.

If the game play is anything like the original Safecracker, players can expect a wide array of logic puzzles spread throughout the game. Mastering the mansion and finding a way to break into all of the safes should be a worthy challenge that will keep you occupied for many hours. Since players will have to use clues from the earlier puzzles to overcome the game's later challenges, the entire mansion will most likely feel like one intricate puzzle. The game's producer promises a "pure puzzle-solving" atmosphere with "no stress [and] no infiltration."

For adventurers who enjoy a game that is heavy in puzzles, Safecracker could be a truly entertaining offering. The initial screenshots released for the game promise a great deal of visual appeal. Players should be able to expect a richly detailed environment they can explore at a casual pace. Going through the large mansion and unlocking all the safes could make for a pleasant experience. Safecracker is currently scheduled for a Fall 2006 release. If you are looking for some serious puzzle solving, Safecracker could easily prove to be worth the wait.

A Tale of Two Kingdoms - Preview

Written by Ugur Sener

It all started on that fateful day when King Culann was traveling across his lands in the kingdom of Theylinn. A group of raiders from Qualinem ambushed the king and his escorts, demanding all the valuable items in their possession. What kind of a king would Culann have been to yield to the demands of petty thieves? Refusing to part with his riches, the king ordered his soldiers to attack. Outnumbered, the king's knights still bravely charged on to battle. Alas, victory would not be theirs. The raiders overwhelmed the knights. King Cullann was killed during the fight.

After the king's death, Prince Vortigern took over the throne. Vortigern would not forgive the raiders for what they did to his father. They had to be hunted down; they had to pay for their crimes. Gathering a massive army, the new king went after the raiders. Yet Vortigern's fury devastated much more than the gang of thieves. The entire kingdom of Qualinem was conquered.

His unquenchable fury and lust for power drove Vortigern to further conquests. Many cities fell before the king. Vortigern sought to become the rule of all the lands. But the king finally met his match in Maeldun Whiteblade. Uniting the people under his banner, Maeldun put up an incredible fight against Vortigern's army and defended the city of Gronthal. Soon Maeldun joined Lady Branwyn and formed a formidable resistance against Vortigern's tyranny. Branwyn and Maeldun liberated many towns as they drew ever closer to Vortigern's home.

Now the kingdom of Theylinn is in grave danger. Vortigern's actions may lead to the devastation of an entire proud nation. The invading army is approaching Vortigern's castle with great force. The kingdom is also threatened from within. Conspiracies are brewing within the castle walls. The kingdom is in a state of unrest and turmoil. In the midst of this chaos, mysteries are waiting to be uncovered and a great adventure is about to begin.

A Tale of Two Kingdoms is an adventure game currently being developed by Crescent Moon Studios. Using the AGS engine, the game is played from a third-person perspective and features traditional point- and- click elements. Players will assume the role of Maeldun and try to overcome a series of challenges in a fantasy setting.

The game relies on the mouse for controls. The left mouse button is reserved for performing actions such as moving Maeldun or interacting with objects. Using the right mouse button, players can cycle through the available actions. Alternatively, players can view the command list by moving the mouse to the top portion of the screen. Each action is denoted by a different icon. The available commands allow Maeldun to talk to other characters, examine objects, or perform actions such as opening a door or pressing a button. Players can also use the right mouse button to cycle to the active inventory item. It is possible to directly access the inventory to choose an item, but players are also allowed to cycle through available items by using the mouse wheel. In addition to the mouse navigation, the player can use the keyboard to move the character.

A short demo is available for A Tale of Two Kingdoms on the game's official Web site (www.TaleOfTwoKingdoms.com). The demo features a couple of inventory-based challenges as you try to gain access to a building. Once you get inside, you will be asked to solve another puzzle by piecing together the clues written on a series of doors. While the puzzles featured in the demo will not be part of the final version of the game, they should still give you an idea of what the kind of challenges you can expect to find in A Tale of Two Kingdoms. The demo also offers a great opportunity to try out the game's interface.

A Tale of Two Kingdoms does not currently have a definite release date. However the game is expected to be completed before the end of 2006. Judging by the demo, available screenshots, and the game's trailer, A Tale of Two Kingdoms could be quite an entertaining adventure offering. The game promises an engaging storyline and an intriguing setting. Traveling through the mystic land of Theylinn, players should expect to overcome a good number of challenges. Solar Crescent Studios could easily deliver a solid adventure offering with A Tale of Two Kingdoms.

Keepsake (Based on the North America release)

PC Review by Wendy Nellius

My dear friend Lydia,

I am so happy that you were accepted at the Academy! You will see, Dragonvale is the best place to live and study. After all, it's the most prestigious and renowned school of magic amongst all!

I can't wait to see you. It's been 8 years and I wonder if I'll be able to recognize you when we finally meet again. I bet you won't recognize me either! I have been so lonely here without you and I'm ecstatic that we'll finally be together again very soon!

I've already planned a full day of things for us to do as soon as you arrive. It will be so exciting! I'll show you around the campus which is enormous. I'll also introduce you to our teachers. We could even go for a walk in the beautiful forest beside the school if you don't arrive too late.

I'll wait for you by the fountain at the main entrance.

Miss you,
Celeste

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Don't be scared Lydia, just give me your hands and repeat after me.

Having met when they were small children, Lydia and Celeste form a bond of friendship that can never be broken. Shortly thereafter, Celeste learns that her father has accepted the position of Principal at Dragonvale Academy and together they will be moving a long distance away. In order to ensure they never forget each other, Lydia and Celeste perform a friendship ritual. Each girl gives the other something they treasure. Celeste gives Lydia a pendant that once belonged to her mother. Lydia gives Celeste her favorite doll which up until this moment has never left her side. These are the Keepsakes.

Many years later, Lydia receives a much welcomed letter from Celeste as she prepares to journey to Dragonvale and begin her life as a student of magic. But, much to her dismay, Lydia's welcome does not go as planned. Celeste is not there to greet her at the fountain. With the exception of a merchant named Mustavio, the outside of the school appears to be devoid of students. Where could they all be? Well, this is a school and there are probably classes taking place, right? Surely, that's where everyone is.

It takes some craftiness, but Lydia is finally able to get inside the school. Hmmm…the main hall also seems deserted. This can't be right. Time to take a look around and find someone, anyone, to clear up this mystery… Well, Lydia does find someone, or shall we say; a wolf named Zak. The wolf claims that he is really a dragon. One of the students played a cruel trick on him and changed him into a wolf. Adding

insult to injury, he was then locked in a cabinet. He is quite grateful to be released and is willing to help Lydia in her search. Something doesn't seem quite right with Zak's story, but he's all Lydia has right now. So, with Zak as Lydia's constant companion, the game truly begins.

Keepsake comes with a game manual and 3 CD's which take a considerable amount of time to load. Keepsake is a 3rd person point and click adventure game. Depending on your ability to plow through some of the game's extremely taxing puzzles, it can easily take 20-30 hours, if not longer, to complete Keepsake. The

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beginning of the game features a mandatory tutorial which must be completed before you can star the adventure.
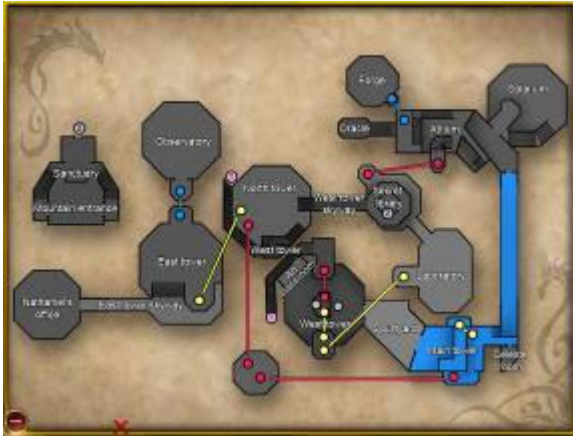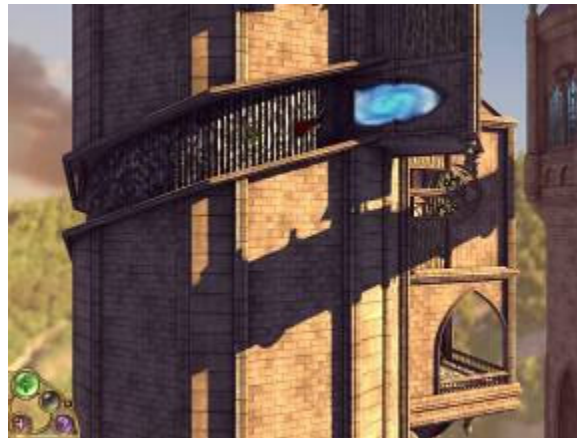

Getting around can be accomplished on foot, through teleportation pads, or using the occasional magic portal. There are 2 maps provided in-game which can be accessed with a click at the bottom of the game screen. The maps are essential due to the fact that Dragonvale is quite large and a bit confusing with all the secret locations. And, it's important to note that not all the locations are listed on the map. When you find one that isn't listed, it might be helpful to notate it on the map in your game manual. This is a long game and your memory might fail you.

The main menu can also be found at the bottom of the screen. It is here that you can view your inventory. All the items Lydia will find in the game are already listed in your inventory at the beginning. But the items remain grayed out until Lydia actually locates them. The Vision Menu also works in the same fashion. Throughout the game, Lydia experiences psychic visions about Celeste, her father, and the school. These visions can be viewed multiple times, but only after Lydia actually experiences them for the first time. Sound volume and Gamma adjustments can also be made from the main menu. All the necessary navigational cursors are pretty standard and are explained fully in the tutorial.

The main menu will also allow you to save or quit the game. What is unusual is that you are unable to go back and load a previous save while you are playing the game. You must quit entirely and restart the game. Then, you can choose the "continue" option and load a saved game. It is also rather odd that you are only shown your last saved game. If you click on the down arrow in the panel, you will get a warning message asking you to proceed with caution as loading an older game will overwrite any current saved game. There are only 9 save slots in total which is not enough for a game of this size. The option to go back without penalty would have been preferable especially if you want to try and solve a specific puzzle again. You can not just go back to that point without losing all your progress. This was certainly disappointing.

Keepsake offers the unique feature of an in-game hint system. Clicking on the question mark at the bottom of the screen will give you a preview of where you are supposed to go next. In most adventure games, wandering is just what you do, but being that the academy is huge and your tasks are scattered all over, you would likely be wandering forever without this helpful feature.   What's even better is that the hint system provides help with the puzzles. Clicking on the question mark during a puzzle will give you a chance for a first hint, second hint, final hint and then, if you really need it, the solution.

Keepsake is a puzzle intensive game, but very few of the challenges you will encounter are inventory-based. The majority of the puzzles are logic-based and a lot of them are really quite difficult. Unfortunately, the hint system may not always help you as well as you would like either. But, if you truly can not figure out the puzzle, you can choose to have the game solve it for you. For some of the puzzles, it will show you how it was solved step by step. Other times, it will just be solved without an explanation. This should have been more consistent one way or the other, but considering that other games with this level of difficulty do not provide help at all, the hint system in any form is a considerable bonus.

That being said; make sure you have your thinking cap on as you go through Keepsake. You might want to double up on the caps for extra peace of mind. Keepsake will start you off with a nice easy puzzle around the fountain, luring you into thinking that this game will be a piece of cake. Then the game knocks you back into reality quickly with much more difficult challenges. One such puzzle consisted of setting 8 different control pads (each with 4 options on them) in order to send a power flow in the correct direction to turn on all the machines. It took this reviewer half the day to figure out the solution to this single puzzle. The hint system was not much help on this particular challenge. The

majority of the puzzles have magical properties to them such as a painting puzzle where figuring out the relationship between 2 paintings causes them to magically change into new paintings. There are other puzzles that have maze like

properties to them and you will need to follow the directions you are given to successfully navigate your way back. Sometimes even figuring out how to go from one location to another can be a challenge. There are also puzzles that deal with astrology and runes. There are trials to overcome requiring logic and school history that you pick up as you explore. Even though your brain will be exhausted by the time you're through, the puzzles are a lot of fun and the magical aspect makes them even more interesting. Even though the game may not seem all that entertaining after you have spent 4 hours on a couple of the challenges, there is a nice balance to keep any puzzle hound satisfied.

The primary characters in Keepsake are Lydia and Zak. Interaction with other characters is extremely limited. Celeste and her father are seen only in Lydia's psychic visions. Lydia is an intelligent and quite loyal young lady. She has a strong determination and refuses to be thwarted from her goal of finding Celeste and the rest of the student body. Zak is quite the character. Trapped in his wolf body, Zak seems to have honorable intentions but also show signs of being a tad shifty. Being in a school of magic, his story seems quite plausible, but the details of that story seem to change a bit each time you hear it. Sometimes Zak will slip up and say something he surely wasn't supposed to say. Lydia will question him about it but never quite get the answer she's looking for. The more detail you get from him, the more you will wonder who he truly is. You'll be wondering if he will turn out to be some evil entity that's just been messing with you the whole time.

The voice acting for the most part was decent. There was a clunker here or there, but as it wasn't a main character and the problems were not great enough to detract from the game. The actor who voiced Zak does deserve special recognition. Zak's voice was wonderfully believable; showing real emotion, seeming innocence, and just the right inflections to let you surmise he's keeping secrets. He damn near made this reviewer cry in the middle of the game. Truly, Zak was a joy to listen to for this reviewer. And, to be honest, the other voices became less and less noticeable. While there aren't a lot of characters to speak to, you will

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get decent amounts of conversation between Zak and Lydia. If you stand too long in one place, Zak will usually just start up a conversation to get you moving again. All the conversation is essential so there's no worry about endless rambling or extremely long dialog.

The character renderings were good, but it's really hard to tell as you rarely see them in close-up view. The creation of the gorgeous backgrounds seems to be where the developers focused their energy. It feels like you just walked into Harry Potter's Hogwarts after they spruced it up a bit. Outside, you can explore a lush forest where every blade of grass is so clear, you can almost smell it. The inside of the academy is bursting with color. Each room you enter will fill you with delight. You can see the magic all around in the colorful bursts of energy that take the place of torch lighting. Walk outside on the balconies and you can see the mountains, waterfalls and all the bridges and towers. In the garden is a small body of water similar to a pond. It is amazing to see the water move and glisten. You can see all the fish swimming around and it is frighteningly realistic; as if you could stick you hand right in.

There are so many locations to see. There are multiple towers, magical classrooms, a laboratory, a secret library, an enchanted crossway, and a whispering stairway. The list goes on and on. You'll be glad that Lydia has a pretty quick running speed. There is certainly a lot of ground to cover. The only minor gripe is that in some locations the camera angles were not the greatest. For example, in the Academy's Façade, you will be in an area with multiple exits. Because of the camera angles, it is truly hard to see where those exits are. It is even difficult to tell where you're going. Thankfully, this is not the case throughout the game, just in a few areas.

There are some cinematic cut scenes. Some occur while using the teleportation pads which allow you to travel magically from one tower to another. You will be able to see the direction your magic travel takes you. These are slightly blurry, but I assume this is to convey the magical essence of the teleportation. One can only assume that to travel in this way would require the physical body to disappear.

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It is doubtful that you would see clearly while you are being teleported. The other cut scenes are manifestations of Lydia's psychic visions. They are done using still pictures with accompanying text and voice. The music is appropriate, light and unobtrusive. Ambient sounds were also done well and helped capture the mood of the game.

Lydia's psychic visions are essential to the flow of the storyline. They tell us what we can't possibly know by walking around the academy. Each new vision brings us tiny shards of the overall story. The visions will raise the number of questions you have and give you more reason to worry. Each new piece of information brings you closer to finding out the truth. The story progresses at a slower pace which gives you a chance to absorb each shred of information. This is much more enjoyable than having the story jammed into you all at once. There are some sad parts, but the focus does not stay there very long. The ending is not what you might be expecting and some may be disappointed. But, it is still appropriate, conclusive, and most certainly not cliché.

Despite some minor gripes, Keepsake is a thoroughly enjoyable and challenging game. If you're a gamer who likes a mystical theme, interesting storyline, and a ton of puzzles, give Keepsake a try. Those who like their puzzles on the easier side can still enjoy the overall story and beauty while utilizing the hint system to solve the more beastly challenges. The puzzles and fantastic environments alone make this game worth the purchase.

Final Grade: 90/100

Developer: Wicked Studios	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):**
Publisher: The Adventure Company	Windows® ME/2000/XP
Platform: PC	Pentium® III 1 GHz
Genre: Adventure	256 MB RAM (512 recommended)
Release Date: April 2006	32 MB Video Card (3D Accelerated)
Grade: 90/100	DirectX® 9 Compatible Soundcard
	16x CD-ROM Drive
	Hard Drive space of 1.5 GB

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Bone: The Great Cow Race

PC Review by Gnome

We live in an era that is starting to transcend each and every notion of sanity. It is an era that even manages to turn entertainment to anxiety. In this dark period for mankind, everything feels, and actually is, rushed. Well, not this review. You see Telltale has been kind enough to provide us with a copy of the second Bone episode, The Great Cow Race, almost a week before its release, meaning I've had more than enough time to thoroughly explore the game and everything related to it. Not rushing to prepare the review for the day of release allowed me to reread the comic book, explore every available option of the game, browse through forums and sites, read Sam and Max comics, drink heavily, and generally let the game grow on me. I even downloaded and read the pdf manual of Bone 2, which –if you must know and can't be bothered to have a look for yourself- is a beauty. I also checked my beloved thesaurus for synonyms of the words beautiful and beauty. It even occurred to me to write a totally surreal The Great Cow Race review that would include references to a Jack Daniel's advertisement and my thoughts on the Greek Football (soccer for you Americans) Championship. Thankfully I overcame that silly phase.

So, in my vain attempt at originality, I'll settle with talking about the first Bone episode, Out from Boneville, instead. To be honest, in my review for Adventure Lantern a couple of months ago, I overrated it. Not by much, but I definitely did. Especially when compared to its successors' score (it's an 89, don't bother to scroll all the way to the end of the article), the first act of Bone exploited my fondness of Telltale and my ancient craving for humorous adventures. Being based on Jeff Smith's brilliant work did help a tad too, but, despite being a good, innovative and refreshing game, Out from Boneville did have its fair share of problems. Most important were its (lack of) length, linearity, and rather empty surroundings. The game had a few glitches here and there, not to mention quite a steep price tag.

Thankfully all these issues are sins of the past. Banished to oblivion. Telltale not only released a better, longer, more interesting, more polished, and cheaper

sequel, but went back in time and lowered Out from Boneville's price too. They have even ironed out their distribution system, and are offering reduced prices to people who bought the first Bone and the option of a boxed version to the bandwidth challenged. In a confident, but self-sarcastic and definitely ritualistic move, Bone: The Great Cow Race goes to great pains to show how much Telltale values the fan-base feedback. It starts with a great line: "The last one was fun, don't get me wrong, but it was too short!"

Actually, I could go on for ages rambling on each and every little thing that Bone Act Two fixed or improved over its predecessor. Little things like the marginally better voice-overs, the slightly more vivid landscapes and the richer animated 3D models. I could even get a tad meaner, overcome my fanboyism and discuss things that should have been remedied but weren't, such as the fact that the 3D engine isn't scalable, that the range of facial animations still isn't what it should be, or that at points you are stuck with the cursor mode the developers chose. Apparently I won't. I guess I'll have to stop this filthy and rather obscene habit of judging Bone Act Two in relation to Bone Act One. Even if it's an episode in a series, it will face judgement on its own, or at least almost.

In case you haven't played Out from Boneville and want to try The Great Cow Race, understand this: Bone 2 is a great standalone episode, but you will not get full satisfaction from this game unless you are able to follow the entire story (for full satisfaction, you can also try to Google phrases like 'escort service' or 'remote control vibrating panty'). You can get a feel for the overall storyline in three ways: 1st buy the comic books, which -believe me- are worth it, 2nd buy and play Bone Act One, 3rd visit Telltale's site to download a video, that sums the story so far, and have a look at the expansive and beautifully illustrated "Who is Who" that's included in The Great Cow Race's Main Menu.

The Great Cow Race (TGCR), besides sporting an improved Main Menu, and as the name rather profanely suggests herding enough Cows to keep me happy, is mostly about a Cow Race. A great one as far as cow races go, and to be more precise one that takes place in Barrelhaven, one of the mythical Valley's rural centers. Being a game in the Bone series, TGCR features the three Bone cousins. The cousins are the stingy Phoney, pointlessly smiling Smiley and all-

around good guy Fone Bone. Other key characters include Grandma Ben, the Red Dragon, Thorn, Ted, the Rat Creatures, and the Hooded One.

In Barrelhaven two of the Bone cousins, namely Phoney and his totally enthusiastic partner in crime Smiley will try to win a major cow-race bet. In the meantime, Fone will go for Thorn's heart. Accompanied by a brilliant soundtrack, TGCR features all this, while the true story of the Bone saga starts unfolding and picking-up pace. Where Out from Boneville introduced the characters and set them on their way, The Great Cow Race starts entangling the Bones in the grand and rather funny epic Jeff Smith has created.

So, story and music are excellent. Graphics are okay, low-tech but colorful and at points plain beautiful. Animation is at times excellent and rich and at (other) times (especially at facial close-ups) barely decent. What about the game play then? Well, if you enjoy adventure games –and let's face it, you are reading Adventure Lantern, you absolutely adore them– Bone Act Two shines in the game play and puzzle departments, as long as you don't expect Gabriel Knight 3's level of complexity. The puzzles are a bit on the easy side, but definitely harder than the first time (don't worry, the excellent and subtle hint system is still there; you might even need it). The challenges are smart and very varied. They sometimes appear as an organic part of the story and sometimes as interesting and well-implemented mini-games. This time you will also have to slightly manipulate your inventory, endure the odd fetch-quest and use Telltale's excellent dialog system. But the best parts of the game (which I won't spoil for you) involve writing a love poem for Thorn and winning the Cow Race itself. This is puzzle design straight from the golden LucasArts era. That is also where the idea of freely changing the character you are controlling (between Phoney, Smiley, and Fone) comes. Think Day of the Tentacle, only not so weird. Appropriately, the game's tone changes to reflect the character you are controlling.

The game of course is not just a collection of puzzles and mental trials. It's an excellent storytelling experience that can almost last 8 hours; provided you take your time that is. There is an abundance of clickable hotspots, that help flesh out Bone's universe and enrich your adventure. You can talk to a variety of characters in order to discover their detailed stories (Benedict, Dirk, Cecil, Alvie and Dirk, the

four brothers come to mind). The game has a few great gags, a glimpse at the dark side of the Valley, a nice cliffhanger-ending, and a particularly successful credits sequence right after the finale. You can even chat with the cows or try reading excerpts from Moby Dick to every person you meet.

Unfortunately, not all is rosy. At points the experience seems to be a bit lacking. Definitely not marred (did you know that 'mar' is a word coming right from prehistoric Germanic?), but just no so satisfying. The animations for example can get stiff or overly theatrical. The lip-synching is mediocre, load times can get tiresome, and the 3D engine is far from perfect. There is also no proper opening sequence, despite the frequent use of cut-scenes. Oh, and Thorn could use a new head. She still doesn't look like someone anything would fall in love with. Ok, so these problems don't even get close to spoiling the game, they are actually quite easily overlooked, but they still exist and keep this excellent adventure game from achieving classical status. On the other hand, I only believe five adventures from the past fifteen years are worthy of classical status.

Nevertheless, reaching a verdict for Bone: The Great Cow Race, unlike the game itself, is child's play. Buy it. You'll thank me, and you'll be prepared for the eagerly anticipated third installment of the saga. For less than 13$ (that's 10 euros) you'll get a beautiful, funny, innovative, engrossing adventure. And you get to look at Bone's expressive eyebrows for more than a few hours.

Grade: 89/100

|	
Developer: Telltale Games **Publisher:** Telltale Games **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** April 2006 **Grade:** 89/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 2000/XP Pentium® III 800MHz DirectX 8.1 140 MB free disk space

Crime Stories

PC Review by Suz

Crimes Stories is a game based upon the Martin Mystère graphic novels. Crime Stories is a point and click mystery game played from a third-person perspective. The game was developed by Artematica Entertainment. **[Editorial Note:** Just in case there is any confusion left in this matter, Crime Stories was originally released in Europe in 2005. The original title of the game was Martin Mystère: Operation Dorian Gray**]**

Crimes Stories begins with Martin waking up to a ringing telephone. Upon answering the phone the detective finds out that there has been a murder. Travis is calling to enlist Martin's help in the investigation. Your first set of tasks comprises Act 1. You need to get dressed, get your car, your cell phone, and a map. This involves a fair amount of searching around the house and the introduction of Java. Java is a friend/housekeeper. There is a bit of brief dialog explaining his role in Martin's life. Java mainly grunts and is unhelpful. He looks rather like a Neanderthal. **[Editorial note:** As fans of the comic would have already realized from Suz's remarks, the depiction of Java in Crime Stories does not necessarily stay true to the comic books.**]**

Crime Stories is designed as a series of acts. The game features a total of eight acts. This structure does occasionally become frustrating when players are required to find the one little piece that allows you to progress to the next act. What you need to do in order to proceed is not always very clear. The problem is made worse due to the way the

game's interface is setup. You use a mouse cursor to explore your environment. The descriptions for what you see appear at the very bottom of the screen. Sometimes there are verbal description of what you are seeing and sometimes not. So as you're pixel hunting, you need to keeping looking down to see if there are any changes. This structure is awkward and keeps you from being immersed in the game. You also need to use the left mouse button to change the cursor from the magnifying glass to the hand or speak cursors. This control structure can take a little getting used to.

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE
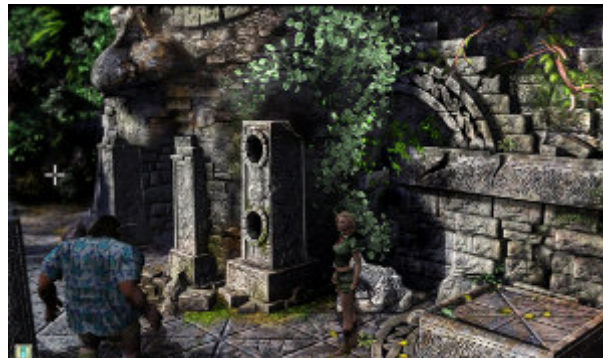
There are eight save slots. The game is saved with a picture and labeled with the act number. Since you can revisit the same area many times in different acts, it might have been better display the save games with a time stamp or allow the player to label them. You can end up with multiples saves with the same picture and Act label, but different content.

With a few notable exceptions during the later parts of the game, Crime Stories is basically an inventory-based puzzle and dialog driven game. It is worth noting that there is inconsistency on how items in the inventory are used. Sometimes you need to select inventory items in order to use them. Yet at other times the game automatically uses them. The non-inventory-based puzzles are not terribly difficult. They also do not seem to fit the flow of the game.

The graphics and music are well done and quite detailed and beautiful. The settings are very detailed with much too look at. However the consistency in labeling is not very good. For instance, an animal in the game is labeled as a monkey or lemur depending on the camera angle. In another case the large statue outside the estate is labeled as a police car, I don't think so! The camera angles can also make it very difficult to see items. This is particularly true in the Professor's rooms in Mexico.

The voice acting might be good, but it is hard to say because the dialog itself is horrible. The dialog is cut up to fit the subtitles which makes it choppy and hard on the ear. Spaces are filled with Ah and Um's that are unnecessary and sound really bad. My suggestion is left click as quickly as possible through those sections.

My conclusion is that Crime Stories might have been a good game, but it is not well constructed. The graphics and music are wonderful, but it is hard to get past the problems in other areas. I would call it a bargain bin purchase.

Final grade is 74/100.

Developer: Artematica Entertainment **Publisher:** The Adventure Company **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** April 2006* **Grade:** 74/100 *Original European version released in 2005	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP Pentium® III 850 MHz 256 MB RAM 32 MB DirectX® 9 Compatible Video Card DirectX® 9 Compatible Soundcard 16x CD-ROM Drive Keyboard, mouse, speakers

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Ankh

PC Review by Sudeep Pasricha

Ladies and Gentleman, step this way please! Follow me into my humble nomadic reviewers' tent, where today you shall feast your eyes upon a most precious object from a land far, far away. Gather around now, as I unveil this rarest of rare specimens: a genuine comic adventure! Ankh is the name of our game, and it comes to you from the fine folks at Deck 13 Interactive, all the way from Germany. As you might have already guessed from its name, the game is set in Egypt – the land of mighty Pharoahs, colossal Pyramids, and much sand. What's that you say? "Buggerit! … not ANOTHER game set in Egypt!"? Ah, well. Sure you've played your fair share of Riddle of the Sphinx, Tomb of the Pharoah, Egypt II: The Heliopolis Prophecy, and The Egyptian Prophecy: Fate of Ramses. But I ask you, did any of these games require you to operate a drive-through Camel-O-Wash, fight toothless crocodiles in the Nile, and make stinky fish burgers for assassins? Settle down now, and take a long, cool sip of your sweet sherbets, as I recount to you my impressions of this spanking new adventure.

In its essence, Ankh is an old-school, point-and-click, comic 3D adventure in the vein of such LucasArts classics as Monkey Island, Day of the Tentacle, and Grim Fandango. Ankh is actually a remake of a game that was released eight years ago with the same title. Of course, it is highly unlikely that you will have come across the original Ankh. The game was released exclusively for the Acorn RiscPC platform which never really took off. Only about 500,000 RiscPC machines were ever sold, a majority of them in Great Britain where they were bought by British schools. The rest were purchased by private users scattered in Germany, France, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand (practically none were sold in the United States). Thankfully, releasing the game on the PC platform, the developers will have a much larger audience this time around. And it's not the same-old game either – everything from the storyline to the graphics has undergone an extreme makeover.

Ankh tells the story of a young man named Assil. The son of an Egyptian architect's, Assil breaks into a pyramid to party with his friends. Unfortunately, he accidentally knocks over some ancient urns and has a death curse put upon him by a furious mummy. It doesn't help that Assil also ends up defiling a sacred artifact (an Ankh) in the tomb, using it as a bottle opener. The Pharaoh is the only person who can help Assil find a way to lift this curse. The game follows your quest to meet the Pharaoh, and get out of your cursed predicament. Of course, since this an adventure game, accomplishing the task will be anything but straightforward. You will soon find yourself bumbling through several totally unrelated side-quests and bumping into all sorts of odd characters, including cut-throat merchants, jive-talking ferrymen, retired genies, hungry assassins and well … what seemed like Israelite hippies waiting on the Exodus.

The interface in this game is a simple mouse-driven affair. The cursor changes to indicate you can perform an action when you bring it over an interactive object. Clicking on the left mouse button gives more information about the object being you are pointing with the cursor. You can also move Assil with the same button. A single click will make Assil walk whereas a double click will make him run. In order to use an item you will have to use the right mouse button. This will need a little getting used to, but you should have no problems after playing the game for a few minutes. Pressing the TAB key during the game pops up a reminder list which shows the status of the most recent and pressing sub-quests that you need to solve. Veterans and even newcomers to adventure games alike will have no problems cozying up to this intuitive interface.

As far as the puzzles are concerned, the game serves ample portions of the standard inventory-based ones which we've come to expect from point-and-click adventure games in the past. For the most part, you'll find yourself collecting various items as you interact with characters and locations in the game. Sometimes you will combine these items in obvious ways. However, this will not always be the case. The game may often have you scratching your head. There

are a few outrageously tough puzzles that defy common sense. Your only recourse will be to randomly combine items in your inventory until something clicks. I somehow got the feeling that the developers of this game did not spend sufficient time designing and thinking about how these puzzles would fit into the plot. When you do solve a puzzle, it will most likely be out of sheer luck, and not as a result of any kind of neuron exercising brainwork.

While the inventory-based puzzles might not be one of the game's strengths, the graphics certainly muster up enough eye candy to make up for it. Ankh has gorgeous cartoony 3D environments and surprisingly expressive character models, which are sure to please even the most discerning of eye. The locales in the game are vibrant and colorful. The cinematics are top notch. However, the heavy reliance on 3D in the game also means an abundance of lengthy load screens. These might not be much of an issue initially, but when you're walking from one end of the map to the other, and encounter several of these in a row, it can become quite bothersome.

The background music in the game is pleasant and gets the job done. The best compliment I can pay to it is that it is not annoying, even after listening to the same track for the umpteenth time. The voiceovers sound professional and capture the personality and emotions of the characters quite well. The voice editing and sound effects however, could have been much better. Sound effects are sparse at best, and oftentimes, when a character speaks, it feels as if voice samples have been clumsily spliced together, because the pacing of the words is so inconsistent. Many times, when more than one character on the screen speaks, the voices overlap into unintelligible sound bits.

For the most part, the storyline in Ankh is engaging and moves along at a fairly good pace. Towards the latter half of the game, you'll even get to play as another character. The second playable character, Thara, is the beautiful and spirited daughter of an Arabian ambassador. She serves as the obligatory romantic twist in the tale. Switching between controlling Assil and Thara to accomplish quests was a lot of fun, although I did encounter a minor annoyance here:

one of the characters would inevitably end up blocking the way for the other character when they were in a confined space, like a corridor, requiring switching control back and forth to remove the other character from the path.

The cracks on the surface begin to widen towards the end of the game. Characters start unintentionally running on walls and walking through solid objects, and voiceovers start to go missing. The endgame sequence is plagued with bugs and required a lot of patience and random trial-and-error before I could get it right. The game also wrapped up a little too quickly for my liking. Experienced players will likely finish this game within 8-10 hours. Nonetheless, I believe I'm nitpicking here and it's not nearly as bad as it seems – I thoroughly enjoyed playing Ankh and loved the plot, and it certainly has its moments when you'll find yourself grinning like a Cheshire cat.

Conclusion

Ankh is a charming old-school comic adventure which holds its own, courtesy of its beautiful 3D graphics and an engaging plot. It does not break any new ground, and it certainly has its fair share of issues which take a bit of luster off its polished appearance. But if you like adventure games, and particularly the comic-adventures from LucasArts in the past, you will overlook the shortcomings, and enjoy a fun, albeit short romp down memory lane. When all's said and done, one can't ignore the dearth of quality comic adventures as of late. Until the next Monkey Island or Grim Fandango comes along, Ankh will do for now.

Developer: DECK 13 Interactive **Publisher:** BHV Software **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** March 2006 **Grade:** 79/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** 1.5 GHz processor 256 MB RAM 64 MB GeForce 3 Video Card 800 MB free disk space

Tears of Betrayal

PC Review by Ugur Sener

Roxanne was casually walking down the street, perhaps on the way to meet her husband James. This town, these streets were no stranger. The small town of Talkstone had been a great home to the young couple. Roxanne arrived at the intersection and carefully started crossing the street. How many times had she walked on this same street? How many times had she crossed at this very intersection? Perhaps the idea of something going wrong did not even cross the young woman's mind. Yet sometimes an entire life can turn upside down in a single moment. A car speeding down the street hit Roxanne with full force. The young woman felt terrible agony for a brief moment. Searing pain engulfed her right before she lost all feeling. Everything was covered in darkness.

James woke up from the terrible nightmare. Climbing out of the bed he was extremely disturbed and shaken. "It was just a bad dream," he thought to himself for a moment, trying to relax. But then he saw the letter lying on top of one of the pillows. It was a message from his wife. Reading the letter James remembered all too well that the accident was real. Roxanne was barely clinging to life in a coma. But then how could she have sent this letter? How could it have been delivered to the young man's bed without James even noticing? Nervously James read the entire letter. Roxanne was asking her husband to visit her at the hospital. To James's utter astonishment, the message simply vanished as soon as he finished reading it.

James was confused, disturbed, and maybe even a little scared. What was going on here? What kind of supernatural forces were at play? Was Roxanne really trying to reach him? James was determined to get to the bottom of this mystery. He had to find out what really happened to his wife. With a pitifully small amount of money, no one to trust, and hardly any leads, James stepped out of his apartment. It was time to discover the truth. It was time to give peace to a troubled spirit.

If you miss adventure games where you could interact with the world by typing in commands, you are in for a treat. Tears of Betrayal, the first game from Frixx-iT, gives players a pleasant opportunity to experience

a gaming style you may not encounter very often these days. As you search all over the town of Talkstone to discover what happened to your wife Roxanne, Tears of Betrayal can offer an interesting gaming experience, presenting elements of the old in a new 3D environment.

Tears of Betrayal is played from a third person perspective. Players can move James by either using the arrow keys on the keyboard or clicking around the environment with the mouse. Unfortunately, the mouse navigation can be occasionally rather problematic. Clicking on a certain part of the screen may result in James moving in an unexpected direction. Thankfully, the keyboard navigation works significantly better as it is much more accurate. As recommended by the game's manual, players will most likely fare better if they use the keyboard to move James.

There two ways to interact with objects. Players can click on an object or inventory item with the right mouse button to bring up a list of commands. The list of available commands is quite lengthy and gives players a lot of options. Upon selecting one of the commands, James will either perform the action or let you know that what you are suggesting is impossible. In the original release of the game, players are required to keep holding the right mouse button while selecting a command. However, a patch is available from the Tears of Betrayal Web site that changes this functionality so the menu stays open when you click on the right mouse button. This greatly improves the process of selecting commands. Especially since it improves the mouse navigation and resolves a few other minor problems, downloading the patch is highly recommended before you start playing the game.

Players who do not want to use the available actions list can alternatively try typing simple commands through the keyboard. Combining object names with verbs, players can get James to try performing certain actions. The ability to type in commands gives players additional options that are not available from the standard list that appears when you use the mouse. Experimenting with the various objects in the environment through keyboard commands can be quite entertaining and improve your experience in Tears of Betrayal.

The story in Tears of Betrayal is centered around James's investigation of the tragic car accident that put Roxanne in a coma. The entire game takes place in Talkstone. While the game does not span over an extremely large area, the town does have a considerable number of different structures that James will have to

explore. Between his apartment, the hospital, the park, the bar, and a number of different stores, James will have to cover a lot of ground. The game does not have a map feature that allows James to instantly travel between places. However, James can run quite fast and cover a significant distance in a relatively short amount of time. Especially once they become familiar with the layout of the town, players should not waste too much time running between different locations.

During the adventure James will meet a number of colorful characters. From a cryptic fortune teller to a concerned citizen on a quest to save chicken, James certainly runs across a strange cast of characters. Tears of Betrayal also features what must be the flower girl with the worst luck in the history of gaming. Interaction with characters is accomplished through the same command system players will use to manipulate objects in the environment. Players will simply ask James to talk to another character. They will not be able to choose from a list of available conversation topics. However, you can ask James to talk to a character several times to make sure you got all the useful information. Most of the dialogue in Tears of Betrayal is written, but there is a small amount of voice-acting during certain key moments of the game.

While exploring the town, players should bear in mind that there are a couple of ways in which James can die during the adventure. First of all, the car accident that put Roxanne in a coma by no means seems to be an isolated incident. You will not see any cars driving around the streets as you explore the town, but the only safe way to cross the street is to use the pedestrian crossings. If you randomly step into the middle of the street, James will be instantly hit by a car that appears out of the blue. You will be forced to resume from a save game. Especially since the car accidents are not the only way James can die in Tears of Betrayal, it is recommended to save often.

Frequently recording your progress can also prevent a lot of frustration if James gets stuck while you are exploring the town. The 3D environment does have a number of corners where you may inadvertently lead James only to realize that you are stuck in place. Clicking on a different location on the screen or struggling with the arrow keys will typically get you out of these situations. However, it is possible for James to become irrevocably stuck and you may have to resort to resuming from a saved game. Fortunately, players should not encounter this

navigation problem very frequently. Especially after you become familiar with the structure of the town and figure out the kinds of places where James might get stuck, you should be able to explore safely.

Tears of Betrayal does feature a good number of jokes throughout the adventure. Some of the comments you will encounter when you ask James to perform certain impossible or illogical actions may bring a smile to your face. A couple of the phone calls James can place throughout the course of the game are pleasantly whimsical. However, the overall atmosphere of Tears of Betrayal is rather dark and gloomy. Between the dim lighting of James's apartment and the gray, misty skies of Talkstone, Tears and Betrayal sets a sorrowful tone from the outset of the game. The atmosphere successfully reflects James's mood and serves as a reminder of the tragic accident.

There is also a strong emphasis on the supernatural in Tears of Betrayal. The letter that vanishes at the very beginning of the game hints at mystical forces at work. Throughout the adventure, James encounters strange visions that help with his investigation. Sometimes these visions deliver strong emotional moments, but they can also be downright disturbing. Players will soon realize that there is more to Tears of Betrayal than James's desire to understand the truth. The game is about a spirit seeking solace. Tears of Betrayal is about a young man's quest to find justice. The mystery behind the car accident may not be incredibly deep or unpredictable, but the game certainly manages to keep players interested in unlocking the truth.

Some of the puzzles in Tears of Betrayal are inventory-based and centered around obtaining the right items to gain access to a location. At other times players will simply have to enter the correct action words to successfully interact with an object. The items James has to find are generally placed at locations that are fairly easy to spot. Careful observation and thorough exploration should easily lead players to all the items they will need. When you do have the correct items to solve a puzzle, determining how to use them should not be too much of a problem. The solutions are generally logical and fairly obvious. The game usually clearly communicates where James should be headed next. Hints can be found throughout the town to aid with the puzzles.

It is worth pointing out that money plays an important role in Tears of Betrayal. Many of the items James needs throughout the adventure have to be bought from stores. The young man starts the game with a humble twenty dollars in his wallet. In order to make any kind of progress, players have to earn more money. Having to buy certain items rather than just finding them lying around does arguably add a sense of realism to the game.

Unfortunately, the process of earning enough money to buy the items required to solve the puzzles can easily become frustrating. Besides the initial twenty dollars in James's wallet, players will find a couple of ways to earn extra cash. However, the amount of money that can be found around Talkstone is rather limited and will not be sufficient to complete the game. Sooner or later, players will have to resort to playing one of the three mini-games featured in Tears of Betrayal. These mini-games involve James betting a specific amount of money for a chance to double his investment. The game is designed to make sure James cannot lose or spend the last of his money and become irrevocably stuck. However, since all of the mini-games depend on luck to a certain extent, players should expect to spend a fair amount of time just trying to earn enough cash to buy a required item. Especially given the fact that James will lose the games fairly often, players may have no choice but to use the old trick of saving their progress before attempting a mini-game and reloading if they lose.

While it has several problems, Tears of Betrayal is still quite an enjoyable experience. Players might get frustrated as James gets stuck when you are trying to explore the town. Having to play the mini-games a considerable number of times to earn enough money can be tedious. However, the mystery behind the accident manages to keep players interested as they search for the truth. The game creates a gloomy atmosphere that not only fits the storyline, but also reflects James's emotional state. Especially the young man's visions create a number of memorable moments. Tears of Betrayal may not be perfect, but it is still a commendable first effort from Frixx-iT. The Belgium-based development company most certainly has a lot of promise. If you are interested in a pleasant adventure game to revive the keyboard command system, and if you are willing to look past its problems, consider giving Tears of Betrayal a try. The game can be purchased from the official Web site at www.TearsOfBetrayal.com.

Developer: Frixx-iT **Publisher:** Frixx-iT **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** December 2005 **Grade:** 70/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP 1 GHz processor 128 MB RAM 32 MB 3D accelerated Video Card 800 MB free disk space 1x DVD Rom drive

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Nancy Drew #12: The Secret of the Old Clock
PC Review by Eileen V. Ifill
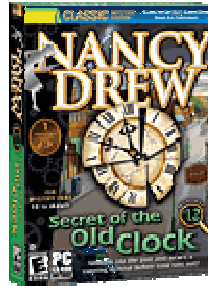
Turn back the clock!!! It's the year 1929. Months after the crash of the stock market, quiet towns like Titusville feel the financial chill of America's looming Great Depression.

Seventeen year old Emily Crandall is hit harder than others. Her mother has recently passed away and a family acquaintance helps her bake pies to make a living during difficult times at the Crandall's Lilac Inn. Emily already has it rough, with a recent streak of bad luck and unexplained events making the running of a profitable business almost impossible.

Emily, like others in Titusville, sets her hopes on the generosity of Josiah Crowley; an elderly man who hinted that the Crandall's would be taken care of after his passing. Sadly, when Josiah died, he left his entire fortune to a stuffy stranger who teaches at a paranormal school. Now you, as Nancy Drew, roll into town in your flashy roadster unaware that your visit will define your destiny as a young and successful detective.

Nancy Drew: The Secret of the Old Clock is a point and click adventure game from HerInteractive. The game is easily loaded with the CD-ROM and you have the choice to install the entire game or a minimum install where you would have to insert the CD each time you play.

You will enjoy the clear graphics and the realistic quality of the characters. The music and sound effects fit right into each sequence of the story. I didn't find any technical problems during game play.

What is unique about The Secret of the Old Clock is the roadster. You are able to drive the car around town and experience the same difficulties as any other driver in real life. You may get a flat tire and will need to find a garage to get it fixed! There are potholes in the streets that you must avoid or back to the garage

you will have to go! If you run out of money for gas or other things, you have to work for it! In this game, making money takes a substantial amount of time! If you get tired of running around for pennies, there are other means to get the cash! I will leave that for you to find out how!

Another distinguishing aspect of The Secret of the Old Clock is that the game is based on the very first Nancy Drew Book ever published. This twelfth installment in the long-running adventure game series commemorates the 75th Anniversary of Nancy Drew!

You are about to venture into the past and outwit a cunning criminal before time runs out! It's strange that Emily Crandall invited you to visit because you barely know her. The Lilac Inn is quiet charming, yet it is very odd that you don't see any other cars parked outside. Curiously, there was an abandoned car down the road…

Nancy Drew: The Secret of the Old Clock features four key characters that you will meet as you go through the adventure:

Jane Willoughby: Is Jane a well intentioned dumb Dora or a calculating con artist with a hidden agenda? Emily's deceased mother asked her dressmaking partner to look after her daughter, but this Chicago girl looks out of place!

Richard Topham: If you decide to try this game, here is a prediction of the future: Mr. Topham will annoy you! Richards runs the "School for the Study and Development of Paranormal Powers." But, is his act just a hoax"? He runs the school from the deceased Josiah Crowley's house. You can bet that most people in Titusville would love to see him caught for pulling off a scam!

Jim Archer: Business is good for banker Jim Archer; at least that is what he says! One would think that if local businesses are closing the main street bank would be flooded with nothing but foreclosures… Archer may know a secret or two about the Lilac Inn and the rest of the town!

Emily Crandall: Emily is the current owner of the Lilac Inn. You will always find the young woman in her room, scared and frequently distracted. Thetheft of her mother's jewels may push this Emily over the edge. She feels close to you because the two of you have a sorrowful bond. You are the only one she trusts considering all the strange occurrences; objects on the wall moving, whispers calling from the shadows, and things mysteriously disappearing and then reappearing.

The navigation in the game has the basic point and click functions which allows for movement and interaction with the characters. You will be using the famous magnifying glass cursor to search the environment for clues. Your notebook will keep you abreast of all your findings. This way, you will be able to refer back to it if you forget what you are doing or where you need to be going.

An inventory section is available to keep objects and tools that you come across during your investigation for future use in the game. Remember, you have a choice before playing the game to set it for Junior or Senior Detective levels. This depends on your sleuthing skills.

Regardless of the skill level you select, some practical tips can help you during the adventure:
• Exclamation points (!) at the bottom of the screen tell you that there are new items in your inventory or additions to your journal. This is the first place you should click when you're stumped.
• Press the space bar to leave your car when you roll to a stop at a parking spot outside a house or building.
• Be careful not to slip your winning scorecard in the old scorecard slot at Josiah's miniature golf course!
• Before you get behind the wheel, look at the road map in your inventory and locate your destination. That roadster you are driving is a gas guzzler! And driving around aimlessly is expensive.
• You can make deliveries for Tubby's Telegraphs if you run out of money. I found that this is an endless job that never tips any money due to the Depression. Try and work as much as you can at one time so you don't have to go back!

As you start exploring the town, you will come across an array of puzzles. Some are easy while others are rather difficult. You don't have luxuries like a cell phone or computer in this game as they weren't invented yet! You will be able to call on dear old dad in this adventure. But don't expect him to give you any clues. Instead, he will send you on an errand that you will have to complete.

An investigation of the Topham School of Paranormal Thought will lead you to the first set of puzzles in the game. Richard will challenge you with mirror mind games and other logic-based games. You have to prove to Richard that your inferior brain waves won't stunt his intellectual growth. I didn't find these tests very inferior to my brain!

Travel the grounds and fore! Yes, a miniature golf course. This is a tricky course which may require a fist full of change. I found this part of the game to be a bit trying, but you can make and even break par if you aim and adjust your shot strength off certain angled bricks. If you win, you will be able to claim a prize.

Other challenges include the clock puzzle at Jim's and the beam of light puzzle. There is a time of reflection with the beam of light puzzle. This puzzle seems easy at first, but figuring out how to make the light bounce off all the mirrors require a little bit of planning. Oh, and you will also find the mirrors in the first place.

A stitch in time saves nine. Have you ever heard of that saying? Well, to me this was the most difficult puzzle and annoying one. You better save the game here after the first mess up! You will be spending a lot of time learning how to sew on Emily's mother's machine!

The Secret of the Old Clock is full of interesting puzzles. The game features a great deal of content waiting for you to discover. The few puzzles mentioned in the review cover only a small portion of Nancy Drew's adventure. Remember if you ever get stuck anywhere in the game you can go to the HerInteractive forum for all your answers.

When you drive through town running errands and earning money, you will come across many different fun characters in their own settings. There is plenty of work and you are the only one to carry out these tiring deeds. So gas up the roadster and get your driving skills together. As always, expect a great and surprising ending.

So what are you waiting for? Get going and find out the Secret of the Old Clock! You will truly enjoy Nancy Drew's first mystery. The Secret of the Old Clock offers a great way to hone your detective skills. The game is targeted to mystery fans ages 10 to adult.

My final grade: 90/100

Developer: HerInteractive **Publisher:** Her Interactive **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** July 2005 **Grade:** 90/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP Pentium® II 400 MHz 64 MB RAM 16 MB DirectX® compatible Video Card 16 bit DirectX® compatible Sound Card 300 MB disk space 12X CD-ROM drive

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Legacy: Dark Shadows

PC Review by Wendy Nellius

Stalingrad, 1941

You ever so briefly play a journalist covering the Battle of Stalingrad. Upon entering the trenches, you come upon a plane crash site. Hmmm…there seems to be a box with some papers in it. You take a look and immediately a flash of white light transports you to 2138.

Mars Colony, 2138

You now take on the role of Ren, a private investigator taking a well deserved break from her caseload of cheating husbands and missing persons. After years of being mined for cobalt, Mars has been turned into a popular tourist attraction. Ren's main goal is to find relaxation with a little entertainment on the side. She immediately signs up for a tour of the surface. But, before she can take the tour, she is contacted by her friend aptly-named friend Hacker. A mutual friend has been kidnapped. Ren must cut her vacation short and get back to earth in order to save her friend.

Earth, 2138

Earth is where the story truly begins. As Ren conducts her investigation, details come to light about a world takeover by a shady corporation that has been in the works for years. It turns out that Ren's journalist friend Ted has happened upon some confidential information that now threatens his life. Ren is going to have to work fast if she is to save her friend, not to mention the entire world. Legacy continues our fascination with the future. Think back to the games of the 1980's in which the future (close to now) was represented by robots, high-tech industrialized locations and of course, flying cars. Since that obviously didn't pan out, we've all had to bump the "future fantasy" date a little further out. 2138 is as good as any.

Legacy: Dark Shadows was created by Razbor Studios; a new company located in Croatia. This is their very first game. The game is a 3rd person predominantly point and click adventure presented on three CD's. Legacy: Dark Shadows does not come with a manual. When it was originally released, the manual could be downloaded at www.razbor.net or www.legacythegame.com . However, these links do not seem to work anymore. It takes a while to load the whole game, but no problems were encountered during the installation process and the game can be run without a CD.

However, Legacy has a tendency to crash at inopportune times. So, it is imperative to save your game often. Legacy also occasionally has problems when you load a saved game while the game is running. Ren might disappear from the game completely or you may be greeted with a white blank screen. These problems are corrected by exiting the game entirely and restarting. This brings us to another technical issue. Upon clicking on the quit button, the ending credits will roll along with a rather interesting musical rendition of some of the game's dialog. The game will run these credits until you press the escape button. Unfortunately, when you press the escape button during the credits, the game crashes every time. There is no way around this. While these problems are annoying, the "quit" and "load" glitches don't really detract from the game too much. And, if you are a persistent little game saver, the in-game crashes won't cause too much pain.

Ren is an interesting character. She is the confident and striking female heroine we have come to expect of late. And, let's just say that without even reading the credits, one could guess that she was designed by men. Perhaps it's the buxom figure. Perhaps it's the unnecessary skintight clothing complete with cut-outs that is the true tip off. Not a big deal here; just amusingly obvious. Ren does, however, have a strange gait. It's a combination of a slide and stomp similar to what one would expect of a robot or perhaps a zombie. The accompanying sound of the footsteps is a bit strange. It seems as though Ren is walking on a metal floor.

One of the more prominent NPC's is Hacker. And, yes his name fits his occupation. He's quite the odd duck; with antennas protruding from his head. Being an accomplished hacker, he provides Ren with important information throughout the game. The obvious villain is the Marshall. Complete with a cowboy hat and classic western wear reminiscent of a small town Texas sheriff;

he turns out to be not so "small town" and heavily embroiled in a history of dirty dealings. There are quite a few other characters to interact with including robots. Dialog is on the lighter side and mostly concerns just the necessary information you will need in order to proceed. Do not expect to see any lip-synching in this game. The character's mouths do not move at all. Fortunately, as conversations in close-up mode are rare, this should not pose a distraction.

Another important aspect of dialog is in the voice acting. Unfortunately, the voice acting is not a highlight of this game. While the tone quality of Ren's voice is quite pleasing, her lines are delivered with no emotion. Both Ren and Hacker have a somewhat computer-generated sound. Some of the dialog is humorous, but due to poor timing and incorrect word emphasis, the jokes tend to miss their mark. The American accents were really rough. It would have been much preferable to hear each actor's true accent. The result would have been a much more natural sound. Besides, the predominant locations of Earth and Mars are by no means restricted to a specific accent. Perhaps this was specifically done to appeal to an American market.

The 2D backgrounds are really done well here. Mars definitely screams "tourist attraction". It is a small location, but has all the prerequisites required: neon signs, a nice hotel vs. a seedy motel, the obligatory local bar, gift shop (of course), local law enforcement and a chance to walk on the surface of the moon as the ultimate attraction. There is a very interesting location underground on Earth. It seems the inhabitants have been down there since an explosion left them exposed to radiation. They were immediately quarantined and then subsequently forgotten. The national archives and a run-down cathedral are what remain in this dark and dismal location. Theft in order to survive is common. Above ground on Earth, Ren always appears first in her office where an aging computer and a few pictures are the only items to distinguish it from a warehouse storage room. Ren's investigation on Earth will

bring her to an abandoned power plant, a prestigious institute, a high powered corporation, the State Prison, and a military camp.

Perhaps the most interesting location is on the surface of an asteroid. The surface of the asteroid is done in black and white with only splashes of color to draw the eye's attention. The asteroid seems at first glance to be uninhabited and dotted with craters. Further investigation proves that there is current activity; secret in nature. Adding the zero gravity effects for Ren was a great touch although it does hinder her ability to run. Further exploration of this area leads to a myriad of pipes and tunnels that Ren must navigate. The cut scenes, even though a tiny bit blurred, are another place where Razbor Studios does things right. Most of the cut scenes involve travel from each of the major locations and are quite interesting to watch.

Game play is pretty standard for a point and click game. The cursor will turn green for a new location complete with a description. When you bring it over an item you can interact with, the cursor will be orange. Upon clicking on the item, a pop-up will allow players to choose between examining, picking up or conversation. On Earth, Ren uses a taxicab for transportation due to the fact that her car is broken down. Once in the taxicab, a simple right click on the map can take Ren to any location in a flash. Getting around in the other locations can be accomplished on foot without the use of a map. There are unlimited save slots which is most appreciated. Previous saves cannot be overwritten.

Ren's PDA can be accessed with a right click of the mouse. All inventory items collected can be viewed through the PDA. There is a log button which allows you to read additional information that you have not been given verbally. Ren also has the use of a camera, an electronic scanner jammer for picking all those electronic locks, and a collection tool for evidence like blood or oil. This brings up another issue. What is expected of the log is that it will provide you with either the information you have already covered or perhaps provide some additional insight to what has already been learned. This is not the case. There are times where the log is the only place to figure out what the heck is going on. You will find out that you have already gotten essential information from Hacker. But, you won't know this unless you are randomly checking the log.

This can also lead to gaps in the storyline and there are quite a few of them. For instance, upon testing some footprints found at a kidnapping scene, you learn that they are simply an oily substance. Go to the map and a power plant location has cropped up. Checking the log on this one won't help. You encounter creepy clones and find something very important at this plant, but you will have no substantial storyline connection to link to this find. The storyline presented on the box cover is intriguing and tells quite a tale. However, the story in the game is never developed fully enough to match the tale on the box. This is disappointing as storyline is so essential to a good adventure.

Puzzles are on the easy side. They are inventory or logic-based. Ren has quite a few characters she has to get rid of in order to explore environments further. Ren will also have to perform some favors in order to get the help she requires. One such task involves finding fruit vodka in order to gain access to a location where Ren will ultimately get a space suit so she can walk on the moon. As in classic adventure style, theft will be in order. There are only a couple of stand alone puzzles which all take place on a prison spaceship. The computer system has a mind of its own and Ren must complete these puzzles in order to get the computer to remove the lasers that block her path. These puzzles will definitely remind you of the Nancy Drew Series puzzles. One of them involves rotating pipes to get a proper connection. Another involves moving barrels into their correct slots using an on-screen robot. This is the only puzzle that will involve using the arrow keys on the keyboard. It would have been nice if you were made aware of that fact.   Of course, you can always keep clicking your mouse on it for 15 minutes wondering what the heck you're doing wrong until by some miracle you realize you need to use the keyboard.

Legacy: Dark Shadows does not quite live up to its potential and has a feeling of being unfinished or rushed.   But, Legacy still has entertainment value and should not be discounted entirely. Even with the flaws, it was still fun to play. Reminded that this is Razbor Studio's first attempt at an adventure game, one can only wish that they can go back and give the game the full attention it deserves. Or, at the very least, take what they have learned from the creation of this game and knock our socks off with the next one.

Developer: Razbor Studios **Publisher:** Tri Synergy **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** 2004 **Grade:** 70/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP Pentium III 1 GHz 256 MB RAM (512 recommended) 64 MB Video Card DirectX® 9 Compatible Soundcard CD-ROM Drive Hard Drive space of 1.5 GB

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Crystal Key 2: The Far Realm (a.k.a. Evany)

PC Review by Neetie

When I bought this game, I had never heard of The Crystal Key, so I was a little surprised to learn that this is the sequel… However, if you have played the original game, do not worry. You don't need anything from the first game to play the second.

Called alternately Evany: Key to a distant land; Evany: Key to Seven Lands (French version) and Crystal Key 2: The Far Realm (USA), this game invites you to 'unlock the portal to unfamiliar realms.' The underlying premise to the game is that after successfully repelling an invasion of their planet, the beautiful Evany, the people seem to have gone into some sort of waking coma. The stand or sit around, not speaking, not doing anything… Everyone except for your character Call seems to be affected.

Within the first 30 seconds of the game, Call sees a young woman being dragged away by soldiers. After being on a planet solely occupied by people who do not move or think, this catches Call's attention. A book and a crystal key dropped by the captured woman are enough to send Call on an adventure to save his planet.

The blurb on the box calls this game 'a Sci-Fi themed adventure.' And the game can be said to fit that description. As indicated on the box, the game really does have 47 locations, 10 environments and 3 worlds… That is if you consider 10 yards further down the street to be a new location. Underuse of certain game locations leaves you with a feeling of something unfinished. For example, with the starter location you only get to see the street you are in, and then only for about 30 second before the game whisks you off to another world… I was left throughout the whole game wondering if there was something I had missed that would explain my feeling of being disconnected from the game and somehow 'out of the loop'.

The 'pre-rendered graphics' are sometimes heart-achingly beautiful. The desert house is particularly impressive. But the graphics do sometimes get blocky with that 'cut out' feeling of some lesser games. While the backgrounds are superbly crafted, the characters sometimes look a little out of place.

The presence of surplus characters was another annoying feature of the game. There were a number of characters who could talk to you, but they would never provide any kind of valuable information. The woman at the cauldron is the perfect example of this problem. A potentially good puzzle was reduced to simple

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

scenery. And the mistake of using a cauldron to boil nuts that need to be roasted was frustrating!

I didn't like the constraints of movement that meant you could only go where the game wanted you to go, or look at things the game wanted you to examine. To make things even worse, at certain points in the game your characters motivation for moving onto the next stage is very unclear. Players can walk away from the game with no real story-driven motivation calling them back.

Puzzles are sometimes compelling, as with the Desert House, sometimes very clever as with the 'artifact' puzzle in the undersea realm, but some are just confusing. In several places Call is presented with a locked door, which is the mainstay of the adventure game, but these doors cannot be unlocked and they will never be opened. They simply exist as part of the scenery. They serve as a way to drag you round the game looking for the answer to a puzzle that isn't really there. The Doctor's door is the perfect example of a bad puzzle in Crystal Key 2. The puzzle features three locked doors, each one relying on one piece of evidence. These clues, in my opinion, are not very clear or noticeable in the first place, meaning that you are unlikely to take note of subsequent similar items. Even if you do, you are unlikely to associate them with the puzzle in question!

All in all I wasn't that impressed with this Crystal Key 2. If I had been able to try it first, I probably wouldn't have bothered to buy it. Now that I have bought it, I am left feeling a little cheated. The puzzles were a either a little too easy, or a little too 'off the wall' and most of them comprised of wandering around until you happened upon the correct sequence of conversations. The in-game lingo also seemed very forced… Some game developers are almost gifted in their ability to create new names for people and places that fall effortlessly from the tongue, while evoking a sense of the person or place they refer to. Sadly, this cannot be said for Crystal Key 2. Random syllables joined together do not make good names, not even for 'other worlds' and unique characters, they merely add to the disjointed feeling that dogged this game from the first frame. My recommendation for this game is definitely 'try before you buy' – you may enjoy it immensely, I didn't.

Developer: Kheops Studio	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):**
Publisher: The Adventure Company	Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP
Platform: PC	Pentium® III 600 MHz
Genre: Adventure	64 MB RAM
Release Date: 2004	32 MB DirectX® 9 Compatible Video Card
Grade: 57/100	DirectX® 6 Compatible Soundcard

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Broken Sword 3: The Sleeping Dragon
PC Review by Thaumaturge

In Paris, Nico Collard prepares to interview a genius programmer who claims to have partially deciphered a previously inscrutable manuscript. Flying over the Congolese jungle, George Stobbart is on his way to discuss a patent with an inventor who has sequestered himself in a mysterious cave. Both arrive just in time to hear the objects of their errands getting murdered.

George and Nico follow the clues left behind by the deceased. These clues lead them to a great power, drawn from that of the Earth itself. Before long, George and Nico are faced with a villain intent on claiming the magnificent power. The trails of the two protagonists quickly converge. George and Nico once again travel together, trying to unravel the mystery before the villain does. The duo tries to beat the villain to the ancient sites of power. They try to find a way to prevent the madman from claiming the power lying dormant in the ley lines of the Earth.

Through the course of their adventure, Nico and George will visit the Congo, Paris, Glastonbury, Prague and Egypt. They will visit city streets, an abandoned theatre, a foreboding castle, tunnels hidden below Paris, and ancient sites of immense power and incredible, machinery. George and Nico will encounter numerous puzzles throughout the adventure. Some of them will be logic puzzles while others are inventory-based. The game also features a few conversation-driven puzzles.

Nico and George will engage in the casual kleptomania that is endemic to adventure game characters. Much to my delight, George even remarks on this fact at one point. The duo will acquire a wide variety of items, from the mundane to the arcane (and at one point a half-eaten hamburger...). And George will move an awful lot of crates (and other assorted cube-shaped objects).

The story, as already suggested, is one of wicked conspiracy for ancient power. If the villain manages to acquire the power, it could lead to the potential devastation of the Earth. As a character puts it in the opening movie, "the price for failure here is Armageddon". The game starts with a good hook in the two murders, and keeps the player interested throughout the course of the adventure. The plot, while not a leap of creativity, is effective and interesting. The story takes the players to some truly wonderful – and foreboding – places.

For the most part, the dialogue is well-written and well-acted. The banter between George and Nico is especially entertaining and often serves to keep the overall atmosphere fairly light. Both characters also frequently describe their thoughts and actions through monologues. While this adds richness to the script, the descriptions do occasionally become a little verbose. The conversations and the monologues, in addition to good (if occasionally slightly exaggerated) character animation and expression during cut scenes makes for effective acting and evokes an atmosphere that seems natural and appropriate.

The majority of the puzzles are inventory-based. They involve finding the right item or items for the current situation. Most of the game's puzzles are not too difficult to solve. A few tripped me up, mostly because I missed a hot spot or forgot to check my in-game notebook, but none are unfair. I found the puzzles of Broken Sword 3 to be very enjoyable to solve, and even amusing in a few cases.

The logic puzzles featured in Broken Sword 3 were particularly enjoyable (However, I'll confess a certain fondness for logic puzzles that may have influenced my opinion). Most of the logic puzzles featured in The Sleeping Dragon drawn from the classic stock. Of note are the river crossing puzzle, for a particularly effective design, and the mirror and laser design, for a pleasant twist on the classic puzzle.

At certain points either George or Nico will be required to sneak past guards. Players can use the control key to get George or Nico to creep rather than moving at their normal pace. The ability to creep allows players to pass more easily by guards and their dogs. While a few of these sneaking sequences are long, they are never long enough to become tedious. The short patrol routes on the parts of the individual guards allows the player to assess each section of the problem in fairly short order, allowing these areas to pass by in a fairly smooth and enjoyable manner.

One anomaly in the line-up of puzzles is what I call the movement puzzles. These primarily involve climbing, jumping between, edging

along or hanging from various parts of an area. However, since this is all handled via simply pressing the action key, and it is impossible (As far as I've found, at least) to fall and die, these sections offer almost no challenge. There is one exception in which the section must be completed fairly quickly to pass it, although this is not very difficult. Many of these sections could have probably been better handled as in-game cut-scenes, although in fairness they are never long enough or common enough to become onerous.

In danger of reaching that point, however, are the prolific crate puzzles that George in particular faces. During almost any part of the game where you control George, there are one or more sections involving the shifting of crates to specific positions, mostly in order to allow George to reach a higher point. Some of these are interesting, but they come close to becoming tedious by their sheer numbers. It would seem that the crate, long a strangely common inhabitant of first person shooter, has managed to invade the adventure genre as well!

It should be mentioned that while it is possible to die in a few places – most notably in failing the sneaking sections, or in one of the handful of quick reflex actions – this simply results in the player being sent back to a point shortly before the most recent challenge and being allowed to try again. Players are not restricted by a limited number of lives. It is possible to attempt any of the sections where Nico or George can die as many times as you like. This system of letting the players freely try the sequence again feels very appropriate in an adventure game. The design allows for dangerous situations without penalizing players too harshly for failure.

All actions (aside from basic movement) are controlled by the W, S, A, and D keys. The possible actions at a particular point are indicated by a triangle of icons at the bottom right of the screen, three on the bottom and one above them, in roughly the configuration of the W, S, A and D keys. For instance, when hanging from a wall, the player might be given an image of a wall with an arrow pointing down placed over it in the leftmost icon, and an image of a wall with an arrow pointing upwards placed over it in the upper icon. This indicates that the player can drop from the wall by pressing the 'A' key, or climb onto it by pressing the 'W' key.

Items and areas of interest are indicated by twinkling stars that draw attention effectively as the player passes near them (and is facing in roughly the right direction of course, although this is fairly lenient). If there are multiple stars

present, then only the currently selected one will twinkle, and the player can cycle through the other options present using the page up and page down keys. This provides a simple, clear, and easy to read system of hot points for interaction, and goes a long way to reducing difficulties in finding active areas and items of interest, as epitomized by the bane of the adventure genre, the "pixel hunt".

The inventory and dialogue options are displayed as arcs of circular icons that can be cycled to select the desired item, with the current icon being central and the largest, and those to either side being visible, but smaller. The arrow keys are used to scroll through the available icons, which are large and clear, and the current selection is accompanied by an easily-legible text label. This system is both simple and very effective, and overall interaction is a joy.

The inventory, which is accessed by pressing the space bar, is controlled using the same W S A D system. In this case, the icons map to actions on the currently selected item, such as using it in the world, inspecting it, and selecting it for combination with or use on another item. To combine two items, or use one on another, the player selects the first item and hits the key corresponding to item selection (usually the 'A' key), which moves the item out of the inventory arc, to one side. The player then scrolls though the inventory to the second item, and, if the option is available, hits the key corresponding to combining the items. If the option isn't available, then the first item cannot be used on the second.

Movement is handled relative to the screen, via the arrow keys. This means that pressing the up arrow key, for instance, will result in the character walking away from the camera as it's currently oriented. However, the camera angle changes often, so a "sticky keys" system has been implemented – if the camera angle changes while the player is holding down a key to make a character move, the character continues to move in the current direction until the key is released, at which point the keys once again act relative to the camera. The character's gait can be modified from its normal walk to running or creeping by holding the left shift and left control keys, respectively.

However, in addition to this, a "hybrid" system has been implemented. This functions by using the two of the arrow keys to produce minor alterations of direction while a single key is held. For instance, if players press the up arrow key and hold it to make the character walk forward, they can make the character turn to the left or right in small increments by holding the left or right arrow keys.

Unfortunately, I found this system to be a bit awkward, often having trouble making my character turn as I wanted. This may well be in part due to my being less acquainted with the camera-relative movement system than with other systems, and that lack of practice did have an effect occasionally. However, I feel that it was the hybrid system that caused the majority of the problems that I encountered in moving my character. For the most part this was not a serious downfall, but it did produce a few frustrating moments.

As is common in modern adventures, the graphics are 3D rendered, a move which has, in my opinion, had mixed results. In this case, I'm glad to report, the graphics work well, bringing the world to life with depth (if you'll pardon the pun). The characters are well-modeled and generally well-textured, although I did note a few occasional and minor problems with the edges of transparent objects, particularly Nico's hair and eyelashes. However, these issues were never too great, and on the whole the texturing was good. In fact, Nico looks decidedly lovely, while George manages to look the part of a believable hero to the piece, without tipping over into the realm of exaggerated masculinity. The characters' facial expressions are well-animated, and help to add emotion to many of the cut-scenes.

The world textures are generally good, although a few lacked a little in detail. Joins at the edges of textures were occasionally visible. However, on the whole, the textures did a good job in evoking an appropriate feel to each of the various areas, such as the dilapidated, slightly lonely and slightly spooky abandoned theatre, or the forbidding militarism of the castle in Prague.

The lighting engine does a good job, casting shadows that are effective, although they sometimes disappear when passing into a shadow. The idea is that the character's shadow should not appear within an area that is already shadowed. Unfortunately, in practice, this technique tends to result in the shadow disappearing in an artificial-seeming manner. Other than this, however, the shadows look realistic, casting themselves onto a

variety of surfaces well. Character and object shading is overall good, although I did notice one minor area in which the shading seemed at some angles rather too deep. Given the contextual lighting of this area, the shading created the impression of a particular character having black-backed hands. The display was much better when the character moved his hands and the light hitting them changed. The special effects are not the most advanced that I've ever seen, but they do their job well. They are effective, but nothing truly special.

The camera is controlled indirectly, moving and changing angle as the player moves around the area. The camera either moves with the player, changes angle to keep the player in frame, or changes position and angle entirely to show different (and often relevant) angles of the environment. Change in camera angles is sometimes used to create dramatic effect. At other times the camera will shift to give the player a useful view of the next puzzle or obstacle. The angles are generally workable, but unfortunately in a number of cases the camera angle obscures areas of interest. Players do not have a way to change directly change the angle either. They will have to move about, trying to stumble upon an area that triggers a camera angle showing what you want to see. This problem is at its worst when players end up walking towards the camera, resulting in an inability to see where you are going.

In conclusion, Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon is a very good game. The story and script suits the style, and the interface is simple, effective, and efficient. The puzzles are good and fair. The game includes some interesting and well-implemented challenges. The movement controls are less than perfect, but aren't a major hindrance. The graphics are good and again suit the style. Even though the camera is equivocal in its usefulness, this is never a serious problem.

The result is a very enjoyable game indeed. The final score is 85/100.

Developer: Revolution Software **Publisher:** THQ **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** November 2003 **Grade:** 85/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 98/2000/XP Pentium® III 750 MHz 128 MB RAM DirectX® 8.1 64 MB GeForce 2 or Equivalent Sound Card 8x CD-ROM Drive 2 GB Hard Disk Space Keyboard, mouse, speakers

Black Mirror

PC Review by Wendy Nellius

Late evening at Black Mirror Castle….

It is a stormy night at the Black Mirror Castle. In the opening scene we watch as William Gordon finds his way to his office by candlelight. He sits at his desk to pen an urgent letter to his nephew Samuel. William has been using all his energy in searching for the truth about the family. He feels that his end is near and he is afraid. William needs Samuel to return to the manor and continue his work. As William pens this seemingly final message, he senses something is coming for him. But, what is it? Watch in horror as William is thrown out the window of the tower to his death below.

Days Later…

Samuel has returned to the castle for his Uncle's funeral. The mood around the castle is somber. Conversations between Samuel and his family are uncomfortable and distanced. It seems this is the first time Samuel has been to the castle in 12 years. What happened all those years ago to cause Samuel to leave his family behind never intending to return?

A look around Samuel's old room is all it takes to clear up some of the mystery surrounding his departure. A photo of Samuel's deceased wife Catherine sits on the dresser. Looking at the picture fills Samuel with despair as he remembers how his wife died in a disastrous fire that consumed and destroyed an entire wing of the castle. For an unknown reason, Samuel blames himself for her death.

Since that time, Samuel has suffered from terrible headaches and carries his medicine with him at all times.

William's death, at least in Samuel's mind, is filled with mystery. It is believed he died accidentally or by suicide. Deep inside, Samuel knows in his heart that these two possibilities could not be true. He refuses to accept it and is determined to find out the truth for himself. As Samuel begins his personal investigation, he finds that many things have changed since he left Black Mirror. Some of the staff has changed and may not be as trustworthy as expected. Samuel's brother Robert appears to be very distant and secretive. In fact, there are quite a lot of people who seem to be hiding something. The discovery of a strange marking on the wall near where William died implies there may be more to William's death than what was originally thought. Then there is the strange torn photo of a man that used to live in the castle during the time Samuel was gone. No one seems to know what happened to him or who he really was. Even more ominous is William's diary where he details the existence of a curse on the Gordon men that destines them to lose their minds and ultimately their lives.

Surely, this is just an old wives tale. However, Robert is acting strangely and always remains locked up in his study. On the other hand, Samuel has begun to be plagued by terrible and destructive nightmares. Could this curse be affecting them? Samuel must follow the trail left by his Uncle William in order to find the truth about the Gordons. He has to save himself and future generations of the family from befalling the same fate.

Black Mirror is a 3rd person point and click adventure. The game comes on one CD and loads up quite easily. No technical problems were encountered while playing. The game is divided into chapters. Completion of all the tasks in one chapter will bring resolution and start the next chapter. In this way, the game is quite linear.

Navigation is pretty standard. The gray cursor will turn red if an item can be interacted with in any form. You will typically use the left mouse button to interact with objects. The

right mouse button will normally cause Samuel to look more carefully at an item, if applicable. When locating an exit, the cursor will usually change to a small door with a description of the new location. However, this is not always the case. There are times when you can walk further into a room, but no indication is given that you can go further. This can lead to missing important clues or being stuck in one place too long. Inventory will appear at the bottom of the screen when you run your cursor over it. A simple click and drag is all that is required to use an item. Right clicking on an item will give you a verbal description of the item or allow you to examine it further.

The character renderings are done nicely, but the camera is too far away, making it difficult to see any real detail. Most of the characters are a bit stiff. Also, when initiating a conversation with another character, there is a very slow response while you wait for the other character to stand up or face Samuel. Black Mirror is a heavily dialog-based game. There are times where you will find diaries or other books which are read to you. They can be quite lengthy, so those not interested in a lot of dialog may be turned off by this. But, if you like a lot a dialog, you will be satisfied in that respect.

In general, the voice acting is done well with the exception of the main character. It is unclear if it is the voice acting, the structured "proper" dialogue, or a combination of the both that tends to make Samuel quite unlikable. In every conversation, Samuel's tone is one of a pompous, condescending jerk. It is difficult to listen to his interactions and feel for him and his situation. This problem doesn't take away the desire to know what's going on at the manor. It just makes you want to pop Simon in the head once a while to knock some "nice" into him. Note that this game was originally created in the Czech Republic. The game was translated to English for the North American version. This could account for the extremely formal tone of the dialog. In the original version, the conversations could be a whole different ballgame.

The 2D environments are very beautiful. This is a dark game and that is reflected appropriately in the backgrounds. The castle truly looks like what you would expect of this kind of structure. The castle is constructed of stone with

huge pillars, wall carvings, a great hall, fireplaces, and a tower. Really, every castle has to have tower. Paintings of the family's ancestors litter the walls and secret passages lie in wait to be found. The closest town is the epitome of a small local village. All the residents know each other. There is a pub, a pawnshop, and the dock. There's not much to do at the village. Simple errands of urban life, such as developing some film, can be a challenge. The local vicarage is the final resting place for much of the Gordon Clan. But, it is hiding secret passages as well. The local morgue is quite gory. This is not the sterile morgue we come to think of in present day. The local doctor converted the basement of his house into the local morgue. The floors are cracked and blood stains are all around. There is no sanitary procedure either as the doctor just dumps remains into a dumpster outside. Even though the backgrounds are static, small touches were added to bring them to life. Birds can be seen flying up in the sky. Butterflies twitter around a bush. Fires sway and glow in the fireplaces. As you progress through the game, more locations become available; each one darker than the next. Take a walk through the local sanitarium that is run by Robert. How about exploring an underground temple?
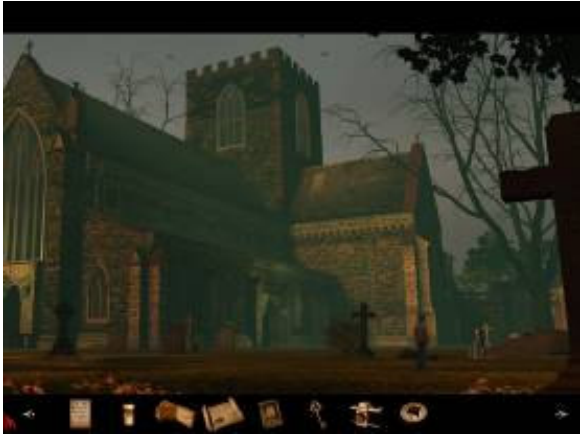
There isn't a lot of music in this game. The ambient sounds are what create the mood and truly shine in Black Mirror. The majority of the ambient sounds were excellent. Walk into the kitchen when Bates is there and you will hear dinner frying in the pan. The cracking of the fire in the fireplace resounds throughout the hall. In some rooms, the voices will have an echo due to the lack of rugs. Also adaptive were the sounds of the footprints as Samuel walks from an uncarpeted room to one with carpet. This was a neat effect. In the town, the local dogs can be heard barking in the night. Your first visit to the graveyard will bring the sounds of an actual grave being dug. Perhaps the most impressive sounds were of the rainstorms. The rainfall and thunder sounded impressively real. Even better is in the greenhouse where the dynamic was changed to reflect the metal roof. There are a wide variety of sounds to truly delight the ears.

The puzzles in Black Mirror are a combination of inventory and logic
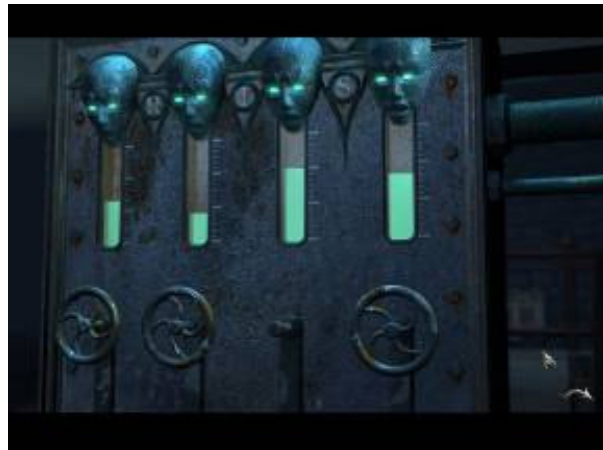
puzzles. They, for the most part, lean towards the easier side. Finding keys for the many doors is a common task. Some puzzles involve the prerequisite running around to find film for the camera, someone to make an illegal key for you, or just interviewing characters multiple times to gather information. There are some puzzles involving the deciphering of riddles. Other puzzles are mechanical. You will spend quite a lot time stuck in a mine trying to figure out the multiple machines that are either broken or deactivated. The casual gamer should have very few problems overcoming the obstacles presented.

The storyline is dark and foreboding. This feeling of darkness remains true throughout the entire game. There are no light moments to speak of. However, the story is laid out well and progresses at an easy pace. You will have the feeling that you are being watched and that something will be coming for you next. Each new detail learned brings more depressing feelings of mania and will keep your interest to the very end. The game concludes with shocking finality.

Black Mirror can be played by any level of gamer. If you enjoy grim storylines filled with mystery, a lot of dialog, and puzzles that won't tax your brain too much, then check out Black Mirror.

Final Grade: 84/100

Note: Black Mirror employs the use of Starforce Copy Protection System. Some may have objections to the use of this software by the game.

Developer: Future Games **Publisher:** The Adventure Company **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** 2003 **Grade:** 84/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 98/ME/2000/XP Pentium® II 400 MHz 64 MB RAM 4 MB Video Card DirectX® 7.1 or higher 12x CD-ROM Drive Hard Drive space of 2 GB

Sanitarium

PC Review by Donna

How to begin a review about a game that has been around for so long, a game that has become sort of a "cult" classic? How do you describe a game that is everything but ordinary?

When you first start Sanitarium, you will be treated with a very cool introduction movie – a man driving, talking to someone, telling that he 'got it all figured out' – all of a sudden, the car crashes and you find yourself in a wrecked-up asylum with a severe amnesia. You don't know who you are, where you are, and why you are there. Sounds cliché, but believe me, the game is far from that.

We have all heard this amnesia story a hundred times over. A character forgets everything, then either by touching a magical ring or seeing their worst enemy or a beloved one, they remember it all! That is *not* the way it works in real life. That is not how Sanitarium works either. You will very, very slowly pick up the pieces of your own past and put them together, one by one.

Controls are quite simple. You move your character by dragging the mouse in the direction you want him to go and access the inventory by clicking on the

character. He moves very smoothly through the world, although there is one bug that appears at random places causing your character to get stuck. He won't be able to move or do anything. You could try saving and reloading, but a better way is saving often and just reloading the last one. Fortunately, players should not encounter this issue very often, it happened once or twice to me throughout the adventure.

As you progress through the world, you will be thrown into different settings – VERY different from what you've seen so far – getting a chance to play as characters other than the nameless protagonist. When you start controlling a different character, the transition may not initially make any sense. But by the time you reach the end of Sanitarium, nothing is left without explanation.

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Your journey through Sanitarium will take you a wide array of different locations. You will visit a town with no grown-ups around, an absolutely mad circus level (with clowns on top), an ancient Aztec city, a fantasy Hive and many, many more. As you play through the game, try to spot Elvis if you can ;)

One of my favorite levels is the one you get to play right after 'tutorial' level that takes place at the asylum. You will find yourself in an eerie town populated with only children. Although YOU will certainly ask yourself where the heck the grown-ups are, the children will not seem to care about it. And not only that – they seem to be terribly messed up as well. It will be up to you to understand what is going on at the town.

Interacting with characters is easy, all you have to do is click on them and a chat screen will pop up at the bottom of your monitor. Every character has a unique voice, and the conversations are accompanied with subtitles. If you don't feel like listening to the dialogues, you can easily skip through the lines by clicking on them. However, it is not recommended to skip a lot of the dialogue, as some of the characters will give out important information. But even if you miss something by accident, you can always go back and ask them to repeat it for you.

On the left side of the chat box you will find a small bust portrait of our nameless character (his expression will change depending on his mood, which is a very nice addition in my opinion) and on the right is a portrait of the character you are talking to. Just be careful, because some characters will freak you out when you see their faces.

Sanitarium does have some action sequences. At the end (or near the end) of certain levels, you will encounter a mini-boss. They usually aren't too hard to beat. Even if you die, the game will zap you a few steps back and let you continue the battle. After all, it's an adventure game, not a shooter. Some bosses will require you to hit them with some weapon, while others will be beaten after you solve a puzzle. The game is all about variations.

Even though the game is locked on 640x480 screen resolution, everything looks great and incredibly detailed. The colors are very vibrant, but at the same time

they appear sick and mysterious. The atmosphere is quite sinister, with some subtle touches of a gothic mood. I don't recommend playing the game if you're touchy and easily frightened, as some portions appear extremely gory and even violent.

The last bit, but the most important one: the story. From the beginning until the very end, you won't have the clearest idea what is going on – the game is full of little flashbacks and hints, packed in beautiful full-motion videos. The plot unravels slowly, often throwing you in deeper lack of knowledge.
[Editorial Note: It is also worth noting that Sanitarium has a number of powerful emotional moments that fit very well into the game's underlying theme of self-discovery.**]**

Constant puzzle-solving is going to keep your brain busy for hours, but don't worry, none of them are very hard (hey, *I* solved them alone!) and they won't ruin your gaming experience. Yet at the same time, they will not bore you either. Each puzzle is unique and while there is a number of inventory-based puzzles, you will encounter a great variety of logic ones as well.

Overall, Sanitarium is one of the best games I have ever played. If you love dark, twisted tales and find the idea of exploring a variety of different worlds and personas appealing, make sure you do not miss The Sanitarium. You will not be disappointed.

Overall mark: 97/100

Developer: Dreamforge Entertainment	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):**
Publisher: ASC Games	Pentium® 90 MHz
Platform: PC	16 MB RAM
Genre: Adventure	4X CD-ROM Drive
Release Date: 1998	16-bit Sound Card
Grade: 97/100	30 MB disk space
	DirectX® 5

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Under a Killing Moon

PC Review by Ugur Sener

The year is 2042. The San Francisco of the future is a dark and dangerous place to live. The evening skies are ruby red thanks to high levels of radiation. Many areas of the once beautiful city are no longer accessible. Wars have ravaged the face of the entire planet. Falling victim to radiation, many people have suffered horrible genetic mutations. Called norms, some lucky people show natural immunity to these mutations. Private investigator Tex Murphy is one of them. But he refuses to live in New San Francisco with the majority of the norms.

Detective Murphy would rather identify himself with the mutants. Down on his luck, miserably broke, and without any cases to investigate, Tex has pretty much hit rock bottom. He fits better among the mutants, the other outcasts of society. Despite his remarkable success in the Martian Memorandum case, things have not been the same for Murphy after he separated from his wife. Alone and depressed, Tex is beginning to wonder just how much worse things are going to get. Yet a meeting with his old mentor might change everything.

Tex's old instructor shows up at the detective's office with grim news. Colonel is working on an exceptionally dangerous case and he has somehow heard Murphy's name in connection to it. The old man warns Tex to stay out of the investigation if he wants to stay alive. Of course the talented private investigator Tex Murphy is deeply insulted by this underestimation of his detective skills. Murphy resolves himself to find a client before the end of the day. He wants to put an end to his bad luck and prove that he has what it takes to successfully crack a case. The private investigator may not know it, but he is about to get involved in a great conspiracy that may well threaten the entire world.

The game begins in Murphy's office. Upon hitting the streets to meet the detective's neighbors, players will quickly find a small case to investigate. Under a Killing Moon has an excellent way of giving players an immediate task they will have to overcome while dropping hints of the greater plot along the way. The

initial investigation involves a simple robbery. However, as you go through Tex's neighborhood and start discovering some evidence, you will be quickly introduced to the game's setting and the underlying social problems in the world of 2042. When you complete the initial investigation successfully, you will be assigned another task which reveals more about the game's greater plot.

The adventure offers quite a few twists and turns along the way to keep players interested. The simple foundations of the story laid during the first day successfully transform into a much greater adventure with a thick plot. Over the course of the six day adventure, Tex will be gradually immersed into an intricate case that threatens many lives. As he gains some success through his detective work, players will also observe a change in Murphy's character. The detective will never lose his wisecracking tough-guy attitude. But the game somewhat subtly shows how Murphy gains an increasing sense of confidence.

The intricately weaved story is perhaps the strongest element of Under a Killing Moon. This is not a simplistic detective tale or your run of the mill 'reluctant hero saves the world' story. Under a Killing Moon is about what people are willing to do in the name of their belief systems. It is about the extremes prejudice can take people. Underneath the interesting science fiction setting and the solid detective story, the game has a deeper foundation. The game manages to grab your interest from the beginning and keep you playing until you reach the end of the exciting adventure.

Despite the overall serious storyline, Under a Killing Moon does have a great deal of humorous moments. Tex Murphy's occasional clumsiness and childish behavior makes for rather interesting accidents. Yet completely at odds with his clumsy moments, the detective also demonstrates a truly astonishing accuracy with crossbows that throw suction darts. Murphy also has a number of great witty remarks throughout the game. The down-on-his-luck penniless detective with a serious attitude manages to make for an interesting and charming character to control.

Under a Killing Moon is played from a first-person perspective. The game features two modes for controlling Murphy's actions. In the interactive mode, you

can examine and pick-up objects using the mouse. This is where Murphy will access his inventory to combine items, open doors, and use inventory items on other objects. Hitting the space key on the keyboard switches the game to the movement mode. In the movement mode, players can move the mouse left and right to turn Murphy in the corresponding directions. Moving the mouse forward will make Tex start walking in the direction he is facing. Moving the mouse backward will make Tex walk backwards. While in the movement mode, players can make Tex look up or down using the arrow keys. It is also possible to make Tex crouch. Especially due to the need to switch between the interactive mode and the movement mode, it might take a few minutes for players to get used to the control structure of Under a Killing Moon. However it will not be long before you are easily navigating the environments and interacting with objects.

The first part of Under a Killing Moon mostly takes place around the neighborhood where Tex has his office. But as you get into the later chapters of the game, you will visit a number of additional locations. For instance, Tex will have to overcome a rather tough security system at an apartment building. He will also have to navigate his way through a series of offices while avoiding detection. The game spans over a fairly large area and has players visiting interesting locales around San Francisco. Travel between the different locations is accomplished through the game's map system. Clicking on the travel button on the interface brings up a map where the currently accessible locations are labeled. Some of the locations indicated on the map will have smaller areas Tex can explore. After discovering these areas for the first time, players will be able to ask Tex to travel to them directly. Thus, the map system can be a good time saver as you get through the adventure.

The characters in Under a Killing Moon are brought to life by real actors. Between the attractive newsstand owner Chelsee Bando, the grumpy pawnshop owner Rook Garner, and the oversized fire safety enthusiast Ardo Newpop, you will encounter a host of colorful and quirky characters throughout the course of the adventure. Interaction with these characters will play a great part in your investigation. In Under a Killing Moon, dialogue works in two ways. During certain sequences, the character you are talking to will ask Tex a question or make a statement. Players will have to choose from one of the three types of available responses. While you cannot see

the exact wording Tex is going to use, you can gauge where he will take the conversation from the answer options listed. Tex will also frequently get a chance to directly interrogate other characters. A list of available topics will appear on the top right corner of the screen. Players will choose one of these topics. If the other character knows anything about the topic, Tex might uncover some vital information to help with his investigation. Important clues you discover while exploring locations or conversations you have with certain characters will add new topics to your questions list.

Unfortunately, the quality of acting in Under a Killing Moon most definitely leaves something to be desired. The lines are frequently delivered rather forcefully and some of the acting feels over the top. However, the solid story and the engaging atmosphere of the game greatly diminish the problems with the acting. Once you start getting into the core story of the game, it should become easy to overlook the acting and enjoy Under a Killing Moon.

The puzzles in Under a Killing Moon are typically inventory-based. Tex will have to thoroughly examine each location and collect evidence that may give him a lead on the case. Players will also frequently have to interrogate the right people to advance the story. In general, the required items are fairly easy to spot, but a couple of them may elude you the first time you visit a location. The game also features a small number of puzzles where players will have to put together pieces of an important document. Tex will figure out the password for a couple of safes throughout the adventure as well. In addition, there are several dialogue puzzles where players will have to select the correct responses to get information out of key characters. Overall, the challenges in Under a Killing Moon are fairly easy, but a few of them can have you searching through locations multiple times or thinking for a while.

If you do have problems with the game's puzzles, Under a Killing Moon has a great hint system to help players. Each time you uncover an important clue or successfully complete a challenge, you will earn a number of points. These points can be spent to purchase hints. The hint system offers a directory with a listing of all the important tasks players should currently be trying to accomplish. Each task is divided into a series of steps. The hint system identifies successfully

completed steps with checkmarks. If you are missing one or more steps, you can purchase a hint to see the next one you can complete. Once you use the hint to complete the indicated step, you will be able to purchase another hint to help with the task.

There are a number of ways Murphy can die during his adventure in Under a Killing Moon. However, the game does typically give players a fair warning before they can perform the action that will lead to Tex's untimely demise. For instance, if you have just broken into an apartment and Tex says he can hear bodyguards talking outside one of the doors, it stands to reason that something bad might happen if you open that door. Yet regardless of the obviousness of the decisions that might get Tex killed, players are recommended to save their progress often.

Twelve years after its original release, Under a Killing Moon remains a greatly entertaining and surprisingly playable game. The engaging story should maintain your interest throughout the course of the adventure. The game offers interesting locations, a multitude of different characters, and plenty of puzzles to keep you occupied. The acting is over the top, a couple of the hotspots are easy to miss, and it might take a while to get used to the controls. But Under a Killing Moon offers an overall excellent game play experience that more than makes up for its problems. This is a hallmark title that all fans of the adventure gaming genre should consider trying. Even though Under a Killing Moon is the third game in the Tex Murphy series, it is not even necessary to have played the previous titles. To make things even better, Under a Killing Moon can be played on a Windows XP system with the help of the MS-DOS emulator DOS-Box. If you like adventure games with a solid storyline and a focus on character interaction, and if you never had a chance to play this game, definitely consider finding yourself a copy of Under a Killing Moon.
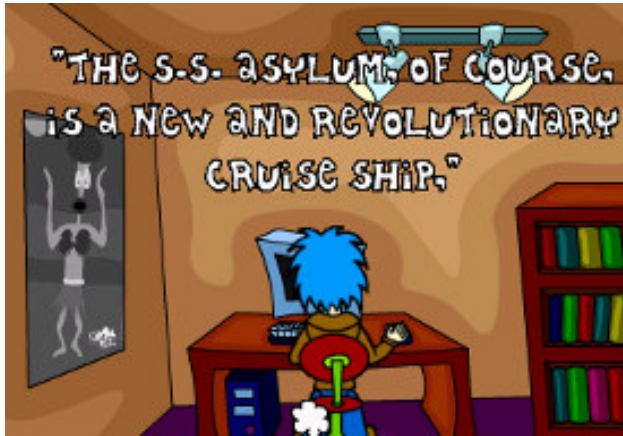

Developer: Access Software	Minimum System Requirements (PC):
Publisher: Access Software	MS-DOS
Platform: PC	386/25 MHz Processor
Genre: Adventure	4 MB RAM
Release Date: 1994	VESA compliant SVGA display
Grade: 90/100	Sound card
	2X CD-ROM drive
	8MB hard disk space

The Game that Takes Place on a Cruise Ship
PC Review by Suz

The Game that Takes Place on a Cruse Ship is a freeware game developed by Deirdra Kiai. It is a point and click adventure that brings back memories of the early days of adventure gaming. The main character of The Game That Takes Place on a Cruise Ship is Gertrude. The game begins as Gertrude finds out that she has won a cruise on the S.S. Asylum. Being accustomed to never winning anything, she is quite excited for her trip. Curiously, Gert packs rather lightly for the cruise. She brings along her rather worthless degree in rhymatology. Gert carries the degree around the ship to make herself feel important. She also has a potato chip that looks like Michel Jackson and a bottle of sleeping pills. This seemingly odd ensemble of items may even come in handy, you never know.

All of the passengers on board the S. S. Asylum are not as odd as the name of the ship might indicate. However, quite a few of them are strange enough to make fitting passengers on the cruise ship. There is a poor guy that you need to befriend, a scary biker guy with a knife, and an obnoxious French Maitre'd to name a few. During her exploits, Gertrude may have to fulfill the prophecy of the Circle Worshipers, join the 1337 Spellcasters Guild, or even win a talent contest. The choices you will make throughout the game leads Gertrude to one of four different endings. The four branches of the path of the game are quite different and worth exploring individually. Make sure you save your game at the decision points so that you will easily have the opportunity to try them all without having to replay the entire game. There is no limit on the number of saves.

The Game that Takes Place on a Cruise Ship is predominantly played using the mouse. However, the game does feature a number of keyboard shortcuts. Players will also have to use the keyboard to play the mini-games featured as part of the adventure.

The game offers six action verbs for your use. You can examine, pick up, talk to, smell, use or consume as you wish. You first click on the action verb and then either the inventory item or object you wish to interact with. The default action is walking. Be sure to try smelling the Maitre'd to get Gert's true opinion of him.

As you explore the different levels of the cruise ship, you will pick up a variety of items. The majority of the puzzles are inventory based, but there are a few mini-games that don't use the inventory. For instance, joining the 1337 Spellcasters guild requires you to win at the Wizard Warble mini-game. If you have a hard time accomplishing this task, you can consult the members of the guild. They will give you hints to help you win the mini-game.

The Game that Takes Place on a Cruise Ship features bright and simple graphics. The locations on the cruise ship are varied. Among the more memorable locations is the Spit Valve Jazz bar, complete with a spit valve fountain and an octopus at the drums. Some of the other locations include a swimming pool, theater, arcade, gift shop, and a disco. The game has a nice sound track, but there is no voice acting. You will need to read all of the dialogue, but this should not detract from the experience.

The Game that Takes Place on a Cruise Ship makes for a nice way to spend an afternoon. Especially considering it is available as freeware, the game is a very good adventure offering.

Developer: Deirdra Kiai Productions
Publisher: Deirdra Kiai Productions
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: March 2006
Grade: 84/100

Dead City

PC Review by Dusan Radojevic

It is another dark and rainy night in the city. The entire world is dying and your name is irrelevant. Memories of past days silently keep following you like a shadow. The only important thing was her. And there is no kind of revenge that can bring her back. You are aware of the irrevocable loss, but something still keeps you going on. Crazy or not, people always carry the weight of the past. "The death sets everything right" you think to yourself for a moment. It is time to take things into your own hands.

Drugs, a near future setting, advanced technology, and a dark, deep story. Cyberpunk is one of the best branches of the science-fiction genre. Unfortunately, there are not very many cyberpunk adventure games released in the past (one of the best was "Ripper" and it's more than 10 years old. Back then it contained 6 CD's of hard core mystery in a cyberpunk universe!). Thanfully, that did not stop NiHiLiS, an independent team from the Czech Republic, to make "Dead City" or "Mrtvé město" to use the game's original name.

The story starts where you would normally expect it end. Your girlfriend is dead, or rather murdered to be more specific. You have just spent the last three months of your life in a madhouse. And now they have decided to release you. Cured or not, you find yourself in the middle of your apartment with only one thought on your mind: Who killed your bellowed Tess? But there is a lot more to Dead City than just a murder mystery. Prepared to do whatever it takes to uncover the truth, our drugged hero starts his gloomy adventure. Dead City is a haven of fake morals and drugs. The city is also the home of a serial killer.

Game play: Dead City" is a traditional adventure game played from a first-person perspective. Left click of a mouse is used for looking at objects and exploration.
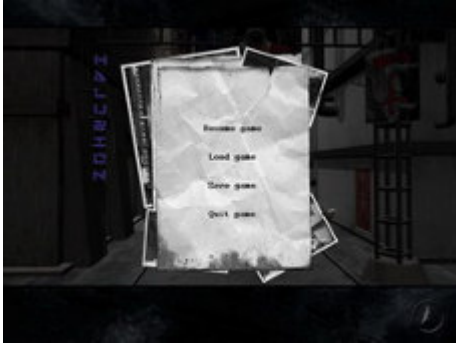

Interaction with objects is accomplished through using the right mouse button. The inventory is well-hidden at the top of the screen and it can be viewed only when your cursor is over it. The menu button is placed in the bottom right corner. By clicking on the button, you enter a small and really greatly designed menu. The standard control structure of Dead City should be familiar to adventure gamers.

The puzzles are logical and quite easy. The relative easiness of the puzzles is actually a great thing in Dead City as it will allow you to enjoy the story without any interruptions.

The graphics are neither the greatest nor the worst seen in the adventure gaming scene. But for an independently made game, the visuals are excellent. 3D backgrounds are rendered at 800x600 pixels and combined with various filters. This gives the game a comic book feel just like the one from the Max Payne. Character sprites are taken from real pictures but they fit the game well. The only significantly bad aspect of this game is the animations. Even though there are quite a number of background effects like rain or thunder, everything else is mostly dead. But every action in the game is well-explained to the tiniest detail. And that is why the great storytelling always wins over great graphic design.

Music: The strong soundtrack combined with the deep storyline helps distinguish Dead City among many other adventure games. I wish that NiHiLiS would make the Dead City soundtrack available for download separately from the game. Once you get through the game you might have the same opinion.
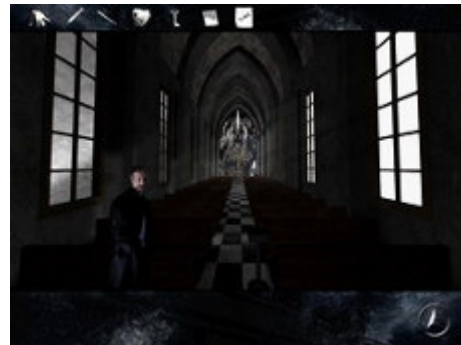
All in all, Dead City is more than average looking independently-made freeware adventure game. You will only need about 40 minutes of your time to finish it. But it will be a lot longer before you can stop thinking about Dead City. Now go and get it at http://nihilis.xhosting.cz/deadcity_eng.html. It is only a 11MB download.

Developer: NiHiLiS
Publisher: NiHiLiS
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: June 2004
Grade: 88/100

The Mystery of Castle Wildenburg

PC Review by Ugur Sener

You weren't exactly thrilled to receive the king's summons. You were asked to join the king in the room where the knights and the monarch discussed the nation's problems. You expected hours of boring debate and petty quibbling from the kingdom's would-be rulers. But you were in for a surprise when you entered the room. The king was waiting for you alone. This was no ordinary meeting.

The old monarch spoke to you about an important mission. He told you of Wildenburg, a mysterious castle that lies deep within the forests to the south. An artifact of tremendous power is hidden within the castle. This magical jewel, known as the Lapsit Excillis, has the power to grant its owner eternal youth. The monarch asked you to find a way to sneak into Wildenburg and capture the jewel. In return for delivering the artifact, the monarch promised you his daughter's hand in marriage.

Now you stand alone on the path leading to Wildenburg. You know that the journey will be arduous. Even finding the castle in this dangerous forest would be a significant achievement. Sneaking inside Wildenburg and stealing the wondrous Lapsit Excillis seems little more than a suicide mission. Hesitantly, you walk towards the forest in search of the castle and the jewel. Either greater glory or a horrifying death awaits you.

The Mystery of Castle Wildenburg is a freeware browser-based independent adventure game. Players are not required to create an account or install anything on their computers before they can start the game. Standard Web browser software and an Internet connection will be all you need. Combining real photographs from the German countryside with hand-drawn images to illustrate certain objects and characters, Wildenburg provides an easily accessible and fairly pleasant adventure gaming experience.

The adventure begins just outside the forest you will have to navigate to find Castle Wildenburg. In search of the powerful magical jewel, you will have to make your way to the castle gates and figure out a way to get inside. However, there is much more to

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Wildenburg than the forest area. Once you manage to find a way into the castle, you will have a lot more ground to cover before you can solve the mystery. About two thirds of the way through the game, a plot twist will take you to a third area to explore. Even though Wildenburg is a relatively short game, solving the puzzles and successfully completing the journey should still keep you occupied for a few hours.

Played from a first-person perspective, Wildenburg features a control structure that will be familiar to players who have had a chance to enjoy some older adventure games. You move around the forest by clicking on buttons indicating geographic directions. To interact with the environment, you utilize action buttons. Attempting to perform an action involves clicking on a command button such as 'use', 'examine', or 'throw' and a hotspot on the screen or an item in your inventory. Every time you find an inventory item, solve a puzzle, or uncover an important clue, you earn a certain number of points. The points contribute towards a final score that you can submit when you successfully complete the game or die during the adventure. Thus, even after completing the game for the first time, players have an incentive to play through the adventure again to earn the maximum number of points available.

Among the distinguishing features of Wildenburg is the hunger and thirst system. The 'food' bar on the top left corner of the screen depicts how hungry your character is. Likewise, the 'drinking' bar on the top right corner indicates your thirst level. Each time you move from one screen to the next or attempt to perform an action, your character gets a little more thirsty and hungry. If you fail to find food and drink to satisfy your character, it is possible to die of hunger or thirst. This system requires players to constantly keep an eye out for food items or places where they can get water. While the hunger and thirst levels do not increase very rapidly, you cannot afford to ignore them as you go through Wildenburg.

The hunger and thirst system may initially sound interesting, but it can cause a great deal of frustration as you play the game. Having to keep an eye on the hunger and thirst levels means that you will not be able to completely freely roam the game world. The amount of experimentation you can do before your hunger and thirst reaches critical levels is greatly restricted. Be prepared to die quite a few times as you struggle to solve the game's puzzles for the first time. When

you do not know the correct path to take and the right items to use in each situation, your character will seem to get hungry or thirsty all too quickly.

The Mystery of Castle Wildenburg does have a save system that can alleviate the problems created by the food and drink bars. Players can save their progress at any time using a very simple interface. However, in order to load a game, you have to know the name you entered during the save. The game does not display a list of all the saved games. Thus, if you forget the name you chose for the save, you will have to start the adventure from the beginning.

Unfortunately, having the ability to save and load your progress still does not give you complete freedom to explore the game world and experiment with items without having to worry about hunger or thirst. When you load a game, your points are reset to zero. As such, if you are shooting for the maximum number of points, it is not possible to use the save game feature during the adventure. Players are thus encouraged to play through the game once with the help of the save system to find the solutions to the puzzles. Upon completing the game for the first time, it should be much easier to play the game again and focus on obtaining a high number of points.

The puzzles in Wildenburg primarily consist of inventory-based challenges. The game also features some dialogue-based puzzles and a couple of puzzles where you have to enter a correct combination. If you carefully survey each screen for clues and inventory items, most of the puzzles should prove fairly easy to overcome. However, the game does have a few challenges where the clues to solving a puzzle are either a bit obscure or non-existent. As such, players might find themselves resorting to trial and error to get past a few of the game's challenges. Unfortunately, having to watch out for hunger and thirst levels can make this trial and error process quite frustrating.

Finding some of the hotspots in Wildenburg can occasionally become tiresome. All of the hotspots on a given screen are not necessarily obvious. Players have to resort to a fair amount of pixel-hunting in order to locate certain areas they can examine. To game does feature a considerable number of screens with no items of interest. These screens serve simply as part of the journey from one area of the game to the next. As

such, players may have a hard time deciding when they should drag the mouse all over the screen just to make sure they are not missing any available hotspots.

The Mystery of Castle Wildenburg certainly has its fair share of problems. While it is certainly an interesting and fairly uncommon concept, it is debatable whether or not the hunger and thirst system brings true value to the game. On one hand the system makes the experience more intense as players have to constantly keep an eye out on the thirst and hunger bars. Yet on the other hand the system restricts free exploration and can force players to save and load the game many times. A few of the hotspots are quite easy to miss and some of the puzzles do not have sufficient clues.

However Wildenburg is one of those games that manage to be fun despite their problems. The photographs from the German countryside make up a pleasant game world to explore. Aurèle Mechler's character drawings, a good deal of the dialogue, and some of the puzzles give the game a most welcome relaxed and humorous tone. While the story is certainly on the light side and lacking in depth, it still manages to keep your interest throughout the game. The game's mouse-driven interface is very easy to use and offers players a wide variety of ways to attempt to interact with the environment.

Taking into account that the game does not have any download or registration requirements, and given the fact that it is offered completely free of charge, adventure game enthusiasts should at least consider giving The Mystery of Castle Wildenburg a try. If you can look past the game's frustrating features, you will see that Wildenburg has an inherent charm. The adventure can offer you a pleasant few hours as you search for the elusive Lapsit Excillis.

The game can be played at: www.Wildenburg-Spiel.de

Developer: Jörg Jochims
Publisher: Jörg Jochims
Platform: PC
Genre: Adventure
Release Date: March 2006
Grade: 69/100

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

Spooks

To win a bright orange goldfish at a funfair game of darts is not usually something to be remarked upon. However, this is quite an achievement within the ubiquitously grey Land of the Dead, where the word "alive" is almost entirely unknown – and frowned upon by the authorities. Nothing, however, seems to perturb Mortia, the little ghoul with a sarcastic sense of humour who wins this extraordinary being.

"Drift right up! Drift right up!" calls the skeleton at the darts booth to Mortia. It doesn't take long for him to convince her to try her hand, and in moments she has won a prize – something special. The skeleton explains that this being is "alive", and that this specific type of being is called a "goldfish". As to what "alive" means, he seems to know nothing more than that living creatures require food and water to stay alive – just as the beings of the Land of the Dead require ashes and tears. If skeleton has any more information to offer, he doesn't stay long enough to say it. Before Mortia can ask much more, he hurriedly closes his booth, leaving nothing but a "gone haunting" sign to answer Mortia's questions.

It is up to Mortia to explore the "Carnage-Val" for information on this strange new word: "alive". She also has to find a safe place for the goldfish Mortia decides to call "Spooks".

Thus begins the story of Spooks. The game follows little Mortia's explorations of the Carnage-Val and beyond. For most of the game, Mortia's goal is to discover the meaning of the word "alive". During this quest, she meets a variety of strange characters. A few of these will hinder her, but a number will provide help – in exchange for some aid from her, of course.

For the majority of the game, the story advances very little. Instead the game focuses on Mortia's attempts to discover enough about the word "alive" to keep

the goldfish Spooks in possession of this strange trait. Eventually, Mortia will discover a means of taking Spooks to somewhere more congenial to his living nature. Through this discovery, Mortia will find out some seemingly important things about herself as well. Despite the lack of immediate advancement, the story is fun and interesting.

The story is advanced primarily through the dialogue, in reward for Mortia's efforts for and against the various beings of the Carnage-Val. Mortia's tasks are of course primarily requested, or at least suggested, by previous conversations. Given the importance of dialogue in Spooks, it is fortunate that the writing is one of the exemplary points of the game – provided that you enjoy puns. The majority of the humor of the game is found in the dialogue, and the majority of that humor is in the form of puns. If you are amused by this form of word play (as I will admit that I am), then the game can be very funny indeed. This adds greatly to the quest relation in many cases, which naturally enhances the game play experience.

The characters in Spooks are quirkily interesting, often being seemingly ironic choices for their job. For instance, the friendly greeter at the gate to the Carnage-Val is a demon, and the fortune teller is a being consisting primarily of a giant eye – which is highly myopic. While no single character is given the chance to gain much depth (with the possible and minor exception of Mortia herself), this seems to be well-suited for the light spirit of the game. Mortia specifically is an interesting and engaging character. It is truly fun to control her throughout the adventure. Given the manner of the game's ending, she is also a character I would very much like to see in another game.

The various areas featured in Spooks are similarly amusing, being primarily distorted inversions of common fairground attractions such as merry-go-rounds, haunted houses, and performing animals. They are in general interesting and fun, and fit excellently with the setting of the game.

Mortia's descriptions of her environment, and the objects and beings in it, account for a great part of the character's appeal and personality. Mortia's comments are made from distorted view of a ghoul: When presented with a bed, she remarks that she has the urge to hide beneath it and make scratching noises. Once the player has access to a lit candle, attempts to use it in most places will result in Mortia commenting that she prefers engineered destruction to wanton. Furthermore, Mortia also displays a wonderfully sarcastic sense of humor that, to my mind at least, serves to make her a far more fun character to control. The ghoul's witty remarks are a great reward for the inspection of the environment.

On that note, it is also worth mentioning that the environment is filled with areas that can be examined. Even the clouds often have brief descriptions – an attention to detail that enriches the game world.

The puzzles placed before the player are often a lot of fun, and while occasionally requiring pause for thought, are generally not overly difficult. Unfortunately a few of them do feel a little arbitrary, especially the "scary-go-round" puzzle, which can easily end up being completed with absolutely no knowledge of why you're doing this and what reward is to be gained from it. In addition to this, some items seem to be rather too conveniently found – although this could perhaps be explained, at least in part, by the major plot twist found towards the end.

There are a few cases in which the solution to a puzzle may be not be obvious, primarily because one or two items are not as easy to spot as I would have liked.

However, these are by far the exception, and even they should not be too hard to solve with a little careful observation.

The puzzles are primarily inventory-based, largely involving helping the various beings of the Carnage-Val in one way or another. In addition to this, there is one riddle-based puzzle, and one brief pure dialogue puzzle.

In one or two places it is possible to lose the game. However, given the nature of the main character, it is not possible to actually die. In these cases the player is given the options of quitting, restarting the game, or loading a saved game.

The interface uses one of the classic patterns of adventure game interaction. The player is provided with a small selection of mouse cursors with which to interact with the world: walk to, look at, use/pick up and talk with, represented by a pair of crossed bones, a pair of white eyes, a hand, and a speech bubble respectively. In addition, when an inventory item is selected, that item's image becomes the current cursor, allowing the item to be used on another object. The player can cycle through the cursors by clicking the right mouse button, while the left mouse button allows the player to attempt to enact the action specified by the cursor.

In addition, moving the mouse cursor to the top of the screen causes an icon bar to pop up. This offers buttons to select any of the standard cursor modes, to open the inventory, load and save games, exit the game, and view two brief messages.

The graphics in Spooks are appropriate and effective – the Land of the Dead is rendered entirely in greyscale. The storyline makes great use of this grey coloring. Objects that are not shades of grey are considered to be strange and highly noteworthy, but are very much frowned upon by the authorities. This choice of visual style feels very appropriate to the setting without ever detracting from the appeal of the graphics. The artistry of the visuals is not, however, outstanding. While certainly up to the task, they are at times a little rough, and sometimes not entirely convincing in my opinion. Nevertheless, the style of the graphics is very well chosen, and adds well to the quirky, funny atmosphere of the game.

Unfortunately, some of the the animations are a little jerky to my eye – a minor problem which could have been rectified by the addition of a few more

intervening frames to the animations. Balancing this is the fact that other animations are quite nice, and it's impressive to see the effect that a simple animation can have in portraying a character's mood or actions.

This game's music deserves mention. It is both cute and spooky, perfectly fitting the theme and mood of the game, and helps to set that mood very well. In addition, the soundtrack is a lot of fun to listen to, and adds a great deal to the game play experience as a whole.

One final point of note is that this game is rather short. It is possible to complete it within the span of a few hours. However, the game does not feel rushed at all – rather the story that it tells is brief, and so the game itself is naturally brief as well. While a short length is not at all unusual for freeware games, it is nevertheless worth noting.

Especially given its brevity, if Spooks was a commercial release, it may not have been a game that I would buy. But it is a game that can definitely be recommended for download. The file size is fairly small (just under five megabytes), so even those of us still restricted to a modem should be able to download the game without too much trouble. This game is a great deal of fun, and very funny (again, providing that you have no objection to puns), and tells an interesting and imaginative story.

Final score: 80/100.

| **Developer:** Erin Robinson (a.k.a. The Ivy); Vince Twelve (scripting, debugging) **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** February 2006 **Grade:** 80/100 | **Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 95 OSR2/98/ME/2000/XP Pentium® 233 Mhz (500Mhz if the option to run at a resolution of 640x480 is chosen) 32 MB RAM DirectX® 5 or above DirectX® 5 or above Compatible Sound and video cards Keyboard, mouse, speakers |

Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso – Preview

Written by Ugur Sener

Getting out of his bed in the morning, Ed certainly did not expect to deal with an alien invasion. Perhaps he hoped to spend the morning out in the fields with his friends. Perhaps the gray cat merely wanted to enjoy the sunshine and the brilliant blue skies. Unfortunately, the evil Goragons have different plans.

Ed and his friends watched in terror as the alien ship flew over their heads. Wicked creatures from another dimension were descending upon Earth. The Goragons were no ordinary invaders from outer space. They didn't just unleash powerful weapons and attempt to devastate civilizations the old-fashioned way. This evil race was known for threatening the very fabric of reality.

The terrible creatures had long been under captivity. Yet somehow the Goragons managed to break out of their prison. Now they are invading Ed's home. Showing no mercy, the aliens are once again bending reality to their will. The entire planet is in grave danger. And as if their highly unsolicited invasion is not enough, the aliens target Mr. Smoozles with a mind ray. The misfortunate cat goes crazy and starts hunting down his own friends!

Ed runs as fast as he can to get away from Mr. Smoozles. But the aliens are far from being done with their assault. As if turning Mr. Smoozles berserk wasn't enough, the Goragons capture all of Ed's friends. The brave little cat is left all alone to save the day. Ed will have to stop the invaders, undo the damage done to the fabric of reality, and find a way to rescue his friends. Just for good measure, Ed will also have to worry about restoring Mr. Smoozles's mind.

Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso is an endearing arcade adventure game that is currently being developed by Juniper Games. Players take control of the cat Ed and try to save existence from the Goragon invasion. The game offers classic arcade action intertwined with solid adventure elements.

UNCHARTED WATERS

The game has an extremely simple control structure. The arrow keys are used to move Ed around the game world. The control key is used to examine objects. The enter key is used to perform actions such as opening doors or talking to other characters.

In many areas of the game, players have to avoid Mr. Smoozles and his nasty gun. With his warped mind, Smoozles is intent on killing Ed at all costs. If Mr. Smoozles catches sight of Ed, he will mercilessly fire his laser gun. Each hit from the laser gun will deplete some of Ed's life energy. In order to keep the heroic cat alive, players will have to avoid Mr. Smoozles at all costs.

However, running away from Mr. Smoozles is most certainly not the only thing players will have to do during the game. The preview build of Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso already includes solid dose of exploration. Players will have to pay attention to their surroundings, looking for inventory items and interactive objects. The story will progress as players overcome various obstacles. In his quest to rescue his friends and put an end to the Goragon invasion, Ed will have a chance to interact with other characters. The conversations will provide vital clues and help you proceed through the game.

Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso certainly offers an interesting gaming experience. The cartoon-like graphics give the game a charming look and feel. While creating moments of intense arcade action, the game also attempts to satisfy players looking for puzzles and exploration. The odd cast of characters gives the game a light-hearted and casual feel. Especially for those looking to try something a little different, the full version of the game could easily prove worth the wait.
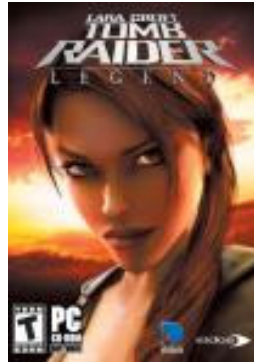
Tomb Raider: Legend

PC Review by Neetie

After the crushing disappointment that was Angel of Darkness, you could have easily imagined we had seen the last game in the Tomb Raider series. Perhaps you imagined Lara was stuck on the silver screen in the form of Ms Jolie. Thankfully this will not be the case. Eidos has once again pulled a pretty spectacular rabbit out of Lara's hat with Tomb Raider: Legend. This new title takes us back to the old school Tomb Raider action, but in a whole new way.

Once more, our erstwhile heroine faces a race against time to unearth an ancient artifact. The artifact is powerful enough to bring about the end of the world if Lara's enemy gets to it first. Once again we scour tombs and fight goons. We wrestle wild animals and mythical monsters into submission, all the while keeping a weather-eye out for the 'enemy'… This is the original Tomb Raider all over again – but better! Tomb Raider: Legend has better graphics, better gadgets, and better moves. Even Lara's voice is perfect. As Lara Croft, Keely Hawes from UKTV's Spooks delivers just the right mix of class and attitude!

A whole host of new and not so new lighting techniques have been crammed in by Core Design's replacement Crystal Dynamics. Normal, Diffuse and Specular mapping, along with specific shading techniques including one known as 'Fresnel Shading' which shows realistic highlights when an object is backlit, give this game a realism that previous versions couldn't hope to achieve.

The old 'checkpoint' game saving system is back in Tomb Raider: legend. But fortunately, the checkpoints are widely spread throughout the environment. Players will not have to go over a great deal of old ground when they miss a vital handhold and have to reload the game. The checkpoints also appear automatically, usually after a difficult sequence. Players are not required to

manually collect a checkpoint icon. The Croft Manor is also back in Tomb Raider: Legend along with the obligatory 'gym' and the pool.

Purists may not like Lara Croft's altered biography that appears in Tomb Raider: Legend and the game's manual. The original biography had our girl disowned by her parents who disapproved of Lara's antics. Now however, it seems that her mother died when she was a little girl, leaving her to follow in her father's footsteps in much the same way her onscreen alter ego did… Croft Manor, too, has been given a facelift so that it appears, at least on first glance, to resemble quite closely the house found in Holywood. However, the manor's new features more than make up for this resemblance. Instead of being a staging post where Lara can practice her moves, the house is now a game in itself, with secret panels, rewards, and puzzles all its own – but before you start going through the manor, I'd recommend looking up what color Cerulean is, or at least having a dictionary on hand – if you get it wrong you could be running around for hours trying to break the puzzle where you will use this hint!!

The action starts off, as always, with Lara off on some quest for an artifact. Unfortunately, she is as usual thwarted at this early stage of the game. Thus, a worldwide tour taking Lara from South America to Africa, Europe, and Asia ensues. New gadgets make it possible for Lara to perform new moves. This means that Tomb Raider: Legend features a whole host of new ways to get out of, and into, trouble!

Lara's most interesting, new gadget is the magnetic grapple. This allows her to swing from objects. The magnetic grapple also gives Lara the ability to pull items towards her, including goons who persist in being too far away to shoot! Of course the grapple is crucial for some puzzles, but the gadget is great fun even when you are just 'hanging around.'

Lara's binoculars also make things simpler through the use of their RAD function. The binoculars give players the ability to determine if a usable item is mechanical, movable, explosive, or just plain kickable, as well as providing an extreme close-up view. The PLS (personal light source) is a great advantage too.

Lara now has access to light at the touch of a button, rather than having to run around with a flare as in the previous Tomb Raider games.

Collecting artifacts along the way gives different kinds of bonuses. Some bonuses are in the form of power-ups that are used during the game. An example of these power-ups is the pistol upgrade. Other bonuses give players access to character profiles, various outfits, and concept art. These bonus materials can be viewed at Croft Manor.

The whole puzzle system has become much more approachable too. The puzzles have generally been simplified, but this does not mean that they are dumbed-down. In fact, Crystal Dynamics has developed a physics-system that allows Lara to use levers, weight, and movement to solve puzzles. This works better than running back and forth between different locations and to pull levers and find obscure keys that unlock doors you have not even seen. The puzzles often have more than one solution. This reduces frustration for the player and increases the playability of Tomb Raider: Legend.

All in all, this game is an absolute hit! When it first appeared, the original Tomb Raider was rightly credited for giving the Playstation its dominance over similar systems 10 years ago. With its superior graphics, Tomb Raider: Legend could do the same for the Xbox 360. The actual game content remains identical across all the platforms for which Tomb Raider: Legend was released. But the additional work done on both Lara and her environments means that Xbox 360 owners will be in for an extra special treat. The rest of us will have to make do with the merely spectacular! Take the plunge and buy Tomb Raider: Legend now. You won't be sorry!!

Developer: Crystal Dynamics **Publisher:** Eidos **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Adventure **Release Date:** April 2006 **Grade:** 95/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows 2000/XP Pentium® III 1.0 GHz 256 MB RAM 64 MB 3D DirectX® 9.0c Compatible Video Card DirectX® 9.0c Compatible Soundcard 9.9 Gb free Hard Drive Space Windows compatible keyboard & mouse

UNCHARTED WATERS

Space Rangers 2: Rise of the Dominators

PC Review by Ugur Sener

You successfully complete the 20 parsec jump between the Arctur and Kepherone systems. As you come out of hyperspace, you set the course for the planet Upsula-Vega and try to relax. Your cargo is extremely important for the war against the Dominators and you have to reach Upsula-Vega within ten days. If everything goes as planned, you should have more than enough time to complete the mission. Then you can join your fellow rangers in the battle to liberate the Marcabe system.

Drifting ever closer to your destination, you enjoy the eternal serenity of space. The distant stars look beautiful. They also glow with the promise of greater glory and the fulfillment of your grand destiny. You lose yourself in the peaceful ocean of stars and your dreams of grandeur. Yet a strong laser blast shakes your spaceship and harshly brings you back from your reverie. Even as you order the computer to switch to manual control, you receive the telecom signal from the pirate ship that attacked you. The corsair is demanding several thousand credits before he will allow you to pass safely. Unfortunately for this loser, he has no idea who he is trying to rob.

You respond to his message by returning fire to the pirate's ship. The pirate initially tries to put up a fight as you circle around each other firing your weapons. But before long, the corsair realizes your piloting skills are far greater and your weapons are far more powerful. He tries to turn around and fly away. You pull the trigger one last time and watch the enemy ship blow into pieces. He should have known better than threaten a ranger.

You set the course back towards Upsula-Vega and put the ship on autopilot. As soon as you reach your destination, you know you will have to embark on another journey and take on a harder task. You are a free-spirited warrior, a daring mercenary, and a cunning trader. A member of the legendary Space Rangers, you are the last hope of an entire galaxy on the brink of extermination.

Space Rangers 2: Rise of the Dominators is a truly remarkable achievement. Featuring successfully implemented elements from multiple genres, the game offers an immersive experience that will keep you chained to the computer for many hours. Between the sheer diversity of addictive game play and the engaging atmosphere, Space Rangers 2 is a rare treat waiting to be discovered.

The game is set in the far future. Mankind has long made contact with other intelligent alien races. Spanning the entire galaxy, humans and the other members of the Coalition of Peaceful Races somehow manage to live in harmony despite their differences. Three hundred years have passed since the events in the original Space Rangers. The stories of the war against the Klissans are still widely told. People remember how the Space Rangers rose to the challenge when the regular military forces failed. The legendary bravery, resilience, and unfaltering dedication of the space rangers ended a terrible war three centuries ago. But now, far greater danger threatens the whole galaxy.

The Dominators are invading star systems with terrifying power and slaughtering civilians with cruel, calculated, and mechanical efficiency. These sentient self-repairing and self-replicating robots are descending upon civilization with unprecedented force. The great military fleet has already miserably failed to stop the invaders. The galaxy's strongest ships were shattered in a great battle while the Dominators suffered nothing more than a minor setback. It is once again time to change tactics. Where huge fleets and massive firepower have failed, a cunning tactical strike force might succeed. It is time to call upon the Space Rangers. The legendary group of independent warriors may be the only hope for salvation.

You start Space Rangers 2: Rise of the Dominators as a newly- recruited ranger with a humble ship and very meager resources. The simple character creation process includes selecting your character's race, portrait, starting skills, class, and equipment. Players have the option to participate in a few simple training missions to help them learn how to play the game. However, once you are done with the training, you are completely free to play the game in any way you choose. Your decisions during character creation by no means greatly restrict

you throughout the game. Space Rangers 2 is all about finding your own path through the galaxy. Whether you choose to play as a heroic warrior rising to the defense of the people, a cutthroat pirate terrorizing the star systems, a great trader, or something in between, the decisions are yours to make.

The most distinguishing feature of Space Rangers 2 is the incredible diversity of game play. Space Rangers 2 carries strong space exploration, tactical combat, role-playing, real-time strategy, arcade, and even text-based adventure elements all in one game. This is a game where you can go from a simple delivery mission to a massive space battle. Upon completing a text-based adventure featuring an interplanetary pizza-making contest, you might be asked to personally command a battle on the surface of a planet. There are enough different game play elements to appeal to a wide variety of players. And to make things even better, much of the content is optional, allowing players who may not appreciate all of the genres covered an opportunity to focus on other parts of the game.

The primary objective in Space Rangers 2 is to locate and destroy the three command centers that belong to the Dominators. You start the game with a simple ship and limited funds. Unable to pack much firepower, you cannot initially stand against the invaders. You are recommended to visit different planets to acquire missions from their governors. By completing these missions, hunting down pirate ships, or harassing civilian ships, you gain experience and become a better pilot. Eventually new technologies become available and you earn enough money to buy better equipment. When you have a strong enough ship to hold its own in a large space battle, you can start taking on groups of Dominators and fight to liberate star systems.

Each day is considered a turn in Space Rangers. However, the structure in which you use turns is different than many other games. While you are in a star system, you can click on a point at any distance and any direction. This sets the course for your ship and shows you the number of turns you will need to arrive at the designated location. When you execute the action, your spaceship automatically flies in the indicated direction. While you are setting your course, other ships and planets remain stationary. All ships, asteroids, and planets move at the same time when you choose to end your turn.

Using this simple interface, you can instruct your ship to cross a star system or land on a planet. If you are attacked during any of the turns spent to reach your destination, the game automatically prompts you to take action at the end of the turn. If you set your ship on a course that will take multiple days to traverse, you can also command the game to stop the action at the end of any given turn.

Travel between star systems is accomplished by entering into hyperspace. The distance your ship can cover in hyperspace is determined by the power of its engine and measured in parsecs. At the beginning of the game, you have a simple engine that can only jump across a very limited distance. This restricts your ability to move freely between all the star systems and requires you to plot your course carefully. As you upgrade to better engines, your ship becomes able to jump across far greater distances. Once your ship can go across multiple star systems in a single jump, travel time will be tremendously reduced.

The tactical space combat in Space Rangers 2 also makes use of the turn-based structure of the game. Players can control the fight directly by assigning orders to fire weapons and fly the ship. When the game is paused in between turns, you can choose the direction and the distance your ship will fly that turn. You can also attempt to attack if you are close enough for shots from any of your weapons to reach the enemy. However, if you do not want to bother with assigning orders each turn, you can use the automatic battle mode. In this mode, your character will automatically engage the enemy. The battle will go on until the enemy ship is destroyed or your ship receives critical damage. The game's feature that prompts you when the ship has received critical damage gives you chance to take charge and run away. You can also interfere and instruct the game to stop at the end of any turn.

Against one or two enemies, the automatic battle system works very well. Players might want to consider using it to save time and get through the fight quickly. However, especially when you are facing a large group of Dominators, the tactical space combat gets pretty intense. The automated dogfights might bring you too close to the stronger enemy ships that you might find too difficult to face alone. In these situations, taking control of the action and assigning orders in each turn might be the best approach.

Since players will start the game with limited firepower, it is difficult to engage in a great deal of fighting. As such, completing the missions assigned by planet governors is a good way to advance through the early stages. These missions vary greatly in terms of their background stories and objectives. The simplest tasks are delivery requests that require your character to transfer cargo from one planet to another within a set number of days. The only challenge in these missions is to plot your course between star systems to make efficient jumps and reach your destination on time. Especially early on, you may have to make multiple stops during the journey to refuel your ship, and completing the objective might be somewhat challenging.

Even though the delivery missions can sound tedious and boring, Space Rangers 2 manages to give them unique background stories to keep them interesting. For instance, one of the tasks assigned by the Faeyan race involves returning a toothbrush "accidentally" left on the planet by a human visitor. Curiously, the toothbrush contains a camera, which the Faeyans suspect is used to study the user's brain. The aliens take it upon themselves to greatly enhance the equipment to conduct a much better scan. Of course, upon delivery, you realize that the toothbrush was actually a bug carefully placed to spy upon the aliens. The good mix of serious and whimsical content in the missions greatly helps break away from the tedium during the very early phases of the game.

Upon completing a few deliveries, governors will start assigning you other types of missions. Sometimes your character will be asked to escort a transport ship for a set number of days. You will have to follow the ship across star systems and fight off pirates. One particularly memorable escort mission involves guarding a spaceship where the defrosting of Elvis Presley is taking place. You have to make sure the King safely wakes up from his cryogenic sleep and rejoins society. Other missions will require you to track down and destroy a particularly notorious pirate. You may also be charged with the safety of an entire star system, making sure no civilian ships are harmed for a set number of days. And these are only examples of the simplest mission types. Space Rangers 2 also features two additional mission types that are completely different than the ones involving space exploration and combat.

Governors will occasionally assign you tasks that play like a text-based adventure game. These missions truly show the creative genius behind Space Rangers 2. They vary greatly in terms of setting, story, and execution. Some of them are played like a Choose Your Own Adventure novel where you make key decisions that either result in the success or failure of the mission. Others feature certain role-playing elements such as character stats. One exceptionally memorable quest has your character training a team of clerks for a very special contest. The vastly popular competition pits clerks from all over the galaxy

against each other in a series of challenges. You will have to determine which team members will be most effective in challenges ranging from wrestling to encyclopedic knowledge and lead the team to victory. Another quest will require you to put together a rock band and perform at a concert while a third one will have you mastering the etiquette of an alien race. The creativity that has gone into these missions is obvious. They also make a nice occasional break from the core game play.

Your character will also be asked to complete missions that are played as real-time strategy games. These tasks will put you against Dominators on the surface of various planets. You are given control of a robot manufacturing plant. You can choose the chassis and weapons that will be used on the robots produced. You can also construct turrets to defend your base. Production efforts consume one of three types of resources. At any given time, you can have a limited number of robots under your command. Facilities that produce resources are distributed across the map. By capturing these facilities, you not only ensure a steady flow of materials, but also increase the maximum number of robots you can manufacture. Dominators also have similar bases across the map. Your mission is to command your team and capture the enemy bases.

An interesting feature during the real-time strategy is the ability to take direct control of robots. If you choose to use this feature, you control one of the robots on your team from a first-person perspective. While this may not be the game's best implemented feature, it might give you an opportunity to take out stationary targets from a safe distance without putting your entire strike force at risk.

On top of the wide variety of missions, Space Rangers also features additional activities to keep you occupied. For instance, you can realize great financial gains by engaging in trade. Each inhabited planet has a trade center that sells various goods. Prices vary greatly between different planets. While food products are common and inexpensive in one planet, minerals might be rare. A planet with plenty of cheap medical supplies may have a great demand for luxury items. As such, it is possible to buy items in one planet and sell them at another for profit.

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Players can also visit special space stations at various star systems. It is possible for your ranger to catch diseases during his or her travels. These diseases can dramatically diminish your ability to engage in combat. By visiting medical centers, you can have the best doctors in the galaxy treat your character. Science centers engage in research activities to make discoveries to aid in the battle against the Dominators. You can capture equipment from destroyed Dominator ships and sell them to these research facilities. The availability of additional materials speeds up the research efforts. Since the discoveries the scientists are trying to make are important in the war against the Dominators, you might gain more than money by helping them. You can also visit business centers to take loans or military bases to request military operations. If you can

afford them, military operations call upon powerful battleship across the galaxy to fight together and liberate a star system. Joining these fights gives you an opportunity to benefit from additional firepower while facing large groups of Dominators. Space Rangers 2 also allows you to hire other rangers to fight under your command. While it might be costly to hire additional rangers, having extra help during battle can be extremely useful.

Traveling through space, you will occasionally encounter black holes. If you choose to go inside any of these black holes, you can discover yet another aspect of Space Rangers. The black holes will take you to far reaches of space where you will assume manual, real-time control of your ship. You will be pitted against enemy ships as you explore the area and obtain various power-ups.

While Space Rangers has many strong features, the game does have a couple of problems. First of all, the wide variety of content and game play elements featured means that there is a learning curve to the game. Especially during the first few minutes of the game, players might be at a loss as to how they need to proceed. The massive galaxy may be daunting and it may take time to get used to the space travel. Players who are hoping to immediately engage the Dominators may also be disappointed since they will not start the game with a strong enough ship with a lot of firepower. However, once you spend a few hours and discover most of the game's features, Space Rangers 2 will become far more entertaining.

There are also a few parts of the game where the English is not as clear and easy to understand as it should be. Thankfully, the language problem is not significant enough to greatly detract from the gaming experience. Finally, the real-time strategy portions of Space Rangers 2 suffer from some AI problems. Your robots are somewhat ineffective in navigating the map and assaulting the

enemy as a unified front. Even when you try to closely control them in groups, they seem to get distanced from one another. One or two frequently robots engage the enemy first and suffer heavy damage before the others get into the action. Once again, the problems are not terribly significant and will not take away too much from the overall game play experience, especially considering that they are not the main focus of the game.

While they may not utilize stunning cutting-edge technology, the graphics in Space Rangers 2 are sufficient to create a feeling of immersion, and the presentation is always clear. The sound effects are once again not exceptional, but they get the job done. The music on the other hand is very fitting for the games atmosphere and stands out as a strong feature of the game. Many of tracks successfully create a feeling of urgency and serve as a reminder of what being a ranger truly entails. The techno tunes work well with the futuristic setting and the fairly large number of tracks keeps the music from becoming boring throughout the lengthy game.

Space Rangers 2: Rise of the Dominators is a remarkably strong offering. The game manages to incorporate elements from multiple genres into a truly engaging and immersive experience. Enjoying real-time strategy combat, turn-based space fights, and text-based adventures all in the same game makes Space Rangers 2 quite unique. On top of the massive amounts of content offered, the game also has significant replay value. The five different available races, the ability to take your ranger career in different directions, and the randomization of the missions you encounter means that you can play the game many times and have a unique experience. The version of the game released in the United States also comes with a full version of the original Space Rangers, making the purchase all the more attractive. If you are looking for a game to keep you busy for many hours while offering a great deal of original creative content, you will not want to miss Space Rangers 2: Rise of the Dominators. It is an exceptional effort that is worthy of notice.

The final grade is 93/100.

Developer: Elemental Games **Publisher:** Cinemaware Marquee **Platform:** PC **Genre:** Strategy RPG **Release Date:** March 2006 **Grade:** 93/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 2000/XP Pentium® II 450 MHz 128MB RAM 800 MB free disk space 16 bit video card 4X CD-ROM Drive

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Future Tactics: The Uprising

PS2 Review by H. Paul Haigh

"*Chance is the providence of adventurers.*"
– Napoleon Bonaparte

Long has been the journey to find wayward adventure amidst the dismal array of other games on the store shelves. Now comes a title that will not define adventure, but it is a wonderful respite along the trodden path. Future Tactics:

The Uprising is an interesting amalgamation of RPG, First-Person-Shooter and best of all Turn-Based Strategy. Set in the not-too-distant future, Future Tactics depicts a post-apocalyptic semi-technological society. Nasty blue-green monsters, simply known as Creatures, have overrun the planet. Living life as gun-wielding nomads in the barren wastelands of what was once Earth; our young heroes must outwit and fight these unworldly denizens to survive and uncover the secrets of their planetary occupation.
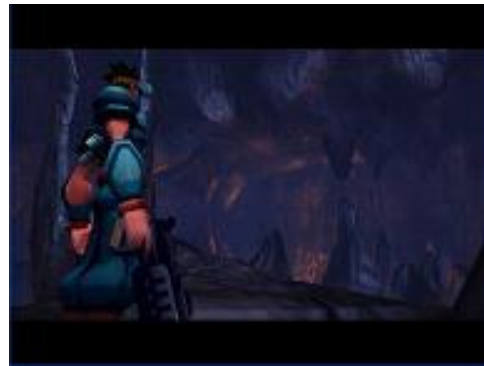
It's safe to assume that a majority of gamers will find this game lacking; evident by the fact that it can be found in the cheapest of bargain bins, and subject of many a negative review. However, if you consider the great lack of true turn-based strategy games available today, one can evaluate this game for what it was truly meant to be. If we want story, we'll buy cinematic adventures. If we want true RPG's, there are thousands of Diablo knock-offs available. And we barely need to mention the plethora of FPS titles. But we don't easily come across a turn-based strategy games with a Sci-Fi setting and environments that react to explosions and gunfire. Future Tactics feels like a cross between Fallout and X-COM, yet with a more modern 3D engine.

First, you will want to know what makes this game fun. In a word, strategy, strategy, strategy. There are 19 levels, each with its own 3D landscape. These landscapes turn into battlefields as the story unfolds. One by one, you take control of multiple characters, each with their own weapons, range, and special abilities. Attributes can be improved as the characters gain experience. You can also locate upgrades. A turn consists of deciding if you want to shoot first or move first. The limits of your movement are displayed as a green border, so you know

exactly what your range of motion will be for this turn. If you only move a portion of the distance, you can stop, fire, and move again – albeit the limits of your movement are more restricted after you stop and restart. You end your turn by simply resting or entering heal mode. Just make sure you don't get hurt while in healing mode. The damage will be severe. You can also end your turn by activating a personal energy shield (but use it wisely, because it will take two turns to recharge before you can use it again).

There are only a handful of weapon types and two basic firing methods. Mortar-like weapons use an over-head radar targeting system, centered on your character, sweeping around. You click the button to stop the sweep when it's pointing at your target, and this will set the direction of your shot. Next, a sonar-type sweep starts, working from the center-outward and you click to set the range

of your shot. If your aim and timing are good, the result will be a devastating terrain-altering blast.

Other weapons use a line-of-sight targeting reticule. You start by lining up the reticule over your target. Then a sweeping line crosses across your reticule. When the line is over your enemy, you must click it to stop it from moving. When you set the first line over your target, a second one will start moving across your reticule. You also need to try and stop this line while it is over your target. When you set both of the lines, your weapon fires at the point where the two lines are crossed inside your reticule. The accuracy of your shot and damage dealt are directly related to how good your aim and timing was.

Strategy is an imperative part of every game turn. Switching between overhead camera angles and line-of-sight gives you a very good perspective of the

battlefield. There are no time limits so sit back, sip a soda, plan your angle of attack – and more importantly, your route of escape. If you haven't moved too much at the beginning of your turn, you can shoot at a Creature (or two), then take much-needed cover behind a tree, boulder, old building, or long-abandoned vehicle. Some landscapes are vast, while others are narrow and restricted. Each battlefield offers its own challenges, tactical positions, hidden upgrades and interesting opportunities.

As the game's title implies, your tactics on the battlefield will determine if, or how many times, you must replay a mission before you can advance the storyline.

While most missions can be surmised as "kill or be killed" other missions require you to get to a certain spot on the map or save a structure from destruction. You will spend a great deal of time shooting and taking cover. But creative strategists will find ways to distribute their teams in strategic locations, focus weapon fire to maximize damage, and use a fast-moving player as a decoy to draw fire away from the others.

One of the best features of the game is the destructible and ever-changing landscape. While it may take several direct hits from a Sci-Fi blaster to kill a Creature or your character, your weaponry is devastating with regard to the battlefield. Taking cover behind a mound of rock may save you for a few turns, but eventually, the Creatures will blow it away leaving you high-and-dry. If you can lure a Creature into a blast crater which just happens to be near a boulder or an old vehicle, a fun tactic is to shoot the boulder or vehicle and try to tumble it into their hiding place, causing a great deal of collateral damage. Creatures standing on bridges or near water are easy pickings – just blast the ground underneath them and watch them fall (they can't swim).

As your characters gain levels and new special abilities, the strategy only gets more complex; and the scenarios get harder. Some characters gain multiple shots per turn, while others gain the ability to heal another player, teleport, reflect shots, zoom, and extend their firing range. As the ratio of swarming Creatures to Humans increases, these upgrades become an invaluable tool in the fight for survival.

Unfortunately, proponents of a well-written storyline, character depth, convincing voice-over, and believable scripts will find this game lacking. Luckily, the use of subtitles makes these problems surmountable, without detracting too much from the tactical enjoyment of the game. When you compare the hours you can spend in one battle, to the minute or two between enjoying the story – these problems seem miniscule.

Other elements of Future Tactics are average for a game of this caliber. You should find the background music above average adding to the mood of the story. The fully animated cut-scenes helped move things along as well. The cartoon-esque graphics are suitable, offering detail with regard to most landscapes but little depth of expression on the part of the characters. The

controls were a breeze to learn, and on-screen prompts help you recall how everything works even if you put this game down for a while and come back later.

The lifeblood of a game is its replay ability – and this game may never leave my shelf. While it doesn't offer an online multiplayer option, it does have a custom-battle head-to-head mode. Select a battlefield, and join a friend in a Human vs. Creature death-match. If you find the Creature AI to be was lacking (and sometimes they do act a bit daft), a human opponent can give you a real challenge. Every time you play, the situation can be vastly different, with random starting locations, random turn sequence and – of course – the destructible landscape; making for limitless alterations.

Most games don't warrant a sequel, but this game has a lot of potential. If someone were to improve upon what was done here; a truly amazing game could evolve.

Unforgettable Game Moment: Losing repeatedly to my 10-year-old daughter who always insisted on playing the Creatures because, in her words, "…they have powerful weapons and they're so funny to watch."

Considering the bargain price of this title, I would put it into the "Must Have" category. Whether you buy it new or used, you'll get your money's worth – assuming you like the kind of game I've just described.

Final Grade: 80/100

Developer: Zed Two
Publisher: Crave Entertainment
Platform: PC; PS2; Xbox; GameCube
Genre: Turn-based Strategy
Release Date: May 2004
Grade: 80/100

Neighbors from Hell

PC Review by Ugur Sener

[Editorial Note: Neighbors from Hell on Vacation, the sequel to Neighbors from Hell, was released in North America at the end of March 2006. Since the original game comes as a bonus with the sequel, we decided to look at both titles in the series as part of our May issue.**]**

Did you ever wake up in the middle of the night to the sound of a hammer banging coming from your neighbor's house? Did you ever have to clean your freshly mowed lawn after your neighbor's pet decided to pay an unsolicited visit? Did you ever have to study for a final exam with obnoxiously loud music shaking the walls from your neighbor's apartment next door? Are there people in your life that frustrate you on a daily basis while you are unable to do anything about it? Think of all the people that made your life miserable and got away with it. Think of all the twisted pranks you wanted to pull but couldn't. Neighbors from Hell gives you a non-violent way to release your pent-up frustrations.

Neighbors from Hell is about a reality TV show. You control Woody as he pulls off pranks against his oafish, annoying, loud, and generally obnoxious neighbor. Excluding the tutorial levels, the game features fourteen episodes. In each episode, Woody breaks into the neighbor's house to perform a series of tricks. Each time the neighbor falls for a trick, the show's ratings increase. To complete the episode, Woody needs to successfully execute a number of tricks and attain a predetermined rating level.

All of the episodes in Neighbors from Hell take place inside the same house. However, each episode has a distinct, different theme. The neighbor might be enjoying a relaxing day while he is making barbecue, crafting gifts for his mother's birthday, or trying to exercise to lose some weight. Depending on the underlying theme of the episode, different pieces of furniture and tools are available. Furthermore, the fourteen episodes are grouped under three seasons. During the first season, only four rooms are accessible. As Woody progresses to the second and the third seasons, additional rooms become available.

In order to perform tricks, Woody needs to locate items scattered around the house. Collected items are stored in Woody's inventory, displayed across the bottom portion of the screen. The inventory items are used on other objects to create the tricks. For instance, Woody might find a bag of marbles in a drawer. Using these marbles on the kitchen floor will cause the neighbor to slip and fall when he walks through the area. While collecting the items and using them on other objects, Woody has to stay out of the neighbor's sight. If the neighbor sees Woody at all, you will lose the episode and have to start over again.

Some of the tricks in Neighbors from Hell are rather simplistic. However, especially as you get to the later episodes of the game, the tricks become more complex. The number of available pranks in each episode also increases. Each time the neighbor falls for a trick, his anger meter fills. If Woody can manage to execute another trick before the neighbor completely calms down, he receives a bonus from the audience. For instance, in addition to putting marbles on the kitchen floor, Woody might figure out a way to mess up the microwave. Thus, upon entering the kitchen, the neighbor first sees the microwave and gets mad because he has to clean it. Upon fixing the microwave, the neighbor takes a couple of steps and falls down because of the marbles. The audience, amused by the successive tricks, gives Woody a better rating. It is possible for Woody to pull off three or four tricks in immediate succession in some of the episodes.

While it is sufficient to complete a specific number of pranks in the allotted time to finish an episode, players are encouraged to find all of the tricks and come up with a creative way to trigger them in chains to achieve the highest rankings. If Woody manages to get a viewer ranking of 90% or higher and finds all the tricks in each episode of a season, he gets awarded a gold medal. The ability to win these rewards gives players a reason to revisit episodes they have already completed and try to achieve the highest score possible.

Neighbors from Hell implements a very simple and completely mouse-driven interface. Left clicking on an empty area moves Woody in the indicated direction. Moving the mouse over hotspots changes the icon. A hand icon is displayed when Woody can search a tool or piece of furniture for an inventory item he can use in a trick. The icon with a pair of eyes indicates that Woody can examine the

object and give the players some simple comments. Inventory items can be selected with a simple mouse click. When an inventory item is selected, it can be used on other interactive objects to setup pranks. If players select a correct item and hotspot combination, Woody starts preparing the trick. Setting up a prank typically takes just a few seconds. Players are allowed to interrupt the process at any time in case the neighbor is about to walk into the room.

Woody can also sneak around the house and interact with objects quietly. In order to get Woody to sneak, players simply need to click with the right mouse button as opposed to the left one. In later episodes, the neighbor brings pets into his house. These pets are normally at rest in their rooms. If Woody enters the same room with his regular walk, the pets wake up and alert the neighbor. However, if Woody is sneaking into the room, he can easily get past the pets.
Unfortunately, Woody is considerably slower when he is sneaking around. As such, players will have to carefully choose when Woody should try to walk quietly.

Among the most successful elements of Neighbors from Hell is the game's atmosphere. The cartoon-like exaggerated graphics do an excellent job of setting the tone of the game. There are many different animations used to depict the horrible things that happen to the neighbor as a result of Woody's pranks. The music is also very appropriate. While the soundtrack may not be of exceptional quality, it definitely has that upbeat yet casual quality that makes it sound like it would be very fitting in a real TV show. The sound effects are also generally appropriate and work with the humorous tone of the game. The overall presentation succeeds in creating a lighthearted atmosphere, making the most terrible practical jokes seem funny and amusing.

The main problem that hurts the game play experience in Neighbors from Hell is the repetition of the pranks across the different episodes. While each episode of the game does feature some unique tricks and a different theme, a number of simple pranks are repeated a considerable number of times during the game. Thus, a joke that is highly amusing the first time you perform it might start feeling like a chore by the time you complete all the episodes.

Neighbors from Hell could have also benefited from a larger number of locations. While the neighbor's house does feature a solid number of rooms with many different interactive objects, Woody will be revisiting essentially the same location fourteen times throughout the course of the game. The addition of new rooms, changes in furniture, and the availability of new pranks does not make up for the fact that the entire game takes place inside one building.

It is also worth noting that Neighbors from Hell is a fairly short game. Completing the basic requirements for each episode will take a short amount of time. Going through the episodes with greater care to find the most effective way of executing the tricks will keep players busy for several hours. However, players paying close attention to details to find all the available pranks can expect to complete all episodes with good rankings in approximately six hours or less.

The idea of breaking into a neighbor's house to pull off pranks as part of a TV show makes Neighbors from Hell a very unique game. The game offers a fair amount of different pranks and successfully creates a light-hearted, humorous tone. Finding all the pranks and getting the best ratings in each episode can make for entertaining and addictive game play. While Neighbors from Hell does have a number of noticeable weak points, the overall experience can still be very entertaining. If you are looking for a casual puzzle game and the idea of harassing a bad neighbor with clever tricks sounds amusing, definitely consider giving Neighbors from Hell a try. There is a lot of fun to be had while satisfying your sadistic side and unleashing sweet vengeance upon your bad neighbor.

The final grade is 77/100.

Developer: Jowood Productions **Publisher:** Encore Software **Platform:** PC; GameCube; Xbox **Genre:** Puzzle **Release Date:** September 2003 **Grade:** 77/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 95/98/ME/2000/XP Pentium®-compatible MMX processor, 166 MHz 64 MB RAM DirectX® 8-compatible 16 MB of video card DirectX® 8-compatible sound card 4x CD-ROM drive 130 MB free space on your hard drive

Neighbors from Hell on Vacation

PC Review by Ugur Sener

Woody is the star of a popular reality TV show. But Woody does not have to publicly compete with other job applicants for an employment opportunity. He does not have to live on an island deprived from the conveniences of urban life. Instead, Woody gets to pull pranks on his obnoxious neighbor for a living.

In the original Neighbors from Hell, Woody was pitted against the neighbor that had made the young man's life miserable. Through the course of fourteen episodes, Woody pulled numerous pranks on the ill-mannered, noisy, and mean neighbor to exact sweet revenge. Having put up with one too many of Woody's tricks, the neighbor is now ready for a vacation. Thus he goes on a cruise on a beautiful ship to travel around the world and visit exotic locations. This of course presents the perfect opportunity for a new season of Neighbors from Hell. Unbeknownst to the neighbor, Woody and his camera crew sneak on board the cruise ship. The prank master is going to make sure this will be a vacation the neighbor can never forget.

Neighbors from Hell on Vacation starts on board the cruise ship with a tutorial episode. The director of the show kindly teaches players the delicate art of pulling pranks. Yet unlike the original game, Woody and the neighbor are not confined to a single location. The journey on the cruise ship takes Woody and the neighbor to China, India, and Mexico. The diversity of locations makes for opportunities to perform a number of unique tricks and keeps the game from becoming repetitive. Players are expected to keep their eyes open and look for all the tools they can use to pull the most twisted pranks.

The core game play is very similar to the original game. In each episode, the neighbor has a specific routine. He walks around from one area to the next, performing various actions and engaging in numerous vacation activities. From waterskiing to wooing one of the passengers on the cruise ship, the neighbor tries to relax and have a good time in a number of ways. Of course, it is Woody's job to make sure the neighbor has a miserable time instead. Players are expected to observe the neighbor's routine and look for ways to disrupt it. There are numerous tools Woody can utilize to prepare tricks in each episode. Woody

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has to find the right tools and use them on the correct objects to prepare his pranks while hiding from the neighbor to avoid detection. Continuing his regular activities, the neighbor never suspects a thing. He eventually comes full circle on his routine and falls right into the trap.

In order to complete each episode, Woody has to find and perform a predetermined number of tricks. Upon completing the required amount, players are allowed to leave the episode and move onto the next one. However, the real challenge comes from finding all the tricks and performing them in the correct sequence to make the neighbor completely infuriated. Each time he falls for a trick, the neighbor's anger meter rises. If Woody manages to set off another trick before the neighbor can calm down, he gets angrier. In each episode, setting up the tricks in the most effective way, Woody can completely fill up the neighbor's anger bar, causing the miserable man to throw a fit. Achieving the maximum fury level gives you extra points and helps Woody win an award for the episode. It also delivers the sadistic and decidedly twisted satisfaction of harassing an obnoxious man to the fullest extent possible.

The actual pranks are greatly varied and have far more diversity than what was offered in the first game. For instance, in the very first episode of the game, Woody can perform a very simple prank by putting a bar of soap on a puddle of water. When the neighbor walks over the puddle, he inadvertently steps on the bar of soap and falls on the floor. There are also far more complex pranks that require Woody to manipulate a greater number of objects. One of the episodes that takes place in India features a pool. Woody first has to find a way to empty the pool. Then he has to use an object he will obtain by emptying the pool to prepare a prank on a different part of the location. Of course a pool with no water also makes for a nice spot to mess with the neighbor. Since the first game was confined to the neighbor's house, Woody resorted to performing a number of tricks more than once throughout the course of his adventure. Neighbors from Hell on Vacation resolves this problem nicely with distinct locations and a great variety of tricks.

An interesting new feature implemented in Neighbors from Hell on Vacation is the chain tricks. Woody can manipulate multiple objects to hurt the neighbor in a number of ways all at once. For instance, in one of the episodes in China, the

neighbor periodically goes on a small bridge to take a look at the fish swimming in a small pond. As a simple trick, Woody can find a way to mess with the rails of the bridge and cause the neighbor to fall in the water. Yet Woody can take the trick one step further and dump a nasty surprise in the pond to further torture the unsuspecting neighbor when he lands in the water. Triggering chain tricks is an excellent way to raise the neighbor's anger bar, much to his frustration and your amusement.

Some episodes of the original game featured pets that could detect Woody and alert the neighbor to the TV star's presence. In order to avoid these pe(s)ts, Woody had to sneak around their rooms and try to prepare his pranks quietly. The sequel does away with the sneaking, allowing Woody to roam each location at full speed. However, the developers have come up with a new way to make the TV star's life a little harder. A third of the way through the game, the neighbor's mother joins the cruise. Having watched the show, this highly unpleasant woman decides to journey with her son to help him avoid Woody and offer emotional support. Thus, Woody is required to avoid detection by two characters during most episodes of the game. Just like the neighbor, the mother has a routine she continually repeats in each episode. Her routine is much simpler than the neighbor's and she does travels around a much smaller portion of the level. However, players still have to pay close attention to her actions and move around carefully. In the first game, Woody lost the level if he was caught by the neighbor once. In the sequel, both the neighbor and his mother are capable of catching Woody. Thankfully, the brave prankster has three lives, giving him an improved chance of avoiding detection and performing all of his tricks. The inclusion of the neighbor's mother is a most welcome additional challenge and makes for many humorous moments as Woody pulls pranks that embarrass the neighbor in front of his beloved parent.

Neighbors from Hell on Vacation also features a small number of other characters. Olga, the most notable among these extra characters, is on the cruise with her son. Irresistibly attracted to Olga, the neighbor makes numerous attempts to impress the woman. Yet as much as he likes Olga, the neighbor cannot stand her son. As such, he continually harasses the poor little boy by teasing him or destroying his sand castles. Woody of course makes it his personal responsibility to turn things

around. A number of the pranks include making the neighbor look bad in front of Olga. Woody also finds clever ways to make sure the neighbor will suffer if he tries to mess with the innocent child.

One potentially annoying feature of Neighbors from Hell is the mini-game featured in each level. Every episode has an object that requires special effort to manipulate. For instance, Woody might be straining to reach high enough to hang a bee hive or dexterously trying to catch a crab. During these sequences, the game displays a small white circle with an icon indicating either the tool you are using or the object you are trying to catch. The icon automatically moves within the white circle towards a random direction. Your job is to move the mouse in the opposite direction to keep the object from reaching the edge of the circle. After a few seconds, the icon starts moving in a different direction, demanding you to make an adjustment with the mouse. During this time, the white circle slowly turns green. When the entire circle is green, Woody completes the action successfully. If you can't keep the icon from reaching the edge, the green coloring recedes and you are required to continue trying for longer. Since time does not stop as you are busy trying to get past the mini-game, if you make mistakes, the neighbor or his mother are highly likely to walk into the area and catch Woody. Thus, players are required to be very careful and as fast as possible with the mini-game in each level. Yet despite the best care, you can expect to lose a few lives while trying to center the icon inside the white circle. While losing a single life will certainly not keep you from passing the level, since every second matters in attaining the highest score, players may find themselves replaying a few levels just because they took too long with the mini-game. While it is certainly not a great problem and does not significantly take away from the experience, Neighbors from Hell on Vacation would have been better off without the tedious mini-games.

Overall, Neighbors from Hell on Vacation is fairly stable and runs smoothly. Shipping on one CD, the game does not even require the disk to stay in the drive after completing the installation. As an added bonus, the original Neighbors from Hell is also included in the package. Thus, players get to experience a total of twenty eight episodes full of pranks. However, there were two times during the game where some of the tricks did not trigger properly.

Woody's interaction with a hotspot did not take effect, making it impossible to complete the preparation of the prank. Thankfully, these issues were in no way

frequent and did not hinder the experience. While they should have been avoided altogether, simply restarting the episode was sufficient to get past them. Many players may be able to finish the game without ever encountering the issue.

From an overall presentation point of view, Neighbors from Hell on Vacation most certainly succeeds in creating a humorous and whimsical atmosphere. The deliberately exaggerated cartoon-like graphics are very fitting for the story and the setting. They create a lighthearted tone that goes a long way towards making the game enjoyable. The animations for the various pranks are nicely handled and sufficiently over-the-top. Anyone who has ever watched and enjoyed a Buggs Bunny or Tom & Jerry cartoon will most certainly appreciate all the torture the neighbor endures. The neighbor also has the uncanny cartoon character ability to instantly recover from any amount of bodily injury. The only things missing are random anvils falling out of the sky and ingenious Acme contraptions that never seem to work quite as expected. While they are not stellar, the sound effects and music also seem fitting for the game and contribute towards creating the atmosphere. Neighbors from Hell on Vacation successfully manages to take horrible pranks and turn them into a series of funny moments.

Neighbors from Hell on Vacation makes an excellent sequel to the original game. Finding all the pranks and attaining the highest anger levels in each episode will certainly keep players busy for a while. Adventure game enthusiasts may especially enjoy hunting for the pranks as the experience is very much comparable to the inventory-based puzzles in adventure titles. The diversity of locations and the wider variety of pranks makes the game more interesting and engaging than the original. The inclusion of the neighbor's mother adds an extra challenge and requires players to carefully consider their strategies. The comical tone can make for a pleasant experience while Woody's cleverness and the neighbor's continual misfortune can deliver a few laughs. Especially considering that the game is getting released at a budget retail price and comes with the full version of the original game, Neighbors from Hell on Vacation is recommended to players looking for a casual puzzle game with a very distinct flair.

Developer: Jowood Productions **Publisher:** Cinemaware Marquee **Platform:** PC; PS2; Xbox **Genre:** Puzzle **Release Date:** March 2006 **Grade:** 85/100	**Minimum System Requirements (PC):** Windows® 2000/XP Pentium® compatible 233 MHz MMX processor (Pentium® II processors or higher have MMX) 28 MB RAM DirectX® 8-compatible 8 MB of video card DirectX® 8-compatible sound card 550 MB hard disk space

UNCHARTED WATERS

CSI: 3 Dimensions of Murder Walkthrough

Written by Wendy Nellius

Case 1 – Pictures at an Execution

Art Galley
1. Examine the victim on the floor
2. Take photo of victim
3. Examine purse
4. Use Latex gloves to collect the purse.
5. Examine the bloody footprint by the victim's legs
6. Take photo of bloody footprint
7. Examine diamond ring on victim's finger
8. Use Latex gloves to collect the ring
9. Examine the blood pool around victim's head
10. Collect blood sample using swab
11. Examine the blood spatter on wall
12. Take photo of blood spatter
13. Collect sample using swab
14. Examine the empty display stand and price tag
15. Use fingerprint powder on price tag
16. Use adhesive lifting tape to collect fingerprint
17. Speak to Nathan Ackerman
18. Examine Nathan's shoe in inventory. Use the arrows to turn the shoe so the sole is facing you.
19. Use the Leuko crystal Violet on the shoes
20. Use the swab to collect the sample
21. Ask about fingerprints and get a full fingerprint sample from Nathan.

Morgue
1. Speak to Dr. Robbins
2. Examine the body (I didn't find anything)
3. Examine the blue paper to the right of the victim's head
4. Collect the hair from the blue paper

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints)
   a. Drag fingerprint from empty pedestal onto the computer. Click on Search.   None of them is a match.
   b. Compare fingerprint from empty pedestal to Nathan's prints. Click on "Confirm Match". The prints match.
2. Trace Analysis Computer (Shoeprints/Tire Treads) – Compare Nathan's shoe to the Smudged floor print. Click on Confirm match. They match.
3. DNA Analysis Computer

THE GUIDING BEACON

a. Compare victim's blood to the blood from wall. Confirm the match. They do match.
b. Compare victim's blood to sample from Nathan Ackerman's shoe. Confirm the match. They also match confirming Nathan stepped in the victim's blood.
c. Enter the sperm sample into the left panel. Click on Search. Drag each search result to the right panel and compare. Search result D looks right. Click on "Confirm Match". The sperm belongs to Mark Stock (the fiancé). He has a prior arrest record for assault and battery.
4. Comparison Microscope – Drag the hair sample to the left pane. An automatic search will be conducted. Sample D is a match. It is a squirrel hair which is commonly used to make artist's brushes.

Brass Office
1. Ask all the questions

Hotel Room
1. Ask Mark all questions until he says he doesn't know anymore.
2. Take the receipt for the artwork from the table by the front door.
3. Examine the plane ticket, newspaper and television in the living room
4. Examine the shirt on the bed. Use the flashlight on the shirt.
5. Use the latex glove to collect the shirt. Note the stain on the front of the shirt
6. Use the Luminol on the stain. Use the swab to collect the blood sample.
7. Examine the open drawer right outside the bedroom. Use the latex glove to take the paper.

Lab
1. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the blood sample from the shirt to the victim's blood sample. They look the same. Click on "Confirm Match". The match is confirmed

Brass
1. Ask all questions

Artist Studio
1. Speak to Patrick Milton on all topics. Get the audio cassette tape and some squirrel hair brushes. Use the swab on the paint brushes to get a paint sample.

Lab
1. Click on the paintbrushes in inventory. Use the tweezers on the actual brush hairs to extract one hair.
2. Comparison Microscope – Compare the hair found on the victim to the hair from Patrick's brush. Click on confirm match. It matches, but is not enough evidence.

3. Chemical Analysis – Drag the paint sample onto the screen. Click on search. It's an oil based paint.
4. Trace Analysis – Choose Audio/Visual. Drag cassette tape to the left pane. Click on Play. It seems Ackerman needed some money from the victim and is quite stressed.

Art Gallery
1. Speak to Nathan again.
2. Get the key to the gallery
3. Use Luminol on the key. Use the swab to take a sample
4. Examine the key in inventory again. Turn the key until you can find the fingerprint. Use the fingerprint powder on the key. Use the adhesive lifting tape to collect the fingerprint.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer – Compare print from Nathan's keys to victim's prints. Click on "Confirm Match". They do indeed match.
2. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the blood sample from Nathan's keys to victim's blood sample. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.

Brass
1. Speak to the Captain to get a search warrant for Nathan Ackerman's back room.

Gallery Office
1. Examine the notebook next to the plant. It seems to have a stain on it.
2. Use the Ultraviolet Tool on the notebook. Use the swab to collect a sample.
3. Examine the scissors in the center of the desk
4. Examine the paper shredder in the corner of the room by the door.
5. Use the latex gloves to collect the shredded paper.
6. Check out the safe inside the shelf to the right of the paper shredder.
7. Examine the bird statue and collect it with the latex gloves.
8. Examine the crate behind the bird pedestal.
9. Examine the table with the bottle and glasses on it.
10. Examine the odd substance on the table. Use the adhesive specimen mount to collect it.

Lab
1. Chemical Analysis – Drag the powdery substance onto the screen and click on search. The substance is Methamphetamine.
2. DNA Analysis Computer – Drag the slippery substance onto the left pane. Click on "Search". Search result C seems to be a good match. Click on "Confirm Match". It belongs to Mark Stock.
3. Assembly Table – Drag the shredded documents on to the table. Honestly, this puzzle is very hard to see. Start by looking for the 2 pieces that have a

signature on them. Then, try to place the others. You will hear a bleep when you have correctly placed 2 pieces together.

Morgue
1. Speak to the Coroner – he confirms that the eagle found in Nathan's back office is not the murder weapon.

Brass
1. Speak to the Captain about a warrant for Nathan's safe. Ask again for a warrant to speak to Mark.

Interview - Mark
1. Speak to Mark about all topics. Receive an alibi testimonial

Gallery Office
1. Examine Safe. Collect bank statement with the latex gloves.
2. Examine safe again. Collect bag of powder with the latex gloves.

Lab
1. Chemical Analysis Machine. Drag bag of powder onto screen. Click on "Search". The powder is Methamphetamines also.
2. Trace Analysis Computer. Click on Search Links/Special. Drag bank statement onto screen. Click on search. Nathan Ackerman has filed for Chapter 11.

Brass
1. Ask Captain about the murder weapon. They found the broken eagle.

Lab
1. Click on the newfound eagle in inventory.
2. Use swab on front of eagle.
3. Use the Leuko crystal Violet on beak of eagle. Use swab to collect sample.
4. Chemical Analysis – Drag the eagle blue stain sample to the screen. Click on search. The sample matches the paint from Patrick's brushes
5. DNA Analysis – Compare eagle blood stain to victim's blood sample. Click on "Confirm match". It matches.

Gallery
1. Speak to Patrick about all topics.

Brass
1. Ask Captain for a warrant to interview Nathan.

Interview – Nathan
1. Receive phone number alibi for Nathan

Brass
1. Ask Captain for info on Nathan's alibi. The alibi checks out.
2. Ask Captain for search warrant to Patrick's studio.

Studio
1. Examine the painting on the easel. Collect the painting using the latex gloves.
2. Use the swab on the painting to get a paint sample.
3. Examine the statue
4. Examine the open drawer in the corner of the room. Use the latex gloves to collect the powdery substance in the bag.
5. Examine the box next to the bed upstairs. Use the latex gloves to collect the tickets.
6. Turn the tickets around in inventory until you see the back. Use the Ninhydrin spray on the fingerprint.
7. Ask Patrick about the tickets.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Compare ticket fingerprint to the victim's fingerprints. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.
2. Chemical Analysis Machine – Use the Bag of Powder on the panel. Click on Search. This is from the same batch of Methamphetamine as Nathan's. Now analyze the paint sample. It matches the murder weapon.

Brass
1. Speak to the Captain to get an arrest warrant for Patrick Milton.

End of Case

Case 2 – First Person Shooter

Convention Center
1. Examine body. Take picture of body & poster.
2. Take wallet from back pocket of victim. Victim's name is Stan Everston.
3. Examine blood stain on chest and use swab to collect sample.
4. Examine the rifle. Collect with the latex gloves. Use the fingerprint powder & tape to get fingerprint from rifle.
5. Examine blood near head of victim. Use swab to get sample.
6. Examine victim's head. Use adhesive mount to check for gunshot residue.
7. Speak to Maya Nguyen.

Mobile Analysis Unit
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Drag the fingerprint from the assault rifle to the left pane. Click on "Search". There are no matches.

   2. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare victim's DNA to blood from demo room
      floor. Click on "Confirm Match". It matches.

Convention Center
1. Examine the poster.
2. Examine the hole next to the poster. Use the tweezers to collect the bullet.
3. Examine the speakers.
4. Examine the AC controls right behind Maya.
5. Examine the T-Shirt to the left of Maya. Use the latex gloves to collect it.
6. Examine the gun display case. Use the latex gloves to collect the .45
   automatic weapon.
7. Examine the bottom of the display case. Use the fingerprint powder and the
   tape to collect the fingerprint.
8. Speak to Maya again about the shirt. It's Craig Landers' shirt.
   Automatically obtain Maya's fingerprint and gun residue analysis.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer – Compare print from the assault rifle to Maya's
   fingerprints. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.
2. Assembly Table – Drag the .45 that you got from the display case to the
   table. Click and drag the 2 pieces of gun to remove them. Automatic test
   shot will be taken. The bullets are completely different.

Morgue
1. Speak to Dr. Robbins about recovering body.
2. Keep asking questions until he tells you he has nothing more to report. –
   Receive bullet from body.
3. Examine the body.
4. Examine the bruising on the chest. Take a picture of the bruising.
5. Examine the insect bites on the victim's foot. Take a picture.
6. As Dr. Robbins all questions.

Lab
1. Comparison Microscope. Put the bullet from the victim on the left panel.
   Put the bullet in the wall on the right panel. Use the +/- buttons to turn the
   first bullet to match them up. Use the + on the left panel once and they
   should line up. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.

Brass
1. Ask captain about background of the victim.
2. Ask about the victim's hotel room.
3. Ask for a warrant to question Maya.

Interview – Maya Nguyen
1. Ask Maya all questions.

Hotel room
1. Speak to Andy Penmore. Ask all questions. Automatically get Andy's prints & GSR.
2. Examine the duffel bag. You won't be able to do anything with it.
3. Examine the salad on the table.
4. Examine the table in between the beds. Use the latex gloves to collect the victim's business card.
5. Examine the pillow on the bed. Find the scorpion. Use the latex gloves to collect the scorpion.
6. Examine the laptop at the foot of the bed. Click on the laptop screen. Click on the email program. It's encrypted. Use scandisk to retrieve the file.
7. Examine the poster on the sink. Use the latex gloves to collect the flyer with angry note.
8. Speak to Andy again. Automatically get testimony and movie rental receipt.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer
   a. Drag the business card to the screen.   You will get latest text messages.
   b. Drag the encrypted email from Stan's laptop to screen. See angry email from Maya.

Morgue
1. Speak to Doc Robbins about toxicology test and scorpions.

Brass
1. Ask Captain for address of gun club.
2. Ask Captain to track Stan's cell phone. Automatically receive cell phone. Turn it around in inventory and use powder & tape to collect fingerprint.
3. Ask Captain to verify Andy and Maya's comings and goings at hotel.
4. Ask to speak to Maya again.

Interview – Maya 2nd time
1. Ask questions until she tells you she has nothing more to say.

Line of Fire Club
1. Speak to the woman at the front desk about all questions. Automatically receive sign-up sheet for the group. Keep asking the woman questions until she has nothing more to say.
2. Examine the gun magazine on the end of the counter and the tray in front of the woman.
3. Examine gun lane #1. Examine the keypad on the left. Click on the bottom button to bring the target paper to the front. Use the latex gloves to take the picture of Stan.   Use the Ninhydrin on the fingerprint to collect it.
4. Examine the table at the left. It's clean.

Convention Center Garage
1. Speak to Craig Landers about all topics. Automatically receive fingerprints and GSR.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints)
   a. Compare range target fingerprint to Craig's fingerprints. They look like a match. Click on "Confirm Match" It matches
   b. Compare Craig's fingerprints to fingerprints on weapon case. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.

Brass
1. Ask Captain for warrant on Craig Lander's Car.

Convention Center Garage
1. Speak to Craig.
2. Examine the back seat of Envoy. Use latex gloves to collect the bullets.
3. Examine the front seat of Envoy. Examine the portable game.
4. Examine the back of the truck. Examine the scorpion. Examine the gun. Use the latex gloves to collect the gun.

Lab
1. Assembly Table – Place .22 automatic on table. Click on different items and drag them to disassemble the pieces. You can only remove 2 pieces. A test bullet will be shot through the gun.
2. Comparison Microscope – Compare bullet found in the victim to test bullet fired from the .22. Automatic cut scene will play.

Line of Fire Club
1. Ask the woman at the desk about gun conversion kits. Continue with questions about the kit. Receive a bullet fired by Craig's gun at the gun club.

Lab
1. Catherine greets you and provides an adapter for converting a .45 gun to a .22
2. Assembly Table – Put the .45 gun on the table. Drag the gun converter from inventory onto the table. Click and drag on the .45 to remove the 2 pieces. Click on each piece of the conversion kit to put it back into place. Automatic ballistics test will take place.
3. Comparison Microscope
   a. Compare bullet from Craig's .22 to bullet from gun club. A comment is made that will rule Craig's gun out.
   b. Compare bullet from the modified .45 to bullet from the body. Turn the modified bullet until the lines match up. Click on "Confirm Match". They almost match, but finding the actual adapter will clinch it.

    c. Compare the bullet from .45 gun w/adapter to bullet in demo room wall. They match.

Brass
1. Ask Captain about Gun Adapter
2. Ask to Speak to Maya again.

Interview - Maya
1. Ask Maya about all questions.

Hotel
1. Speak to Andy about all questions.

Convention Center Garage
1. Speak to Craig again. Ask all questions. Receive Craig's ring into evidence.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins about the ring matching the bruises on the victim. The ring matches the bruises.

Brass
1. Ask the Captain for warrant to interview Craig Landers.

Interview – Craig Landers
1. Ask Craig all questions.

Hotel
1. Speak to Andy again. He will give access to his PDA.
2. Examine the bag on the bed. Click on the actual PDA
3. Click on the picture of a file on the PDA. It will tell you it's password protected
4. Use the SanDisk Crossfire flash Drive on the PDA. The file will be downloaded.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Search Links/Special) – Drag the encrypted file from Andy's PDA to the screen. Click on search to get the result.

Brass
1. Ask to speak to Maya again

Interview - Maya
1. Ask about the bonus. Receive Maya's flash drive to analyze

THE GUIDING BEACON

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Search Links/Special) – Drag the flash drive onto the screen. Click on "Search". Receive memo from Stan to Maya.

Brass
1. Ask Captain about the murder weapon. Receive the missing gun adapter.
2. Use the fingerprint powder & tape on the gun adapter.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Compare Adapter fingerprints to Andy's fingerprints. Click on "Confirm Match".
2. Assembly Table – Drag the .45 gun to the table. Drag the adapter found in the dumpster to the table. Remove the 2 items from the .45. Drag the found adapter pieces onto the gun. An automatic ballistics test is performed.
3. Comparison Microscope – Compare bullet shot with dumpster adapter to bullet from the victim. Rotate to line up. Click on "Confirm Match". It matches.
4. Comparison Microscope – Compare Bullet from dumpster to bullet in demo room wall.
5. Comparison Microscope – Compare Bullet from dumpster to bullet w/CSI adapter.

Brass
1. Ask for arrest warrant for Andy.

Interview – Andy Penmore
1. Ask Andy all questions.

End of Case

Case 3 – Daddy's Girl

Carrie's Apartment
1. Speak to Michael Dubois. Ask all questions.
2. Examine small wooden table beneath the plates on the wall.
3. Examine the gauge in the small drawer. Use the Mikrosil to take a cast of the possible tool mark.
4. Examine the marks on the table itself. Use the magnetic Brush and Powder on the fingerprint. Use the lifting tape to collect the fingerprint.
5. Examine the large pool of blood on the right. Take a picture of the blood. Use swab to collect a blood sample.
6. Examine the pool of blood closer to the kitchen. Use swab to collect a blood sample.

7. Examine the area next to Sara's shoe. Collect the necklace with the latex gloves.
8. Examine the couch. Use the ultraviolet light on the pillow to detect fluid. Use swab to collect a sample.
9. Examine the window by the couch. Use the latex gloves to collect the plastic fragment.
10. Examine the table next to the door. There is a footprint on the table. Take a picture of the footprint.
11. Examine the table to the left of the kitchen. Use the latex gloves to take the notepad. Use the fingerprint powder on the notepad. A message appears from Lucy.
12. Examine the area near the front door. Examine the bloody footprint. Take a photo of the footprint.
13. Examine the keys lying near the front door. Use the latex gloves to collect them. Use the adhesive Mount on the key to retrieve a waxy substance.
14. Examine the freezer. It's empty
15. Examine the post behind Sara. Take a photo of the blood spatter. Use the swab on the spatter.
16. Speak to Michael. Ask all questions.
17. Automatically get Michael's shoe. Examine the shoe in inventory and spray with Leuko Crystal Violet. Use the swab to get a sample.
18. Continue questioning Michael. Obtain DNA Sample.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Drag fingerprint from desk to left panel. Click on "Search". Search result "D" seems to match. Click on "Confirm Match". The print belongs to Michael who has a police record.
2. Trace Analysis Computer (Shoeprints)
   a. Compare photo of shoe print to Michael's shoe. Click on "Confirm Match". They match meaning Michael exited after the blood was already on the floor.
   b. Compare the photo of partial window footprint to Michael's shoe. They don't match.
3. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the following
   a. Blood from Smear with Blood on Floor – They Match
   b. Blood from Smear with Blood on Wall – They Match
   c. Blood from Smear with Blood from Michael's shoe – They Match
   d. Michael's DNA to Semen from Sofa – These do not match.
4. Chemical Analyzer
   a. Drag the key residue to the screen. Click on "Search". It's Ski Wax that can be used to make key copies.
   b. Drag the piece of plastic to the screen. Click on "search". It's a common trash bag.
5. Comparison Microscope – Drag necklace to left pane. See cut scene.

Morgue
1. Speak to Dr. Robbins about all questions. Keep asking until he has nothing else to tell you.

Lucy's Office
1. Speak to Lucy Canelli. Ask all questions. Obtain DNA sample.
2. Examine the appointment book on the desk.
3. Examine the trash can next to the desk. Use the latex gloves to collect the paper.
4. Examine the letter opener on the desk. Use the latex gloves to collect it. Use the Luminol on the blood stain. Use the swab to get blood sample.
5. Speak to Lucy again about the appointment. Automatically get speeding ticket. Ask about the blood on the letter opener.

Michael's Apartment
1. Speak to Michael about all questions.
2. Examine the sunglasses on the couch. Use the latex gloves to collect the sunglasses. Turn the glasses around in inventory. Use the tweezers to obtain the hair. Spin the sunglasses again and use the swab on the side of the sunglasses to get a sample.
3. Examine the cell phone on the dining room table.

Lab
1. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the following
   a. DNA from sunglasses to Blood from smear
   b. DNA from sunglasses to Blood on Wall
   c. DNA from sunglasses to Blood on Floor
   d. DNA from sunglasses to Blood on Michael's shoe
   e. DNA from sunglasses to Lucy's DNA
   f. Lucy's DNA to Blood on letter opener.
2. Chemical Analysis Computer – Drag the sunglasses residue onto the screen. Click on "Search". The residue is a makeup concealer used to cover bruises or spots.
3. Assembly Table – Drag the torn document to the assembly table. Drag the pieces into place to form a Last Will and Testament.

Skyler Hospital
1. Speak to Alex Porterson. Ask all questions. He claims he doesn't know anything.

Brass
1. Ask about call to Lucy from fraud unit.
2. Ask about the speeding ticket.
3. Ask about background check on Alex Porterson. He was picked up once.
4. Ask about Carrie Canelli's phone records. She called Alex the same day. Obtain copy of phone records

5. Ask about the hotel in Aruba
6. Ask about getting Carrie's father in for questioning.

Lucy's Office
1. Ask all questions. Obtain note from Carrie to Lucy turning over the casino.
2. Obtain Lucy's sneakers. Use Luminol on the sneakers. Use the swab to collect a sample.

Skyler Hospital
1. Ask Alex all questions. He claims Carrie was abused. He won't give a DNA sample without a warrant.

Michael's Apartment
1. Question Michael about the abuse.

Lab
1. Chemical Analyzer Computer – Drag stain from Lucy's shoe to screen. Click on "Search". No blood was found.
2. Trace Analysis Computer (Shoeprints) – Compare Lucy's shoe to the photo of the partial print. They seem to be the same but can't be definite.

Lucy's Office
1. Ask Lucy about the shoeprint and her shoes.

Skyler Hospital
1. Ask Alex all questions.
2. Examine Alex's coffee cup. Use Ninhydrin on cup to get a fingerprint. Use swab on rim of lid to get DNA sample.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Enter Alex's fingerprint into the left pane. Click on "Search". Search result "C" seems to be a good match. Click on "Confirm Match". It matches his hospital record.
2. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the Saliva from the coffee cup to the Semen from the sofa. We have a match.

Skyler Hospital
1. Ask Alex about DNA and when he last saw Carrie.

Michael's Apartment
1. Speak to Michael about Carrie's affair with Alex

Skyler Hospital
1. Ask Alex about his split lip, witnesses to the assault and Michael's whereabouts.

Brass
1. Ask about questioning Michael

Interview – Michael
1. Ask all questions. Search Warrant obtained.

Michael's Apartment
1. Use the latex gloves to take the knife from the kitchen counter. Use Luminol & swab to get a sample of blood.
2. Use the latex gloves to get the folder from the shelf to the left of the refrigerator. Use the Ninhydrin to get the fingerprint off of the back of the folder. Keep turning the folder until you can see the screwdriver from the side view. Use the latex glove to collect the screwdriver.
3. Go out to balcony. Use the latex gloves to take the garbage bag out of the trash bin next to the grill.

Lab
1. Comparison Microscope – Compare the tool indentation from drawer to the screwdriver. Click on "Confirm match". They match.
2. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the blood on the knife to the victim's blood. They match.
3. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Enter fingerprint from folder to left pane. Click on "Search". Search result D seems to be a good match. Click on "Confirm. It matches Lucy's.
4. Chemical Analysis – Drag the trash bag from Michael's computer to the screen. Click on "Search". It matches the fragment, but the trash bags are quite common.

Brass
1. Ask for another interview with Michael

Interview – Michael
1. Ask Michael all questions.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to search Lucy's office.

Lucy's Office
1. Use the latex gloves to collect the key from Lucy's desk.
2. Examine Lucy's desk drawer. Collect the bookmaking records with the latex glove.
3. Examine the file cabinet drawer. Move the mouse around until you can see into the drawer. Collect the needles with the latex gloves. Use the Ninhydrin to collect the fingerprint.

Lab
1. Comparison Microscope – Compare key from victim's apartment to key from Lucy's office. Click on "Confirm Match".
2. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the blood from needle to the Victim's DNA. They match.
3. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints). Drag the fingerprint from box of needles to the left pane. Click on Search. Search result E is a good match. They match and are Porterson's prints.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins to test the blood from the needle. The test comes back clean.

Brass
1. Ask for a warrant to bring Lucy in for questioning

Interview – Lucy
1. Ask Lucy all questions

Brass
1. Ask to speak to Michael again

Interview – Michael
1. Ask Michael all questions

Skyler Hospital
1. Ask Alex about the needles. Go back and see brass to get warrant for his locker.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to get into Alex's locker.

Skyler Hospital
1. Enter the room directly behind Alex.
2. Use the latex gloves to collect the picture of Carrie.
3. Use the latex gloves to collect the trash bag
4. Use the latex gloves to collect bloody dress. Use swab to get sample of blood.
5. Use latex gloves to collect tomato juice jug. Use swab to get sample of blood.
6. Use latex gloves to collect sneaker. Use swab to get sample of blood.
7. Speak to Alex about the bloody dress.

Lab
1. DNA Analysis Computer – Compare the following:
   a. Blood from clothing to Carrie's DNA – They match

     b. Blood from jug to Carrie's DNA – They match
     c. Blood from Sneakers to Carrie's DNA – They match
2. Trace Analysis Computer (Shoeprints) – Compare photo of partial footprint to sneakers found in Alex's locker. They match.
3. Chemical Analysis Computer – Drag trash bag found in Alex's locker to screen. Click on Search. It matches the crime scene piece of plastic bag.

Brass
1. Ask for arrest warrant for Alex Porterson.

Interview – Alex
1. Ask Alex all questions.

End of Case

Case 4 – Rough Cut

Campsite
1. Examine body and take photo
2. Examine the victim's head and take photo.
3. Examine the victim's nose and blowfly larvae with tweezers (yuck)
4. Examine the needle in the victim's arm and collect with latex gloves.
5. Examine the victim's hand
6. Examine and collect the cigarette butt near victim's leg with tweezers
7. Examine the victim's shoes. Use the lifting tape to get a boot print.
8. Examine the inside of the tent.
9. Examine the sleeping bags. Use the flashlight to see the empty bottle. Use the latex gloves to collect the insulin bottle.
10. Examine the footprint. Use the adhesive tape to collect footprint.
11. Examine the bag.
12. Examine the large rock in the campsite. Examine the tire track. Use the casting plaster to collect the track.

Mobile Analysis Unit
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Shoeprints/Tire treads)
     a. Drag tire tread found at scene to left pane. Click on "Search". Search Result C looks correct. It is a match.
     b. Drag the shoeprint from the tent to the left pane and click on "Search". Search result "C" it's a match. Click on "Confirm Match".
2. Chemical Analyzer
     a. Drag needle to screen. Click on "Search". There was insulin on the needle.
     b. Drag the insulin bottle to screen. It is indeed insulin.
     c. Drag cigarette butt to screen. It comes up as just lipstick.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins to retrieve the body.
2. Ask all questions. Receive sample of Jimsonweed & fingerprints/DNA.
3. Examine the body. You won't find anything new here.

Campsite
1. Use latex gloves to collect note on the sleeping bag
2. Use tweezers to collect cigarette butt. Use adhesive mount to collect salt like powder on cigarette.

Lab
1. Chemical Analysis Computer –
   a. Drag Jimsonweed seeds to screen. They are non-lethal amounts.
   b. Drag white substance from cigarette butt to screen. It is an unknown chemical.

Brass
1. Ask Captain to trace prescription insulin. The victim's name is Derrick Mitchell. Ask about mother running for senate. Gain 2 locations.

Derrick and Carla's Condo
1. Speak to Carla about all questions. Gain 1 location

Emily's Estate
1. Speak to Emily Hanson. Ask all questions. Gain testimony & cigarette butt.

Contractor's Shop
1. Question Lou Astor.
2. Examine the back of the truck
3. In back of truck, collect the jar out of the junk box with the latex gloves. Use the adhesive mount to collect residue sample.
4. Examine the table to the right of the truck. Collect the poker chip from underneath the table. Use the fingerprint powder & tape to collect the fingerprint.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Fingerprints) – Drag fingerprint from poker chip to left pane. Drag victim's prints to right pane. Click on "Confirm match". They match.
2. Chemical Analysis Computer –
   a. Drag the jar residue to the screen. Click on "Search". Same unknown substance that was found in cigarette.
   b. Drag Emily's cigarette to the screen. Click on "Search". It is the same type of lipstick, but brands don't match.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins all questions.

Derrick and Carla's Condo
1. Ask Carla about her marriage.

Contractor's Shop
1. Ask Lou about the poker chip with the victim's print.

Brass
1. Ask about Emily's truck. Receive tread print.
2. Ask about Carla's alibi
3. Ask fore more info on Emily
4. Ask about Lou Astor's background.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis (Tire Treads) – Drag desert tire tracks to left pane. Drag tire tread from brass to right pane. Click on "Confirm Match". They seem to match.

Emily's Estate
1. Ask Emily about newspaper article. Receive surveillance evidence.
2. Ask about Lou. Receive dated estimate.
3. Ask about the matching tire treads.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis (Audio/Visual) – Drag surveillance evidence to left pane. Photos will automatically pop up.
2. Trace Analysis (Audio/Visual) – Drag angry note to left pane. Drag estimate to right pane. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.

Derrick and Carla's Condo
1. Ask Carla all questions. Receive pair of hiking boots.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis computer – Compare footprint in tent to Carl's hiking boots. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to search Lou Astor's place.

Contractor's Shop
1. As Lou all questions.
2. Enter Lou's office and examine the cell phone in front of the brown folder. Use the flashlight and latex gloves to collect it.

3. Examine the top of the filing cabinet. Use the flashlight to see the chemical. Use the latex gloves to collect.
4. Examine Lou's desk. Use latex gloves to collect ripped document.
5. Examine right side of filing cabinet. Use tweezers to collect hair. Use latex gloves to collect the whole handle.

Lab
1. DNA Analysis Computer – Drag victim's DNA to left pane. Drag hair found on broken handle to right pane. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.
2. Chemical Analysis Computer – Drag pesticide found at Lou's to screen. Click on "Search". It matches the substance found in victim's tobacco.
3. Assembly Table – Drag torn paper to table. Assemble the paper to get a score card for gambling.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins all questions. He tells you Grissom wants to see you in the lab.

Brass
1. Ask about GMC
2. Ask about the phone – It belongs to the victim. Receive take of voice mail.
3. Ask for warrant to question Lou Warrant

Interview – Lou Astor
1. Ask all questions until he won't tell you any more.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Audio/Visual) – Drag each phone message tape to screen in order of 1,2,3. Watch cut scene of Emily

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to search Emily's garage.

Emily's Estate
1. Ask Emily all questions.
2. Enter garage and examine the book to underneath the tools. Use Ninhydrin to collect fingerprint on page.
3. Examine the memos on the top shelf. Collect with the latex gloves.
4. Use flashlight to examine shelf on left. Collect jar of powder with latex gloves. Use fingerprint powder and tape to collect fingerprint.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer
   a. Drag fingerprint from jar at Emily's house to left pane. Click on "Search". Search result C s a match and belongs to Lou.

    b. Drag fingerprint from book to left pane. Click on "Search". Search result
      C is a match and belongs to Emily.
2. Chemical Analysis – Drag jar of powder from Emily's to screen. Click on
    "Search". It is the same pesticide. (Trinity updated – warranty available)

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to bring Emily in for questioning.

Interview – Emily Hanson
1. Ask all questions – Get receipt for tobacco purchase by Carla.

Brass
1. Ask about Carla's tobacco purchase
2. Ask for search warrant for Carla & Derrick's condo.

Derrick and Carla's condo
1. Ask Carla all questions
2. Examine the underwear on the living room table. Use the ultraviolet light on
    the underwear. Use swab to collect sample.
3. Use the flashlight to examine under the kitchen sink. Use the latex gloves
    to collect the lid. Use the adhesive mount to collect sample. Turn the lid
    over and use fingerprint powder & tape to collect the fingerprint.
4. Examine the exposed electrical socket. Use the magnetic powder & tape to
    collect the fingerprint.

Lab
1. Chemical Analysis Computer – Drag the brown flakes from lid to the screen.
    Click on "Search".   It matches the tobacco from the desert and residue from
    pesticide.
2. DNA Database –Drag DNA found at Carla's Condo to left pane. Click on
    "Search". Search result A seems to match. Click on "Confirm Match". It
    seems Carla was very busy.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to bring Carla in for questioning.

Interview – Carla
1. Ask Carla all questions. Receive Carla's fingerprints.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis (Fingerprints) – Drag Carla's fingerprints to the left pane.
    Drag the fingerprint from lid at Condo to the right pane. They match.

Brass
1. Ask for an arrest warrant for Carla.

Case 5 – The Big White Lie

Alley
1. Ask Dr. Robbins all questions.
2. Examine the green dumpster. Use the latex gloves to collect the car key.
3. Examine the front seat of car. Take of picture of the serial number on the dashboard.
4. Examine the side of the car near the gas cap. Use Luminol and swab to collect sample.
5. Examine the back of the car. Use the fingerprint powder & tape to get the print from a spot right above the bumper.
6. Examine where the license plate should be.
7. Examine and take photo of crate.
8. Take picture of body in crate.
9. Examine and use swab to take sample of blood on victim's pants.
10. Take photo of tire tracks to the right of crate.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins all questions

Alley
1. Examine the crate again. Use flashlight and adhesive mount to collect the substance on the broken pottery.
2. Use the latex gloves to collect the pottery itself.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Search Links/Special) – Drag the photo of the VIN# to the screen. Click on "Search". Owner is Gary Melvoy.
2. Chemical Analysis Computer – Drag powdery substance to screen. Click on "Search". It is cocaine.
3. DNA Analysis Computer – Drag victim's DNA to left pane. Click on "search". Search result B matches. It belongs to Gary Melvoy.   Now compare victim's DNA to blood from fender of car. It matches also.

Morgue
1. Ask Dr. Robbins if there was cocaine in the blood.

Brass
1. Ask for info on Gary Melvoy. Receive new location.

RV Park
1. Examine the door to the RV. Use Mikrosil to collect a mold.
2. Examine the surveillance equipment
3. Examine the computer keyboard. Use magnetic powder and tape to collect fingerprint.
4. Examine camera on shelf above keyboard. Use latex gloves to collect.

5. Enter bedroom and use latex gloves to collect bank statement.
6. Examine the console in between the driver and passenger seat. Use latex gloves to collect piece of paper with phone#.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis computer (Search Links/Special) – Drag bank statement to screen. Click on "Search". See transfer from Ackerman Fine Arts Studio.

Gallery Office
1. Ask Nathan Ackerman all questions.
2. Ask Gus Clein all questions. He won't let you search.

Brass
1. Ask for information on the phone number. It belongs to Lucy Canelli.

Interview – Lucy
1. Ask Lucy all questions. Location is added.

Michael's Apartment
1. Ask Michael and Carrie all questions. Location is added.

Carrie's Apartment
1. Ask Lucy and Carrie all questions. Receive photo of Nathan with crate and torn photo.

Lab
1. Assembly Table – Drag torn photograph to table. Slide pieces into place.
2. Trace Analysis Computer – Drag photo of Nathan at Gallery to left pane. Drag photo of victim's body position near vehicle to the right pane. Click on "Confirm Match". The crates seem to be the same.

Brass
1. Ask about Lucy's alibi.
2. Ask for search warrant for Nathan's gallery office.

Gallery Office
1. Examine the desk. Use latex gloves to collect accounting records.
2. Examine the crate. Use the latex gloves to collect damaged pottery.

Lab
1. Assembly Table – Drag the pottery found at the gallery to the table. Click on the pottery and drag the pieces away until the bag of powder pops up in inventory.
2. Rotate the bag of powder in inventory until you see the imprint on the top. Use the Ninhydrin to collect fingerprint.

3. Trace Analysis (Special Links) – Drag gallery accounting records to screen. Click on "Search". Get info on gallery.
4. Chemical Analysis Computer – Drag the bag of powder to the screen. Click on "Search". It is cocaine.

Galley
1. Ask Gus Clein all questions.

Michael's Apartment
1. Ask Michael all questions.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer – Drag fingerprint from powder to left pane. Click on "Search".   Search result D matches. Click on "Confirm Match". It is Mr. Ackerman's print.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to bring Nathan Ackerman in for questioning.

Interview – Nathan Ackerman
1. Ask Nathan all questions until he has nothing to say anymore.

Carrie's Apartment
1. Ask Carrie all questions. Receive Crowbar she found at Michael's apartment.

Lab
1. Comparison Microscope – Drag impression of marks from RV door to left pane. Drag the crowbar to the right pane. Click on "Confirm match". They match.

Brass
1. Ask for search warrant for Michael's apartment.

Michael's Apartment
1. Ask Michael all questions.
2. Examine and use latex gloves to collect paintings.
3. Use flashlight to examine cabinet under television. Use latex gloves to collect the microphone and recorder.
4. Use latex gloves to collect the memory card right beneath the television.
5. Use latex gloves to collect the audio tape from next to the stereo equipment.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Audio/Visual) – Drag audio tape to screen. Click on "Play". It implicates Dubois and Clein as working together.

2. Trace Analysis Computer (Audio/Visual) – Drag memory card to screen. It reveals a picture of Michael and Clein outside a warehouse.
3. Trace Analysis Computer (Search Links) – Drag microphone & recorder to screen. Click on "Search". It belongs to Gar Melvoy.
4. Trace Analysis Computer (Audio/Visual) – Drag photo of victim's body near vehicle to left pane. Drag photo of warehouse to right pane. Click on "Confirm Match". The crates match.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to bring Michael in for questioning.

Interview – Michael Dubois
1. Ask Michael all questions.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to search the exterior of Gus's warehouse.

Warehouse
1. Speak to Gus Clein.
2. Examine the drain in front of the large door. Use the tweezers to collect the bone fragment.
3. Examine the drag marks near the drain. Use luminal & swab to collect the blood and bleach sample.

Lab
1. DNA Analyzer – Drag the white piece from drain to left pane. Click on "Search". Search result B seems to match. Click on "Confirm Match". It matches the victim. Try to analyze the blood sample. It's too diluted with bleach.

Brass
1. Ask for warrant to bring Gus Clein in for questioning

Interview – Gus Clein
1. Ask Gus all questions

Brass
1. Ask to have Gus Clein's alibi checked.
2. Ask for warrant to search the interior of Gus Clein's warehouse

Warehouse
1. Enter warehouse open door.
2. Use the flashlight to examine the box below the first aid sign. Use the latex gloves to collect the gun. Use the fingerprint powder & tape to collect the fingerprint.
3. Examine the bottle of bleach.

THE GUIDING BEACON

4. Examine the marks on the floor to the right of the bleach next to the crate. Take photo of the marks
5. Examine the hose.
6. Examine the small office area.
7. Examine the serial# on the bottom of the slot machine. Take photo of serial number.
8. Examine the laptop computer. Click on the computer to access the desktop.
9. Click on the file folder on the laptop. It is password encrypted. Use the SanDisk Flash Drive on the computer to retrieve the file.
10. Go back to computer and click on the picture of the world. See game forum complaining about the cancellation of the Fuzzy & Bill game.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer
   a. (Fingerprints) Drag fingerprint from gun to left pane. Click on "Search". Search result D is a match. Click on "Confirm Match". The fingerprint is Ackerman's.
   b. (Shoeprints/Tire Treads) Drag tire tread from warehouse to left pane. Drag tire treat from alley to right pane. Click on "Confirm Match".
   c. (Search Links/Special) – Drag photo of slot machine serial number to screen. Click on "Search". The machine has a lot of history.
   d. (Search Links/Special) – Drag encrypted file to screen. Click on "Search". It is a computer program to rig a video poker machine.
2. Assembly Table – Drag pistol to table. Click and drag on the gun to pull 2 pieces off of it. A test shot will automatically be fired. Receive bullet in inventory.
3. Comparison Microscope – Drag bullet from body to left pane. Drag bullet fired from handgun to right pane. Click the + button 4 times to match up the lines. Click on "Confirm Match". They match.

Brass
1. Ask to speak with Nathan Ackerman again.

Interview – Nathan Ackerman
1. Ask Nathan questions until he won't tell you anymore.

Lab
1. Go back to lab for conversation with Catherine.

Carrie's Apartment
1. Ask Carrie all questions. Receive broken watch belonging to Michael.
2. Examine the watch. Use luminal & swab to collect blood sample.

THE GUIDING BEACON

Lab
1. DNA Analysis Computer – Drag blood from watch to left pane. Drag victim's DNA to right pane. Click on 'Confirm Match". The blood matches the victim's.

Brass
1. Ask to speak to Michael again. Receive tape from Michael.

Lab
1. Trace Analysis Computer (Audio/Visual) – Drag tape from Michael to screen. Click on "Play". Drag Audio Tape from Michael's apartment to right pane. Click on "Confirm Match"

Brass
1. Ask for arrest warrant for Gus Clein.

End of case.

A Final Note…

As I wrap up the editing and the formatting for Adventure Lantern's May issue, I am more than a little relieved that April is finally over. It seems almost the entire team went through an especially hectic period during the past month. Here is my personal thanks to the Adventure Lantern staff for coming through with their articles and making our May issue possible.

From brand new commercial releases to a healthy dose of freeware titles, this month's issue covered a wide variety of adventure games. While Under a Killing Moon was released all the way back in 1994, Keepsake and Crime Stories were shipped across North America just a few weeks ago. I hope that you enjoyed our selection of articles. Perhaps we even got some of you interested in downloading the freeware games or hunting at eBay for older commercial releases.

Our June issue should bring you reviews of some recent releases including Dreamfall, Paradise, and Barrow Hill. We will be continuing our coverage of the Tex Murphy series along with reviews on a number of other older adventure games. We are also trying to get you some additional information on games we have already previewed with a couple of interviews.

As we start working on next month's issue, please feel free to contact us with your feedback and suggestions. We greatly appreciate all the feedback we get from our readers. We even welcome suggestions on archive reviews. If there is a game you would like to see us cover, just drop a line and let us know. More than likely, someone in the team will have a copy.

Be sure to tune in next month for another issue packed with gaming material.

-Ugur Sener