

Adventure Lantern

REVIEWS:

- *Myst III: Exile*
- *Myst IV: Revelation*
- *The Night of the Rabbit*
- *Parasite Eve*

ISSUE #42
MAY 2013



EDITORIAL

Another month and another collection of adventure gaming news and reviews published. This month we are bringing you a review of *Parasite Eve*, written by Nick; A fantasy RPG/survival horror for the Playstation original. I remember playing through the first level, a opera house, on a friend's console years ago. The active battle system was interesting, with you capable of moving around the battle arena dodging enemy attacks and lining yourself up for offensives. I think I got stuck in the opera house and could not find any way out, and never played it again after that. Nick obviously did finish the game, and has a lot to say about it in his review. On the adventure game front I reviewed both *Myst III: Exile* and *Myst IV: Revelation* this month, as well as fitting in the brand new *The Night of the Rabbit* game by *Daedalic*. *Myst* three and four are very different games, made by very different developers, as they are the only *Myst* games made by an outside studio. Ultimately, I determined that one of them felt true to the series and quite enjoyable, while the second had significant issues that distracted from the experience, and was missing some of the *Myst* charm.

On the news front we have many new and exciting stories for you this month, and quite a few that have been announced at the very end of this month. Not only did the *Nelly Cootalot* sequel and *A Vampyre Story: Year One* get *Kickstarters*, ending the 28th and 30th of June respectively, where you can pre-order a copy for less than ten bucks each, but there have been many bundles which just launched that contain many great adventure games. *Groupees* was running a *Sherlock* adventure game charity bundle with seven *Sherlock* games and three others thrown in for good measure. *IndieRoyale* also just launched a *Hammerhead* indie bundle including *Primordia* and *Richard & Alice*, among four others, which will be running until the seventh. But the *Humble Bundle* outdoes all of these sales with two adventure crammed gems. The current weekly sale that ends on the sixth is a *TellTale* pack featuring *The Walking Dead* complete series prominently. Additionally, *HIB8*, which is running until the eleventh includes *Dear Esther*, *Thomas Was Alone*, *Little Inferno*, and *Proteus* along with a few others.

Last but not least, I wanted to make a special mention of the brand new [Bundle in a Box](#). The *Capsule Computers Indie Bundle* includes eleven indie titles, many of which are adventure games. Included are *Super Tower Rush*, *Hacker Evolution Untold*, *Pixelry*, *Blackwell Legacy*, *Blackwell Unbound*, *Blackwell Convergence*, and *Blackwell Deception* all for just a minimum of two dollars. If you beat the average, about four dollars at the time of this writing, you also get: *Hamlet*, *Hacker Evolution Duality*, *Hacker Evolution*, and *Secret of the Magic Crystals*. Every copy sold had some money going to the *Australian Red Cross* charity and to the *Indie Dev Grant*.

– Jonathon Wisnoski

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Cover Image:
MYST III: EXILE

ADVENTURE LANTERN
#5 (42) may 2013

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NEWS

ANNOUNCEMENTS	4
UPCOMING RELEASES	5
NEW RELEASES	9
NEWS FROM THE BIG BLUE CUP	10

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

MYST III: EXILE	12
MYST IV: REVELATION	16
THE NIGHT OF THE RABBIT	20

UNCHARTED WATERS

PARASITE EVE	24
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Video games with the most memorable pre-rendered backgrounds

This last month Kotaku ran an article about the best and most memorable pre-rendered backgrounds in the history of gaming. I do not think that they have a particularly good list, nor is it a very in depth or well written article; But it is interesting regardless and a great subject to talk about. The comments after the article do a good job of filling in some of the gaps left by the author, and are filled with some great screenshots.



Announcements

THE CAPSULE COMPUTERS INDIE BUNDLE

</GET TONS OF

The Capsule Computers Indie Bundle

Bundle In A Box is at it again with this upcoming bundle in cooperation with Capsule Computers.

The Indie Dev Grant



1. No, I think I can do without.
2. Well, that's very kind and a ~~THANK YOU VERY MUCH~~
4. Oh no, this is too much, I
5. I am rubber, you are glue!



The Cabrera Brothers Horror Adventure

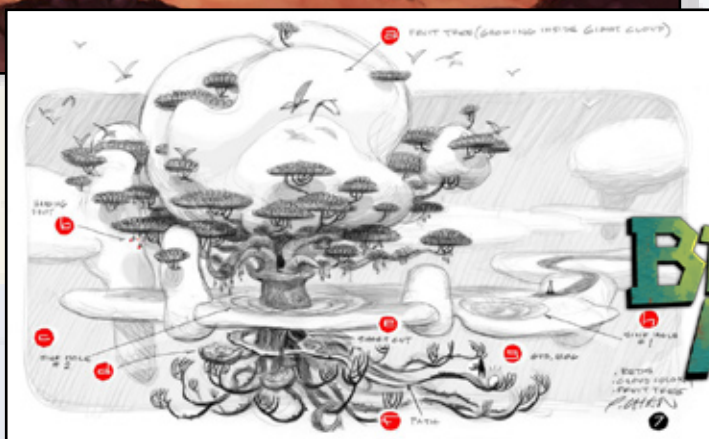
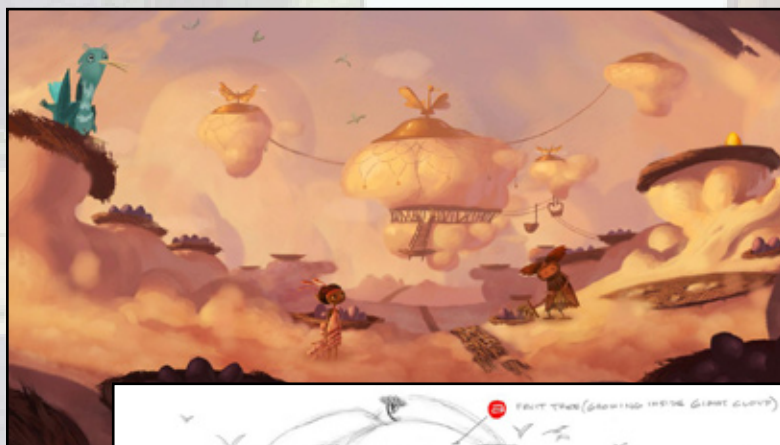
In a recent interview with indiegames.com, Javier Cabrera has revealed that they are well into the development of a graphical horror adventure. No real details released so far, but we know it

will be drawn by the talented Carlos and Javier is working on the story.

Cabrera Brothers' previous game was the well received indie game "Cypher", a cyberpunk text adventure.



Upcoming Releases



Broken Age

Gameinformer has run a very in-depth preview of Double Fine's upcoming adventure, Broken Age. One fact that I found the very interesting is that even though they blew past their original goal of raising \$400,000 and instead got \$3.3 million, they still need more money and are on track for spending every cent, as well as all the profits from Brutal Legend PC sales, and still needing to find more sources of capital or cut back on the game's scope.

BROKEN AGE

Cradle

In a frankly surprising turn of events, particularly after the announced how bad development was going in late 2012, the adventure game *Cradle*, by Flying Cafe, has been Greenlit. I have written about *Cradle* before, but it has not been particularly well or thoroughly advertised, and updates and information has always been rather limited. But I have never doubted that if the developers could pull it off that it would be a game worth trying. Simply put the graphics look great, and the premise sounds amazing and unique, with possibly a slightly *Syberia* theme.

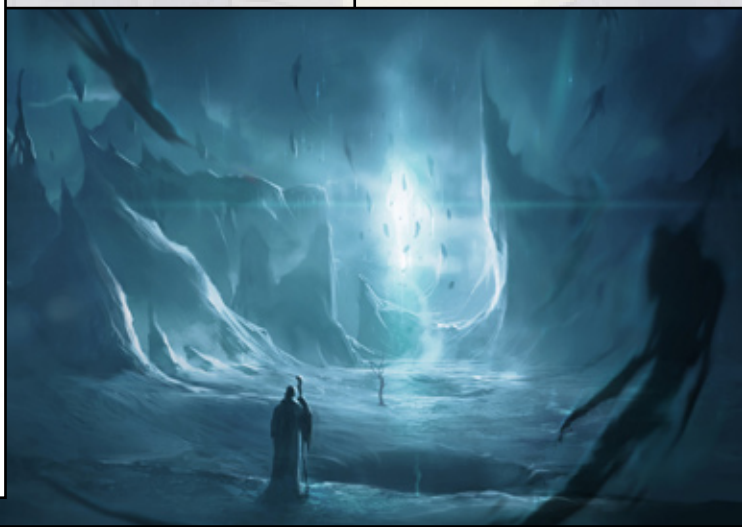
"Cradle is a science-fiction first-person quest with freedom of movement. The story is built around the relations of the protagonist and a mechanical girl,



who by enigmatic circumstances find themselves together in a yurt among the desert Mongolian hills. The player is to restore the lost functions of his companion's mechanical body parts and together reveal the mystery of the neglected entertainment park found not far from the yurt." - Flying Cafe

Dreamfall Chapters The Longest Journey

The upcoming, and long awaited, sequel to *The Longest Journey* series has been Greenlit and succeeded in their Kickstarter campaign. They raised \$1,538,425 out of their \$850,000 goal, hitting many stretch goals, with a pre-order available for \$20 or more.





King's Quest IV: the Perils of Rosella demo

This upcoming remake of *King's Quest IV: the Perils of Rosella* has just gotten itself a demo version. Grab it and give it a go if you are interested.

Nelly Cootalot: The Fowl Fleet Kickstarter

After making the short freeware game "Nelly Cootalot: Spoonbeaks Ahoy!", Alasdair Beckett-King decided to make a bigger adventure game with all new graphics, more locations and characters and has started a Kickstarter campaign to support this sure to be an interesting game.



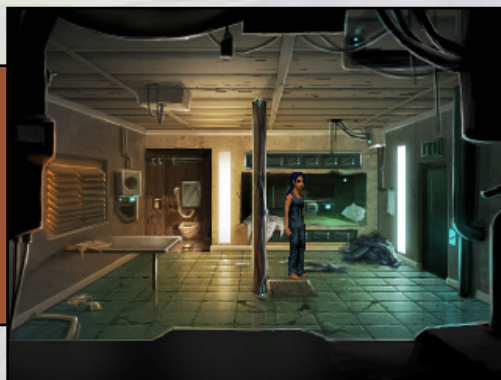


Prominence

This sci-fi indie adventure that seems like it has been in development forever has just gotten its first in-game footage trailer. It looks like the game is finally pulling together and it is looking great. The trailer shows a node based, fully 3D, world, with some absolutely amazing ship interiors and great node transition animations.

New Technobabylon game

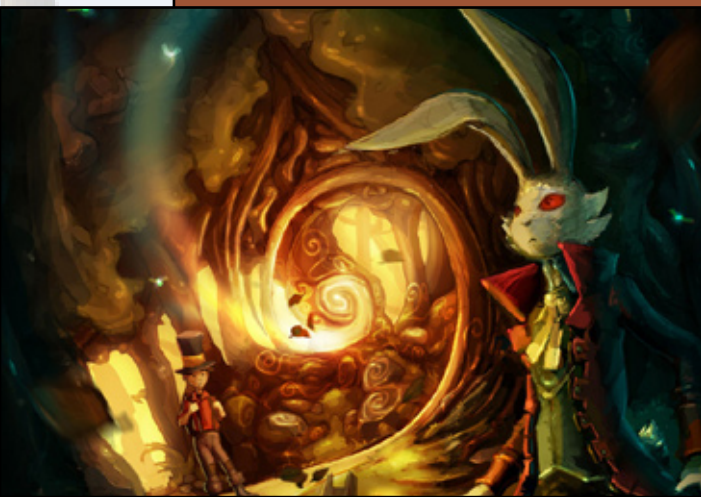
Recently, Technocrat Games has teamed up with Ben304 to work on his upcoming Technobabylon game. And because of this influx of talent he estimates that the game will be finished eminently.



The Wolf Among Us

Telltale's upcoming series, based on Bill Willingham's award-winning comic book series Fables, is marching ever closer to release. This last month the developers have released the game's first screenshots.





The Night of the Rabbit

This upcoming adventure being developed by Dae-dalic Entertainment and headed by Matt Kempke of What Makes You Tick fame has just gotten an interview over at GOG, and Matt Kempke has answered some user questions. The game is slated for a May 29 release and described thusly: "The Night of the Rabbit is a point-and-click adventure of magic, mystery, and wonder, full of beautiful storybook graphics and an amazing story that will appeal to young and mature gamers alike."

This interview states, among other things, that the puzzles are being aimed at young children. And worryingly, they "hope" they game will still be enjoyable older players. So expect something bordering on casual, at least if you are in a pessimistic mood.

New Releases

Qube Against the Qlock

The first-person puzzle platformer has just gotten itself its first DLC in the form of a series of race levels that pit you against the clock and some new achievements.

And on Steam DLC is available from May 6th.





News From the Big Blue Cup



KTX-1 (dkh) - Winner of the March 2013 MAGS competition. In it you play as an agent, briefed to defuse a bomb on a high-speed train. A DAW (Digital Warfare Assistant, i.e. a hacker) is assigned to you and helps you through the game.

Nancy The Happy Whore and the Perfidious Petrol Station (Technocrat) - The timeless story of a young woman needing gasoline, and nowhere near the giant leap backwards for womens' rights you may think it is! Coming from a tradition of naughty humour and dodgy puns in adventure stretching back as far as "Leisure Suit Larry", Nancy's first adventure is a nostalgic romp into the kind of surreal story that only exists within adventure games. Its features includes a fully-voiced cast and an average play-length of around three hours.

Waffle Quest I (Sylvr) - This is the story of an alien and his breakfast. Uruffaw's ship malfunctions one day in space and he is forced to make a crash landing on the front lawn of a school. However, it is before 6:30am--before the daycare opens--so he has to find his own breakfast!

A Cat's Night 2 (PuNKKoMmAND077) - Every night, some animals of the city 'of Forli are kidnapped and taken away with a white van. The Feline Council ask the help of Horace, the hero of the cattery Emergenza Randagi, which is now' was adopted and lives with his family in the center of Forli'.

Dark Black (dactylopus, Purplescape) - Dark Black is a short adventure game made by Purplescape and dactylopus. It tells the story of a cruel villain and his evil plot to transform you and your village.

The Rail (Technocrat) - On a tidally-locked world, the only way for resources to be moved under the deadly sun is by high-speed train. The management refuse to automate it entirely - after all, then there'd be nobody to blame when things go wrong - and it's been your uneventful duty for the past several years to see the train back and forth along...THE RAIL!

So naturally, things are going to go wrong on your watch. Things like, oh, maybe a hijacking? And a little bombing? And how about 'all of the above'?

Road to Brollywood (Zinedin Osmanovic) - Take on the role of Seth as he journeys to the land of cinematic dreams in the comedic free-ware adventure game, Road to Brollywood!

The Bum (Gribbler & Parafia) - The game tells a story of a homeless man who communicates with the world using an old sock on his right hand. He's a huge football fan and plays it a lot near his back alley. One day he gets mugged by a wandering bully and loses his precious ball in the process. Now he must pull himself together, team up with a local superhero, find a new ball and confront his oppressor again.

Skumring (SeamanNaranja) - Port Horizon 1951. A city on the verge of collapse. Moral collapse. Crime. Corruption. Greed... Money. Private eye Cooper Chutney thought he was the exception. When a beautiful dame in distress enters his office he is ready to show that someone still cares about something in this wretched town. But as he soon will learn everything can change during a cold Port Horizon night...



Pick of the Month: May - Barely Floating

Barely Floating proves the elderly can kick pirate butts better than most young dorks, as they come with the benefits of dangerous prescription drugs and a strong cane in hand.

Despite its decrepit hero the game sports superior production values - like the (realistically) nauseating effects of everything on the ship rhythmically moving. Also there's true 720p HD - a first for AGS.

But most importantly BF is a carefully designed classic nautical point&clicker with dozens of custom interactions per hotspot and an innovative and neat dialog system.

(Chosen by Ascovel)



Skurming
(SeamanNaranja)



KTX-1
(dkh)



Road to Brollywood
(Zinedin Osmanovic)



The Rail
(Technocrat)



Waffle Quest I
(Sylvr)



A Cat's Night 2
(PuNKKoMmAND077)



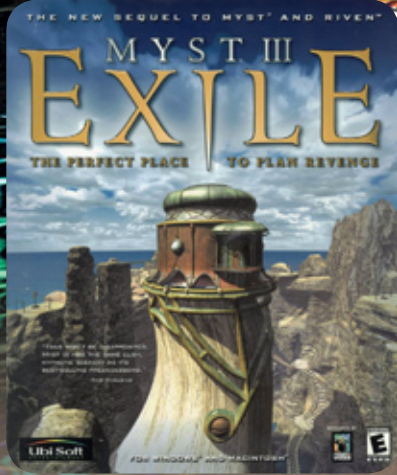
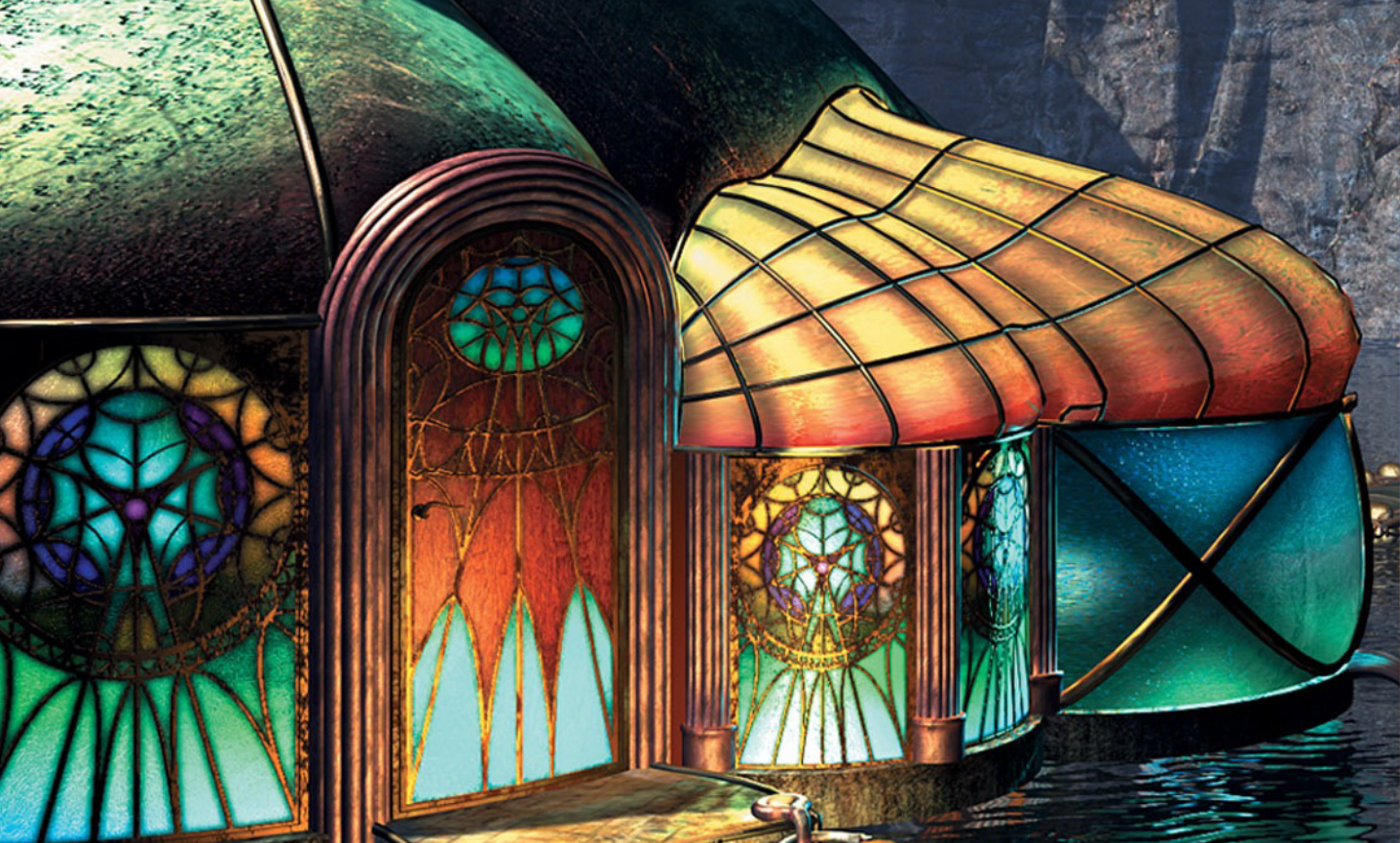
Nancy The Happy Whore and the Perfidious Petrol Station
(Technocrat)



The Bum
(Gribbler & Parafia)



Dark Black
(dactylopus, Purplescape)



Myst III: Exile

    Genre: adventure Developer: Presto Studios Publisher: Ubisoft Release date: May 7, 2001
Platforms: Windows, Mac OS X, Xbox, PlayStation 2 Website: none

Exile is the third title in the *Myst* series and the first one to be developed by an external studio. It was released in early 2001 by *Presto Studios* to moderate praise, later making it onto both the Xbox and Playstation 2 consoles.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Cyan initially offered the role of developing a third *Myst* game to several development studios; Interviewing several before settling on *Presto*. Development then took two and a half years, using *Presto Studio's* entire team, to complete. Technically, *Exile* copies a lot from its predecessors, with its prerendered node based graphics and minimal inventory; But it does add one major feature, which is a free look, panoramic, 360 degree, field of view; Which really opens up the gameworld.

The story of *Exile* takes place ten years after *Myst* and *Riven*. Atrus, who you rescued in *Myst*, and Catherine, who you rescued in *Riven*, are together and have a new daughter Yeesha. They are living in their new home on Earth called J'nanan, and you have been invited over by Atrus to travel to his new age of Releeshahn; The age written by Atrus at the end of the third and final book of *The Myst Reader* trilogy as the new home for the remainder of the D'ni civilization. But *Exile* is not focused on this present, or even the future, but the twenty year old past; The past of events of *Myst*. As you progress you learn more and more about the events that led directly to *Myst*; What the brothers were up to leading up to their

imprisonment, when you, the Stranger, entered the scene, in that first glimpse into the universe of *Myst*. The game takes place in a series of learning ages, designed by Atrus to teach his sons about age writing; There is the central age J'nanan, and four other ages (Amateria, Voltaic, Edanna, and finally Narayan) each designed to impart a specific lesson. This formula works very well with the concept of the *Myst* series and gives a perfectly logical reason to have a series of, mostly uninhabited, puzzles ages for you to explore.

This backwards facing narrative is quite expertly told, and I think it is my favorite *Myst* story found so far in any of the games. On a series level absolutely nothing happens in *Exile* and nothing is effected; It sounds like the most boring story of the entire series, but it is simply done quite well. The journal fragments that are scattered throughout the ages are very interesting, and provide a lot of detail. And they do it so much better than *Riven*, in *Riven* you are given whole journals at a time; In fact you start out with one. And they contain a significant chunk of text, requiring a rather lengthy period of just reading straight to get through one. In *Exile* you are given a few pages at a time, and it just feels so much more natural and interconnected with the game. Additionally, the ages

all contain some bit of this history as well, seamlessly embedded in their gameworlds. Continuing *Myst's* tradition of a CGI landscape with live-action actors; *Rand Miller* again reprises his role as Atrus, but this time around we see our first real professional actor; *Brad Dourif*, known for his role as a murderous psychopath in numerous films and TV shows, specifically *Star Trek*, *Babylon 5*, and as the voice of Chucky. All the characters in *Exile* do a wonderful job, there is a single instance where *Mr. Dourif* does a hilariously exaggerated step over a rather small CGI floor girder, but for the most part it is serious and believable.

The gameplay of *Myst III* continues the *Myst* trend





of having logic puzzles that require a lot of environmental observation to solve and often at least a little bit of critical thinking, sometimes a lot. Again, there are absolutely no inventory based puzzles nor any dialogue options. *Exile* has moderate difficulty puzzles, generally easy, but you will get hung-up for a short while on a few of them; Though, none of them are particularly hard, and in general they are quite logical. Some of the better logical puzzles are quite self contained, but others have hints spread all around, and this is a game where you will be writing quite a bit down and quite possibly having to backtrack to find clues that did not at first look

conspicuous. Overall, they are good, decent adventure game puzzles; I do not think that they live up to *Riven*, but they are far advanced from the ones encountered in *Myst* and better than average. Some of these puzzles are truly terrific, and I think that some people very well might prefer *Exile's* specific puzzle style to all of the previous *Myst* titles. They are, almost universally, far more visually dramatic than the previous games' with a great many of the puzzles having long detailed cinematics, and all of them having at least some visual feedback. It does this feedback very well, and watching these puzzles is clearly a highpoint of the entire experience; One

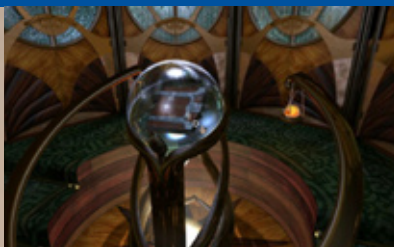
that is both graphically impressive and an improvement to the gameplay.

One of the main objects that *Presto Studios* had for *Exile* from the very start was to make your progress more obvious, to let players know how far they have come and how far there was left to go; I would say they are completely successful at this, it is obvious right off what your main objective is and what sub-objects need to be accomplished to get there, you are even given an indication of your specific objective for each of these sub-objectives; So you are pretty grounded all the way through. The game is separated into five small ages. A central hub, three mini



puzzles ages that can be completed in any order (including all at once, with you popping back and forth between them), and a final age where you only have access to a few rooms. So it is a very open experience, and you have a lot of freedom in what order you do things in; In this way it really hearkens back to the original *Myst*.

The visuals of *Exile* are a hard thing to review. There is a lot of beauty, but also a lot of ugliness. The CGI and live-action cutscenes are crisp and high quality, but the regular static graphics are simply grainy. It is particularly ridiculous when a scene changes over from a regular game-screen to a video cutscene, as you see the exact same scene, just with drastically better graphics. You would think with hours of high definition video that they could of spared the space to make the individual game screens a more decent quality. It still all looks good, and many scenes are still breathtaking, but it is always noticeable. One might also wonder why they start off the game with the ugliest scene in all of *Myst*. The room where you start the game is very noticeably grainy, but behind this graininess is just horrendous looking leafy vines and an uninspiring blurry view. Thankfully, it does not take long to move on from here and find some good looking scenes. Overall, this lack of quality really effects the game, and the overall impression is of a decent looking game; It absolutely does not live up to the series graphical standard of outdoing everyone else. Still the cinematics are top notch and amazing, but they are used mostly for animating the puzzles, animations that you really want to skip most of the time. Both these static graphics and cinematics are highly steampunk styled, and go to a far greater extreme to include some rather science-fictiony technology.



Myst III: Exile feels like a *Myst* game to me. It might not be made by *Cyan*, but I think the developers did a decent job of keeping the *Myst* style. Overall, I think it feels more like a sequel to *Myst* specifically, instead of *Riven*, and completely ignores some of the great things that *Riven* brought to the series. At the time of its original release, it was said that current fans of *Myst* would enjoy this sequel, but

it would not win over any converts (particularly prior *Myst* haters). I agree with this sentiment; *Riven* was a game that could win over old skeptics and new converts, *Exile* is a game that is simply a solid addition to the series and a quite a bit of fun for those that enjoy this sort of game. But it would of been a far better game if it had better quality stills, and would really benefit from a remastering. ●



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The beautiful cinematics, and some of the better logic puzzles.

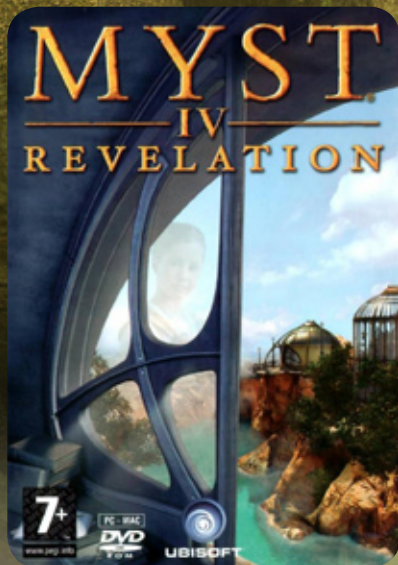
FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The low quality background stills.

VERDICT:

Good but with significant issues.





Myst IV Revelation



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: Ubisoft Release date: September 28, 2004

Platforms: Windows, Mac OS X, Xbox Website: none

Revelation is the fourth title in the original *Myst* series, and ends the story arc that began in *Myst* original and progressed through *Riven* and *Exile*. It was released in 2004, after *Uru* and after over three years of development by *Ubisoft*. It was to be the final game based on *Cyan's Myst* franchise to be developed by an external studio and the last title to use pre-rendered graphics.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Like *Exile*, *Revelation* uses a node based, 360 degree view system. The background images are pre-rendered, but there are a moderate number of cutscenes and quite a bit of animations added on-top of these still screens. Both the stills and the video are of an acceptable quality, you can notice a little fussiness in both on occasion, but altogether they are quite good. In contrast to previous *Myst* titles, *Revelation's* screen is alive with dynamic animations of every sort; Lighting, creatures, weather effects, water, and of course machinery. Indeed, they often seem to go overboard and fill the screen with so many different animations of every variety as to be distracting. These animations also interfere quite a bit with the full cutscenes, as all the dynamic animations obviously cannot sync up with the pre-rendered video; And in fact they do not even seem to try to get it as close as possible, with many effects left out entirely from the video.

Revelation's graphics are professionally done and boast



quite a few impressive technical achievements. But all of this is done with a bit less of the usual over the top consideration to detail and style; It is just somewhat bland in places. They do quite well regardless, even with all the lush, life filled environments that the story called for. The biggest issue, in my opinion, is the subject matter of the video cutscenes. For the most part the full video cutscenes are simply of walking down random corridors and opening random doors. I am not sure exactly why 50% of these cutscenes exist, or what they are supposed to add to the experience; None of them stand up to the dynamic, interesting, and over the top cutscenes found in *Exile*.

In *Revelation* your main hub, and a significant portion of the game,



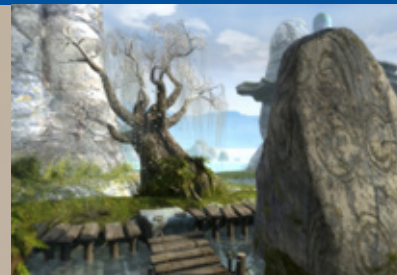
is Tomahna, Atrus's new home first seen in part in *Exile*. It is a delight to be able to explore this area in full this time around, and there are many interesting sights. You are called to Tomahna at the beginning of the game to help Atrus decide what to do with his long imprisoned sons Sirrus and Achenar. During the course of this game you will travel to their individual prison ages, Spire and Haven, and finally to Serenia. Spire is a world of soaring rock and crystal set above the multiple cloud layers; A world of power and wind. While Haven is a lush jungle island filled with alien creatures and adventure. Serenia, alternatively, is a populated world written by Catherine, Atrus's wife; With a serene controlled environment and many small



streams. *Revelation* ends the *Myst* story arc focusing on the brothers betrayal on *Myst*, even giving you a few hints of things you will see in the spin-off series *Uru*. In my opinion, based on content, *Myst IV: Revelation* has to be considered the last game in the main series, with *Myst V* being grouped with *Uru* in its spin-off series.

The gameplay is generally *Myst*-like, but there are many and critical playability problems. There are very few enjoyable puzzles, but the biggest problem are all the ones that are simply unplayable. Requiring the user to read D'ni at an angle is simply asking for problems, though this is still more readable than Catherine's journal. Similarly, to this word comparison is the even more challenging practically identical crystal puzzle. Both of these puzzles are moderately easy to figure out, and would be great puzzles, except they are basically impossible to input. Other puzzles are simply illogical, there is literally no logical sequence of thoughts that lead from the clues to the solution, for many of them. The controls are also quite annoying, and the game is just not fun; I do not think there is a single puzzle worth playing. One nice feature, that has is not new to the series, is all the content that is skippable if you already know some piece of knowledge. You could probably play through the game in about an hour a second time, and can skip Haven (about one quarter of the game) completely, among a few other individual puzzles.

I like *Revelation's* story; It is told well, and has the best story concept of any of the prior *Myst* games in my opinion. It looks good, even great occasionally. It simply has absolutely abysmal gameplay; It is



so ridiculously horrible, boring, and frustrating. I rather liked *Spire*, in all regards, at least relatively; But even its puzzles are not that great overall, even if its art is quite amazing. If the game was redone with all the puzzles made obvious and easy, it would be a great game. But as it stands I cannot recommend anyone play it, even

though not doing so means you will miss out on exploring some amazing worlds. One big disappointment is that even so far into the series this game still breaks the most simple of *Myst* canon, by creating with The Art. The game is about 10 hours, ideally, but with these puzzles it could easily take four times that number. ●



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The Age of Spire, and generally the story, and even the graphics, to some extent.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The illogical and frustrating puzzles.

VERDICT:

A great game mired in some of the worst puzzles of the entire genre.





The Night of the Rabbit



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: Daedalic Entertainment

Release date: May 29, 2013 Platforms: Windows, Mac OS X

Website: <http://rabbit.daedalic.de/en/>

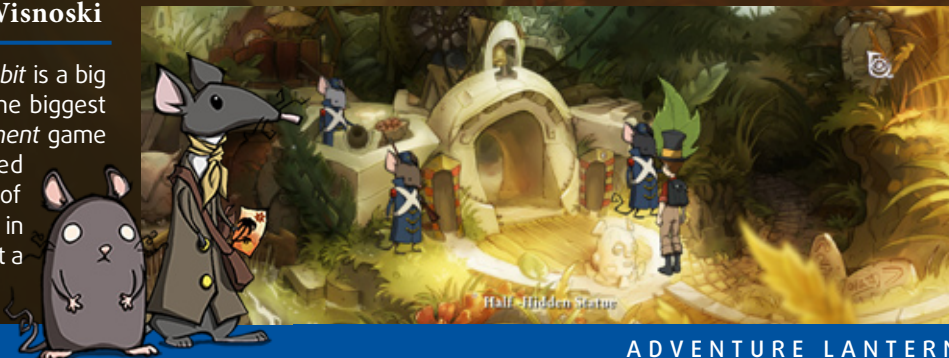


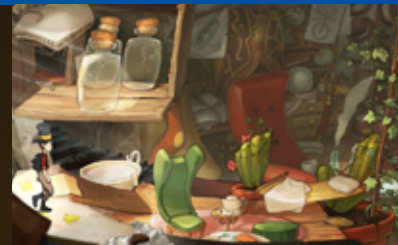
This latest point and click adventure by *Daedalic Entertainment* was released on the 29th of May. I got a sneak peak into this adventure a few days early, with a press pass, but from my understanding it is the same version that will be released, bugs and all; Though I would expect that some of the more damaging bugs will be patched soon. Luckily, while it is far from polished, it is still completely serviceable and the bugs do not really take away from the fun you can have with this charming adventure. Heading up the development of this title is *Matt Kempke* of *What Makes You Tick* fame, and personally, I was more excited to see a new game from him, than I was to see a new *Daedalic* title. The way *The Night of the Rabbit* ends, they have obviously left room for a direct sequel, but at the same time it does completely end one full storyline; So I imagine that the developers are only planning on a sequel if this first one sells well.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The *Night of the Rabbit* is a big game, it is easily the biggest *Daedalic Entertainment* game

I have ever played and I think it might be one of the biggest adventure titles in recent years. You can expect a play time of around fifteen





hours, and I would not expect much less than ten hours being possible, even with moderate use of a walkthrough. But that is just the beginning, they have stuffed this game full of bonus items and optional content; I did not even get to see most of it, and my achievements page shows that I was less than halfway through all of them, and I was trying. Altogether, there are eight stickers to find hidden among the scenes, as well as no less than 32 dew drops. I do not think you get anything by collecting all the stickers, but you are given access to a bonus image in game, which is a peak into the future of the plot, if you collect all 32 dew drops. You also get to collect a deck of cards, which you can use to play a game like Go Fish with pretty much everyone. But most worthwhile has to be the audio stories. There are a total of eight audio stories you can collect, which make up a grand total of just under three hours of audio!

So if you want to listen to these stories, you are probably going to add at least one hour extra to find them and about three to listen to them; And I could not even begin to estimate what it would take to find all of those dew drops, stickers, and get all the achievements. We would easily be in the low twenties to finish the game and get every single extra along the way, at least without extensive use of a walkthrough.

You play a twelve year old boy with only two days left of summer vacation. You dream of becoming a magician, and on this particular day you go adventuring in the forest between your rural home and the ever encroaching city. Your first task is simply to pick a basket of blackberries, so that your mother can make her delicious blackberry pie. But you soon are delivered a magic letter and your journey to become a magician begins. As the apprentice magician of Marquis De Hoto, you will journey to

the alternate dimension of Mousewood and beyond as a Treewalker, using portal trees. Mousewood, a wood populated with talking mice, squirrels, and other woodland creatures, will be your hub throughout your entire adventure, and 95% of all the game takes place here. Here you begin your training, but as you go about the regular routine of an apprentice magician you learn that lately there has been a rash of crow attacks and part of the city has been flooded. Add to this, mysterious strangers wearing the masks of men start appearing all over Mousewood, and fliers advertising the great illusionist Zaroff are appearing everywhere. This story is told almost completely through the ending and opening cinematics, with not much more than hints and suggestions in-between. It has been chastised for this style of storytelling, but it comes out ok and the charming characters





my system, even though I exceed their outrageous system requirements. And lag can be a serious problem in this game; Loading screens can take up a lot of time, and even after they end you might have to go to some lengths to squeeze every iota of system resources to prevent game ruining lag.

The gameplay is very conventional, without any surprises to be found among the main body of the game, but there are three exceptions to this rule. This gameplay sticks completely to item use with the occasional item combination thrown in. Which normally would be completely fine, but *The Night of the Rabbit* manages to make them all completely illogical and and directionless; I have not had to address a walkthrough so frequently in a long time. But the biggest problem has to be that you have no reason to solve most of these puzzles; And just by random happenstance do any of them bring you closer to your completely unrelated goals. One area where it does diverge from this item use is the magic spells you acquire throughout the game. It seems like a great shame that these spells are basically never used; Maybe once, right after acquiring a spell, you might have a use for a particular spell, but that is about it. And in fact, I think you might never

really hold the story together and keep everything interesting.

The Night of the Rabbit is presented as a children's story, but that is not everything it has to it. It may be set in a wood with friendly talking animals, a forest filled with magic; And the protagonist is even a twelve year old boy on an adventure to become a magician, during one of the last days of summer break; As if it could get any more cliched as that. But this childishness only really goes skin deep. The story is simply not as black and white as you would expect from a children's story. The villain has a backstory, and is neither a horrible person nor completely unlovable. Bad things do happen to good people. And by no means is the ending completely happy. In addition to this, alcohol, and even very slightly drugs, are hinted at, and death is no stranger to this world.

One part I thought was particularly interesting was the series of audio short stories. These tales, delightfully, are all set in Mousewood, and contain many of the people you meet in the game. They are pure children's stories through and through, and I think they are great; I think *Daedalic* could make these into a great, real, children's franchise in any medium. But I feel that they needed something extra in *The*

Night of the Rabbit. Three hours, or even just the twenty minutes per story, is a long time to just be staring at a static screen. And in particular,

no child who is used to similar children's tales is going to not care about the lack of visuals. I think if they included, even just a very few, sketches to go along with the story, like a real children's novel, it would go a long way to make them more enjoyable, and most of all accessible to children. As it is now, I cannot see most people actually wanting to spend that amount of time listening to these stories being narrated.

True to normal *Daedalic Entertainment* fashion, the graphics of *The Night of the Rabbit* are beautiful and hand-drawn. They are comprised of sprites on static 2D backgrounds with numerous animations. A very simple setup, but that does not translate into low system requirements. *The Night of the Rabbit* has larger system requirements than *Skyrim*, and that includes storage space, which in both is six gigabytes! They are obviously not even trying, and every game they release seems to get more laggy on



have to use the first spell you acquire, which is a spell to communicate with your master. It seems to be set up as a hint system, but he never says anything except for reiterating whatever quest he gave you, something that was almost completely devoid of useful information the first time you heard it. These powers are reused at the end of the game in an uninspired magic duel setting, but in a completely different form.

At the start of the game most of Mousewood is already available for you to explore, and a great many challenges can be started right away. Slowly the game opens up, and a few more areas are traversable as you progress. There are also non-Mousewood locations that are only visitable once, after completing a specific puzzle that is strictly ordered in the storyline, and never again. I think that was a very bad design choice; Not only is it just more enjoyable for locations to remain open, and for you to not be forced to complete an area in one straight push, nor have the possibility of missing some optional content that gets cut off from you; But it would also be better story-wise, as you are training to walk between worlds using portal trees, why should these travels be only one time events that you have no control over?

The Night of the Rabbit is an interesting title, if nothing else. Its concept, at least, is amazing, its characters are riveting, and much of its story is unique and fantastic; And all of this set in one of the most delightful worlds. But it simply has not been put together all that well. The puzzles and challenges are some of the weakest in recent memory, and all the bonus content seems like more a time waster than something that is enjoyable. The game is still not something I would warn anyone away from, but the only reason to pay this adventure title is for its story. ●



BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The delightful and charming Mousewood.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

Illogical and undirected challenges.

VERDICT:

A greatly flawed gem. With a unique setting, for an adventure game.



Parasite Eve



Genre: survival-horror/RPG Developer/publisher: Squaresoft
Release date: September 9, 1998 Platforms: PlayStation Website: none



When a game describes itself as being "cinematic," I interpret that to mean the game wants to be like a movie. To me, that means a game should emphasize its visuals, its story, and its characters, to make the game's overall presentation more closely resemble that of a typical Hollywood movie. Well the bad news for *Parasite Eve* is that its story and characters are absolute garbage, and nearly all of the game's audio-visual aesthetics fail to impress outside out of the pre-rendered cutscenes. Thankfully the gameplay is pretty good, providing an interesting blend of RPG and survival-horror elements, but that's the game's only saving grace.

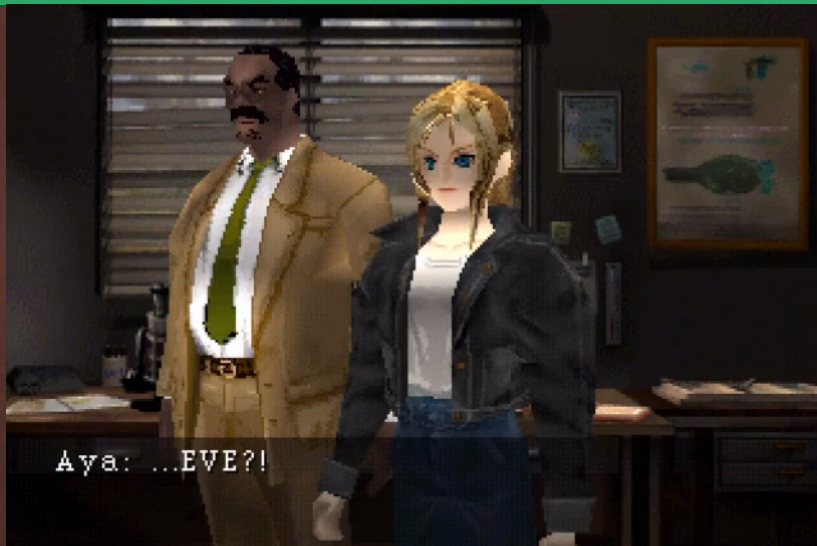
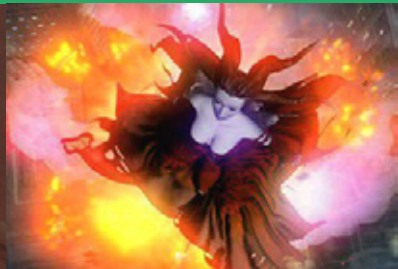
Review by Nick Burgener

The game begins with the main character, Aya Brea, a young NYPD rookie, arriving at an opera house with her date on Christmas eve. During the opera, the lead actress Melissa performs her solo

and everyone except for Aya bursts into flames. Melissa singles Aya out and comments about them having the same power, then flees backstage. Aya pursues Melissa and soon learns that their mitochondria have evolved so that they each possess supernatural powers, and that Melissa (now referring to

herself as Eve) is causing other people's mitochondria to over-produce energy to the point that everyone spontaneously combusts within her presence.

The entire game takes place over the course of six days as Aya and her partner, Daniel, investigate the phenomenon and try to put a stop



to Eve's plan of eradicating inferior human life. The set-up is fairly interesting, but the rest of the game does little to build on the premise. The rest of the game can be safely described as a wild goose chase with Aya and Daniel racing back and forth between the district 17 police station, and wherever Eve happens to appear next. There's some kind of backstory going on that explains

why Aya has the "mitochondria powers" and what her relation to Eve is, but it feels forced and doesn't add anything to the story.

The bulk of the actual story-telling happens during dialogue sequences where characters are either standing perfectly still, or sitting in a car on their way to or from the police station. During these scenes, there's no music whatsoever and none of

the characters are voiced (which isn't a bad thing by itself), so you're often sitting in complete silence while these characters go back and forth with their inane dialogue. Typically while you're doing the actual gameplay, Daniel and/or Maeda (a Japanese scientist they bump into on the street) are off-screen doing research, and then they show up to dump expository diarrhea on you.





Virtually all of the characters' explanations for what's going on in the plot is filled to the brim with biological pseudoscience, as if it was written by someone who took a biology class once in their life and decided to throw terms around without really understanding what they're talking about. Meanwhile, the writing often feels clunky and awkward. Whenever a character is explaining to Aya what he found out off-screen, she periodically repeats the last thing they said in the form of a question. It's like the whole scene was written as one long monologue, and then someone realized they had to make a dialogue or else it would be too

boring, and so they just had Aya ask mindless questions to fill up space. This is an actual excerpt:

Maeda: I came across some findings... mmm... yes... First of all, there was blood serum with Maya's name labeled on it in the freezer.

Aya: ...My sister's name... And...?

Maeda: Well... the research code for it was called EVE...

Aya: EVE?! Then EVE really IS...

Maeda: It appears to have been made up of liver cells. He was culturing them in the past.

Aya: What do you mean, culturing? What for...?

Maeda: Recently, it appears he was conducting research on artificial sperm... For Eve, of course...

Aya: ...For Eve...?

Maeda: Err... yes... he wanted to exclude the mitochondria from the sperm and create new sperm... Sperm with no parasites... Sperm with only the nucleus...

Aya: Sperm without... the mitochondria...?

The awkward, tedious monotony of dialogue scenes is further accentuated by the fact that characters spend most of the time standing completely still. Every so often they make some

kind of gesture, but it looks stiff and clunky. Turning in place, for example -- an animation that happens anytime a character turns to address another character -- puts the character into their normal walking animation while they slowly rotate in place. Not only does it look bad, but it slows down the flow of dialogue when you have to sit there waiting for them to get into place before the next line of dialogue actually starts. It's equally disappointing that there's no benefit in talking to people multiple times -- after getting out of a cutscene, if you try talking to someone they'll just repeat their last line of dialogue from the cutscene.

Not that you'd want to talk to anyone, anyway, since none of the characters have any real personality. They're entirely one-dimensional and never develop or evolve beyond their one, shallow trait. Daniel is the hard-assed cop, Maeda is the meek scientist, and so on. They just exist to have someone explain what's going on to Aya (and thus, the player), not because they serve any real purpose in the story. Daniel, for instance, has a divorced wife and a son who serve as his motivation, but his interactions with his son feel hollow and meaningless, and even though he feels a great deal



Melissa: I'm... Melissa... I'm...
NO...! I'm... I...

of anguish when Lorraine dies (spoiler alert), it's impossible to sympathize with him because they never bothered to develop that relationship.

I found the threat of Eve especially difficult to care about, which made the entire game an obligatory chore of getting to the end just to be done with it. For starters, Eve isn't characterized as anything more than your stereotypical monstrous villain who wants to destroy life because they're superior. She's not exactly unique or memorable. Secondly, aside from two 30-second cutscenes where opera audiences are set on fire, you don't get to see her actually doing anything to anyone or anything. There's no tension and nothing's at stake, except for something Eve might theoretically do. New York gets completely evacuated halfway through the game, and at that point there's literally no one around for Eve to pose any threat towards. So it just feels like an arbitrarily forced conflict between heroine and villain.

Fortunately, the gameplay makes up for most of the story's shortcomings, and makes the game somewhat worthwhile. *Parasite Eve* is

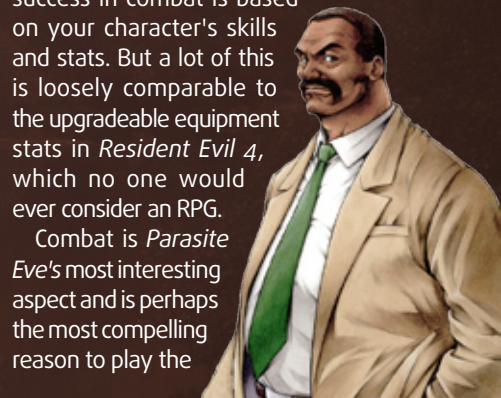
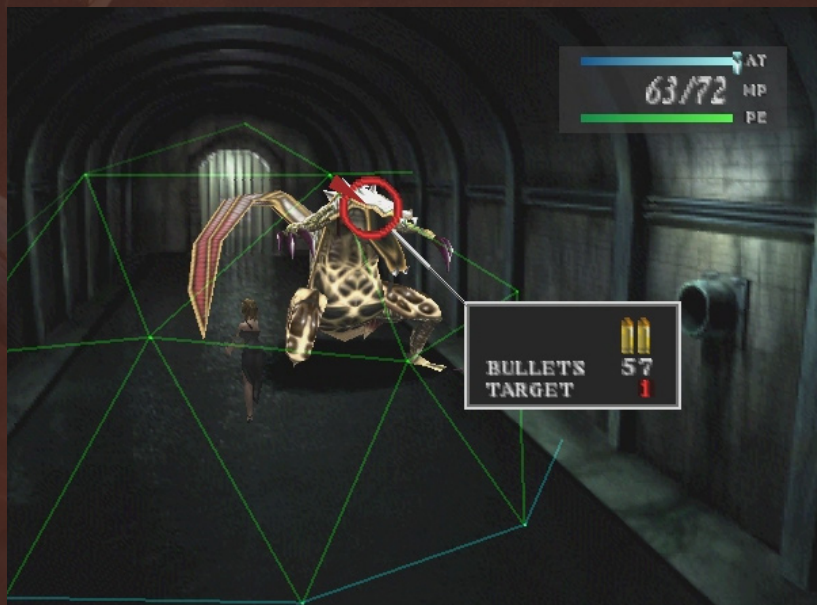
commonly described as a mixture between *Resident Evil* and *Final Fantasy VII*, in the sense that it's a survival-horror game with a leveling system, stats, and quasi-turn-based combat. The game is divided between story segments and gameplay segments; when you're not watching a cutscene or cycling through dialogue, you're typically alone in one of Manhattan Island's various locales fighting strange, mutated monsters, collecting loot, and managing a limited inventory, while collecting keys and finding other ways to advance to the desired location.

Parasite Eve has all of the essential ingredients of a survival-horror game, but it doesn't go all the way with those elements. As with any survival-horror game, you're all alone in desolate environments fighting grotesque monsters, but it's tough to feel on-edge walking around ordinary Manhattan, especially considering the monsters always feel like a random encounter from a JRPG. You have to collect ammunition for your weapons, but there's an over-abundance of ammo so there's never any risk of

running out. You can collect items to restore your health, but these items are plentiful as well and you can even heal yourself using "parasite energy," which periodically recharges on its own. You can only save in designated areas, but unlike *Resident Evil*, you don't also need a consumable item to save your game.

The RPG elements are there as well, in an equally subtle fashion. Battles are fought using a modified "active time" system from *Chrono Trigger* or *FFVII*. After every battle you gain experience points that go towards leveling up, which increases your character's stats in various ways. At each level-up you're awarded a variable amount of "bonus points" (which decreases the more damage you take) that you can allocate into different stats. Weapons and armor have different stats and effects, and you can upgrade them using bonus points or other consumable items. Much of your success in combat is based on your character's skills and stats. But a lot of this is loosely comparable to the upgradeable equipment stats in *Resident Evil 4*, which no one would ever consider an RPG.

Combat is *Parasite Eve*'s most interesting aspect and is perhaps the most compelling reason to play the





enemies for whom you'd actually want to know that information. As a result, I used magic primarily for healing.

The combat system balances the strategic appeal of certain turn-based RPGs while providing some of the fun, engaging qualities of an action game. The main reason I wanted to play *Parasite Eve* was just to try out of the combat, because I don't think I've ever played anything like it. It feels pretty unique, and that alone makes the game worth playing. Unfortunately, the game doesn't always give you easy camera angles to work with, sometimes making it very difficult to perceive depth and thus making it harder to dodge attacks, and basic actions like reloading a gun takes five or six button presses across three different sub-menus.

Furthermore, *Parasite Eve* commits the cardinal sin of featuring a sewer level, complete with repetitive, labyrinthine corridors and the most obnoxious status-inducing enemies in the entire game. All of the corridors are literally carbon copies of one another, so it's hard to wrap your head around where you are relative to other corridors if you're trying to explore everywhere for hidden loot, and the enemies all have a tendency to inflict poison and blindness on you. Enemies always spawn in groups of four or five, and the moment you stop to shoot one of them you're basically guaranteed to become blinded by an enemy because your feet are rooted to the floor during the shooting animation. Sewer levels seem to suck in every game ever,

game. Combat is quasi-turn-based and uses the same mechanics as the active time system from previous Squaresoft games, meaning you have to wait for a gauge to fill up before you can execute commands. The key difference in *PE* is that you're free to move around while the gauge charges. This is essential for dodging enemy attacks and making sure you're within range to hit an enemy when the gauge fills up. The camera typically assumes an overhead angle with enemies using melee and ranged attacks, requiring that you learn their patterns so you know where to stand or how to move.

When the action gauge fills up you can enter a command to shoot an enemy by selecting them. A gun's stats affect its efficacy in battle, but one of the most important stats is its range -- when you select the attack option, a wire-frame dome appears around you, indicating your accurate range. Enemies within the dome are likely to be hit, enemies outside will be missed. You're also more likely to score critical hits at close range. So combat has this fun nuance of trying

to stay far enough away from enemies to avoid being hit, while also staying close enough to fire accurately, as well as finding the right moment to attack. Getting up close to an enemy is a high-risk behavior because you're more likely to get hit, but it also comes with a high reward of scoring critical hits.

Besides conventional arms, you also have special mitochondria powers that function similarly to magic spells in a fantasy RPG. Instead of consuming mana, you consume parasite energy, a meter that regenerates on its own, but regenerates more slowly the more magic you use. As you level-up you unlock more skills, including basic healing spells, buffs, debuffs, and special attacks. These special skills are nice for the sake of variety, but buffs and debuffs don't last nearly long enough to feel worthwhile, since they only seem to last two rounds and then you're stuck recasting it. Other skills like "Liberate" border on being game-breaking, and the "Scan" skill (which displays an enemy's health and weaknesses) is totally useless against bosses, the only



and this game is one of the worst offenders.

The game's overall difficulty was somewhat sporadic. I made it through the entire game with relative ease, never once using any of the equipment upgrade items I'd collected. I just didn't see the point in upgrading a gun or armor that would inevitably become obsolete the moment I found a better one, so I just stockpiled them. When I got to the final boss, I found myself getting my ass kicked and finally had to use all of those upgrades and customize my equipment. I ended up dying 4-5 times against a multi-stage final boss that can basically one-shot you at numerous points, after only dying a couple of times in the entire game. I wish the main gameplay emphasized the survival elements more, and that final boss were a little less cheap.

Visually, *Parasite Eve* gets by with adequacy but doesn't impress very much. Most of the character models look pretty good for the time (especially compared to *FFVII*'s models), but Aya in particular looked incredibly

mannish with her broad shoulders and narrow waist. Most of the animations, though, look stiff and clunky. The pre-rendered 2D backgrounds all look decent, but ultimately feel a bit grainier than similar games of the time. Musically, *Parasite Eve* is bit of a disappointment. It often feels like there's no music in the game, with the same few themes repeating ad nauseam. Sound effects for things like gunshots always sound tinny and unsatisfying. In general, there's just not much sound in the game.

Parasite Eve uniquely blends survival-horror and RPG elements together, and despite not being especially great in either category, the combination works well enough to be a satisfying gameplay experience. The overall experience could be greatly improved, however, by enhancing both the survival-horror and RPG mechanics. The combat feels totally unique and is reason enough to play the game. It's just disappointing that, for a game describing itself as "the cinematic RPG," the story, characters, and general presentation are all rubbish. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The unique blend of action and turn-based survival-horror/RPG combat.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The storytelling is pretty atrocious, and none of the characters are worth caring about.

VERDICT:

The game's weak story/characters are saved by the interesting gameplay, but the overall experience is still mediocre.



Adventure Lantern

