Adventure Lantern

REVIEWS:
- Beyond Atlantis II
- Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars. The Director's Cut
- Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror. Remastered
- Lilly Looking Through
- Runaway: A Twist of Fate
- The Wolf Among Us. Episode 1: Faith
- Tokyo Jungle

EDITORIAL

I was reluctant to turn off the game when my mother declared that it was time to go. She was done packing for the trip and we had a nine-hour drive ahead of us. I was excited at the prospect of visiting Antalya for the first time, a reportedly beautiful city along the southern coast of Turkey. However, I did not want to stop playing *Broken Sword II*. It was before the days when laptops became prominent. Going on the trip meant I would have to leave my desktop computer behind and stay away from the game for a week. I grudgingly turned off the game and shut down the computer, wondering where George Stobbart's journey was about to take him next.

The vacation in Antalya turned out to be better than I could imagine. Founded around 150 BC, the city was rich with Greek, Roman, and Turkish history. From the ancient theatre Aspendos to the remains from the Ottoman Empire, there was more than we could explore in one week. The wonderful seashore and the modern city were great attractions in and of themselves. At the end of the week, I was reluctant to leave. Going back to school seemed very mundane when I could be exploring more of Antalya.

I had all but forgotten about *Broken Sword II* by the time we returned to our apartment. However, before long, the game had once again captivated my attention. The animations and the backgrounds were absolutely stunning. The characters and environments were depicted so vibrantly that it beckoned you to explore. Adding in the game's lighthearted atmosphere and great use of humor made the world of *Broken Sword II* highly compelling. The story involving a mysterious Mayan stone was fascinating, starting with a bang as the protagonist George tried to escape a fire in the opening scene and not letting go until the end credits rolled. Though what I enjoyed the most were the main characters George Stobbart and Nico Collard. They both seemed very likeable, resilient, and full of personality. In the end, *Broken Sword II: The Smoking Mirror* was an excellent journey and became one of my all-time favorite adventure games.

Looking back on the game sixteen years later, it is interesting to contemplate whether or not *The Smoking Mirror* would have made such a strong impression on me if I had played the original *Broken Sword* first. When the first game, *Broken Sword: The Shadows of the Templars*, came out, I was not able to purchase a copy. In a few months, *Broken Sword* disappeared from the stores in my area. At a time when online stores like Amazon or eBay were not readily available, I had no other venue to purchase the game. As such, I ended up playing *The Smoking Mir-ror* before *The Shadows of the Templars*. *Broken Sword II* was where I met George and Nico for the first time.

It was more than three years later, after I moved to the U.S., when I finally bought a copy of the original game on eBay. I still remember my excitement at receiving the package at the campus post office and hurrying back to my dorm room to play the game. It was a chance to finally see the beginning of George and Nico's story. In a few hours, I was again completely taken by the gorgeous environments, charming humor, and the captivating storyline. It was delightful to travel all over Europe with George. It was easy to see why the game had been a huge success at the time of its release. I could not stop playing until I reached the end of the adventure.

After finishing *The Shadows of the Templars*, I played through *The Smoking Mirror* again to better appreciate the connection between the two games. The original game had greater depth, but the sequel still held up very nicely on a replay. Years later, both games remain treasured items in my collection.

With the fifth *Broken Sword* adventure *The Serpent's Curse* on the horizon, it was delightful to have Rob review the remastered versions of *The Shadows of the Templars* and *The Smoking Mirror* in this edition of Adventure Lantern. Much like reading Jonathon's articles on the first two *Atlantis* games, Rob's reviews are like visits from old friends. Seventeen years after the release of the first *Broken Sword* adventure, it is impressive to see how much lasting value the series had. Here's hoping *The Serpent's Curse* lives up to the legacy of *The Shadows of the Templars* and *The Smoking Mirror*.

Until next time,

– Ugur Sener

NEWS

INTERVIEW

ADVENTURER'S RAVINE

UNCHARTED WATERS

AdventureX 2013

AdventureX is coming on December 7th and 8th to London, England. At the expo you can expect:
• video-game exhibitors, developers, publishers and related skills
• secialist talks on game design, adventure games & related subjects
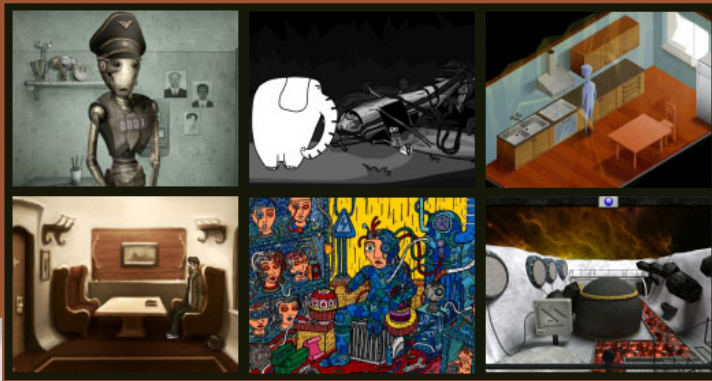• game demonstrations and hand-on gaming
• special guest talks and many other surprises
• live web stream provided by Screen 7

ScummVM: Wintermute

ScummVM tells us that they are now finalizing the addition of the Wintermute engine.

Following Freeware: September 2013

Latest artcile from AdventureGamers.com "You can become a cyborg trying to break out of a scientific facility or an android breaking into the dark recesses of an underground bunker. Explorers can try to find their way around a surreal house, delve into the deeper realms of their own sleeping minds or journey into fantastical pocket universes. Alternatively, you could take on such diverse goals as selecting a target to assassinate, rebuilding an elephant's beloved vacuum cleaner, or simply getting a drink on a disturbing overnight train. All these await you in this month's roundup of releases from the freeware scene."

Journey to the Center of the Earth 10th Anniversary

Frogwares wrote an article recently about one of their very first games, Journey to the Center of the Earth.

Telltale: Game of Thrones

Multiple sites are reporting that Telltale are currently working on a Game of Thrones adventure game, though officially Telltale has no official stance on this yet.

Announcements

Bolt Riley: A Reggae Adventure Game

Become a Jamaican Reggae legend in an adventure game designed by the creators of the Quest for Glory series. A Kickstarter was launched, looking for $120K, but ultimately failed to even get half of this amount. I have read no work yet on if they still plan on going ahead with this game, yet.

Harvest

Harvest is a 2D graphic adventure game set in the future of Detroit where a chemical war took place, leaving 99% of the population of earth unable to produce offspring.

Decoherence

AdventureGamers.com has an interesting artcile up on an upcoming adventure title, Decoherence.

The following is a small quote of the article:
"In Decoherence, players get to explore the human mind in a philosophical sense. By meeting and getting to know both fictional and history-based characters, you will be given the ability to interpret different worldviews, possibly even your own."

Delaware St. John 4: Asylum of the Lost

With the Drake Institute, there's much more than meets the eye. Even the stories of abuse, conspiracy and torture won't prepare you for what Delaware and Kelly will face this night. If the creepy, abandoned building isn't enough, powerful forces shift time to trap Delaware in the past when the hospital was operational by the Drake family. Dig deep and solve the puzzles that will reveal much more than skeletons in this twisted family's closet.

Asylum of The Lost is the fourth installment of the Delaware St. John series and a first-person point-and-click PC adventure game that takes place in the long-abandoned Drake Institute for the Mentally Ill. While the hospital had a reputation for housing some of the most emotionally damaged people in the upstate NY area, it also floated rumors that innocents could also be arranged to be taken, for a price.

This is third Kickstarter to tr and revive this adventure series, and the developers have cut a lot of excess in this go at it. I am fairly certain that this time round they have a very good chance, with superb tiers and a very reasonable goal. They are looking for a measly $10,000, with a $10 pre-order tier, and a $15 tier that give you a copy of their previous three games plus a pre-order.

The Slaughter

The Slaughter is a film noir style 2D point-and-click adventure with gameplay in the vein of the classic LucasArts and Revolution games, but with dark adult themes. Set in Victorian London, the games takes place in the shadow of a string of serial killings. With a Kickstarter ongoing, The Slaughter is looking for £8,000, with a £8 pre-order tier.

The 7th Guest 3: The Collector

Trilobyte Games has just launched a Kickstarter to fund a second sequel to The 7th Guest. The Collector, a direct sequel to both The 7th Guest and The 11th Hour, is looking for $435,000 in funding, and gives you a pre-order for $20.

"[In this upcoming game] you re-enter the mysterious and magical Stauf mansion, newly remodeled and filled with classic Stauf games, toys, diabolical puzzles and artifacts."

The Walking Dead: Season Two

Season two of Telltale's most prestigious series is coming. Set a few months after the end of the first series, season two continues the story of Clementine, and is currently available for pre-order at 10% off for PC and Mac.

Upcoming Releases

Gomo

Gomo, a game I have reported on a few times already, is finished development. At the time of this writing it is not yet available for purchase, but it likely will be by the time this issue is published.

Broken Sword: The Serpents Curse

This fifth title in the classic adventure series, Broken Sword, has a release date for its two episodes. The computer version, at least, will debut on December 4th, with the second episode following soon after. They plan on released the game simultaneously on PC / Mac / Linux through Steam, GOG.com, and Revolution's own store.

brand new *Broken Sword* on the 4th of December!
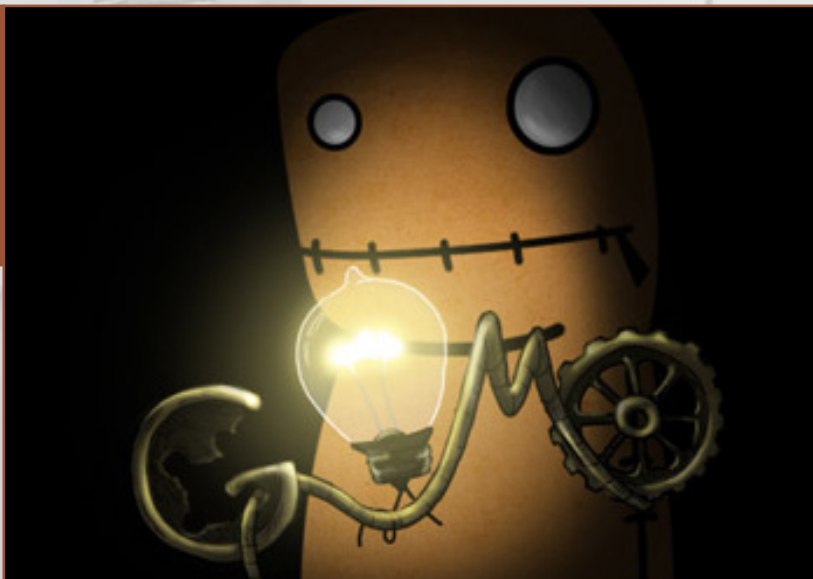
Reset

Reset is a sci-fi noir mystery, first person puzzle game. In it you will navigate mind boggling puzzles, experience a grippingly haunting but beautiful story, and explore an unparalleled immersive atmosphere. With an ongoing Indiegogo campaign, Reset is looking to raise €65,000, with a €20 pre-order tier.

Stasis

A classic point & click adventure game played from a unique isometric view point set in a science fiction universe in 2D. Stasis has an ongoing Greenlight and Kickstarter campaign. It is looking for $100,000, with a $19 pre-order tier.

The Dead Flowers Case

In addition to The Dead Flowers Case getting a new teaser trailer, I am very excited by some incredible revelations from the studio, I had never heard before. Apparently, the developers, Mando Production, are the team who formerly worked alongside Benoit Sokal in White Birds Productions. Mando Production are also running an ongoing Kickstarter, looking to raise $290K for The Dead Flowers Case. In it $15 gets you a pre-order.
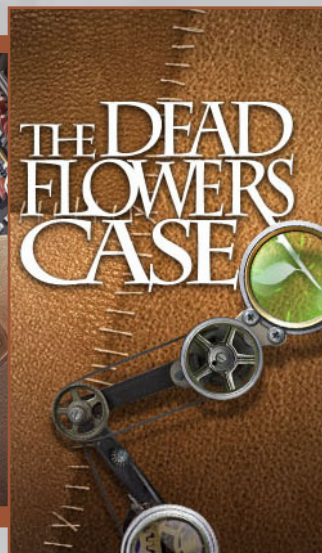
NaissanceE

This amazing looking exploration game has just got greenlit, with a release date of early 2014.

New Releases

Journey of a Roach

Hello and welcome to the post-apocalyptic world of Jim and Bud. They're two mutated roaches but that doesn't make them any less likeable!

In Daedalic Entertainment and Kobold Games' latest new adventure you will accompany these two on their way through an old subterranean bomb shelter and help them acquiring the greatest of all treasures.

Nancy Drew: The Silent Spy

The 29th title in the Nancy Drew series has arrived, and is filled with mystery and adventure, and this time it is personal.

"Nearly a decade ago Agent Kate Drew left home to neutralize a biochemical weapon in Scotland. While her assignment was a success, Kate died in a car accident. Or so we were told. Now the echoes of a similar plot reverberate and it's up to you, as detective Nancy Drew, to thwart the sleeper cell and expose the truth about your mother's tragic demise."

Lilly Looking Through

This platforming adventure game that was funded last year through Kickstarter was released November 1st, for PC and Mac.

Updated Releases

Dracula: Resurrection

The original title in the classic Dracula adventure series has been ported to Android. You can play it, or its sequel, for the very reasonable price of $3, or give the first game a try with the free demo.
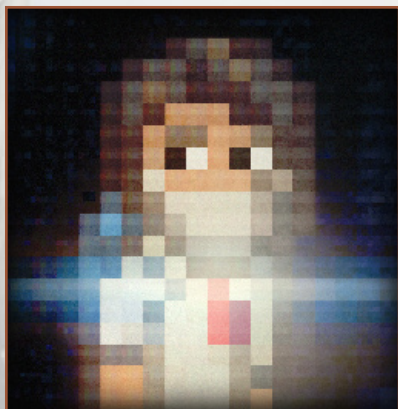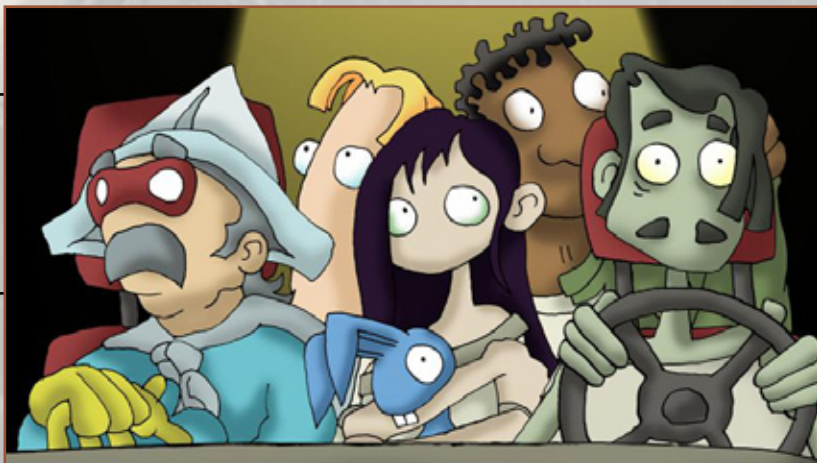

Lone Survivor: The Directors Cut

This massive update for Love Survivor is out for Mac and PC as well as PlayStation 3 and PlayStation Vita. All previous owners get this massive update, that took the developer ten whole months, for free.

Edna & Harvey: The Breakout

Daedalic Entertainment's very first title, and I think it is its very best by many metrics, has just made it

The Shiva

An update comes to one of Wadjet Eye Games very first titles, in the form of The Shiva: Kosher Edition. Featuring: updated graphics, newly composed music, rabbinical conversation methods, talmudic combat, Fully-voiced dialogue (Abe Goldfarb's debut role!), and Three different endings.
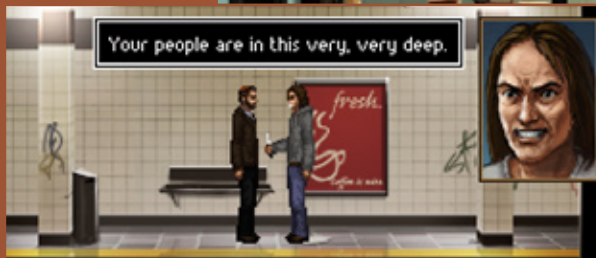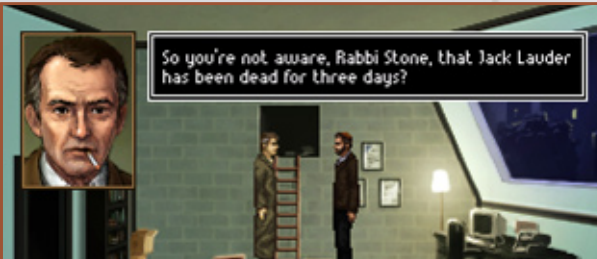
The Last Express

The near legendary adventure, The Last Express, is now available on Android devices, thanks to the hard work of dotemu. Pick up a copy for $4 at the Google store. Additionally, it has made it to Steam, with the release of the new Gold Edition, for PC and Mac. This new edition adds an advanced hint system, a more intuitive UI & improved inventory, challenging achievements, as well as in-game bonuses.

News From the Big Blue Cup

Monty the Komodo Dragon (Fitz) -
Meet Monty! No, he's not an actual dragon. He's just a lizard. A very, VERY big lizard. He's also a husband to a loving wife and a father to a lovable child. As a dutiful housekeeper, he is the one providing for his family. His ever hungry and glutinous family...

Absent (fentonfilmgames) -
A story which follows the character of young-adult and college student, Murray Schull. He and his two best friends, Eve and Steve, attend a college in which students are disappearing daily. It's up to them to find out how this is happening, why this is happening, protect their other friends, and to put a stop to it once and for all. Steve's girlfriend, Crystal, has mysteriously disappeared on her way home from college. But further into the investigation, and through Murray's new-found paranormal visions, Murray realises that whatever caused Crystal's disappearance was not anything from this earth. Alongside his vision, Murray is confronted with puzzles, with friends turning against each other, and all for one reason, The Reaper.

4-Lung Boy (Anatola Howard) -
A short point & click adventure story, designed and illustrated by Anatola Howard & put into motion by denzquix. Originally made for a contest with a 9 day time limit.
"A week after moving to a small town, you are confronted by frustration, an astronaut, and striped siblings..."

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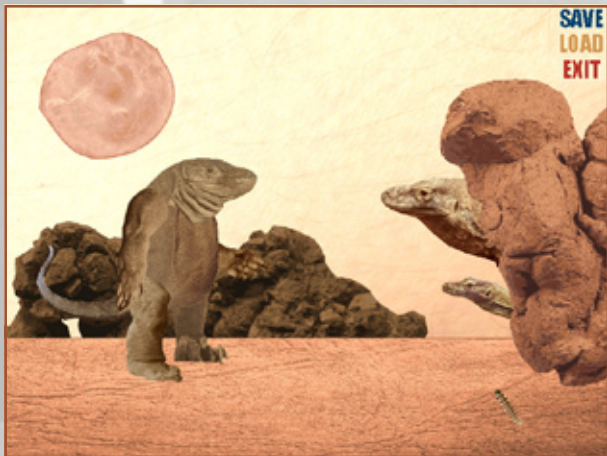15
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30th

4-Lung Boy
(Anatola Howard)

Absent
(fentonfilmgames)

Monty the Komodo Dragon
(Fitz)

BRYAN STEEL

DELAWARE ST. JOHN
Asylum of the Lost

Conducted by Ugur Sener

I met *Delaware St. John* for the first time in February 2006, when I played *The Curse of Midnight Manor*. I immediately liked the young detective who investigated paranormal activities. Delaware was brave, resourceful, and quick-witted. Throughout the adventure, Delaware also had an excellent dynamic with his partner Kelly Bradford. *The Curse of Midnight Manor* was designed as the first episode in a series of ten games featuring Delaware. Each episode was intended to have two unique stories with an overarching core storyline tying the games together.

By the time I finished *The Curse of Midnight Manor*, I was a fan of the series. The story and the atmosphere were captivating. The game made good use of Delaware's unique abilities and nicely developed the relationship between Delaware and Kelly. The horror themese were nicely mixed with a sense of humor that delivered memorable and enjoyable experience.

The Curse of Midnight Manor was followed by *The Town with No Name*, inviting players to explore a different setting. The third chapter, *The Seacliff Tragedy*, was released in 2007. The third episode ended with a great twist, leaving players wondering where the series would be headed next.

However, after the release of *The Seacliff Tragedy*, *Delaware St. John* disappeared from the adventure gaming scene for several years. The developer Bryan Wiegele, now Bryan Steel, had plans for all ten chapters of the series. However, the fourth episode was delayed due to a lack of funding. Several months ago, Bryan launched a Kickstarter project to finance the development of episode 4 or *Asylum of The Lost*. The campaign had very ambitious goals of redesigning the game engine and offering a longer gaming experience. Unfortunately, the original Kickstarter campaign failed to meet its funding goal.

Now, Mr. Steel is once again trying to fund the development of *Asylum of the Lost* through a Kickstarter campaign. This time, the campaign has a humble budget and already reached over half of its funding goal by the time we contacted Mr. Steel for
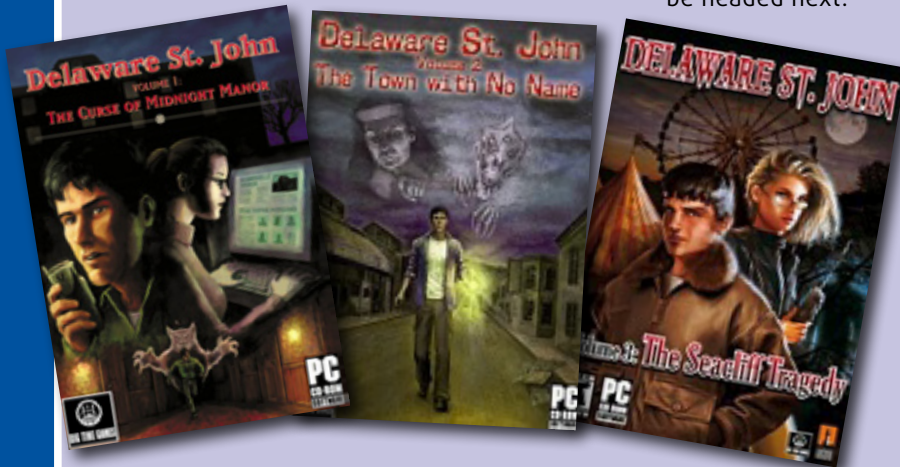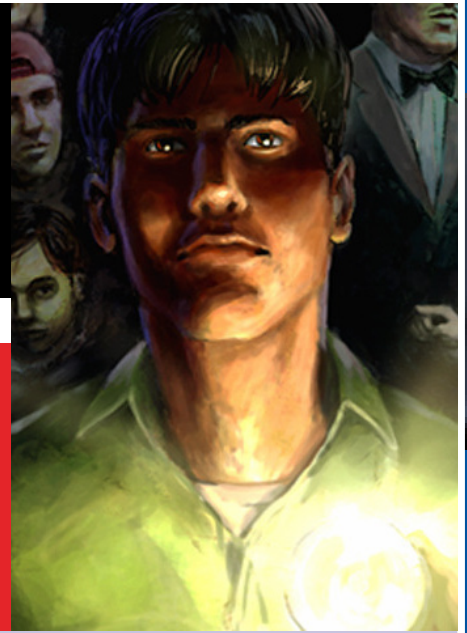
Delaware searches for a way into the abandoned asylum.

an interview. He kindly agreed to give us information about the most recent campaign and the status of *Delaware St. John* episode 4.

[Adventure Lantern]: It's been several months since we discussed the first Kickstarter campaign to bring back the *Delaware St. John* series. Can you tell us a little about what happened in the interim?

[Bryan Steel]: This is our third campaign to get *Asylum of the Lost* in production. The goals of the first campaign were huge. We wanted to create a full-scale real-time 3D adventure game and the budget reflected that. The fans spoke up, we listened and adjusted the campaign for a second run. During the second run I had to make a tough decision and ended up closing the campaign prematurely. For the third try we've scaled the game back as far as we could while retaining the level of quality established by the previous games.

[AL]: What did you learn from the previous campaigns?

[Bryan]: I think the biggest thing we learned was keep things simple. This is why for the third try we've cut out all fluff and plan to deliver a quality game experience for as low a development cost as possible.

[AL]: This time the Kickstarter campaign has a much smaller budget. Can you tell us how this will impact the game?

[Bryan]: We've established that the base $10,000 goal will allow us to create a high-quality 6-hour game experience. We've established stretch goals to allow for a game up to 10 hours if we're able to hit those. Other than game length, everything will be similar to the previous games in the series.

[AL]: How will *Asylum of the Lost* compare to the previous *Delaware St. John* titles?

[Bryan]: The story took a big twist in *The Seacliff Tragedy*. *Asylum of the Lost* opens on a darker tone and will keep that feel throughout the game. There's also a tie-in to the first game, *The Curse of Midnight Manor*, which I think fans will really appreciate. It's going to be a very emotional game and even creepier than the previous games.

[AL]: What can you tell us about the story? Did you make any changes since the first Kickstarter campaign?

[Bryan]: I actually have the base storyline for all 10 *Delaware* games planned out from the initial work I did in 2004 when starting the

The past becomes the present for Delaware.

series. The story for *Asylum of the Lost* is still the same as it was for the previous campaigns. The only changes I would make is scaling the story to fit whatever game size we ultimately are funded for. I don't think the player would ever notice this, it's something that would happen in the background. As with the previous games, there are two main stories. For *Asylum of the Lost*, the focus is on two young lovers unlucky to meet in the hospital. The second story will focus more on the main history of the building, digging deeper into the past events that ultimately led to the hospital's closure. I don't want to say too much because, as I said before, there are twists and relationships to previous events I want the player to experience first-hand.

[AL]: What about the setting? What kind of environments can players expect to explore?

[Bryan]: The hospital we've

Ghosts can't harm the living, right?

built is broken up in a way that exposes the player initially to a creepy environment but as the story progresses, the player gets deeper and deeper into progressively more horrifying environments. While playing as Delaware, he finds himself shifting from current day into the past when the hospital was still operational. We plan on using these environment shifts to play with the player's sense of security.

[AL]: What kind of puzzles can we expect to tackle?

[Bryan]: I keep a notebook with sketches and basic ideas for puzzles but it's not until the game is in development when they become fully realized. I don't want to give too much away but I can say expect the puzzles and overall mystery to increase for this game.

[AL]: Are the voice actors from the previous games on board for the new project?

[Bryan]: We are truly blessed to have such an amazing team behind the series. We're very happy to say the actors are all excited and on board for the latest adventure!

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

[Bryan]: With our current development schedule we will have a beta build ready around August, 2014. The final game would be released in October, 2014.

[AL]: What are some of the incentives available through the Kickstarter campaign?

[Bryan]: We've really been listening to everyone and think we've developed some really cool rewards. We offer backers the chance to have their likeness featured as a character in the game. We offer DRM-Free copies of all three previous Delaware games. We even have a tier called "*Fan for Life*" which means backers will get a copy of every future game in the series! We're always taking suggestions for more rewards so we encourage everyone to speak up and contact us!

[AL]: How can Delaware fans support the project?

[Bryan]: Fans can show support by either directly pledging to the Kickstarter campaign or helping us spread the word. As of now we're only 38% away from achieving our base goal so word of mouth is critical for us to close that final gap!

You can get the latest info about the game from our Facebook page here.

Kelly gets closer than she'd like to the spectral Hunter.

Adventure Lantern thanks Mr. Steel for taking the time to answer our questions. Judging from the information provided, the current iteration of *Asylum of the Lost* could be a great way for the series to return to its roots while continuing to build on the story that started in *The Curse of Midnight Manor*. While the project now has a different scope, with the help of the adventure-gaming community, the fourth episode of *Delaware St. John* could become a reality and still deliver a very satisfying horror adventure experience.

If you tried and enjoyed any of the previous games in the series, contributing to the campaign for *Asylum of the Lost* could be worthwhile. To find out more about the project and make a pledge to contribute, please click here.

Disclaimer: While I will personally donate to the project, Adventure Lantern has no financial interest in the *Delaware St. John* series or the upcoming fourth episode. This interview was solely posted to increase awareness about the fundraising effort. ●

Beyond Atlantis II
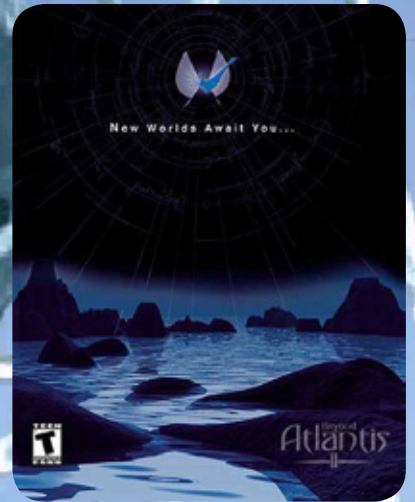
Beyond Atlantis II, the third *Atlantis* title, subtitled: "*The New World*", was released in 2001, and was the last *Atlantis* title developed by *Cryo Interactive*. It was originally released for the PC and Playstation 2, later being remade for cellphones.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The story of *Beyond Atlantis II* seems to be the basis for the newest *Indiana Jones* film, *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008). There is this alien crystal skull that is fabled to lead to some ultimate power. The bad guys want it, but there is some, hugely outnumbered and outgunned, heroic archaeologist who saves the day. Now, *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* is renowned for its bad story, but it has nothing on *Beyond Atlantis II*; *Beyond Atlantis II* is simply disjointed, self contradictory, and atrocious, with an underwhelming ending. This horrible story telling starts in the opening cinematic, which, in my

Bennu! Pharaoh is dead and awaits rebirth! Come lead his soul back to life!

opinion, pretty much ruins the rest of the game. In this cinematic we learn that you will be playing a young female archaeologist, who apparently is one of the most reckless drivers in the world and is attempting to run over every living thing in the desert; Because of this horrendous driving you are quickly involved in a brutal crash and knocked unconscious. The rest of the game plays as you acting as a reserved, intelligent, young lady, which never ceases to be jarring, throughout the rest of the game. To make mattes worse, you have a rather bland, empty, personality that just makes you a very uninteresting person. The game borrows, for no apparent reason, the same basic story formula from the last game. The majority of the game has you playing through three unconnected chapters, with

a little padding at the beginning and the end of the game for the main storyline. First off, you play through an introductory, wacky humorous guide accompanying, Egyptian chapter. Then, in any order, you play through a prehistoric sequence, filled with wild animals, and hunting; And an Aladdin style, thief in Baghdad sequence. The first introductory sequence, in the tutorial Egyptian chapter, is particularly horrible, with the Jar-Jar Binks type character, who has lost all of his memory, trying to guide you through a series of rituals; But none of the sequences are anywhere

near as well done as the those in previous games in the series.

This story does not seem to have any link to the previous games in the series. For about ten minutes you do visit a familiar setting, but I do not think any storylines or characters are shared or continued from previous games. I do not think that anything in *Beyond Atlantis II* has anything to do with *Atlantis*. And the addition of space skulls, and dream dolphins sets it far apart.

The presentation is another feature that should be a huge disappointment to fans of the series. The graphics are only

Seek beyond the corridors. Begin by passing through the first door on your left, then the child on your right.
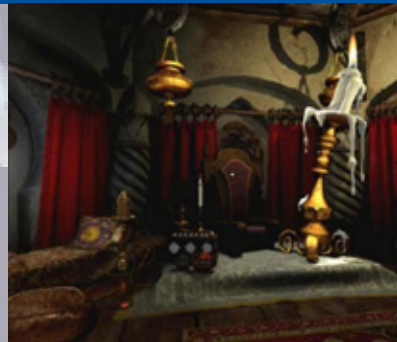
decent, they do not really add anything to the game; Far behind the results of just one year prior, with *Atlantis II*. The soundtrack is similarly uninspiring, and the voices just acceptable. There are less transitional animations this time around as well (actually basically zero), but this is made up for by more cutscenes, which include most of the story and are of a higher quality than the rest of the game. Additionally, the menu page is even more abstract than *Atlantis II*, making it very hard to use. The presentation of the game is decent, it is a huge step back stylistically, but does not fare all that badly compared to other games, and is still very technologically impressive.

Meanwhile, the gameplay is rather good, and arguably some of the best of the series. I am not going to say that it is absolutely more fun, but it is a lot more playable, and that has to count for something. It is a lot easier than the previous iterations, and playable completely without a walkthrough, with only a few hiccups. There are still a hint of its roots, with a small number of the completely random puzzles, and puzzles with absolutely no direction, but they are kept at a minimum, and are

I have it! At last! All power is mine.
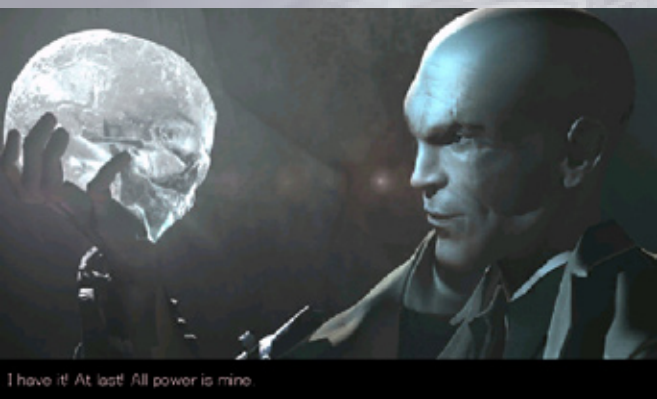
not quite as impossible as they were previously. After a short intro, you are thrown into a tutorial style Egyptian sequence. The gameplay in this sequence is different than in any other, as it is an open world, with quick-link map, and a guide/hint system. But this sequence, and every other, plays mostly the same; Explore, find objects, solve logic puzzles, and use objects to progress. All very linear progression, but even the latter sequences are somewhat open, explorable, worlds.

I did not really like *Beyond Atlantis II* very much. I don't see it adding anything to the series. It is a decent, bland, adventure; With a confusing a n d uninspiring plot and unexciting graphics. It is a fine game, but it did not offer me any reason to fall in love with it, or to recommend it. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
Some very interesting logic puzzles, among others.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
The story, and characters, simply do not work.

VERDICT:
A huge divergence from what made the series great.

Broken Sword
Shadow of the Templars
The Director's Cut

With the imminent arrival of *The Serpent's Curse*, the fifth episode in *Revolution Software's Broken Sword* adventures, there has never been a better time to look back at the first game in the series released in 1996. This updated version, *The Director's Cut*, boasts improved graphics, extended storyline and an array of puzzles not seen in the original. However, it does raise an interesting question. Is it possible to improve upon a classic game that has acquired iconic status?

Review by Rob Hamilton

Paris in the spring and George Stobbart is nowhere to be seen. No café, no clown and no exploding briefcase – not just yet, anyway. We are following Nicole Collard, a French photojournalist, who has been despatched by her editor to interview Pierre Carchon, one of France's most powerful men.

Arriving outside Carchon's apartment, Nicole ignores

an irritating mime artist who is, of course, not what he seems, and enters the building. She meets Pierre Carchon and his wife who reveal that they knew Nicole's father, Thierry. A noise in the drawing room distracts them and Carchon goes off to investigate.

A shot rings out and Nicole rushes into the room to find the mime standing over the dead body of Carchon. Before she can react, the mime knocks her unconscious with a perfectly timed right cross and escapes, appropriately, through the French windows. When she recovers, Nicole persuades Carchon's wife

not to call the police and then searches Carchon's room. She discovers several clues, which lead her across Paris to a secret location that appears to be a meeting place for a subversive organisation.

After finding several incriminating documents, including a torn up photograph of her own father, her editor's decision to drop what appears to be an intriguing story, angers Nicole. However, with the information uncovered she realises that her father may have been involved in a conspiracy plot. A phone call from a mysterious man called Plantard, who wants to speak to her about her story, raises the stakes even higher.

The next day, after everybody involved has taken a deep breath, a sinister clown blows up the café where George Stobbart is lingering

over a cup of coffee, and thus begins one of the most intricately plotted stories in adventure game history. If, having played the original game, you think you know what *The Shadow of the Templars* is about, you might be pleasantly surprised at how much more depth and intricacy has been added to the storyline in *The Director's Cut*.

You'll still visit Ireland, Syria, Spain, Scotland and numerous locations in and around Paris but, as the storyline has significant differences to the original, the actions and consequences required to complete various locations are subtlety diverse enough to intrigue even the most experienced gamers.

There is a mysterious briefcase, an old manuscript, an intriguing mural, ancient artefacts, gems, idols, chalices, Latin inscriptions, secret areas, explosives, guns, and if you ever wondered about the meaning of *Broken Sword*, that's explained in the game too – the only thing missing is the kitchen sink, but I'm sure if
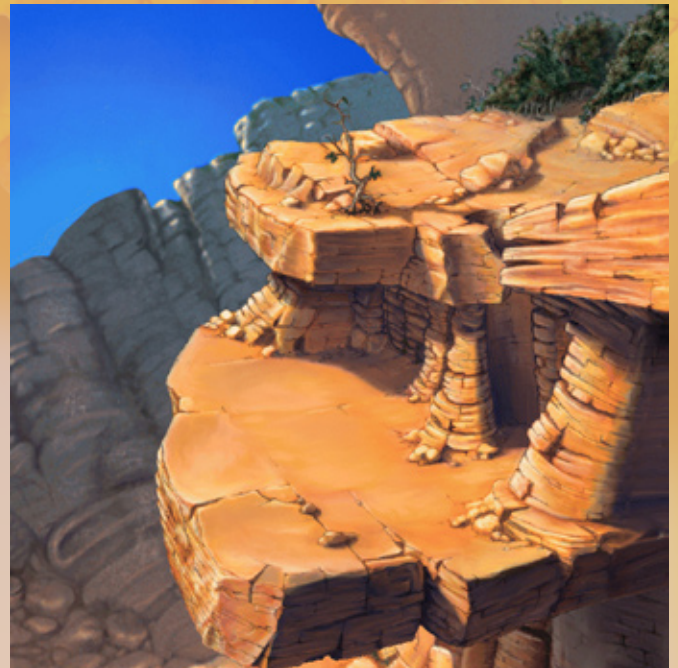
you look hard enough it's probably in there somewhere.

The game, played in 2D from a third person prospective, has comic book style graphics that are sharper, smoother and more colourful than the original. Played on a PC the graphics are very good, played on a Kindle Fire HD or an iPad, they are exceptional. The range of expressions on George Stobbart's face as he says something inappropriate or finds himself in another tricky situation are priceless.

For a game to gain classic status everything about it has to work together seamlessly, the storyline, the graphics, the writing and something that is often less than

I will start by asking the locals about Peagram and his dig.

Came across this guy, Sean Fitzgerald, who was as nervous as a long-tailed cat. He'd been given a package by Peagram - and told to give it to someone called Jacques Marquet.

Fitzgerald panicked when I caught him out, rushed out the pub and... was run over. By a leprechaun. Khan rented a leprechaun suit - it must be him.

So the 'ghost of Lochmarne' is no more than a fierce Billy goat. For a moment I thought he was going to be incredibly awkward to get past, but in the end it was surprisingly simple. Who would have known?

that it is difficult to find something, anything, to criticise.

So good are the conversations between characters, sit back and listen to George try to explain something to Nicole, that the background music is often missed. Written by *Barrington Pheloung*, the music is subtle, unobtrusive and adds a depth of feeling that enhances most scenes – and you'll probably never even notice it.

The controls, as you might expect, are simple and highly effective. A blue circle indicates something of interest. Four other symbols, all carried over from the original game, interact with the environment. An eye examines things. Cogs allow you to interact with an object and a hand allows you to pick up objects or move in various directions. You can also click on the floor to move a character around.

New to the *Director's Cut* is a diary, which records actions and dialogue. Also new is a hint system with three levels. Small hint, large hint, and here's how you do it. Very useful for some of the more

perfect – the voice acting. Nothing to worry about here. As in the original, George and Nicole, voiced by professional actors, are pitch perfect. Indeed, the entire cast of diverse characters are so faultless

obtuse puzzles - of which there are several, unlike the original game, which, if memory serves, had very few number or letter puzzles.

What the original did have was the infamous goat puzzle, considered

by many gamers to be the most challenging puzzle of all time because so many gamers lost sleep, hair, and eventually their sanity trying to get past the evil beast. This puzzle is now significantly easier to master – which is a shame. Making puzzles easier does not make for a better game and if I have one criticism of *The Director's Cut* it is that the puzzles are nowhere near as difficult as they were in the original.

What makes this game stand out is the standard of writing. *Charles Cecil*, CEO at *Revolution Software*, took a scriptwriting course before attempting to write *The Shadow of the Templars*, and it shows. The writing is tight, concise and tells the story in the fewest words possible, making it a pleasure to play.

In answer to the question posed at the beginning of this review, is it possible to improve upon a classic game that has acquired iconic status? The answer is a resounding yes – especially when the game takes you to Paris. In the springtime. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
George Stobbart in Ireland.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
Some of the puzzles are just too easy.

VERDICT:
Lives up to its reputation. One of the best adventure games ever.

Broken Sword
The Smoking Mirror
Remastered

Genre: adventure Developer: Revolution Software
Publishers: Kalypso Media/Revolution Software Release date: April, 2011
Platforms: Windows, Mac OS X, iOS, Android
Website: www.revolution.co.uk/games/bs2r/

When *Charles Cecil*, CEO of *Revolution Software*, replayed *Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror*, a game he wrote and produced in 1997, he discovered several problems with the aging software. Glitches included pixelated backgrounds, poor audio quality and misplaced dialogue. He decided to address the problems by remastering the game. Was this simply a marketing ploy or did a classic adventure game receive a timely, and well deserved, upgrade?

Review by Rob Hamilton

You would think that George Stobbart, an American patents lawyer, would have learnt his lesson by now. The last time he was in Paris he was bombed, shot at, kidnapped and found himself wading through the city sewers. On his travels, George encountered a demented goat with a Rottweiler mentality,

uncovered a Templar conspiracy, revealed the secret of the Sword of Baphomet and blew up a church in Scotland.

Enough action for one vacation, one would presume. Well no, not really. He also managed to fall in love with Nicole Collard, a French journalist and now, six months later, George has arrived back in Paris to continue the relationship. Unfortunately, Nicole seems to have found herself another man.

She has also found a mysterious Mayan stone.

Accompanied by the lovelorn George, Nicole sets off to meet archaeologist Professor Oubier, who she believes can identify the Mayan stone. Arriving at the professor's house, they run into Pablo, a Central American thug, who kidnaps Nicole and leaves George tied to a chair in a blazing room. The fire is of secondary importance, the very large, very poisonous spider scuttling across the room seems to be the priority. Having only just arrived in Paris, George finds himself in deep trouble. Again.

So, can our reluctant hero rescue Nicole, travel halfway around the world in pursuit of three mysterious stones, outwit a variety of villains, and save humanity from a Mayan deity set on destroying civilisation?

Yes, he can, but it won't be easy.

In the course of this rip-roaring adventure, George and Nicole discover more than they will ever need to know about slave ships, Pirates, Conquistadors, Shaman, magic stones and human sacrifice. The action switches between Paris, London and a handful of exotic locations in Central America.

Several familiar characters also reappear, to either help or hinder the two main protagonists. In Paris, there's André Lobineau, a French history scholar, who gives Nicole saucy underwear (what?), and an ex-gendarme from Episode One who is now down and out in Paris and appears to blame George for his predicament. In the town of Quaramonte, Pearl Henderson and her crackpot husband Duane, an

imaginary CIA agent, also lend a helping hand, or don't, depending upon how they are treated.

Also in Quaramonte is a goat. A talking goat. If George delves into his bottomless pockets and gives the animal a certain object, an amazing conversation will ensue. Listen to the goat, he seems to know what he's talking about, which is more than can be said about George at times.

Another interesting encounter occurs in a London Underground station where Nicole discovers a vending machine. Instead of walking away with the bar of chocolate, if she drops a penny back into the machine, she'll meet a ghost who introduces her to Robert Foster, the hero from *Beneath a Steel Sky*, an earlier *Revolution Software* adventure. Totally irrelevant, of course, but great fun.

As part of the upgrade, the redesigned interface is now intuitive for a wide range of devices, including smartphones, iPads and most tablets. Indeed, the point-and-click adventure game may have evolved into prod-and-poke or just touch-and-feel without anybody noticing, which is not a bad thing. The interface works perfectly across a range of devices still far in the future when this game revived the flagging adventure game genre back in 1997.

Use the mouse on a PC or just touch a hotspot on an iPad to bring up an eye or a set of cogs. Examine or use. Simple. There are also three icons residing in the corners of the screen. An inventory bag which can contain anything from a small piece of coal to a bulldozer, a spanner for a range of options and a question mark for a set of hints. All these icons fade into the background when not needed, leaving the player to get on with the game without distraction.
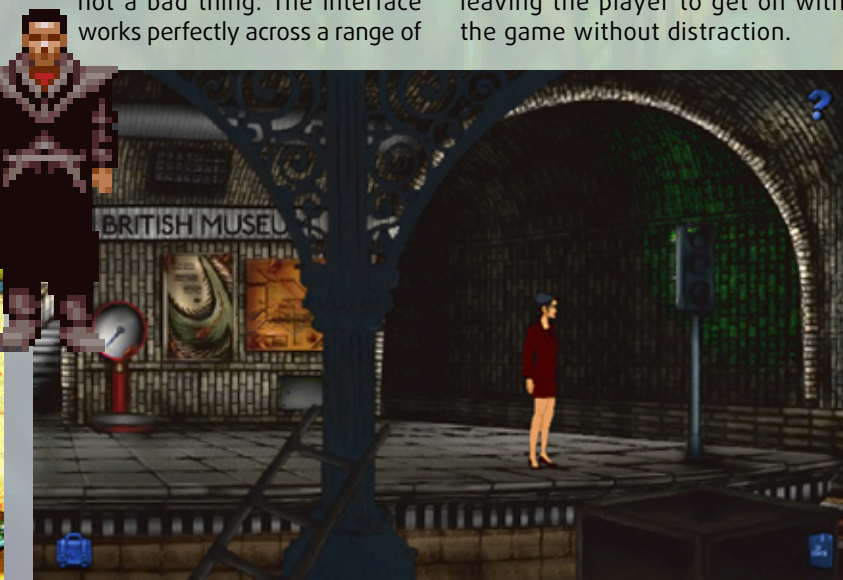
Interestingly, there is also Dropbox Integration, which according to the *Revolution Software* website "facilitates a unique cross-platform save-game feature enabling players to enjoy the same adventure simultaneously on multiple devices." Okay. Haven't actually used that particular facility myself, but it's there if you need it.

The most surprising aspect of *The Smoking Mirror* is the graphics; they have hardly aged at all. Hand drawn in pencil and then digitally coloured and animated, they retain the vibrancy and impact of the originals. Now tweaked slightly in the *Remastered* version, with minor pixilation problems smoothed out and facial animation

added, the colourful, 2D cartoon effects, implemented nearly seventeen years ago, remain almost unchanged, and none the worse for that. In fact, played on a HD tablet or iPad, they stand comparison with the most recently released games.

The enhanced graphics certainly add a new dimension, but if you played the original game, you may find that some things have definitely not changed. A strange feeling of déjà vu seems to envelop the *Remastered* game. Long forgotten encounters with half-remembered characters, curious environments and convoluted puzzles, now appear strangely familiar, which is hardly surprising, as the general gameplay remains the same as the original. Although many scenes contain new camera angles, w i t h the dialogue

rearranged to make the narrative more comprehensible, the linear feel of the storyline remains as it always was, and it doesn't take too long to crack many of the puzzles.

Having said that, solving familiar puzzles still engenders a feeling of euphoria. Getting the yappy guard dog to jump into the water at Marseilles docks still raises the pulse rate. Remembering how to use the barrels to knock the despicable Pablo into the dock is even better.

However, not all the puzzles are entirely fair to the
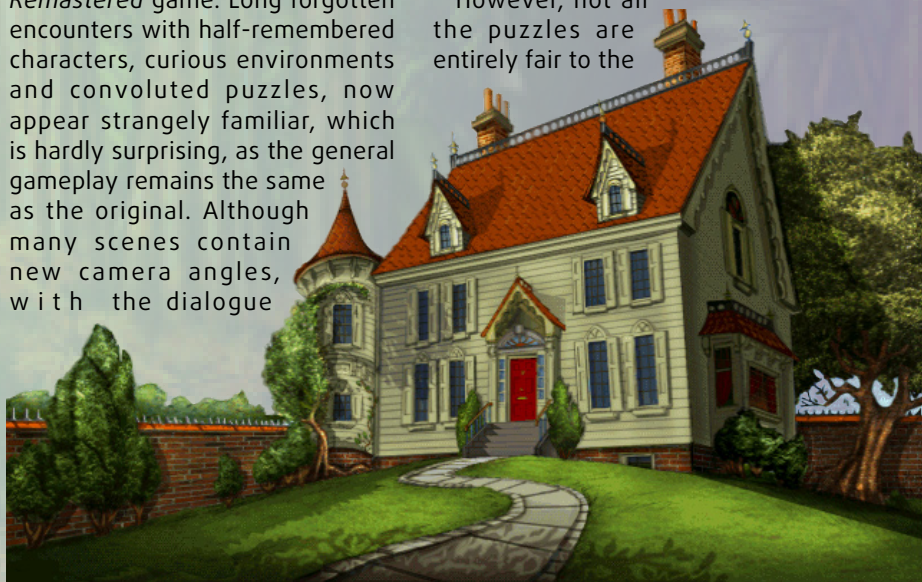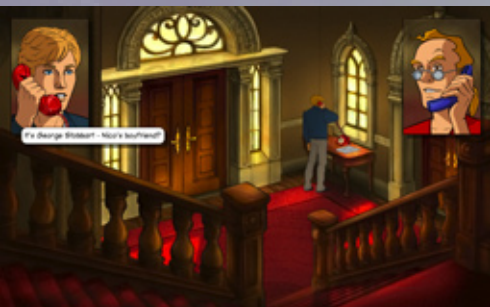
player. Try something once and it doesn't work. Try it twice, it still doesn't work – most players give up and try something else. In fact, several puzzles require multiple attempts before anything happens and there are many instances of this in *The Smoking Mirror*, which only adds to the frustration.

While rightly regarded as a classic, this game does have a number of drawbacks, mostly related to its age. The storyline becomes quite pedestrian and ponderous at times, with the amount and complexity of dialogue sometimes overwhelming the gameplay. I suspect that the new *Broken Sword 5*, *The Serpent's Curse* will address these issues.

However, if you prefer to sit back and ponder the puzzles while listening to the music, you won't be disappointed. The soundtrack remains as good as it always was, haunting, mellow and entirely in keeping with the action. Written by *Barrington Pheloung*, it is a master class, connecting mood, action and emotions with an engaging simplicity. Add that to the sublime voice acting by all the characters

and you have the perfect storm; adventure games do not sell a million copies plus unless all the elements come together. The audio track was tweaked on the *Remastered* version to improve the sound quality, the music, the voice acting and sound effects remained exactly as originally recorded.

The question posed at the beginning of this review asked if this version was a marketing ploy by *Revolution Software*. The answer is no, it wasn't. *Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror Remastered* is an upgrade that

ticks all the boxes. Making games like this available for smartphone, tablet and iPad users can only be good for the genre, as adventures are proving to be a perfect fit for the handheld media.

Even if you've played *The Smoking Mirror* in the past, it's

worth installing on whatever device you use. It's also available for PC's on Gog.com and comes with manual, artwork, game guide, and comic book, which explains Nicole's story before George arrives in Paris.

And who wouldn't want to know what that was all about… ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
George and the talking goat.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
Lengthy dialogue. Relatively slow pace.

VERDICT:
Arguably, one of the best adventure games ever produced.

Lilly Looking Through

Lilly Looking Through is the creative effort of husband-and-wife team *Steve* and *Jessica Hoogendyk* of *Geeta Games*. As fans of adventure games like *Myst*, *Ico*, and *Beyond Good & Evil*, *Steve* and *Jessica* wanted to create an adventure game that could be enjoyed by all ages. A successful campaign on Kickstarter allowed them to see that goal through to fruition, leaving us with the wonderfully charming game that we have today. With much of the game's development inspired by their daughters, you can tell that *Lilly Looking Through* was a true labor of love.

Review by Nick Burgener

Lilly *Looking Through* takes the form of a point-and-click adventure game following the young protagonist, Lilly, as she attempts to catch up to her younger brother, Row, after he's whisked away by a red scarf-like fabric in the wind. The world in which these two siblings inhabit seems to be relatively primitive;

the opening scene features round, wooden cottages along a lakeside buried deep in the woods with gas-powered lanterns illuminating wooden walkways. As Lilly ventures forth in search of Row, we're treated to imagery of run-down, abandoned bits of technology, seeming to suggest that this world has regressed to a simpler time after experiencing an era of prosperity and technological growth.

It should be noted that there is quite literally no storytelling in this game. There are no drawn-out cutscenes, crawling text messages, or dialogue sequences to inform you of this world's backstory or what's presently happening to Lilly and Row. The game's basic premise (catch up to Row) is just that -- a premise. It's actually kind of refreshing to play a game that doesn't feel the need to spell everything out for you, and which just allows you to enjoy its atmosphere and presentation in near total purity. The minimalistic characterization of Lilly and Row, depicted solely through their actions, the way they carry themselves, and occasional vocalizations, is enough to make them endearing in their own childlike simplicity.

Lilly Looking Through is filled to the brim with magical whimsy.

While it has many of the requisite elements to constitute a video game (a central premise, puzzles and problem-solving, sequential progression from beginning to end), it almost feels less like a video game and more like an experience. Since there's so little going on besides solving puzzles, much of the experience is just soaking yourself in the hand-painted scenery and the evocative music, and these two elements both prove very artistic in the most literal sense of the word.

The puzzles are clever enough to be satisfying, making the actual gameplay worthwhile, but the aesthetic ambiance to be experienced in this game is what elevates it beyond just an engaging video game.

The game is comprised of 10 short "chapters," each basically consisting of one "scene" with puzzles that must be completed in order to move on to the next "scene." The puzzles are all tethered to the environment, always requiring you to interact with or manipulate some

contraption; there are no items to be collected or combined in your inventory. At first these puzzles are relatively simple; drain water from a barrel and use it as a step-stool; use a cattail stem on a gas lamp to create a torch and then burn a rope holding up a drawbridge; operate a waterwheel and use it as an escalator. They're not terribly complicated or challenging, but they feel so organic and logical that they're a pleasure to solve.

As you advance through the game the puzzles become

increasingly complex, with the final scene having you manipulate nearly ten different hotspots in a multi-step process. As admirable as their complexity might be, the puzzles in the second half of the game aren't always as satisfying to solve as those in the first. Some of the later puzzles are just too complicated for their own good and bog themselves down with trial-and-error. When dealing with some of the later contraptions it's a puzzle just to figure out what each lever and switch actually does, then it's a puzzle to figure out what you're expected to do, and then it's a puzzle to find the solution.

Sometimes it's a puzzle to figure out why a certain solution is, in fact, the solution. With one small puzzle, I apparently solved it before I even knew what I was doing because I happened to use the switches and levers in the correct order while simply trying to discern each one's purpose. On another puzzle I arrived at the solution through sheer accidental luck because I had absolutely no idea what I was doing or what I was supposed to be doing. With certain particularly obscure puzzles you can get completely stumped because the game doesn't always give you feedback to hint you towards or away from your particular line of reasoning.

The process of trial-and-error isn't inherently a bad thing -- trial-and-error is precisely what makes puzzle-solving fun and rewarding -- but it becomes problematic when you're stuck watching long, slow animations between every single action. In the game's final puzzle, for instance, you have to maneuver a contraption to very precise points, a process that requires dozens of clicks, each

time requiring you sit and wait while you watch animations you've already seen dozens of times. As delightful as it is to watch Lilly's movements throughout the game, it can really bog down the pacing and inflate the tedium in more complex puzzles where they only serve to slow down your process of arriving at the solution.

Early in Lilly's adventure she acquires a set of goggles that serve as the game's unique twist on the puzzles. When looking through the goggles, Lilly is able to see into the past, with the landscape changing around her to resemble what it once looked like. When you put on the goggles, run-down, dilapidated structures become pristine, almost futuristic-looking. Each scene has you switching back and forth, taking the goggles on and off, and using the differences between the two eras to your advantage. If you need something to climb up to an unreachable ledge in the present, you can switch to the past and plant a tree; when you take the goggles off, the tree will be fully

grown and ready for you to climb. This mechanic becomes the central tool in each puzzle and it works remarkably well. Plus, it's great fun just seeing the differences between the two time states.

Although the goal for *Lilly Looking Through* was for it to be enjoyable for all audiences, I think some of the puzzles might go beyond the capacity of a young child. Younger audiences will surely be driven to the whimsical, childlike visual design, but I find it difficult to imagine a child having

a firm enough grasp on how to mix colors of the rainbow by restricted addition and subtraction to solve some of the game's later puzzles. I learned all of that stuff back in kindergarten, and even knowing exactly what to do, it still required a fair amount of experimentation to come to the solution. Meanwhile, I can picture certain adults who'd be turned off by the game's whimsical, childlike design. It seems to me that this game might best be enjoyed when played together by a parent and

child, so that the parent can solve the game's more devious puzzles while the child just enjoys the atmospheric journey.

What pains me the most about *Lilly Looking Through*, though, is its short length and abrupt ending. Sometimes games are at their best when they're short and sweet, striving to offer the most poignant possible experience without outstaying its welcome. With this game, I got between two and three hours out of it -- enough time to fill one afternoon

while still being completed in one sitting. Ordinarily that would be fine, so long as it felt like a complete, wholesome experience, but the game's ending occurs so suddenly and with so little resolution that it leaves the whole game wanting for more, which in turn makes its short length into a major disappointment.

The idea, I guess, was to establish a cliffhanger ending that would leave audiences craving for another "chapter" of Lilly's adventure, but in this case it leaves the game we have feeling almost incomplete. This is a game that presents itself as a bit of an intriguing mystery; it makes you ask a lot of questions about its world, and then makes no effort to answer any of those questions. At the very end, it raises yet more questions, and right when it seems like you'll get some answers or have some kind of emotional payoff for Lilly and Row's adventure, something inexplicable happens and then the credits roll. Rather than ending with

a wholesome, satisfying feeling, it left me feeling rather annoyed at what I'd just witnessed.

It's clear that a lot of love and effort went into *Lilly Looking Through*; its aesthetic design, the goggle mechanic, and the organic feel of its puzzles are all a delight to experience. The game is worth playing for those simple reasons, but unfortunately the

overall experience feels mired and unsatisfying thanks to its short length and anti-climactic, abrupt ending. If the developers had focused on making the final payoff to this game more rewarding, instead of deliberately trying to leave holes open to be filled in a possible sequel or expansion, it could've been great. As it is, the good averages out with the bad. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The artistic visual design and musical accompaniment create a very whimsical atmosphere, and some of the early puzzles feel very organic.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

Later puzzles become detrimentally obtuse and convoluted, and the game's anti-climactic, abrupt ending offers no resolution to the experience.

VERDICT:

Lilly Looking Through shows a lot of great potential, but in the end, it doesn't quite deliver on its expectations.

★★★☆☆

Runaway
A Twist of Fate
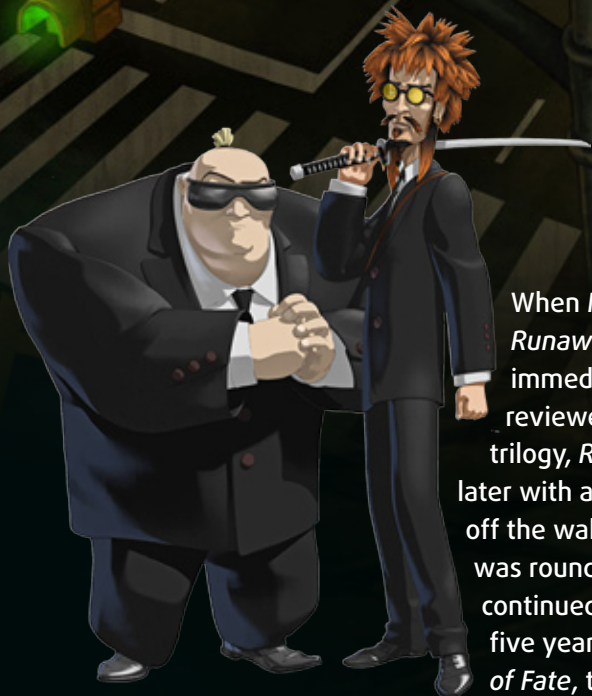
When Madrid based Software Company *Péndulo Studios* released *Runaway: A Road Adventure* in the summer of 2001 it was an immediate success, the game's left field quirkiness appealing to reviewers and gamers alike. The second game in the proposed trilogy, *Runaway 2: The Dream of the Turtle*, arrived four years later with a dull thud. Garnering poor reviews for its incoherent plot, off the wall characterization and ambiguous conclusion, the game was roundly criticised for abruptly ending with the words "...to be continued." After an interminable delay that stretched to more than five years, *Péndulo Studios* eventually released *Runaway: A Twist of Fate*, thus completing the trilogy. Was it worth the wait?

Review by Rob Hamilton

With the two main protagonists, Brian Basco, a student physicist and Gina Timmins, a nightclub dancer, literally up to their necks in all sorts of trouble at the end of *Runaway 2*, many gamers wondered how the storyline could proceed in any logical direction without losing credibility. Well, good writing will find a way and in this case, the story moves on from the island of Mala in Hawaii where we last encountered our intrepid heroes, and begins in two different locations that nobody could have expected.

A New York Courtroom and a cemetery.

In the courtroom, Brian is on trial for the murder of Colonel Kordsmeier, a completely bonkers Marine Corp officer from *Runaway 2*,
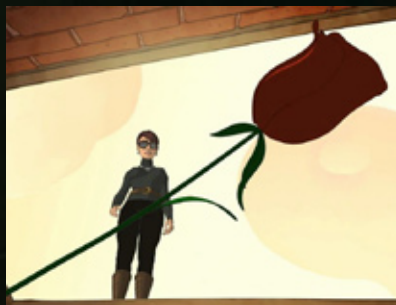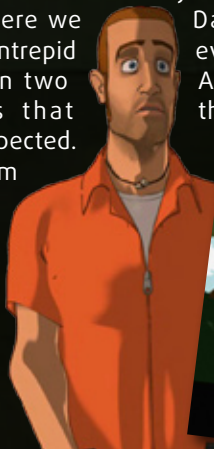
and judging by the expression on Brian's face, it's not going well. That assumption is confirmed when the judge consigns Brian to the Happy Dale psychiatric hospital for evaluation by a Doctor Bennett. As he's forcibly removed from the courtroom Brian yells, "I'm not crazy."
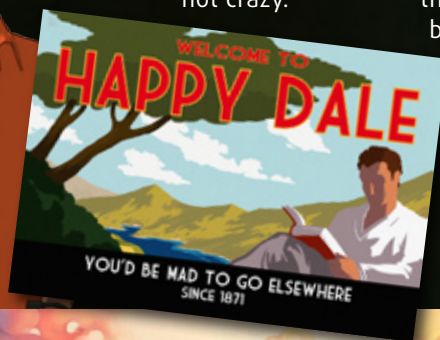
Meanwhile, back at the cemetery, Gina throws a single flower into a grave just before the gravedigger pushes the final slab into place. The name on the headstone is Brian Basco.

Gina's phone rings. It's Brian. He's not dead.

Somehow, he escaped from the Happy Dale hospital, leaving behind a headless corpse in his place. He also informs Gina that mobsters are waiting outside the cemetery gates to kill her. Oh, and if that isn't enough, would she mind getting him out of the grave because it's dark and quite scary buried under six feet of earth.

It's a wonderfully cinematic opening, which many Hollywood directors would be proud to put their names to. The game then splits into six chapters, each one carrying the story forward a step at a time.

In the first chapter, Gina has to release Brian from the grave. The second chapter tells the story of Brian's escape from the hospital, expressed in flashback sequences. As the narrative slips between past and present, the storyline slowly unfolds in each successive chapter, with chapter five tying up the loose ends created by the abrupt ending to *Runaway 2*.

Gina's mission is to unravel a murder mystery and prove Brian's innocence, while Brian attempts to escape from the psychiatric hospital and then deal with the bad guys – One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest meets The Sting with a touch of Love Story thrown in for good measure. The finale in New York City rivals anything *Hitchcock* or any of the great movie directors' could have produced; all that was missing from the twist ending was the presence of *Robert Redford* and *Paul Newman*.

The glue that holds this game together is the characterization. Apart from nerdy Brian and sassy Gina, there's a cast list of diverse characters each with their own quirks and eccentricities. There's Colonel Kordsmeier and Private O'Connor, two marines who are both nutty as fruitcakes, but highly entertaining. The hospital inmates include Brian's

roommate Gabbo Spiegelman, fixer and con artist, Marcello the mime who gives Brian an imaginary flower and an imaginary box, both of which somehow end up in the inventory and Miss Palmer, the Taser toting nurse, who appears to hate Brian but is actually another character in disguise. Just stir to thicken.

And then there is Quickle, whose highly volatile rants from behind a door at the hospital covers such diverse subjects as the weather, baseball, flowers and the state of the nation. Quickle is so memorable that he actually appears on the end credits, still ranting and raving about something or other.

So ludicrous (and entertaining) is some of the characters' behaviour, watch Brian attempt to photocopy a tattoo on his nether regions or Marcello climb into an invisible box, that the game could only have been rendered in a cartoon style, any other type of graphic would not have

worked quite as well. Backgrounds are beautifully hand painted, colourful and highly detailed; the hospital's Victorian treatment room and the steamy back alleys of New York City are visual treats.

Playing in the third person, you will step into the shoes of at least five different characters as dictated by the plot, although you play the majority of the game as either Gina or Brian. Each character, even the minor ones, are so well integrated there's virtually no difference between live play and cut scenes, which contributes to a feeling of reality, of being involved in the game world rather than just spectating from a distance. The attention to detail is astonishing. In live play, Gina sheds a tear at the

graveside, which falls onto her sweater, leaving a visible stain. If *Péndulo Studios* set out to produce an interactive cartoon experience, they succeeded.

The interface is surprisingly simple, yet highly effective, especially the

use of the Space Bar which pauses the action, even during a cut scene. A hidden menu of five icons pops up at the top of the screen when needed and contains help, hotspots, (very useful in cluttered environments) inventory,

progress and options which includes a simple load/save system that can be used at any time. Tab and the F keys also allow access to these items, while right clicking switches between use and talk. It is this simplicity and ease of use that makes the gameplay so entertaining.

If, as a matter of principle, you won't use a walkthrough or an in-game hint/help system, then you are in for a tough time. Most of the puzzles are logical, albeit convoluted beyond what a player might reasonably expect within the context of the game. For example in one puzzle, you have to translate a booklet from Swedish to English in order to obtain a single item, without which you cannot continue. In order to achieve your goal you have to find three objects, put one inside another, put that newly created object into something else, then put that somewhere else;

and to obtain all these objects you have walk between two different locations about a dozen times. Poor old Gina must have walked about twenty-seven miles in order to get that damned booklet translated.

And talking about Gina, at one point she produces a large metal car jack from her back pocket and props up a huge statue. Look, I know this is interactive fiction and I know I'm supposed to suspend belief, but Gina's leggings/jeans (see fashion page) are

so tight she'd be hard pressed to slide a piece of gum into her back pocket, let alone an enormous car jack. The game designers actually recognize this because back at the hospital Brian removes a full size whiteboard from the wall, shoves it into his pocket and then remarks, "You can tell some people have never had one of these in their pocket before."

Not wrong there, Basco. One downside to this game is the dialogue. The characters in this game love to talk and they chatter away interminably about anything and everything. It's your mission, should you accept it, to shut them up. Each conversation tree usually has about half a dozen strands, only one of which is relevant. The other five will take you off on a series of red herrings, running you every which way without reward. Other strands will take you to irrelevant cut scenes that just waste your time and are often highly frustrating. Apart from the trial and error approach, try everything, go everywhere, if a branch of dialogue looks relevant to the situation, it probably is.

Another problem was the humour. This game, an excellent translation from Spanish, just seemed to miss the mark when trying to be humorous. I

ACARUS

JONAS McPAIL AT "ACARUS"
AVHA DIVINES AT "CINDY"

DIRECTED BY
ANTONO
ESCOHOTADO

YOU'LL NEED A **HUGE** VACUUM TO DUST IT DOWN!!

could see what they were attempting to do on several occasions, but some of the comic set pieces just didn't work for me – perhaps they were trying too hard, perhaps subtle humour is difficult to translate.

The music in this game was excellent and I was surprised how underused it was. Many of the more dramatic highlights, especially in the hospital scenes had no musical accompaniment at all, which was disappointing. The voice acting, however, was of the highest quality. Every character had their own voice and their own character, which added enormous enjoyment to the game. Dramatic tension within the game world is only sustained by the believability of the characters, and every character I encountered convinced me that I was involved in something special.

For all its minor faults, this game is worth investing the fifteen to twenty hours it takes to complete, and you don't have to have played the two previous episodes to enjoy this one. The story connects seamlessly between all the subplots and narrative strands, coming together in a dramatic finale in New York City.

I can't believe *Péndulo Studios* will end it here; the characters are just too well developed. I suspect Brian, Gina

and the rest of the miscreants, villains and whackos in this game will return for a curtain call at some point in the future.

Finally, make sure you sit through the end credits. Listening to Quickle criticizing all and sundry, including the game you've just completed,

is an experience you should not miss. And use HELP at least once to enjoy a humorous piece of action that really does hit the mark. *Runaway: A Twist of Fate* is available at Gog.com and it comes with artworks, avatars, manual and wallpapers.. ●
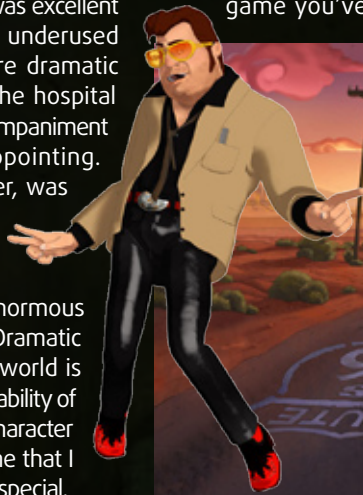
BRIGHT MOMENTS:
The final puzzle in New York City is a masterpiece.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
The humour often fails to hit the mark.

VERDICT:
Odd, improbable, fanciful and surreal – it's all these things and more, but it is also a terrific story with great characters, well told and well executed.

The Wolf Among Us
Episode 1: Faith

BASED ON THE VERTIGO COMIC BOOKS 'FABLES'
BY BILL WILLINGHAM AND PUBLISHED BY DC ENTERTAINMENT

THE **WOLF AMONG US**
A TELLTALE GAMES SERIES

The Wolf Among Us (*TWAU*) is the latest episodic adventure series from *Telltale Games*, and an official canonical addition to *Bill Willingham's Fables* comic book series. *Faith* is its first episode and the only one currently released, at the time of this writing. This is out of a total of five planned episodes, which will set you back $25 for the entire season.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Fables, as well as *TWAU*, is set in New York City, where a community of fables (called Fabletown) have settled after leaving their homelands. These fables are none other than characters from popular children's stories, like Snow White, Tweedle Dee & Dum, and the main protagonist The Big Bad Wolf. These magical characters try and live in peace alongside the mundanes with the use of a magic called glamour, which changes their appearance to match that of ordinary humans. The

Big Bad Wolf, known as Bigby Wolf, is the main protagonist of the main comic series as well as this series, and is the sherif of Fabletown. He tries to keep the peace, regardless of whatever previous relationship any of the fables had with each other, or himself. In *TWAU* you play as Bigby, who is investigating a string of decapitation murders. At this point, not enough has happened in the story to give a value to it. I do not know if the story is bad or good, but episode one absolutely could not stand alone.

The Wolf Among Us is a very mature adventure. Very dark, gritty, mature, and violent. There is prostitution, alcohol, near constanting fighting, gore, blood, suicide, and gruesome murder galore; Not to mention that Telltale states that there will be partial nudity. I think it is the most mature adventure I have ever played, and certainly the most constant stream of diverse mature content I have ever played.

The gameplay style is supposed to be a derivative of last year's *The Walking Dead* game, in which *Telltale* premiered this choice driven adventure sub-genre/style. I am one of the few people to not ever have played this critically

Tenement Building
South Bronx
O Sometime after midnight...
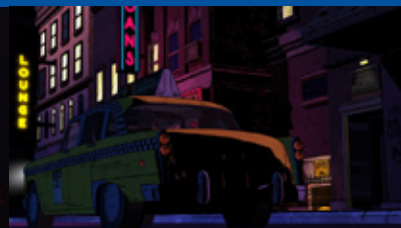
acclaimed adventure, but from what I have seen in Faith, I just do not get it. I have no idea how this gameplay created one of the most critically acclaimed games of last year. Such a huge emphasis is put on choice, and the consequences of these choices, but it ultimately rings hollow. A lot of the choices you make are in your dialogue with other characters; You are given a list of choices to pick from and a very limited time to choose between them. You are never given enough information about the options to know what you are actually picking. In one

conversation I was trying to be nice, and I needed to restart the conversation over and over again, until I had tried every single option. In another conversation I picked the option for what I assumed was "be nice to him", but it turned out it meant "attack immediately". How can choices and dialogue options have any meaning if you cannot tell the difference between the "be nice, calm, and understanding" options, and "smash him in the face with a bottle" options. And even after the choice is made, it just not really seem to affect much. In my opinion, the game is

not replayable, and when I tried, I ended up just doing the exact same things, and having the exact same conversation, even when picking completely different options. And since the game is basically just one big cutscene, with very limited gameplay, it was incredibly boring.

The gameplay is separated into three roughly even game types: quick time event sequences, most notably fights; Dialogue; And normalish point and click gameplay. You have almost no freedom in the game, being automatically placed from one tiny sequence into another. One thing that is
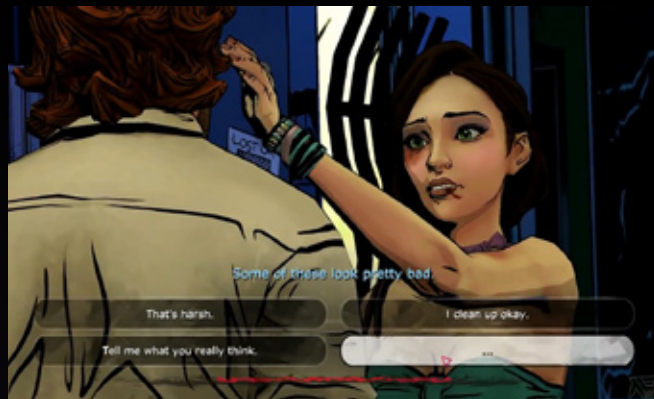
constantly important is "time". It always matters, and failing to do something quick enough is almost always a valid choice. You can just say nothing, or wait and watch something enfold, instead of intervening. This time mechanic is really the only part of the gameplay that I think has promise, but even it can be annoying at times, when you are not given enough time to even read the dialogue options.

The game is presented fabulously, with every part of it obviously well polished. The graphics are a great comic book style, and work very well with the story. The cutscenes, of which most of the game is comprised, are dynamic, and similarly well crafted; With all of the character's movements always being lifelike, and well choreographed. The voice cast also do a fantastic job, and the soundtrack is great.

I cannot say that *Faith* impressed me, or got me excited for more *TWAU* episodes. It is very short, at around three hours, and just does not give you anything substantial to sink your teeth into. The gameplay is like a slightly interactive cutscene, and in my opinion the constantly highlighted choice system does a worst job of giving choice to players than traditional methods, that have been used for decades, but perhaps it will be put to better use in future episodes. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
The great looking graphics, and the mature grittiness of the story.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
The gameplay, or lack of it.

VERDICT:
An interesting start to the series, though I am not sure it is substantial enough to judge just yet.

Tokyo Jungle

Genre: roguelike survival sim **Developer:** SCE Japan Studio
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment **Release date:** September 25, 2012
Platforms: PlayStation 3 **Website:** none

Tokyo Jungle has quite the unique premise -- after humankind has mysteriously gone extinct in Tokyo, the urban city has become a sprawling jungle for animal wildlife. You play as an animal attempting to survive in this jungle, scavenging for food, defending yourself against bigger and stronger animals, claiming territories, and reproducing. When I bought the game ($14.99 on PSN), I was expecting a slow-paced, realistic survival simulator with a unique twist -- that would've been such an awesome gameplay experience. But it turns out that *Tokyo Jungle* is a much faster-paced, arcade-style roguelike. Not what I was hoping for, but the game is still surprisingly addicting.

STORY
Act. 7 Lioness's Hunting Diary
The males and Cubs count on the Lionesses to provide food. Hunt again today within the Yamanote Line where Pteranodons circle.

05   06   07

OK   Back

ARCHIVES
Zookeeper Record 1
Veterinary Report
Zookeeper Record 2
Newspaper Article 1
Newspaper Article 2
Newspaper Article 3
Not Obtained
Not Obtained
Newspaper Article 5
Press Release
METI Report
Not Obtained
Not Obtained

February 8, 2027
The zoo animals have been restless recently. The fierce predators are particularly on edge, and fights are often breaking out between them. Feeding time has become quite frightening.

I think I'll talk to our vet about administering some tranquilizers...

Back

Review by Nick Burgener

Tokyo Jungle consists of two gameplay modes -- "Story" and "Survival." In story mode, you play specific scenarios with certain objectives that tell a loose story arc for different animals. The story mode, however, is not the game's main emphasis; it's survival mode. The entire game is built around survival mode, with the story missions consisting of derivative survival

mode mechanics forced into certain situations. In fact, you can't even play the story missions until you've unlocked them in survival mode. The story missions and unlockable story logs are a welcome component, offering a little more depth and insight to the backstory of what happened leading up to the current situation, but if you're looking for something more than a survival roguelike, you should probably look elsewhere.

In survival mode, you get to select which animal you'll play as, and you're given as long as you can survive to play. Initially, you can choose between a Pomeranian

dog (a small carnivore) and a Sika deer (a mid-sized herbivore). As a carnivore, you'll have to hunt other animals in order to eat; as an herbivore, you'll have to avoid carnivores and forage for plants and fruits growing about the city. The two types of animals provide slightly different gameplay experiences -- carnivores get to play a more action-style game with a combat system, and herbivores get to play a more stealth-style game, sneaking through tall grass and avoiding enemies.

As you play, you can complete challenges to unlock new animals.

It's quite a different gameplay experience playing as a house cat and a bear, for instance, or playing as a baby chicken and an elephant. Each specific animal has different stats that affect their ability to survive, such as their speed, health, stamina, hunger, attack, and defense, but certain areas of the city (like rooftops and the sewers) are only accessible to smaller animals. Small grazers like rabbits are easy prey for bigger predators, but can hide more easily and go longer without needing food. Large predators like lions can roam the streets freely, being near the top of the food-chain, but their bigger stomachs demand that they eat more often to survive.

Besides feeding, animals must also claim territories and reproduce in order to continue living. Death can come from starvation, pollution, being killed by another animal, or from simple old age. In order to reproduce, you must claim territories in Tokyo as your own by marking your scent at predetermined areas. Once all areas have been claimed within a territory, females will consider you for mating. Depending on your current status rank (based on how many calories you've eaten), you can choose between desperate, average, or prime females -- if they're available. Once you mate, you take control of the new generation and inherent a fraction of whatever stat boosts you

acquired in the previous generation from completing challenges.

When taking control of a new generation, you only ever control one animal at a time. Your other siblings will follow you around, and when the animal you're controlling dies (for whatever reason), you take control of one of the remaining animals until they're all dead, essentially providing multiple lives. In this way, it's advantageous to seek a prime female mate because they will produce more offspring for you, thus boosting your odds for survival. New generations are born into a young adult state capable of fending for themselves, albeit with slightly reduced stats for the first couple years of their lives until they reach full adulthood.

What makes *Tokyo Jungle* such a compelling experience is the fact that you're constantly under a time limit. Whether it's your hunger gauge depleting, or your pollution gauge filling up, your health slowly draining (from hunger or pollution), or time passing towards your inevitable death of old age, the game constantly pushes you towards the next objective. And time moves insanely fast. There's barely any time to stop and rest -- go one minute without eating and you're practically on your death bed. But once you finally fill up your hunger gauge, food supplies might be running low in that area, requiring you to venture out to new

territories. By the time you get there, your hunger gauge might be down again, and you'll need to reproduce soon or else you'll die anyway, which means splitting time looking for food and marking territories.

Even then, do you eat just enough food to survive, leaving some left-overs for when you get hungry later, or do you eat as much as you can to rank-up and catch a better mate? Nearly every action has some kind of consequence requiring you to weigh the risks versus the rewards. If you eat all of the food in a territory, intending to rank-up and land a prime mate, you might find that only desperate or average mates spawn -- in that case, you've no food left in that area to eat and have to move on, or you settle for an inferior mate who'll produce fewer offspring for you with lower stats. If you're desperate for food and stumble

across a scrumptious fruit tree with a couple of hyenas prowling the area, do you risk trying to get the fruit, or avoid the potential conflict and hope to find sustenance elsewhere?

In keeping with the roguelike formula, the situations are different with every playthrough. The layout of the city remains the same, but food

and animal spawns are all randomized. Each run also provides different types of random events. Weather conditions can affect your radar and visibility while also causing food to spoil faster. Pollution can come and go at random. A turf dispute might break out between lions and hyenas, or an elephant graveyard might

"spawn." Rabies might break out. A special boss animal might appear. That's a large part of what makes the game so addicting -- just like the variable psychological reinforcement of gambling (you win some, you lose some), it's easy to feel compelled to try "just one more run" because things will be different and you might have better luck next time.

The ultimate goal of all this, besides unlocking new animals, collecting story logs, and unlocking new story missions, is to achieve high scores. When you eventually die, a final score for that playthrough is tabulated based on how many calories you ate, how many times you reproduced, how many territories you claimed, how long you survived, what challenges you completed, and so on. That's where a lot of the risk-vs-reward comes into play -- do you perform riskier behavior to get more points, or do you play it safe and try to live longer to have more opportunity to score points? These scores are uploaded to a leaderboard, so you can see how well you fared in comparison to other players on a daily, weekly, or all-time basis.

If you're going for a high score, the challenges that pop up in each playthrough will give you bonus points and stat improvements. The bulk of these challenges task you with eating calories or mating a certain number of times, but plenty of more specific ones show up as well. Grazers are sometimes tasked with eating rare types of fruits and vegetables; predators are sometimes tasked with scoring a certain number of clean kills. Sometimes you're challenged to go to a particular area at a certain time, or to find a special location. Sometimes you're challenged to defeat a boss animal. Even if you're not into the points specifically, a portion of the stat boosts from completing challenges carries over into subsequent playthroughs, so that you're always improving the more you play.

There's even a local two-player cooperative mode, allowing you and a friend to team up in survival mode. You can both play as the same type of animal, meaning you'll have to work together to share the food evenly, or you can split being a grazer and a carnivore, having the predator defend the grazer. Multiplayer is a worthwhile feature that only adds to the game's appeal, since it requires teamwork and communication to be successful while also adding a whole new level of strategy to the gameplay, but the camera makes it kind of a hassle. The camera remains permanently fixed on player one, while player two is at the mercy of getting lost on the edge of the screen and having to find himself in a cluster of animals during a fight.

As effective as *Tokyo Jungle* is as a fast-paced survival roguelike with such a unique premise, it doesn't really hold my interest. It's a great way to pass the time, but that's really all it is. When I'm sitting at home deciding how to spend my free time, I consider going into *Tokyo Jungle* but inevitably go with something more fulfilling, because after a few hours the only real point is to achieve high scores, and I frankly don't care about scores. It's the kind of game that feels better suited for mobile gaming when you're waiting at a bus stop and are literally just trying to pass the time.

As it stands, I feel like *Tokyo Jungle* would've been a more enjoyable experience with a much slower, less frantic pace, and with a more open-world exploration system, rather than the faux side-scrolling of the actual game. The combat and stealth systems are ultimately just a little too simple, repetitive, and rough around the edges to feel like worthwhile draws on their own. Otherwise, if the premise intrigues you and you have $15 to spare, it's worth the cost for the amount of entertainment you can get out of it. Even if the premise intrigues you, if you're not terribly interested in roguelikes, this might be one to pass on. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
The premise is fun and original, and there's a lot of good tension in trying to survive while managing all of your gauges.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
Some mechanics like stealth are a little finicky and inconsistent, and the story missions don't have as much substance as they could.

VERDICT:
Tokyo Jungle is a fun way to pass the time, but that's about all it really amounts to – a time-passer.