REVIEWS:
- Beyond Atlantis
- Captain Morgane and the Golden Turtle
- The Dream Machine: Chapter 4
- Hypnosis
- The Testament of Sherlock Holmes

EDITORIAL

It was the summer vacation between our second and third year of high school when one of my best friends and I bought copies of *Atlantis II*. We went to the store to buy the game early in the morning, to make sure we would have plenty of time to play it throughout the day. We rushed to my friend's bedroom and installed the game with great excitement. I had first played the original *Atlantis* over a year ago. Despite its flaws, I loved the game for its story, setting, diverse locations, and wonderful soundtrack. My friend loved it for the stunning visuals. As far as we were concerned, the sequel had huge shoes to fill in.

At the time, I did not routinely follow games during their development. My only source of gaming news was a monthly magazine. The magazine's news section did not offer a great deal of coverage for adventure games. As such, I mostly became aware of new adventures when I saw them at a store or read a review. Thus, before we actually launched the game, I had no idea how the developers had designed *Atlantis II*.

As the game began, I was once again amazed at the quality of the visuals. Much like the original adventure, *Atlantis II* looked absolutely stunning. The control structure from the previous game had been retained. We were in familiar territory. Yet I couldn't help feeling a sense of disappointment. On the surface, the story only had a small connection to the original adventure. Where was Seth, the hero of *Atlantis: The Lost Tales*? What had happened to him after the conclusion of the first game? We were told the main character in *Atlantis II* was Seth's descendant, but I wanted to see the next chapter in Seth's story and did not necessarily care about this distant relative. It seemed as though the sequel was taken in an altogether new direction, barely acknowledging its predecessor.

Nevertheless, *Atlantis II* had a unique appeal of its own. There were three storylines to explore, each with its own fascinating setting and tied together by an overarching grand adventure. Once I got over my initial disappointment at not finding out exactly what happened to Seth, I realized that I liked having the idea of having three distinct quests. It was as if three different adventure games were packaged into one. You had a chance to explore different civilizations, solve numerous puzzles, and meet several cryptic if not downright bizarre characters. The scenery was consistently breathtaking, beckoning us to explore. While it did not reach the same heights as the original game, the soundtrack was memorable and elevated the game's atmosphere. My friend and I were having an excellent time traveling through *Atlantis II*.

Our journey was not without challenges. Though we had played several adventure games and would not consider ourselves novices, the puzzles in *Atlantis II* stumped us on a regular basis. We were frequently stuck, desperately looking for clues we might have missed. We needed more than a little help to complete the Mayan and Chinese segments of the adventure. Once we reached the final portion of the game and the puzzles became increasingly abstract, we essentially gave up all pretense of figuring out solutions on our own, depending heavily on a walkthrough. *Atlantis II* was by far the most challenging adventure either of us had played.

For me, the story also left a little to be desired. While it was nice to explore different settings and interact with a variety of characters, none of the plotlines were developed in as much depth as Seth's adventure in the original game. The lead characters did not quite have the same resonance. The mystical themes fell a little flat, failing to truly expand on the ideas introduced in the original game. While the three core quests were clearly linked by an overall theme and the game ultimately had strong spiritual ties to its predecessor, I did not feel as invested in what happened to the characters or the final outcome of the adventure.

However, *Atlantis II* managed to be a great deal of fun despite our inability to solve the puzzles on our own and my frustrations with the story. There was something about the game that transcended its substantial difficulty. Trekking through the imaginative environments was its own reward. While some story elements could have been better developed, it was also nice to play an adventure game that focused on mystical themes. There was a great sense of discovery and wonder that ultimately made playing the game worthwhile.

It has been well over a decade since I played *Atlantis II* for the first time. My friend and I now live in different cities. I heard that he got married several years ago. I have yet to meet his wife. He has never met my spouse or my children. I can't remember the last time we spoke on the phone or exchanged e-mails. As I read through the articles that went into this edition of Adventure Lantern, spending an entire day playing *Atlantis II* in my friend's room is a distant pleasant memory. As usual, this month's PDF is full of adventure gaming news and offers a selection reviews for new and old adventure games. Thanks to Jonathon's review, this issue also gives me a chance to revisit *Atlantis II* so many years after I played on my friend's computer. Perhaps it's time for me to find my copy of the game and see if I can get it to work on my laptop. Perhaps it's also time to pick up the phone and call an old friend.

Until next time,

— Ugur Sener

Adventure Lantern

ISSUE #47
OCTOBER 2013

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Cover Image:
BEYOND ATLANTIS
(ATLANTIS II)

Following Freeware: August 2013 releases

A new batch of freeware adventures have been cataloged by AdventureGamers.com. The following is their own words on these games.

This month you can become an accountant debating philosophy, an accident-prone space captain, or a historical character from a famous series of books. Foodie adventurers can attempt to thwart a pizza apocalypse or investigate strange goings-on at a carnival of cheese. Those who prefer less jolly tales can try to avert a disaster by gifting ten seconds of life, or escape a deranged killer in a decrepit surgery. Alternatively, you can go cave-delving with an intrepid young adventurer. All these await you in this month's roundup of releases from the freeware scene.

Steam Greenlight

On October 16th Steam greenlit another 37 games, including a few adventure titles. These adventures include: J.U.L.I.A. Enhanced Edition, Montague's Mount, Fester Mudd: Curse of the Gold, Fran Bow, Neverending Nightmares, Portal Remake Mod, and Violett.

Wadjet Eye Interview

RDBK has an interview with *Dave* and *Janet Gilbert* of *Wadjet Eye Games*, where they talk about everything from *Primordia*, to the ZX Spectrum, and *Planescape: Torment*.
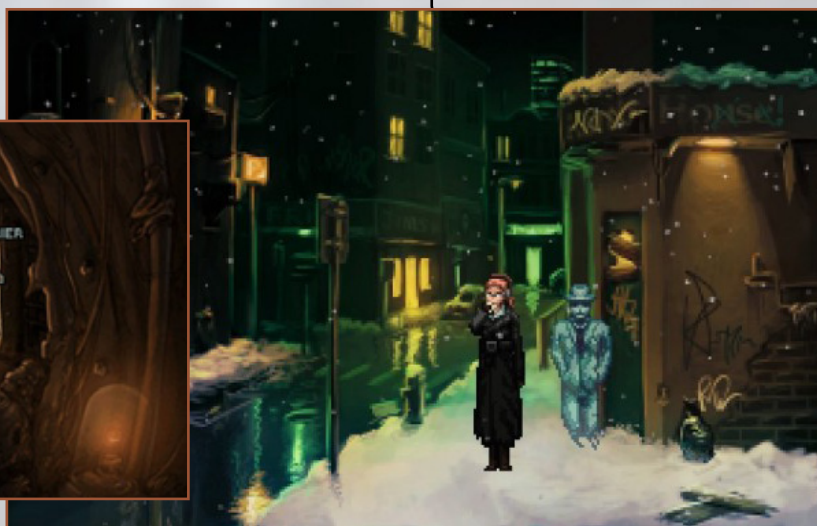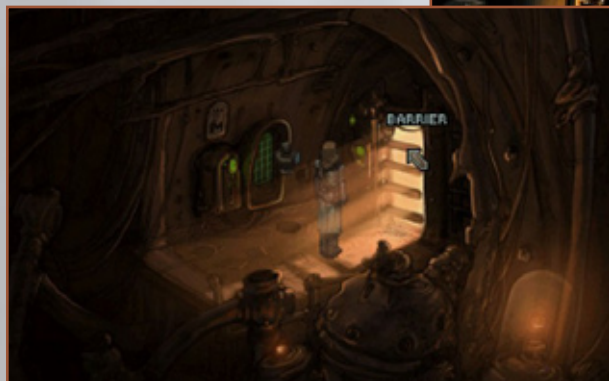
Myst 20th Anniversary

The Inlander has a wonderful article up for Myst's 20th anniversary.

King's Quest: 30th Anniversary

Normally when I go to Just Adventure articles I just get database errors, but not so for this editorial. In what is the first JA article I have seen since the site change, Brad Kane does a retrospective for King's Quest's 30th anniversary (has it really been that long?).
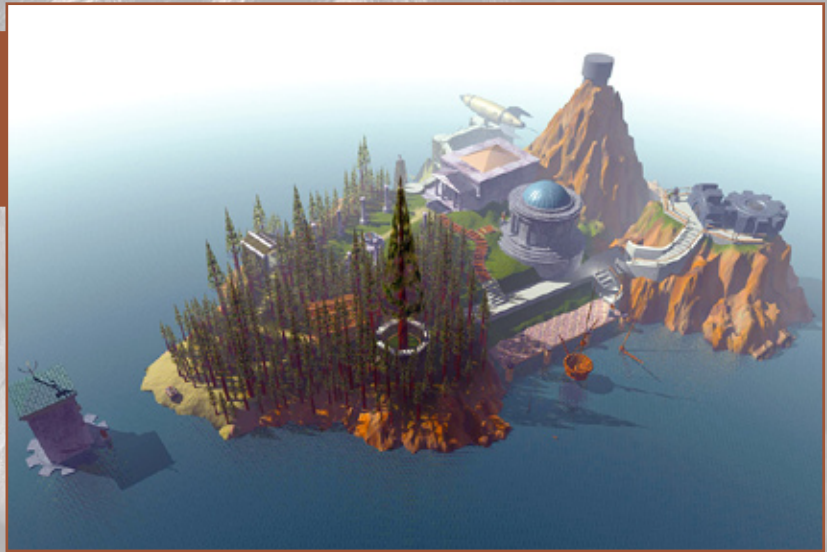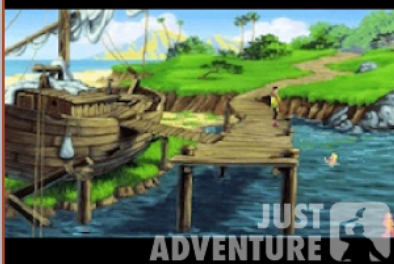
Wormwood Studios

The Escapist recently hosted an indie developer, 48 hour development session, in which many great games were likely made, but I just want to focus on two of them. Wormwood Studios, the makers of Primordia, have entered two small games with graphics reminiscent of Primordia.

ScummVM

The engine which powers Zork Nemesis and Zork: Grand Inquisitor is being added to ScummVM.

Daedalic Entertainment Shop

Daedalic Entertainment has opened an online shop to sell t-shirts, coffee cups, and posters, among a bunch of other non-game merchandise.

Phoenix Online

"Phoenix Online discusses Cognition, episodic gaming, adventures, [and] the future" in this interview over on IndieGames.com, which was conducted by Gnome.

Campo Santo

Former Telltale directors, Jake Rodkin and Sean Vanaman, as well as Olly Moss and Nels Anderson of Mark of the Ninja fame, have teamed up to form a new studio, Campo Santo. We already have a few details of their first game, specifically that it is coming out for Windows, OSX, and Linux and is being published by Panic Inc.; No word on what genre it will fall under though.

Phantasmagoria

Play the Past explores the interactive film styled 1995 game Phantasmagoria, by Sierra On-Line. The article goes into quite a lot of detail, and uniquely compares the game to the Gothic novel genre of the late 17-hundreds and early 18-hundreds.

Announcements

realMyst: Masterpiece Edition

Cyan is working on a remake of realMyst, and it is not for mobile devices. For PC comes realMyst: Masterpiece Edition, a remake of realMyst with better graphics and more options, including the ability to play in classic fixed screen mode or 3D free roaming.
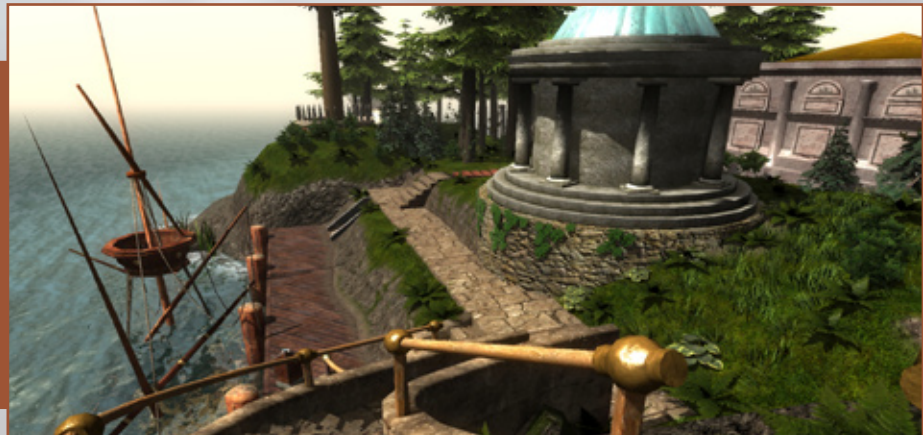
The Ballads of Reemus 2

The sequel to the first commercial Reemus adventure has just been Kickstarted with over $17,000 in funds, meeting the initial goal and all of the stretch goals. The game will be released on the PC, Mac, and Linux and continues the classic, LucasArts inspired, 2D, point and click comedy adventure style. The story revolves around Reemus, a medieval exterminator and his loyal sidekick Liam the purple bear as they battle giant insects in a quest to legitimize "extermination" as a heroic career path. $15 will net you a preorder, as they continue to take orders through their post Kickstarter paypal system. You can still check out the numerous free browser based games that comprise the first games of the series.

Soma

The latest announcement from Frictional Games, Soma is a sci-fi horror game coming to the PC and PS4 in 2015.

The radio has gone silent on PATHOS-2. As isolation bears down on the staff of the remote research facility, strange things are happening. Machines are taking on human traits and alien constructions have started to interfere with routine. The world around them is turning into a nightmare. The only way out is to do something unimaginable.

Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers 20th Anniversary Edition

Pinkerton Road has announced a remake for Jane Jensen's classic adventure game, Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers; Featuring a series of voodoo murders, New Orleans, forbidden romance, and the most charming womanizer you ever met. This 20th anniversary update will be better than ever with high res graphics, an all new remastered soundtrack, behind-the-scenes goodies, and the great gameplay and story of the original.

Look for it in mid-2014.

Unwritten: Adventures in the Ages of MYST and Beyond

The worlds of Myst and D'ni are yours to explore in this FATE Core-driven tabletop RPG of Adventure, Discovery, and Accomplishment. In this still running champagne, $23,000 thousand of the $5,000 goal has already been raised. When released, the game is supposed ot be available as a PWYW PDF, as well as a softcover physical copy.

The Dead Flowers Case

A murder mystery case in Stephane Halleux's amazing steampunk universe. Welcome to the fantastical, mechanical world where flowers and other plants of beauty are but a distant memory. Unfortunately, a terrible murder has been committed which only the player can solve.

Set in a unique universe from the mind of acclaimed artist Stéphane Halleux, The Dead Flowers Case is an adventure game in which players must use all of their skills to investigate the case and unravel the many mysteries that will ultimately expose the perpetrator of this terrible crime.

White Heaven

Set in the same fictional universe as Anna, Deampainters have announced a second horror adventure, White Heaven. Developed with Unreal Engine 4, White Heaven will be available for PC and Mac and natively support Oculus Rift, with a scheduled Q1 2014 release. It appears thety are designing a very similar gaming experience as last time, and with all their extra experience this time around, I am confident that WH is a game to look out for.

Obduction

An all-new, immersive adventure game from the award-winning creators of Myst and Riven. Obduction is an all-new, real-time, first-person adventure that harkens back to the spirit of Cyan's earlier games Myst and Riven. Obduction resurrects that incredible feeling of suddenly finding yourself in the middle of a new world to explore, discover, solve, and become part of.

Obduction will be built with the same framework that made Cyan's earlier games such a wonderful experience: stunning landscapes, deep storyline, engaging characters, dramatic soundscapes, and challenging yet intuitive puzzles. At the base funding level, Obduction will be developed for both Windows and MacOS, with a targeted release of mid-to-late 2015.

Obduction's Kickstarter has already reached over half of its $1,100,000 goal, with most of its campaign to go.

Upcoming Releases

Solstice

Indie Statik has an article up called "Conversations, Secrets And Lies: Solstice's Exploration Of Private Lives And Ethics In A Microcosm" about Solstice. MoaCube's next game, MoaCube being the developers behind the critically acclaimed visual novel Cinders.

New Releases

Goodbye Deponia

The final episode in the hand-drawn, comedy, adventure trilogy by Daedalic Entertainment is out. More chaos, more destruction, more Rufus. Not one, not two, but three Rufuses cause all kinds of crazy mayhem in the long-awaited adventure comedy Goodbye Deponia: The Organon plans the destruction of Deponia, the lovely Goal has (once again) disappeared, and anti-hero Rufus just can't seem to stop getting in his own way.

Beyond: Two Souls

Journey into a unique, interactive, psychological thriller from the makers of the award-winning smash hit Heavy Rain, with the newly released Beyond: Two Souls, available exclusively on PS3.

The Inner World

The first major release from a studio I hope we will see more from, Studio Fizbin, The Inner World was released worldwide on September the 27th. Here is what they have to say about it:

The Inner World is a classic-style hand-drawn adventure game for PC & Mac. Solve plenty of challenging puzzles with Robert and Laura in the twisted world of Asposia. Experience an atmospheric and humorous story full of bizarre characters. Asposia is a mysterious world. Surrounded by the endless soil and against all laws of physics, Asposia is located in an enormous hollow space, which is ventilated solely through three big wind fountains. In this world lives Robert, a naive and cheerful novice of the last wind monastery.

The Wolf Among Us

Telltale Game's newest series got started October 11th on the OC, with Mac and PSN released following soon after. TWAU is an episodic adventure with the gameplay of their critically acclaimed hit The Walking Dead, and a story set in Bill Willingham's, Fables, comic book series.

The Stanley Parable

Based on the award-winning 2011 Source mod of the same name, The Stanley Parable returns with new content, new ideas, a fresh coat of visual paint, and the stunning voicework of Kevan Brighting; As well as a $15 dollar price tag. The Stanley Parable is a first person exploration game. You will play as Stanley, and you will not play as Stanley. You will follow a story, you will not follow a story. You will have a choice, you will have no choice. The game will end, the game will never end. Contradiction follows contradiction, the rules of how games should work are broken, then broken again. This world was not made for you to understand.

Finding Teddy

A little girl was sleeping peacefully with her teddy bear, when suddenly, a monster popped out from her cupboard then stole her favorite plush. A traditional point and click released on October 9th for iOS and PC.

Outlast

A horror game, which has been getting a lot of attention, was released not too long ago. Outlast is an indie horror game with loads of monsters and jump scares. AdventureGamers has a review that is not a review, post-mortem thing on it.

Sepulchre

Sepulchre is an adventure short from Owl Cave, written by Ashton Raze (Richard & Alice) and drawn by Ben Chandler (The Blackwell Epiphany), and with other awesome contributions from lots of lovely people.

Sepulchre is free, however, for $2.99, you can get a special edition – which gets you the full original soundtrack, two wallpapers, and a digital copy of Raze's book Bright Lights and Glass Houses as well.

Rain

AdventureGamers reviewed a game I had not even heard about, Rain, released September 30th for PS3. "Rain is certainly not your typical adventure game as it mixes subtle puzzles with stealth platformer elements. With a beautifully melancholic concept which could potentially have aroused many emotions, this PS3 game struggles in conveying it into a flawlessly engaging narrative."

Dream Chamber

The Dream Chamber is a PC, Mac, and iPad Microids adventure, that was released October 24th.

"A humorous adventure with a quirky cartoon graphic style. Immerse yourself in 30s America, between Prohibition and the Great Depression, and discover Charlie, a rich heir who divides his time between social obligations and his hobby as a private detective. During yet another official museum opening, Charlie witnesses a robbery, the victim of which is none other than his own girlfriend. Firmly set on investigating the case despite the reluctance of his uncle, the detective in charge of the inquiry, he unknowingly embarks on what will become the greatest adventure of his life! Thanks to his unique skill and unrivalled memory, Charlie explores and investigates all the way into his dreams."

Updated Releases

Gemini Rue

Some guy remade part of the 2D AGS adventure game into 3D with Unity. I do not see a download link to actually play it, but you can see it in action, in his youtube video.

The (i)Cave

The Cave, Ron Gilbert's latest game, is now out on the iPhone 4S and up, iPad 2, iPad Mini and iPod Touch 5.

Face Noir

Face Noir made it on to Steam on October 17. You can get a copy for $20.

News From the Big Blue Cup

Memories of a Snake (Marion) - This is a point & click game about the story of one of the four Founders of Hogwarts (Harry Potter): Salazar Slytherin.

Sepulchre (Owl Cave) - An adventure short from Owl Cave, written by Ashton Raze (Richard & Alice) and drawn by Ben Chandler (everything ever), and with other awesome contributions from lots of lovely people. It's a game featuring horror, trains, and huge bags. It should take most people around half an hour to play through.

Weathered (MrNashington) - A point and click 1950s inspired RPG set in the middle of the sea.

My First Big Adventure (Ross Moffat) - Our theme in the class was once in a lifetime summer experiences and this is the project which grew from that theme. You will probably not find an especially challenging game if you choose to download our project, but if you DO choose to take part then I hope you can rediscover a part of your childhood that you may have forgotten, or at least disregarded for a while.

The Blackbird Strikes Back (D-Boy Wheeler) - You are a blackbird. A human has killed your mate and ruined your nest.Now it is time to get revenge. Make that human's life heck! Made as an entry for MAGS September 2013. The theme was "Animals".

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Pick of the Month:
Skumring

When a beautiful dame in distress enters gumshoe Cooper Chutney's office, asking for help to investigate her husband's infidelity, something didn't seem right. Why would anyone cheat on such beautiful broad, he thought? Little did he know that this seemingly simple case would lead him down a spiral into the darkest depths of Port Horizon. SeamanNaranja's Skumring is a 1950's Noir point and click adventure set in the sleepless city of Port Horizon. A city on the verge of moral collapse.
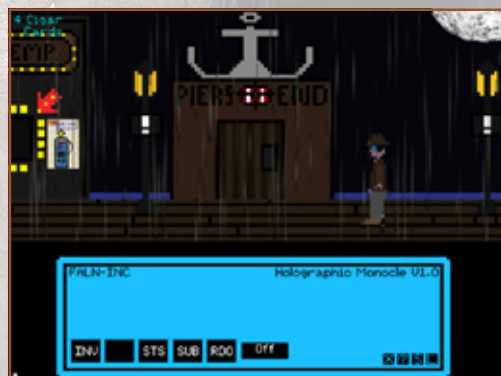
Step into the shoes of a PI yearning to prove himself in this slick, contemporary tale of gangsters, greed and goons.

With classic comic book-esque cutscenes, full voice acting, varied jazz/classical soundtrack, intelligent writing and 3+ hours of gameplay, this is certainly a must play for any adventure gamer.

(Chosen by **Sunny Penguin**)

Memories of a Snake
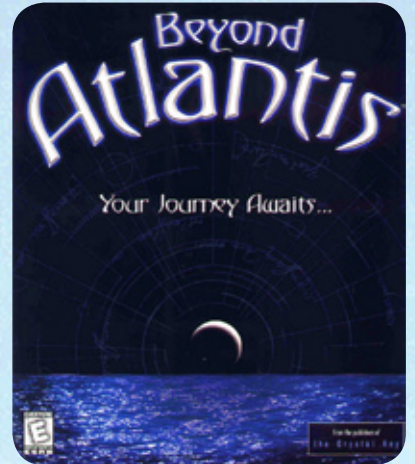(Marion)

Weathered
(MrNashington)

My First Big Adventure
(Ross Moffat)

Beyond Atlantis

Beyond Atlantis, also known as *Atlantis II*, is the 1999 adventure by *Cryo Interactive* and sequel to *Atlantis: The Lost Tales*, of two years prior. This is the only *Atlantis* game I played as a child, and probably one of my most vivid, earliest, gaming memories. I never did beat it back then, not even close, no matter how many times I tried. Years later, now coming back to this game, I am glad to see that the puzzles I was stuck at were real doozies, puzzles that I would not want to go up against even now, without a walkthrough.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

Beyond Atlantis, unlike its predecessor, actually is pretty playable. I could even imagine an adventure game veteran playing thru the whole thing without any external help. There are a few puzzles that are still ridiculously unplayable, though none as horrendously unenjoyable as a few from *The Lost Tales*. And the majority of puzzles, while very challenging, are enjoyable and doable. Also unlike its predecessor, *Cryo* had included a cursor this time round, as well as

a fully featured save game system, while retaining the autosaves and game resumes of the original.

The story of *Beyond Atlantis* is as complex and mysterious as it was the in the original game; And nothing is really explained, at all, until the very end. Additionally, unlike *The Lost Tales*, this time you spend the entire game doing mostly unrelated things. You, as the Bearer of Light, inhabit the body of three people from the far reaches of the globe, and solve their problems for them, problems related only in that they all started when a strange new star was

sighted in the sky. All of these problems involve spirits, gods, immortals, and magic, and take place hundreds of years in the past. After completing these three areas, unlocking the road to Shamballa, you can finally travel to Shamballa, and onwards to your destiny. It is in Shamballa where you are finally told enough to figure out what is going one, and where you finally find hints of the events from the first title. *Beyond Atlantis* is in fact, a moderately direct sequel, though you would not know this until about fifteen minutes from the end of the game. The story is
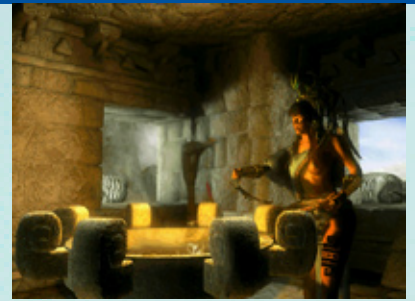
understandably rather disjointed, 99% of the game is only very loosely related to the overarching story, and the three mini story arcs are not related to each other in the slightest. That said, the game does manage to tell four very interesting stories. Stories that will keep you entertained, and at least kept me from skipping the dialogues.

The presentation of *Beyond Atlantis* is just astonishing. I thought *Atlantis* I was good, but *Beyond Atlantis* is head and shoulders above its predecessor; And it gets a five out of five in that category from me, no hesitation. It does this with amazing graphics of every description; Great voice acting for all of the numerous

and diverse dialogue; And a great and memorable soundtrack. All of these combine to really make you fall in love with the game's settings, which include an ancient asian monastery; An Aztec city, complete with themes of human sacrifice and accompanying spirit word; And an idyllic, serene, small, Irish island and monastery.

The gameplay is broadly similar to the first game, just designed far better, and more logically. There are loads of inventory puzzles, as well as logic puzzles, and some small number of pixel hunts, as well as mazes and riddles. There are some very interesting and unique puzzles within, and almost all of them are very enjoyable and logical. There is one aspect of the gameplay that I do not like at all, it is just horribly done and all round enjoyable, and without a walkthrough it would be a horrible experience. These are the crystal puzzles that I am talking about; In all three worlds you must find a particular sport, face in the right
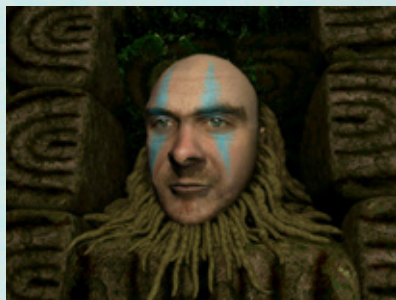
direction, and try to line up a few abstract lines on a crystal with the background. If you do not look up where to look exactly from a walkthrough it is nearly impossible to find these locations, and this one puzzle in each world could easily double that world's play time.

Beyond Atlantis is a great game, and I had a great time playing it. It has its problem areas, but they are nowhere near game ruining. The game has some great puzzles, but the setting is what really makes the game; It just has a fantastic world, or worlds, that are a charm

to interact with and explore. The game is quite long, with something between twenty to forty hours being necessary for a walkthroughless, or mostly walkthroughless playthrough, although on the order of ten hours is around how long I took. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
The world-class, peerless, presentation.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
Basically uncompletable without a walkthrough, due to some insanely challenging puzzles.

VERDICT:
A fantastic, cinematic adventure, with puzzles that might ruin it for some people.

Captain Morgane and the Golden Turtle

Captain Morgane and the Golden Turtle is a spin off of the successful *So Blond* adventure game series. It was written by *Steve Ince*, developed by *Wizarbox*, and published by *Reef Entertainment* in 2012. It originally made it to the PC, PlayStation 3, and Wii; And now has an ongoing Steam Greenlight campaign. *Captain Morgane* is very obviously a heartfelt attempt at a classic point and click ideal, with a great many analogies to *The Secret of Monkey Island* in particular. There is humour, or course, a wannabe pirate, and many easter-eggs and popular culture references.

Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The story follows Captain Morgane, a young pirate captain who has just gotten her first command, overseen by her father. After getting the ship outfitted, and finding a commision, you set off for adventure, looking for the fabled island of the Golden Turtle. Along the way you must deal with the, long past, death of your mother; And fend off the evil pirate captain Hilary Simpkins, the villain from the *So Blond*; All while looking for Uncle Eduardo, who is thought to have been lost at sea, but rumours of his survival abound. This story takes place on five islands, in a semi-openworld manner, and should take you about ten hours to complete its ten chapters. The story concludes with ample material to produce a sequel; Hilary Simpkins very much alive, and vowing revenge against Captain Morgane, as well as a key to another legendary treasure being discovered. Overall this story is decent; There are some inconsistent areas, and some areas that are more boring than anything else, but most of the time it is neither amazing, nor actively bad, it is simply a decent story.

The presentation is what I have the most problems with. The voice acting is decent, the music is decent, and the graphics themselves are even decent (most of the time). But the menu system is horrible; Both the main menu, and the ingame inventory/menu system. Simply horrible looking, and not particularly well designed. Also, the game features many minigames, that look, and play, like crappy flash web games.

The gameplay is mostly general inventory puzzles, but you also

This is Senor Guzman's bank.
T

encounter the occasional very simple minigame. There puzzles are separated into quests and recorded for you, so it is easy to figure out what you are currently supposed to be doing, and kept moderately easy. One big complaint I have is the walking around controls; You cannot just click anywhere and walk in that general direction, there are designated walking areas, and sometimes these are quite small and hard to navigate; Sometimes parts of the screen are even missed the first time around, as it seems like

Seeing this rod has just triggered memory of the day my Dad left island for good.
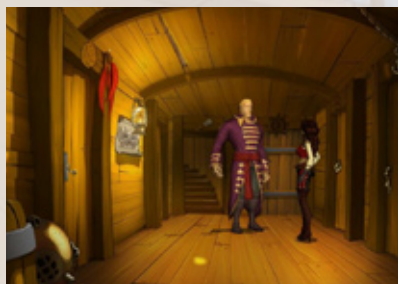
there is no way to get further right or left. Also, some of the objectives are just stupid, like going on a huge multi-arc adventure to get the location of a inn on the other end of town, because the only one you can ask about this establishment wants something in return for the information. Captain Morgane does do one thing unique, and that is how you sometimes use other characters as a sort of item. While you always play as Morgane, as the captain you are occasionally given other characters to order around. This is not altogether different to just using an item, but it is different enough to be memorable and one of the games better features.

Captain Morgane and the Golden Turtle is a decent game, whose graphics just barely let it pass as a professional little. I really was not all that impressed, It is somewhat bland and all round uninspiring. But loads of people would disagree with me, and many have enjoyed the game quite a bit. ●
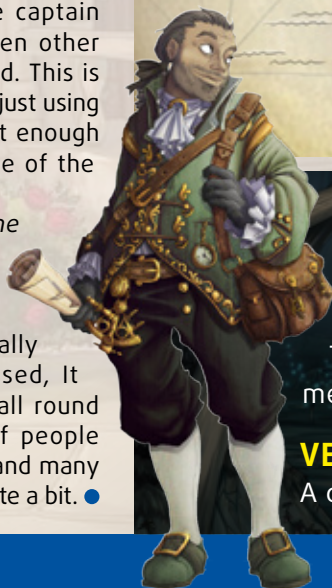
BRIGHT MOMENTS:
At ten hours, it has a good length.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
The graphics, especially the menu system and minigames.

VERDICT:
A decent adventure.

The Dream Machine
Chapter 4

It's been nearly 16 months since I reviewed the first three chapters of *Cockroach Inc.'s The Dream Machine* in the May 2012 edition of Adventure Lantern. When I played those three chapters, I was immediately hooked and couldn't sing enough praises for the game. An interesting story with great narrative pacing, intelligent brain-teasing puzzles that felt incredibly natural and plausible in context, and a fairly unique atmosphere and visual style had me anxiously awaiting the release of chapter four. And yet it's taken nearly two years since the release of chapter three for chapter four to finally become available.

Review by Nick Burgener

Fortunately, chapter three didn't end on a major cliffhanger -- there was still obviously a lot of the story yet to be told, but it sufficiently resolved one prominent story arc before promising others. Chapter four picks up right where chapter three left off; after rescuing your wife Alicia from her own dream, you realize that you have to do the same with the other residents of your apartment building in order to shut down the landlord's haywire dream

machine. Chapter four thus consists of a self-contained dream sequence as Victor goes into the dreamscape of his elderly neighbor Edie.

As much as I enjoyed playing through the first three chapters, I found chapter four much harder to get into. The biggest issue is just getting back into the swing of things after so much down time between episodes because there's still no recap to bring you up to speed. It was therefore quite jarring going into chapter four, trying to remember exactly what had just happened at the end of chapter three, and figuring out exactly what I was supposed to be doing in chapter four. Consequently, I spent an awful lot of time in the beginning aimlessly wandering around, clicking on everything possible, unable to remember what I'd already examined or used in previous chapters and unsure of what was important or new to me now.

It becomes especially problematic when the game expects you to remember an obscure, previously unsolvable puzzle -- something you encountered in chapter two but weren't able to find a solution to until now. After so long of waiting, it's just hard to remember what you have and have not used in the environment, and it's even harder to connect the dots between this particular puzzle's clue and its solution when they're in completely different areas and when such small environmental details aren't still fresh in your memory. So early on, I found myself completely stumped and unable to make progress in the game until I'd consulted a walkthrough.

Those issues aside, chapter four still leaves a little something to be desired, and doesn't offer
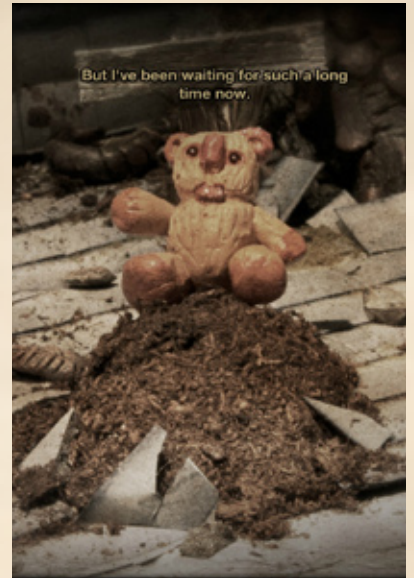
a whole lot of substance to sink your teeth into after so long of eager anticipation. Chapter four is incredibly short and can be completed in under an hour if you figure out where to go and don't struggle too much with the puzzles. Particularly underwhelming is the fact that there are basically only two puzzles in this chapter: one where you have to brew a sleeping potion by reading through the landlord's old journal, and another in Edie's dream sequence, which is a more drawn-out process of navigating a maze by rearranging the layout of rooms and experimenting with different combinations of things within the room.

With such a slow, clumsy start to chapter four, things picked up tremendously once I was finally in Edie's dream, presented with a fresh slate of environments and puzzles. It's in this sequence that the brilliance I'd come to expect from the previous chapters finally came to life. Navigating the "maze" of rooms welcomes interactive experimentation, allowing you to creatively discover things on your own rather than being forced to figure out a rigid, linear path of a solution. The storytelling in this sequence is especially enjoyable; subtle things in the environment and overheard conversations let you piece together Edie's past on your own, without the game ever explicitly telling or showing you anything.

Chapter four of *The Dream Machine* is probably not as satisfying or as fulfilling as anyone was hoping it would be after so long of a wait between chapters; too much of the game's episodic

momentum is lost with the nearly two-year delay, and it's ultimately not very long with not very much content. But even still, there are touches of brilliance to enjoy with Edie's dreamscape and the puzzles are generally good, which, if you've already played the first three chapters, will make chapter four worth your while. If you still haven't played any of the chapters by now, though, I'd probably recommend waiting for all six to be completed before starting, simply to avoid the problems I encountered waiting so long between episodes. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
As usual, the hand-crafted claymation looks wonderful, and the prolonged puzzle sequence in the second half of the chapter is clever and engaging.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
Besides the nearly two-year delay halting the narrative's momentum, this chapter is pretty short and doesn't offer a whole lot of content.

VERDICT:
Chapter four is absolutely essential to the episode series, but doesn't feel as worthwhile on its own.

Hypnosis

You open your eyes to find yourself inside a flying streetcar. Looking out the window, all you can see are dark clouds. A storm is brewing. It seems as though the darkness will soon envelop the streetcar, with you in it. You walk toward the front of the car. To your surprise, your old colleague and former boyfriend Dr. Mark Blanche is driving. He tells you to open the door and jump off. As the streetcar flies into the heart of the storm, you have little choice but to comply. You open the door and face the dark clouds. You take a deep breath and jump. Moments later, you wake up in your bed. Was it all just a dream?

Review by Ugur Sener

The phone starts to ring. Detective Schwartz is calling you to ask for help. Dr. Blanche has gone missing. To make matters worse, all the patients at the doctor's psychiatric facility have suddenly started to act very strangely. The detective asks you to meet her at the Find Your Way Psychiatric Center. You are to attend to Dr. Blanche's patients and help the detective with the investigation. You are a psychiatrist who specializes in hypnotherapy. You will need your hypnosis skills to help the patients at the mental institution. Perhaps as you sooth their troubled souls, you will also find clues that will lead you to your lost friend.

Hypnosis is a casual third-person point-and-click adventure game by *Nevosoft*. The game puts players in the role of Dr. Maya Anderson

as the psychiatrist investigates the disappearance of Dr. Blanche and helps patients at a mental institution. While the game's relatively simple puzzles may not appeal to experienced adventurers, its imaginative environments, zany characters, and lighthearted atmosphere combine to make *Hypnosis* a charming and enjoyable casual adventure.

The game begins with the dream sequence in the streetcar. However, it won't be long before you make your way to the mental insti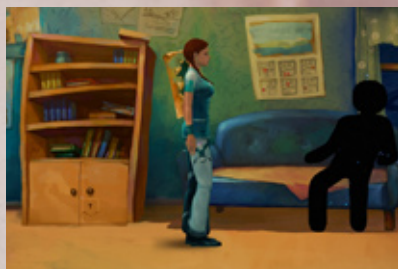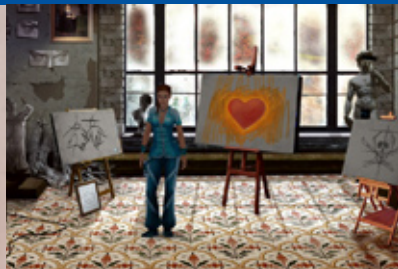tution and start talking to patients. The gameplay consists of three phases which include exploring the psychiatric center, hypnotizing patients to help them solve their problems, and phobia battles. First, you explore the Find Your Way Psychiatric Center and meet a patient. Maya typically has a brief conversation with each patient, finding out some background information about the patient and the nature of their psychiatric problems. She then hypnotizes each patient to help them with their problems.

Once you hypnotize a patient, you are taken to an environment that represents their psyche. Depending on the patient's personality, these environments have different themes. For instance, the consciousness of the art student you hypnotize looks like an art gallery. You initially arrive at the main part of the gallery. Then, as you try to help the student with various areas of her life, you enter different paintings. While one painting represents her family life, another is dedicated to her social life. Each area features a new set of puzzles for players to solve.

The various settings that represent different patients' consciousness are by far the strongest element of *Hypnosis*. The developers have clearly spent a lot of time designing each of these locations. Granted, some of the environments are a little predictable. For instance, it is not exactly shocking to enter the mind of a scientist and be confronted by a plethora of mathematical equations. However, the locations are still very imaginative and offer a great deal of diversity. From the art gallery inside the art student's mind to the arcade-game-inspired setting representing a programmer's psyche, *Hypnosis* presents many fun

the phobia and initiate a "fight." Once you start the battle, you are taken to a screen with several nodes representing areas occupied by Maya and the phobia. The goal is to conquer all the nodes controlled by the phobia. You do this by gathering psychic energy and using it to deplete the phobia's power. The game does a great job of presenting these encounters in increasing difficulty and teaching players how to utilize different types of nodes.

In essence, all of the phobia fights are logic puzzles. There are times where you may need to be a little quick with the mouse, but the encounters are hardly a test of dexterity. There is a strategy that will allow you to defeat the phobia during each battle. Your job is to recognize patterns and come up with the most effective tactics. As you progress through the game, nodes with different attributes begin to appear in the battles. You also unlock various bonuses you can use during a given encounter. These features combine to make the phobia battles quite engaging. If you have trouble with a particular battle, the game gives you the option to skip it.
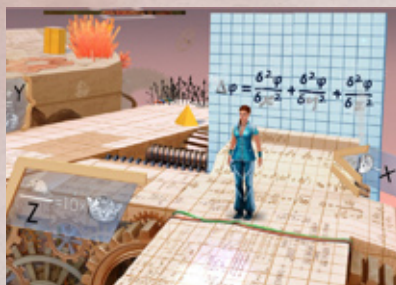
One issue I had with the phobia battles was that the transition from the patient's mind to the fight screen can be a bit jarring. You will be calmly exploring an interesting location only to have the phobia come crashing through a nearby structure. For me, the sudden appearance of the phobias detracted from the feeling of immersion into the patient's mind. Actually approaching the creature and initiating the fight further disrupted the atmosphere. At times I found myself wanting to finish the encounter as fast as possible so I could get back to exploring. It would have been nice to have a smoother transition from the exploration screen to the phobia battles. After a while, the phobia battles can also become a little

repetitive. Specifically, during the final chapter of the game, you have several of these encounters back to back. It gets a bit irritating to fight phobia after phobia with very little exploration and no puzzle-solving in between.

Winning a phobia battle generally results in Maya finding an important item. She then uses these items to solve puzzles inside the current patient's mind. The puzzles are essentially all inventory-based. You just need to use the correct item on the right hotspot. Since you are typically confined to a very small environment and the phobia fights readily present you some of the required items, it is rather easy to find the solution to each puzzle. Experienced adventurers can expect to breeze through these inventory-based challenges without any difficulty. For those new to adventure games, the game does provide a hint system that helps you determine what to do next. Unfortunately, the easiness of the puzzles does mean that *Hypnosis* may not be a satisfying gaming experience for adventure veterans.

Between exploring the facility, traveling through each patient's mind, and the phobia battles, there is plenty to do in *Hypnosis*. If you take the time to complete every phobia battle and don't use any hints, you can expect to get between four to six hours out of *Hypnosis*. As you tend to each patient, the storyline gradually develops and you understand exactly what happened to the patients at the mental institution. While the plot twists are not shocking and the storyline lacks depth, considering the relatively short length of the game, there is still a fairly satisfying amount of story development that can maintain your interest throughout the adventure.

In the end, *Hypnosis* is a straightforward game well-suited for a rainy afternoon. They game

locations to explore. It also helps that each location is beautifully depicted with excellent background pictures and features a fair number of puzzles.

As you travel through each patient's psyche, you also encounter phobias. In *Hypnosis*, phobias are presented as small creatures that suddenly appear as you examine a particular area and start circling the current location. You then have the option to walk up to

has a nice sense of humor, featuring delightfully quirky characters. There is an amusing silliness to many of the puzzles. The game goes not take itself too seriously or try to deliver a heavy-handed message. It is clear that the developers wanted to create a game with a light-hearted atmosphere. The puzzles may be too simple and the frequent phobia encounters can disrupt the atmosphere, but *Hypnosis* still manages to offer plenty of entertainment. It may not be an instant classic, but if you are looking for a casual yet imaginative game, *Hypnosis* is certainly worth a try. ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
Fun quirky characters. A variety of creative environments to explore.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
Puzzles may be too simple for adventure veterans. Frequent phobia encounters can hurt the atmosphere.

VERDICT:
A fun light-hearted adventure that does not take itself too seriously. May be worth a look if the prospect of exploring patients' minds sounds appealing.

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes is the sixth episode in the series of Holmes and Watson adventures created by *Frogwares Games*. Trailed as probably the darkest of the Holmes stories, *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's* most enduring characters find themselves drawn into the dank and dismal back alleys of Victorian London. Faced by a series of gruesome murders, unreliable witnesses and Holmes' unusual behaviour, Watson begins to doubt his friend's motives. As the investigation progresses, the doctor, unable to comprehend the situation, asks himself the questions most of London would like answering; what is wrong with Sherlock Holmes and why is he behaving so badly?

Review by Rob Hamilton

London. 1898. In the Marquis of Conyngham's luxurious drawing room, Sherlock Holmes is explaining to Doctor Watson how he solved the case of the missing Samoan necklace. The doctor listens patiently as Holmes painstakingly details the series of clues that led him to his conclusion. The arrival of the Marquis, accompanied by Inspector Baynes from Scotland Yard, allows Holmes an opportunity to close the case with a dramatic flourish. Plunging his hand into the ornamental fish tank, Holmes retrieves the missing necklace from its watery hiding place and hands it to the Marquis for verification. With the missing item returned to its rightful owner and Scotland Yard put firmly in its place, Holmes and Watson return to 221B Baker Street.

The next morning Holmes is astonished to read an article in the 'Globe Explorer' newspaper, accusing him of theft. The article states that the Samoan necklace is a vulgar fake and that only Sherlock Holmes had the opportunity to switch it. Right on cue, Inspector Baynes appears and, somewhat smugly, hands the necklace to Holmes. A brief examination confirms that the necklace is indeed a vulgar fake.

However, this is only the beginning of Sherlock Holmes' problems. A series of brutal murders occur. The first being the Bishop of Knightsbridge, tortured and then mutilated moments before Holmes and Watson arrive

for an appointment. The gruesome scene reveals a plethora of clues left behind by the murderers, many of which lead to various diverse locations around London.

It is during this investigation that Watson begins to notice his friend's strange behaviour. Holmes, it would appear, is willing to break the law in order to further the investigation. At one point, Watson says, 'I hope your motivations are founded, Holmes, I don't much like skirting around the edges of the law like this.'

More articles appear in the 'Globe Explorer' accusing Sherlock Holmes of various crimes and clandestine actions. The accusations relate to previous investigations and involve theft, blackmail and kidnap. Perturbed by these revelations Watson wants answers, but Holmes remains inscrutable.

After several more incidents of odd behaviour, Watson begins to wonder just how far his friend is prepared to go to solve a case. The answer is forthcoming during a visit to Whitechapel. A bomb explodes at a retired judge's house, killing the occupant. When Holmes becomes the prime suspect for the explosion Watson finds himself considering the unthinkable; is Sherlock Holmes capable of murder?

Unfortunately, the good doctor is unable to pose any of these questions to his friend because Holmes, now under investigation by Scotland Yard, has disappeared. In order to solve this complex case, the first thing Watson must do is locate Holmes – but where does he start looking?

And, it is there, brooding in Baker Street, that we must leave Watson to continue his investigation. Any further outlining of the story would take us into the unwelcome realm of spoilers. There are so many twists, turns and revelations within this game it is difficult to explain in any detail what it's about without giving away the plot.

Interestingly, the storyline adheres to the standard three-act format used in Hollywood movies, including the mid-point revelation, which usually occurs at the sixty-minute mark in most films. In *The Testament of Sherlock Holmes*, the revelation half way through the game is so shocking most gamers will find themselves staring at the screen in stunned silence. To say this particular scene between Sherlock Holmes and John
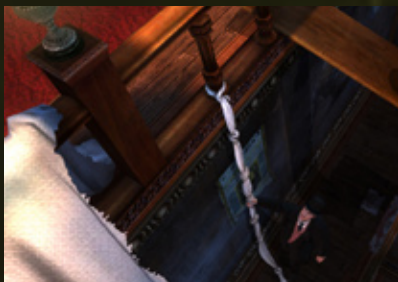
Watson was unexpected would qualify for the understatement of this or any other year.

These scenes work so well because the dialogue unfolds with beautifully controlled precision, exchanges between characters is briskly efficient with conversations rarely extending beyond several sentences. Thankfully, there are no 'state of the nation' speeches,which gives the game an even pacing throughout the fifteen of so main locations.

With such strong characterization and a highly believable game world many players may not appreciate what is staring them in the face. In the jargon of the developers, 'the designers used motion capture to get realism, a new light and shadow system, various post-treatment image effects and cinematographic direction.' In other words, the graphics will blow your socks off.

The graphics in this game are indeed excellent and add a richness to the overall feel of the game, but they won't blow your socks off. With high definition images spread across most of the devices used today, quality graphics in recently developed games should be a given. Watching Holmes pace

A violin... It is a lovely one. But where is its case?

thoughtfully around a murder scene is visually satisfying, but there is room for improvement and it is highly likely the next Holmes adventure, due in 2014, will indeed leave us all sockless.

There is, however, one aspect of the game that fails to impress. The music. It's there, in the background, warbling away to no great effect. It does not enhance the drama nor raise the tension (it doesn't even irritate me) – it just plays away seemingly on a loop, having no discernable influence on anything.

The sound effects, on the other hand, add a sense of realism to most of the scenes. Ominous footsteps on cobbled streets, creaking doors in basements and ricocheting bullets can become clichéd if overdone, but here, in the

back streets of Whitechapel, not listening to your environment can quickly become a health hazard.

At the beginning of the game there is a slick tutorial detailing the controls, which are very simple and very effective; use the mouse and WASD to move the characters around. The left and right buttons on the mouse brings up the magnifying glass for examining objects and checking the inventory. Unusually for an adventure game, there are three playing modes, all very useful at certain times; play the game in the third person, the first person or a hybrid over the shoulder first person. Later in the game when you control both Holmes and Watson (and a dog) this use of perspective become invaluable. There is also something

called a 'sixth sense', which is simply a variation on the hint button and is best avoided.

What is difficult to avoid in adventure games are the puzzles. Some gamers live for these mindbenders; others come out in a cold sweat when they see yet another fiendish combination of letters and numbers. In this particular game, puzzles appear in virtually every location. Thankfully, once you begin to go cross-eyed with frustration, you can skip them. If you are a puzzles person, this game is definitely for you. Good luck.

One of the most satisfying innovations in this game is the deductions board. Place a series of clues on a board and then link them to create conclusions. As the great man said, 'When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.' Unfortunately, the deduction board only appears three times in the game and is woefully underused.

The Testament of Sherlock Holmes is a wonderfully complex and entertaining game, which will take you through twenty hours or more of gameplay – twists, turns, revelations – and then, at the final curtain, it will let you down with an unceremonious bump. Unfortunately, the game has a flawed ending. When the climax or dénouement, if you will, arrives and everything slots neatly into place, the writers' should have said thank you, goodnight and pulled the plug – but they didn't. The game now devoid of dramatic tension and purpose, continues for another fifteen or twenty minutes of irrelevant gameplay for the sole purpose of engineering yet another twist.

The final twist ending, when it arrives, simply drains the life out of the

game because it is just unbelievable. Maybe this is too harsh a judgement, but it appeared to me that the writers', who up to that point had put together a superb story, suddenly decided to leave the building, allowing the office junior to complete the storyline.

It really was that disconnected. However, despite the ending, this was a very enjoyable game to play. The characterization, the storyline, and the atmosphere merged to produce a very satisfying romp through the back streets of Victorian London.

The final words belong to Sherlock Holmes. 'And it ended by my discovering traces, but very different ones from those which I had expected.' ●

BRIGHT MOMENTS:
Slowly unravelling the clues.

FUMBLES IN THE DARK:
The puzzles. The weak ending.

VERDICT:
Nothing is perfect. Definitely worth playing.

★★★★☆