Abandoned Times

presents

- DOOM I/II vs. DOOM 3
- DOOM series reviewed

ISSUE 02
"DOOM & HORROR"

PAGE 30

History of Horror Games
From the Dark Ages Until the Cthulhu Renaissance

PAGE 58

NOCTROPOLIS REVIEW

PAGE 05

Super Fighter vs Sango Fighter
Chinese War Ends in America

EDITORIAL

It took us more than two years to put together this second issue of Abandoned Times. Out of these two years, one and a half were spent on chasing people around and when we were finally done with the chasing, we realized we didn't have a graphic designer that could fully commit his time to mold this raw text into a readable format.

Luckily, since I don't leave projects half-finished, your dear editor decided to also play the role of grammar nazi overseer and graphic designer, while coordinating the flow of work. When I assumed the reigns over the magazine from the previous editor, I inherited both the theme and the focus of the second issue. The theme was "Horror", the focus was the "DOOM series".

In fact, since they play along as theme and subtheme, the result product has come out to be overly ambitious and maybe a bit hard to digest for the unseasoned gamer. The DOOMs are a landmark in the history of video games; as such they are widely known and discussed time and time again over the internet. "We want obscure titles!", you scream. Well, there are some of those too, but for our first full-fledged issue, we wanted something emblematic - and that's DOOM.

Vindicating further our choice of content, allow me to boast about the variety of the articles: we have freeware and console reviews, we have history articles, two interviews with two interesting people that marked the gaming industry in their own unique way, and a wide selection of non-DOOM PC game reviews which are at least tangentially related to horror. If there's a thing that I really regret it's the fact that console games are a bit unrepresented. My plan was two console reviews. We ended up with only one, which is a funny piece of text about a crappy game (those are always funny), but the mag really lacks a solid console game. As much as I want to play a Vagrant Story or a Baten Kaitos, doing that might've postponed the release of the second issue by another year. Next time, we promise!

Enjoy the read!

                                                                              -Editor.

CREDITS

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Super *VS* Sango
FIGHTER

by Brandon Cobb, president of Super Fighter Team

Chinese war ends in America.

Growing up during the fighting game craze of the early 1990s, it was only a matter of time before I too became swept up in it. My options seemed limited because I didn't own a home game console and was unable to pay 50 cents at the arcade for a two-minute match of Street Fighter II. All we had at home was a 386SX PC running at 33Mhz: a machine which, by most accounts, wasn't powerful enough to tackle an action-packed game with detailed arcade graphics. Luckily, my fighting game needs were filled by an unexpected source.

On the other side of the world, a Taiwanese company named C&E Inc. had just released Super Fighter, a game heavily inspired by Street Fighter II. Passed along dial-up BBS networks, Super Fighter came all the way to Santee, California, my hometown.

■■■Super Fighter screens
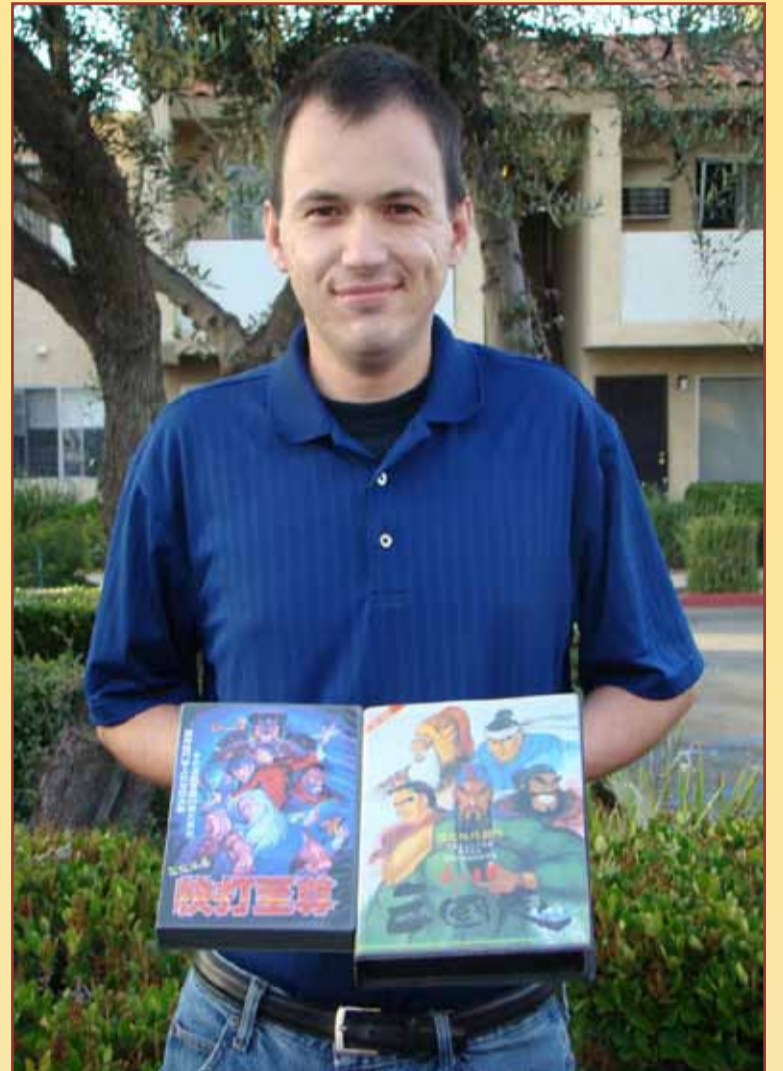
■Bradon Cobb with the two game boxes

> "I'll never forget it: the huge, detailed characters; the crisp sound and vocal effects, and the beautiful backgrounds."

I'll never forget it: the huge, detailed characters; the crisp sound and vocal effects, and the beautiful backgrounds. Everything about the game was fresh and wonderful - not chopped up or downsampled like the console games my friends were playing. It was an amazing experience.

Months later, I discovered yet another gem. Panda Entertainment, also from Taiwan, had produced a game called San Guo Zhi, more popularly distributed as Sango Fighter. The game was unlike any other title in the genre. For one, its plot revolved around 12 legendary generals drawn from ancient Chinese history, fighting to unite a nation torn apart by civil war. It was also one of the first fighting games to include "super attacks", which could be performed

after filling an energy meter at the bottom of the screen. With more graphics and character voices than Super Fighter, as well as a few additional features, Sango Fighter was "the next big thing" for me. I had countless hours of fun.

That could have been the end of the story, but these two games would do far more than keep me entertained as a child. Once I had mastered them, my next quest was to find the people who created them - just to say thanks.

Everyone I encountered, even people in Taiwan, told me I would never succeed, but I soldiered on. I have never been big on rumor, and no one I spoke with could prove their claims about the death or existence of C&E. I wouldn't quit until I reached the finish line, which for me was locating the company's president and telling him how much I loved his game.

That moment came in 2001, when a former C&E employee decided to search the Internet for his name. He came across my

modest Super Fighter website, which had recently been translated into Chinese by Gilbert Cheung, a friend and fellow Super Fighter supporter.

This man, Joseph Chang, had designed

■Sango Fighter

the game's large characters that had so impressed me. Finding my website moved him to tears, and in his first e-mail he offered to help me locate other members of the design team. I later learned from Joseph that he met his wife during their tenure at C&E. He said all they did was argue at first, but eventually fell in love.
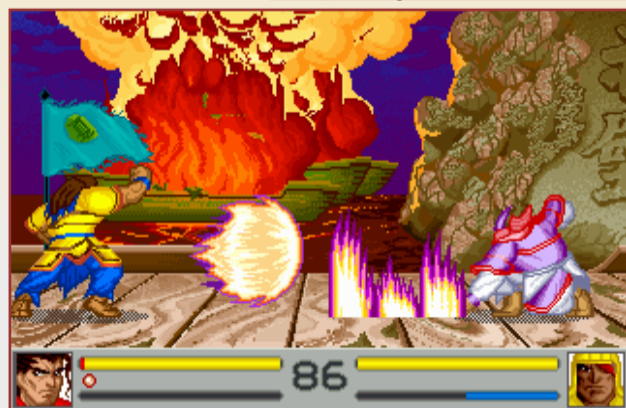
Jon Cheng, Super Fighter's programmer, was the next man to whom Joseph introduced me. Jon was delighted to hear of my interest in his game and had a lot to say. He was gracious in answering all of my questions and wished me luck in tracking down his former boss.

■Sango Fighter

In the final years of the Eastern Han Dynasty ,

Several months later I finally found C&E's President John Kuo. Contrary to popular belief, his company had survived the tough transition of DOS to Windows and 16-bit to 32-bit game consoles, a feat which few Taiwanese companies had managed. Kuo was professional and businesslike, and his short responses were to the point. Even so, I could sense he was impressed by my efforts to share Super Fighter with the world, something solidified when he allowed me to rename my website the "Official Super Fighter Website."

Having axed its entertainment software division, C&E was unable to promote the game or produce new versions: I was more than happy to take up the task. My childhood idol handed me the rights to Super Fighter at no cost, and all because I had taken the time to find him and say thanks. This friendly partnership became the basis of the small company I founded in 2004. Super Fighter Team, named after the game that had started it all, was formed around the dream that great new titles could be created and released for computers and classic game systems.

Even with all of the attention Super Fighter was getting, I never forgot about Sango Fighter. As it turned out, both games were created by some of the same people: Joseph Chang designed them and Jon Cheng handled the programming - for two different companies. This came as no surprise, as both games felt very similar; both used almost identical data storage methods and had nearly identical configuration programs.

No, the shocker was Sango Fighter's torrid history, which was explained to me by former Panda employees and confirmed by Kuo. It was a story which, after hearing it, refined and refocused my efforts to support classic gaming.

It started simply enough: after finishing work on Super Fighter, Jon Cheng decided to leave C&E, mostly for personal reasons. His start with the then-fledgling Panda Entertainment, as explained to me in his own words, came about as follows: "A Panda shareholder knew me through a colleague. When he heard that I had decided to leave C&E, he strongly encouraged me to join Panda. After discussing the matter with a few colleagues, we started a studio and worked by contract for Panda. Our first project was Sango Fighter. At this time there were only four members in our studio: one programmer, one character designer and two artists. Four months later, we formally joined Panda and became shareholders."

Armed with customer feedback for Super Fighter, and recalling his own personal
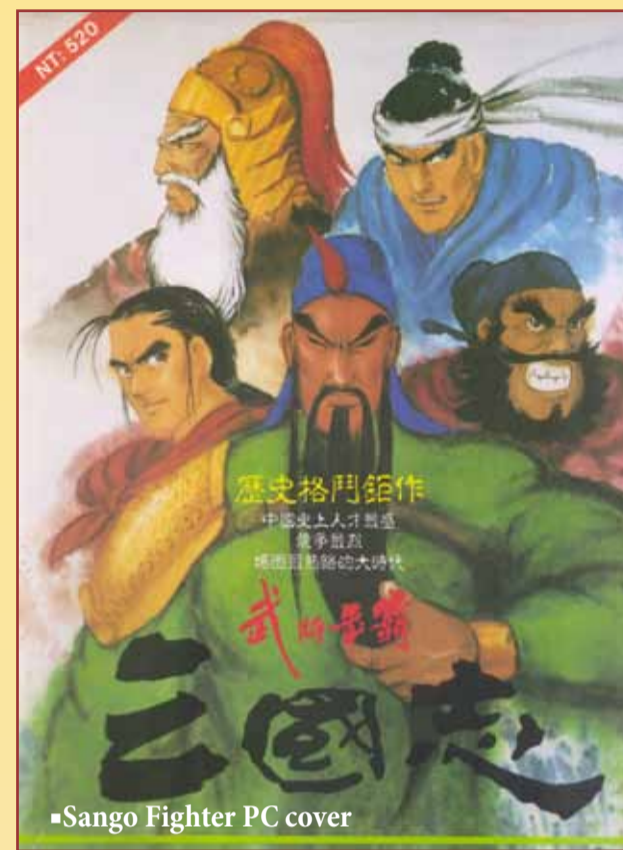
■ Sango Fighter PC cover

> "Super Fighter Team, named after the game that had started it all, was formed around the dream that great new titles could be created and released for computers and classic game systems."

SYU HWANG VS SYA HOU YUAN
■ Sango Fighter

JAAN   JOKER
■ Super Fighter

86
◄ Sango Fighter

■ Super Fighter PC box cover

> "Sango Fighter, was released by Panda Entertainment and quickly became one of the most successful action games on the Taiwanese market."
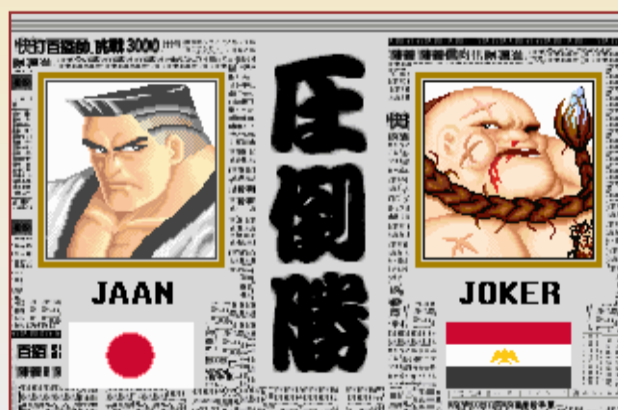
experiences with the game, Jon became more focused and vowed to create a superior product. "I didn't have a debugger for Super Fighter, since I'd used all the system memory to store the game data. The only debugger was my eyes. I spent nearly four months rewriting the Super Fighter engine with the help of Soft-ICE, which helped to shorten my debugging time. The resulting game, Sango Fighter, was released by Panda Entertainment and quickly became one of the most successful action games on the Taiwanese market."

This success was short-lived, as the generals would become embroiled in a legal war. "C&E sued Panda, claiming that some of Sango Fighter's music and sound playback code was identical to the code used in Super Fighter. Since the code in question was derived from a book, I wasn't worried about C&E's claim. However, for some reason Panda decided to accommodate C&E by ceasing all sales of Sango Fighter within Taiwan. It seems Panda's general manager wished for us to concentrate on our next game with a clear head, without having to worry about a lengthy legal battle," Jon said.

The story got worse from there. While Sango Fighter did indeed make it to other markets including the USA, Panda Enter-

-tainment and its employees never saw a dime from these foreign sales, something Jon remembers clearly. "It's a long story, but a company called Accend pirated Sango Fighter and sold it in the USA. They even used Sango Fighter to cheat Apogee, the largest shareware company in the USA, out of their 3D game engine. To me, this deception was heartbreaking," he said.

Though official ports of the game did appear for other machines such as the Japanese PC-98 computer and Taiwan's own Super A'can game console, they were small accomplishments compared to what could have been. The A'can was a failure, losing its producer UMC over $6.5 million. The version of Sango Fighter produced for the A'can was highly inferior to the PC original, which Jon blamed on a poor development kit. "I didn't spend much time with the A'can, but we had one employee who was dedicated to working with it. Its development kit was very difficult to use, so it was hard to create A'can games."

▪**Strip Fighter II PC Engine manual cover**

Before C&E's lawsuit, South Korean companies had shown interest in localizations of Sango Fighter, and one small outfit even developed an incarnation of it for the Samsung Aladdin Boy, Korea's version of the Sega Master System. Hearing about the illegal recreation of the game, Cheng was both surprised and saddened, saying, "Now you see how deeply it hurt Panda to accommodate C&E. When we released Sango Fighter, we received feedback from people all over the world, but the legal accommodation killed our sales plans. We lost many chances to promote this game on the world market."

Panda eyed the Sega Genesis as an ideal platform for the popular fighting game, but the lawsuit cut these plans short. Panda lost its chance to be a worldwide cross-console name. Though a vastly improved, rewritten from the ground up sequel was released for the PC in 1995, by then it was far too late. "Sometimes, chances don't wait for you.

Sango Fighter 2 never got the same attention as the original," Jon said.

While Super Fighter had similar shortcomings, such as its official USA release being cancelled after widespread piracy of the Chinese original, C&E was able to market its engine to other companies. One example was the smut-peddling Japanese outfit Hacker International, which produced and sold Strip Fighter II for NEC's PC Engine. Some of C&E's source code referenced the Hacker partnership, something I later confirmed in an e-mail exchange with C&E President John Kuo.

> ## "When we released Sango Fighter, we received feedback from people all over the world, but the legal accommodation killed our sales plans. "

▪**Strip Fighter II for PC Engine**

I couldn't feel too bad for C&E - Panda Entertainment practically had its golden goose snatched from its arms. I was even more inspired to obtain the rights to Sango Fighter next and give it a second chance to be presented to and enjoyed by people all over the world. That task would be plagued with difficulties and would take five years to accomplish.

When Panda Entertainment went out of business in 1996, it sold its intellectual properties to another Taiwanese company. Trouble was, no one from Panda could remember that company's name or anything about it! The search seemed hopeless until Jeff Huang, Panda's former general manager, sent me an e-mail regarding the situation. "The company was called Art 9 Entertainment. Its general manager arranged the deal with me, but I don't remember his name.

▪**Sango Fighter for Sega Master System**

Since I'm on the Chinese mainland most of the time, I'm unable to locate the related documents or information," he said. I was excited: the company name was a starting point, and as long as I had that I was certain I could track down the owner.

After some digging I found a man in Taiwan named Owen, who listed Art 9 Entertainment on his resumé. I contacted him, introduced myself and my intent, and proceeded to ask him if he remembered the name of his former boss at Art 9. "Sure. His name is Andrew Li," he said. Running the name past Jeff Huang, I got a confirmation: he was the one I needed to talk to.

Finding Li was another challenge altogether. At the time he was working for a large education company in China whose offices spanned a range of the country. No one knew for sure which office he worked at, and the trail ran cold. While several people helping me with the search shrugged and gave up, one of my programmers at Super Fighter Team kept trying. Finally, he presented me with the personal cell phone number of Li.

▪**Sango Fighter Sega Master System box cover**

▪**The eternal question...**

Li, though busy, was cordial over the phone. He was surprised at my interest to acquire the rights to Panda's games, and he said he left the video game business years ago. Even so, he still owned the rights to the games, and after several weeks of negotiation we reached an agreement. As a result, on February 24, 2009, the legal rights and ownership to half of Panda Entertainment's back catalog, including Sango Fighter and its sequel, were officially acquired by Super Fighter Team.

Interview with Brandon Cobb
president of Super Fighter Team

by Dumitru Condrea

We gather around the campfire for a Q&A with Brandon Cobb, president of Super Fighter Team - the guys behind the resurrection and localization of various classic console and PC games from the Asian market like Beggar Prince, Legend of Wukong and the fighting games mentioned in the first article of the magazine. The interview was taken in mid-2010, and as such some information is a bit outdated.

Super VS Sango
FIGHTER

Epilogue

Li personally met with Jon Cheng to pick up the source code before it was delivered to me. I personally informed Joseph Chang, who said, "Amazing! You did a wonderful job."

I was beside myself with joy. My favorite games were finally united under the same company banner, opening up huge potential for both. Not in my wildest dreams could I have ever expected to accomplish such a feat.

Two Taiwanese fighting games, each with its own remarkable story, may not have changed the world when they were initially released, but they certainly changed my life. The fighting game craze may have perished in favor of other gaming fads, but it has never left my heart. ◆◆◆

1. We already know about the history behind Super Fighter Team, its ties with your gaming past and love for two fighting classics, Sango Fighter and Super Fighter. But what are the company's goals? What determined you to create it and what are you trying to accomplish in a video game industry that's more focused on innovation?

Everyone has a gaming preference. My preference happens to be 2D games with pixel graphics, charming chip tune soundtracks and simple, fun gameplay. At the advent of the 32-bit machines, the train stopped for me to get off. There are lots of people around the world who share my gaming preference, but there wasn't any new, commercial-quality software being made for us to all enjoy. Vowing to change that, I founded Super Fighter Team.

Where innovation is concerned, we have changed the whole approach to producing new games for classic systems. We're the only company doing this sort of work that's managed to enchant the mainstream media, raising awareness about the classic gaming movement in a way never before achieved. The answer to how is in the quality level we adhere to with each release: I'm a very selective gamer, demanding perfection in the games I buy. I apply this same policy to our products: if they aren't perfect, they don't ship.

2. How is the prospect of releasing new games for old console systems? The original manufacturers no longer support, nor produce them; furthermore we're seeing how lately publishers rerelease their games through online services such as WiiWare, PSN, XBL and even PC digital distribution stores. A recent example is SEGA's Mega Drive Classics Pack launched on Steam and Gamersgate. Won't gamers prefer to stick with their current-gen platforms even when they need their retro fix, rather than dig up their dusty old Genesis from the basement?

For those who simply want a "retro fix," playing a classic game on modern hardware may indeed be enough. We exist, however, to serve those who live retro: people who don't have to "dig out" their Genesis because it's already plugged in and connected to their TV at all times. With thousands of customers around the world, we have definitely found our audience.

■Legend of Wukong for Genesis

3. Doing a quick browse through your list of released titles we see that Super Fighter Team didn't limit themselves to only one platform. There's Beggar Prince and Legend of Wukong for Genesis and the more recent Zaku for Atari's handheld Lynx. What other consoles do you have your eyes on for further game development?

While we own rights to games for several different platforms including the NES, Super Nintendo and Turbografx-16, we've been too focused on our work for the Genesis, Lynx, mobile phone and PC to consider working any of them into viable products.

Once the backlog clears a bit, I'll make the decision as to which platform we'll expand to next.

■The horizontal shmup, Zaku

4. Both Beggar Prince and Legend of Wukong, like the Fighter games, have their roots in Taiwan. I don't know about others, but I find the idea of localizing foreign games captivating. Are you planning on bringing other gaming goldies from the Far Orient to the worldwide stage, and what kind of work does it involve, generally?

We'll happily localize and improve upon Asian video games so long as we have the opportunity. There's so much out there that isn't going to reach the rest of the world unless a company like ours takes up the challenge - and it's always a happy challenge. We show as much respect to the original programmers and their code as possible, making changes and improvements only when and where they will enhance the overall shine of the product.

Contrary to what some may think, we don't just translate a game's script into the English language, plug it back into the game and call it a day. Aside from the massive edits and rewrites that take place after first

having an English translation performed, there are a lot of little things we do to add our own personal touch to a game. Adding elements of subtle humor and enhancing character development, energy and emotion are all important parts of the process.

We also go back and fix any bugs we find that were left behind by the original developers, and we usually add new features as well. To Legend of Wukong, for example, we added new magic and the ability to "miss" during combat, a staple RPG feature that the game's original Chinese language release happened to lack. These little touches are integral to the task of creating a perfect product for our customers.
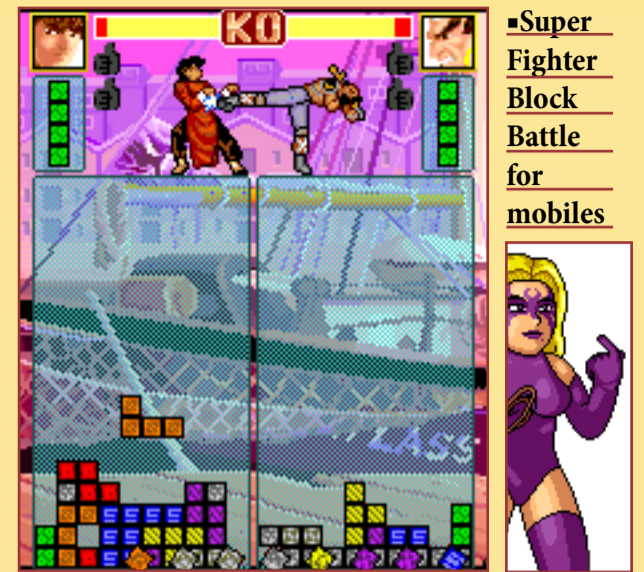
▪**Super Fighter Block Battle for mobiles**

▪**Beggar Prince for the Genesis: after swapping places with a beggar that resembled him very closely, the prince of Shatt is unable to get back into the palace and regain his authority...**

▪**...the villagers are amused**

5. In the time I've spent at Abandonia I was surprised by one thing, among others. Personally I've played most of the Street Fighter games, including the Supers, the Alphas, the Turbos and whatever suffixes they added across the time, yet on the forums I've seen more people talking about Sango Fighter than Capcom's groundbreaking franchise. It seems that, since its release, Sango Fighter has developed around itself a small and devoted fan base. What would've happened if the game wasn't pirated and properly marketed outside Taiwan? Do you think it has what it needs to stand on par with great 2D fighting series such as King of Fighters, Samurai Shodown, Fatal Fury and Street Fighter? Or are Chinese games, and, in a way, 2D fighting games for PC destined to fail commercially in Western markets?

Sango Fighter is unique for many reasons. It doesn't feature generic fighter stereotypes from different corners of the globe who fight simply for fame and glory. Instead, it focuses on legendary generals pulled directly from ancient Chinese history, duelling one another to unite the country and put an end to the chaos of civil war. Its character graphics are an early example of the animated style that later became popular with Capcom in, particularly, their Street Fighter Alpha series. And, Sango Fighter was one of the earliest fighting games to use a "super attack" mechanic.

After storing up enough energy, a more powerful fireball and / or throwing attack could be unleashed by the generals.

While most of the fighting games being developed in Taiwan were laughable at best, Sango Fighter was a stunning gem that was, in fact, of higher quality than many of its Japanese counterparts. It's a damned shame that legal problems and piracy both played a part in the demise of its potential worldwide success, because it would have been something amazing to have seen a small Taiwanese company light up the world markets in the early 90's.

6. Sango Fighter had a sequel, although released only in its homeland. Do you have something in store for us regarding it?

Sango Fighter 2 was released to far less fanfare than the original, despite being a phenomenal game. It was exported to South Korea, but, at a time when the fighting game market was highly saturated, was otherwise lost between the cracks. It's our intent to

change that, which is why we're currently working on an English localized, code improved version of Sango Fighter 2. Everyone who missed out on it the first time around is going to get a remarkable second chance to enjoy it.

[1]This project was revealed to be Star Odyssey, a futuristic RPG developed by Hot-B and released in Japan (1991) as Blue Almanac. The game was scheduled for a release in North America, but as it often happened back then, the localized version was canceled. Star Odyssey tells the story of Toby, who decided to unravel the galactic conspiracy behind Planet Radan's sudden lust for war.
Editor

Another project announced recently by SFTeam is Nightmare Busters, a platformer for SNES that gameplay-wise resembles Super Mario Bros, according to SNES Central. As I understand the game never got released because its developer Arcade Zone, didn't survive the transition to PS.
Editor

7. Any other surprises and goodies that you'd like to share with our readers?

We've completed work on another new roleplaying adventure game for the Genesis, and this one is going to be big news when it's

officially announced. Let's just say, we have continued with our tradition of "firsts," and this "first" is a whopper[1]. ◆◆◆

A small list of commercial remakes released in the last couple of years.

Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together

Year: 2010/2011 **Platform:** PSP
By: Square Enix **Original Dev:** Quest
Original Game: same title, for SNES, 1995
Why: Together with series like Fire Emblem, Shining Force and later Final Fantasy Tactics, Vandal Hearts etc., it defined the evolution of japanese tactical RPGs.

The PSP version is considered to be significantly better than the PS remake. It introduces new gameplay features such as the Chariot system, basically an easy way to go back and try a different tactic for a lost battle. Together with the original's branching storyline this is a must try.

Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars Director's Cut

Year: 2009/2010 **Platform:** Wii, NDS, PC, IP
By: Ubisoft/Kalypso Media
Original Dev: Revolution Software
Original Game: Circle of Blood, for PC and PS, 1996
Why: The original is still considered one of the most beautiful adventure games. The scenery of Paris in autumn is among my fondest gaming memories. It has an engaging worldwide conspiracy storyline, intelligent humor and a charming protagonist in the person of George Stobbart. The DC adds a new introductory chapter from Nico's perspective, which is nice. But some may find the added character graphics and remade cinematics incompatible with the original feel of the game.

Monkey Island 2 Special Edition

Year: 2010 **Platform:** PC, IP, X360, PS3
By: LucasArts **Original Dev:** LucasArts
Original Game: Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge; for DOS, AMI, MAC; 1991
Why: LucasArts is viewed as the god of funny and polished adventure games by an entire generation of players. In the center of this cult is the Monkey Island series. After more than a decade refusing to revive Guybrush, the Mighty Pirate, LucasArts finally gave in, and they did it with style.

In addition to a brand new adventure released in episodic format by Telltale (Tales of Monkey Island), they remade the first two titles in the series. The graphics were skillfully upgraded, the gameplay was tweaked and the characters can speak now. Of course, if you don't agree with these changes, you can always switch to the original version with minimum effort, while in-game.

Bionic Commando Rearmed

Year: 2008 **Platform:** PC, X360, PS3
By: Capcom/GRIN **Original Dev:** Capcom
Original Game: Bionic Commando; for ARC, NES, ST, DOS, C64, AMI, ZXS; 1987
Why is Bionic Commando special? It's one of the few games that managed to introduce a succesful gameplay mechanic, to garner critical and popular acclaim thanks to it, without being mercilessly cloned by other companies. Of course, games like Super Metroid and Super Castlevania IV employed similar gimmicks, but those additions were not central to the experience. On the other hand Bionic Commando's bionic arm, which lets your soldier grab onto the ceiling and swing around instead of jumping, is both the heart (like Portal's portal gun, without which it's impossible to navigate through Aperture Labs) and the symbol (much how the whip is the emblem of the Castlevania universe) of the game. 20 years later, Capcom brought the same formula, but with enhanced graphics, new weapons and polished gameplay. Suffice to say - it was a hit. Just like the original was in the 80s.

TUTORIAL

DOSBOX
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

Abandonia makes it easy to find those old school games we've all loved at one point or another in our past, but playing them on the latest and greatest machines can be somewhat of a trial.
Enter DOSBox, an emulator for most current Operating Systems allowing you to run your DOS games just like they used to be. Getting it setup is easy, just follow these easy steps below and you'll be well on your way to retro gaming goodness!   WRITTEN BY DARKARMADA

DOSBox		
Windows	0.73	Win32 installer
Gentoo Linux	0.73	portage
Source	0.73	Source
Mac OS X	0.73	dmg (Universal)
Solaris 10 - sparc	0.73	pkg
FreeBSD package	0.72	TBZ
Fedora Core	0.72	rpm
OS/2	0.72	exe (OS2)
BeOS	0.63	binary (x86)
Risc OS	0.63	zip
Old dosbox versions	0.58-0.72	source + binary(x86)

1

http://www.dosbox.com/ ◄ First of all you need to download DOSBox from the official website, making sure you select the correct version for your OS.

◄ Click your version and download the file.

2

Once downloaded, open the file (for Windows the filename is DOSBox0.73-win32-installer.exe) and install it with default settings. Once finished it will have installed into C:\Program Files\DOSBox-0.73 and you'll see it in your start menu under Programs > DOSBox.

You have now installed DOSBox for Windows. Next you need to setup an area on your PC dedicated to your DOS games so you have somewhere for DOSBox to work. This will not only mean it's easier to play your games, but it will also keep your library of titles organised.

First click Start Menu > My Computer. The window that appears will show you all the drives in your computer. Your main hard drive may have a different name, but will always end with (C:) on Windows 7. Double-click that to open up your main HDD. Next, right-click on the (C:), move your cursor to New and select Folder, this will create a folder called New Folder with the text highlighted.

3

Type in "*DOS*" and press enter. This is the folder where all your files and folders for DOS games will be stored.

4
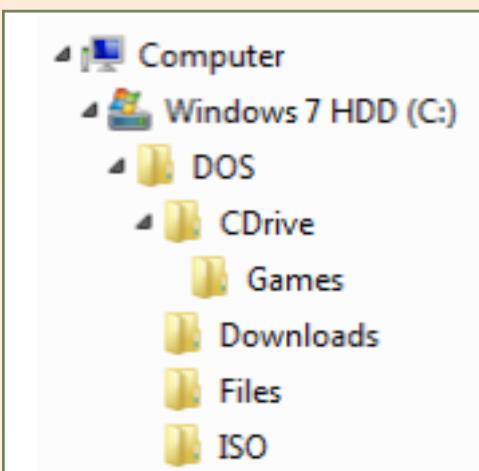
◄ Open the folder you just created (C:\DOS) and create four new folders called CDrive, Downloads, Files and ISO, making sure you right-click on the DOS folder this time. Finally, open the CDrive folder (C:\DOS\CDrive) and create a folder called Games. When you're finshed, your new DOS folder should look exactly like this. Why have you just created these folders? Well C:\DOS\CDrive will be like your (C:) in DOSBox and C:\DOS\CDrive\Games will be where all your games will be stored in their own sub-folders.

✳ The remaining folders are there to keep other various files associated with DOSBox and DOS Games sorted.

We're almost finished, you just need to tell DOSBox where to find the folders you just created as well as where to find your CD-ROM drive. This is so you can install and run your old CD-ROM based games in DOSBox.

5 Open Start Menu > Programs > DOSBox-0.73 and in there you will see a Configuration folder, open it and there will be two files, Edit Configuration and Reset Configuration. Remember where the latter is so that if you ever run into any errors after making changes to the DOSBox configuration, you can very easily revert back to the default setup and start again. ▸

```
dosbox-0.73.conf - Notepad
File  Edit  Format  View  Help
# This is the configurationfile for DOSBox 0.73.
# Lines starting with a # are commentlines.
# They are used to (briefly) document the effect of each option.

[sdl]
#       fullscreen: Start dosbox directly in fullscreen.
#       fulldouble: Use double buffering in fullscreen.
#   fullresolution: What resolution to use for fullscreen: original or fix
# windowresolution: Scale the window to this size IF the output device sup
#           output: What video system to use for output.
#                   Possible values: surface, overlay, opengl, openglnb, d
#         autolock: Mouse will automatically lock, if you click on the scr
#      sensitivity: Mouse sensitivity.
#       waitonerror: Wait before closing the console if dosbox has an error
#         priority: Priority levels for dosbox. Second entry behind the co
#                   Possible values: lowest, lower, normal, higher, highes
#       mapperfile: File used to load/save the key/event mappings from.
#      usescancodes: Avoid usage of symkeys, might not work on all operatin
```
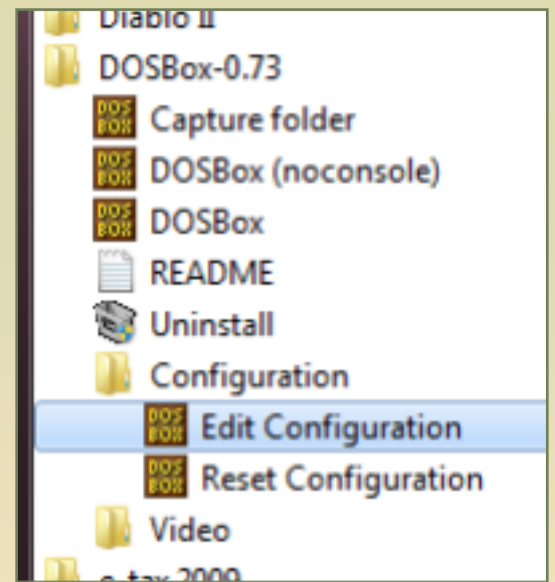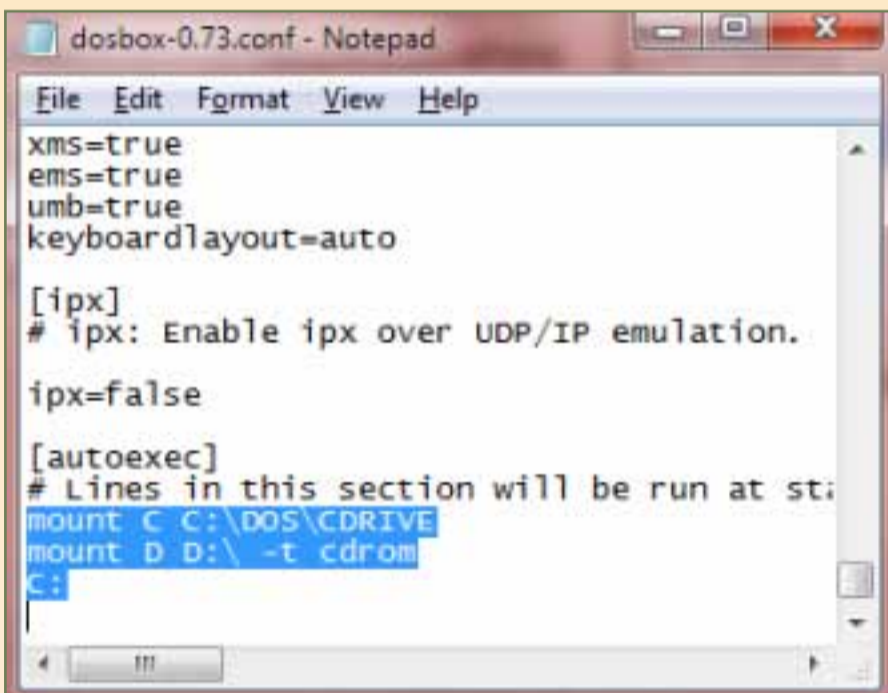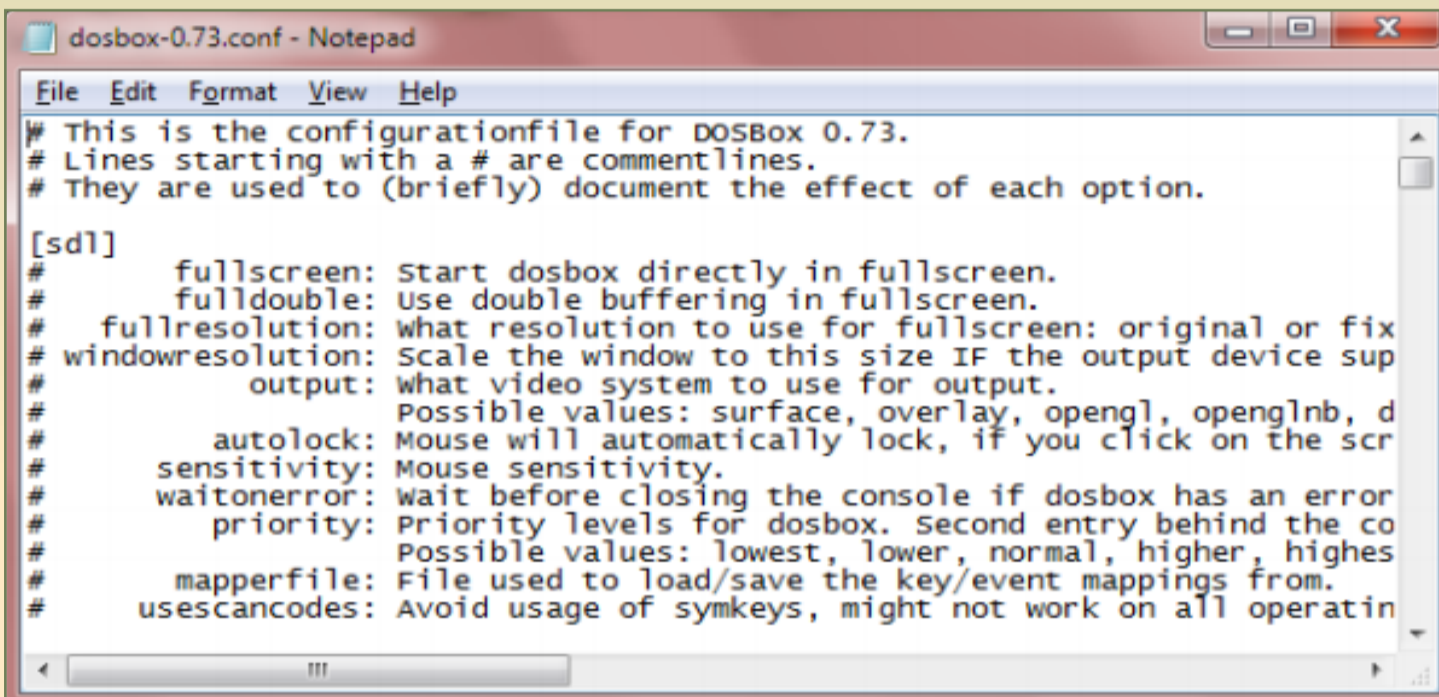
◂ Click on Edit Configuration and a Notepad window will appear. Don't be overwhelmed by what seems like lines and lines of code, DOSBox will run just fine without ever having to change these settings however, I will explain some of the more useful options later on in this tutorial.

```
dosbox-0.73.conf - Notepad
File  Edit  Format  View  Help
xms=true
ems=true
umb=true
keyboardlayout=auto

[ipx]
# ipx: Enable ipx over UDP/IP emulation.

ipx=false

[autoexec]
# Lines in this section will be run at st
mount C C:\DOS\CDRIVE
mount D D:\ -t cdrom
C:
```

The only line we need to be worried about right now is right at the end. Find "# Lines in this section will be run at startup."

◂ Below it, copy and paste this in.
    mount C C:\DOS\CDRIVE
    mount D D:\ -t cdrom
    C:

6

The first line instructs DOSBox to make C:\DOS\CDrive the main hard drive in DOS. The second line makes sure DOSBox knows where to find the CD-ROM drive and finally, the third line changes the active directory from Z-Drive to C-Drive. There you go! DOSBox is now setup and ready to be used. If you now click your Start Menu > Programs > DOSBox-0.73 and open DOSBox, you will be presented with the below screen.

Now don't be confused, there are only a few commands you actually need to know in order to launch your games. Next I'll explain how to view / change folders and how to run files within those folders.

```
DOSBox 0.73, Cpu Cycles:    3000, Frameskip 0, Program:  DOSBOX

Welcome to DOSBox v0.73

For a short introduction for new users type: INTRO
For supported shell commands type: HELP

If you want more speed, try ctrl-F8 and ctrl-F12.
To activate the keymapper ctrl-F1.
For more information read the README file in the DOSBox directory.

HAVE FUN!
The DOSBox Team http://www.dosbox.com

Z:\>SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 H5 T6

Z:\>mount C C:\DOS\CDRIVE
Drive C is mounted as local directory C:\DOS\CDRIVE\

Z:\>mount D D:\ -t cdrom
MSCDEX installed.
Drive D is mounted as CDRom D:\

Z:\>C:

C:\>_
```

7 First of all, type in dir, then press enter and you should see some text appear. This command shows you the contents of the folder you're currently in. If there's too much to fit on one page, use dir /p instead, this will allow you to see the list one page at a time. ▸


```
C:\>dir
Directory of C:\.
.                    <DIR>          16-11-2009   9:59
..                   <DIR>          16-11-2009   9:59
GAMES                <DIR>          16-11-2009   9:58
        0 File(s)                 0 Bytes.
        3 Dir(s)        262,111,744 Bytes free.

C:\>
```

In that list you can see GAMES on the third line. To open that folder type cd games and press enter. Now you can see behind the flashing cursor no longer shows C:\> but C:\GAMES> showing you the folder you're currently in. Type in dir again and you'll see that there's nothing in that folder.... yet. Just a note, to go back a folder type cd .. and voila.

Well we need to get a game in there don't we! For this example, I'm going to show you how to install Civilization. First head to Abandonia's Civilization page and click the Get It! Button. Do the same on the next page to begin the download. Choose to save the compressed file to your Downloads folder in C:\DOS. Next open the Downloads folder and extract the contents of Civilization.zip to C:\DOS\CDrive\Games.

8 You can use anything from the default option in Windows to WinZip, WinRar or even 7Zip. Regardless of how you do it, extract the contents into the above folder. You'll now see in the Games folder a new folder called CIV1. For most games you download from Abandonia that's all you need to do as they mostly come as a complete directory ready to play. Now we boot up DOSBox again to get playing Civilization!

As before go to Start Menu > Programs > DOSBox-0.73 > DOSBox. Once loaded and you can see the C:\> type cd games then type dir. Now you can see CIV1 as a folder. Type cd civ1 and once in the new folder type dir /p. Hit enter three times and you'll see the file we're looking for – CIV.EXE. Press enter until you get back to C:\GAMES\CIV1> then just type civ. That will launch the game.

9

The next few screens will ask you what settings you'd like to use for video, sound and controls (Just hit 1 / 4 / 1 if you want to use best settings) and like magic...

All games are different, but the process is generally the same. Download -> Extract -> Run. Occasionally you will have to install the game once you've extracted (usually by typing install), but once installed just run as usual. I hope this guide will get you on the way to enjoying those much loved classics from the past. I know I do.

Washington founded: 3620 BC.

Advanced Tips

⊙ You can store your games anywhere you like, just make sure you mount the relevant directory in the DOSBox configuration file.

⊙ After booting up DOSBox, if you don't want to play the games in a window, hit *Alt+Enter* to make the window fullscreen. Just be warned that some games will not function correctly depending on the display settings you have enabled in Windows.

⊙ Alternatively you can make DOSBox always load into fullscreen. Go to Start Menu > Programs > DOSBox-0.73 > Configuration > Edit Configuration. Find the line fullscreen=false and change false to true.

⊙ Is your game running way too fast? While playing your game press Ctrl+F11 to slow down and Ctrl+F12 to speed up how fast DOSBox runs.

⊙ When setting up new games (usually by running install.exe), DOSBox emulates Soundblaster / Soundblaster 16 audio by default and the settings are "address=220 irq=7 dma=1" which can also be changed in the configuration file.

⊙ When naming folders for use within DOSBox, make sure they are no longer than 8 characters. This is due to how DOS used to handle filenames. Anything longer than 8 characters and DOSBox has to shorten, causing all sorts of issues. For e.g. Naming a folder Civilization would look like C:\GAMES\CIVILI~1, it's far easier just naming it "CIV1".

WELCOME TO SECTION #018
BIOENGINEERING

00111101010100111101010101011100100110010D00M000101001010110101011110R3SSUR3CTIONOF3VIL011001010010
000101000100111001001101H3LL0N3ARTH001100101010100101001000100010100010010010111010101010101111110001
00000001101010101010101011111110101001101110SATAN0011010101001110101010101000010010101011010111000000
00113LVIRA010101JAWS0FC3RB3RUS00101010101110101011110101100001110011V3IL0FDARKN3SS001010101001001
00011010100101100100101010010100101010000010101111101001010101111000100101011010100101010100101010011111
11010101010101011111000001R3ALMS0FTH3HUNTING00001100101010111010000110111001101001011110101010110
100011001010101111000010101110001010101011110000000011101010011111N0CTR0P0LIS0001010101010101111101011110001
000110101011AL0N3INTH3DARK00001010010001100100101000001001AND%%%WHAT3VER00001100100100100100101
11100101010101010111010100000110100BINARY000101010101011011STRUCTURALISM01001L3VISTRAUSS010101010

🍌 Freeware Corner

The White Chamber
Review

Written by The Fifth Horseman

Developer: Studio Trophis ####################
Release Year: 2005 ##############
Genre: Point-and-click Adventure / Sci-Fi Horror ##
Status: Freeware ###################

This is the beginning of "The White Chamber", an anime-styled point-and-click horror adventure released by Studio Trophis in 2005.

A young woman wakes up in an empty room, with no memory of her past. The interior of what later turns out to be a space station is incredibly aged and streaks of splattered blood encrusted onto almost every surface, hint at some unspeakable horror having taken place there.

What is this place? What happened here? And most importantly, what - if anything - does it have to do with the game's protagonist?

The video recording left by one of the crew members brings further questions, but no answers. And it only gets weirder from then on: messages written in blood appear on control panels and walls, parts of the station change into bizarre things straight out

◄ **I foresee an** *event horizon.*

of a nightmare... and some of the former station crew members seem to still be around. Pieces of them, anyway.

Further exploration makes it clear the answers to this mystery can only be found in the station's laboratory module... the titular White Chamber.

▪ **This is actually quite sane compared to some other scenes.**

The plot is not especially convoluted - but still well thought out and consistent in keeping the mystery under tight wraps until the very end (a relief, considering in how many modern video games the "grand revelations" of the finale become painfully obvious about halfway through the game).

Unlike in certain other adventure games, in The White Chamber you won't encounter outlandish puzzles like freezing a rodent to

use it a century later in a treadmill to generate electricity - the solution to every problem you encounter is logical and can be found with a little effort on your part.

Artistically, there isn't anything to be held against the game either - the graphics are well-drawn and the animations (where they are present) fluent, the only thing I could consider an issue being the main character's ridiculous hair style (WAY over the top even considering how weird hair you can find in anime - but hey, your mileage may vary).

The soundtrack enhances the creep factor well where neccesary, but other than that it's not exceptionally memorable; just as it should be in a horror.

▪That's a dangerous lack of genre awareness...

Multi-language support is a major plus for the game: it includes a whopping total of nine language versions for the text - English, French, Italian, German, Czech, Russian, Greek, Portugese and Polish. The voice-overs are, however, only available in English and German.

▪ Spammers... IN SPACE!

Try as I may, the only real fault I could attribute to the game was its length: unless you get completely stuck on one of the puzzles it can be completed during the course of a single evening, leaving you with a serious itch for more.

▪ Like I said... *an arm*. Now where's the *leg*?

▪ A decapitated body... it's... crucified upside down... Am I in hell?
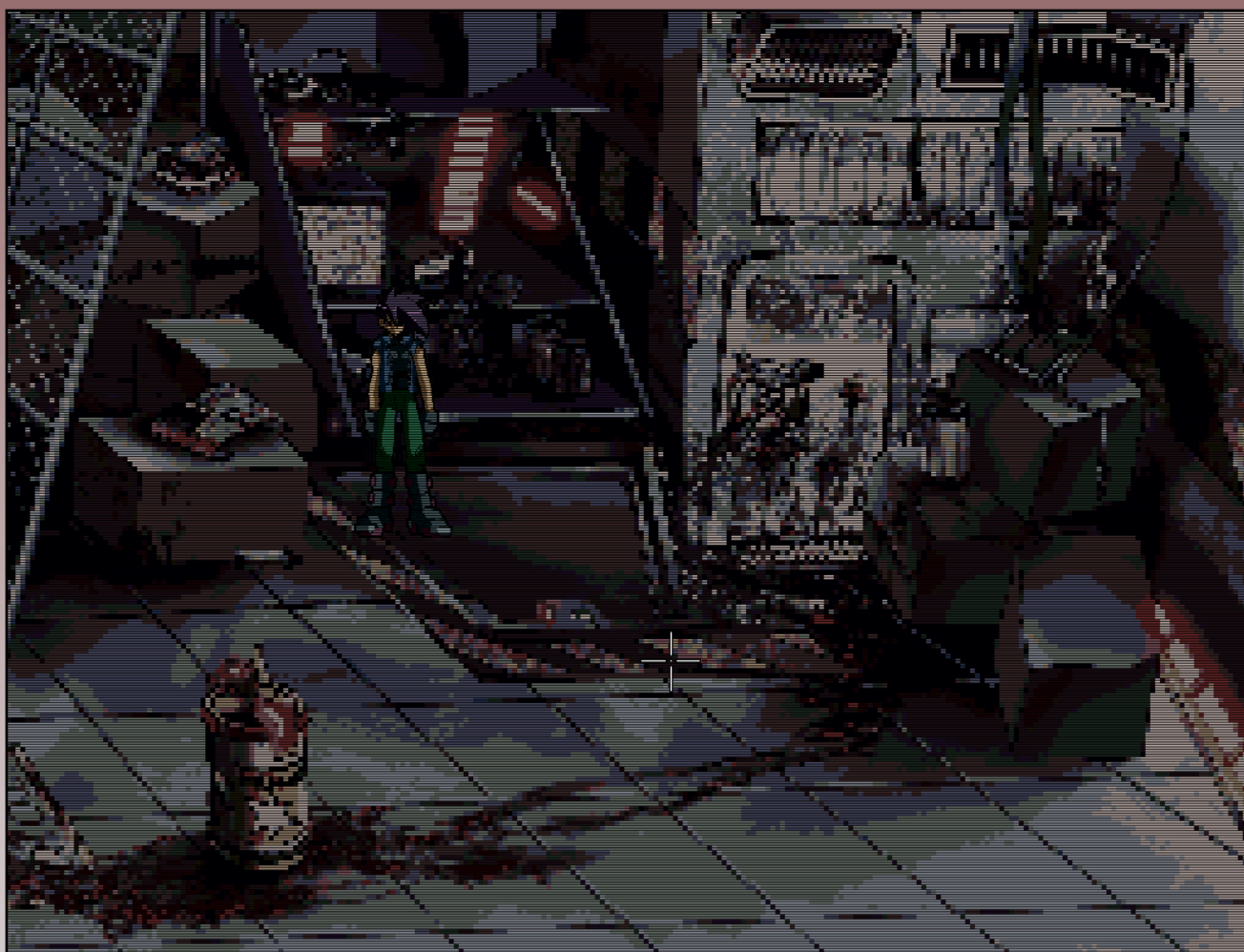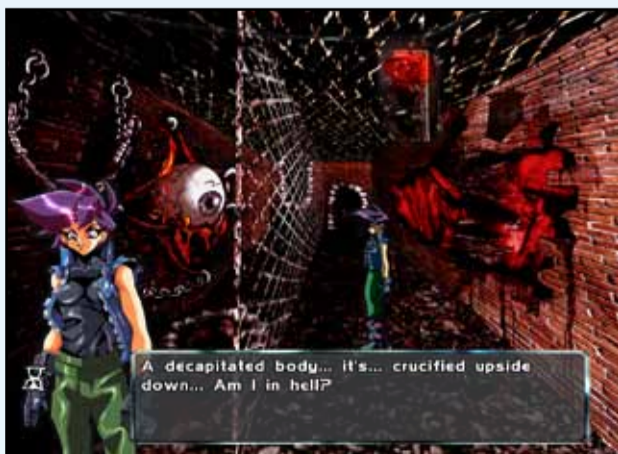
▪ Do not adjust your ezine. This is a real screenshot.

If you have strong nerves, are not put off by anime and enjoy playing adventure games, give The White Chamber a try - you won't be disappointed.

But beware: once you start, there is

NO TURNING BACK!

The game can be downloaded from the creators' site at http://www.studiotrophis.com/site/projects/thewhitechamber

◄When electricity costs you an arm and a leg...

◄ Good question.

▪ Two words: Nightmare. Fuel. Unleaded. No, wait, that's three...

Score of
9.0
out of 10

And just like this we give start to this issue's centerpiece set of articles, covering the main entries in the DOOM series. The first one, managed to polish and popularize the FPS fundamentals introduced by Wolfenstein 3D in 1992 - no wonder they have survived mostly unchanged until today.

Written by ianfreddie07

I n the cold December of 1993 id Software released Doom onto the general public. Gamers were suddenly engulfed by what at that time was considered to be amazing graphics, great immersion, fast and furious gameplay, awesome multiplayer and even a high level of customizability. It was this game that revolutionized and popularized the first-person shooter genre and also spawned various "Doom-clones" during the mid 90's. But many years have passed and you may wonder: "How does this game hold up to today's standards?"

■ **One of the most legendary starting areas in gaming history.**

The answer is: extremely well. Even now, Doom is still one of the most fun first-person shooters on the PC. The very simple gameplay is still a boatload of fun, and the atmosphere is still excellent. The graphics are ancient but they still hold up and do an adequate job of pulling you into the game's world. An extra bonus is that the modding community of Doom is still very active and is continuing to make innovations in mapmaking and other things that can be done with the id Tech engine. But let us lean towards a specific version, that being Ultimate Doom. It is Doom with the 1.9 patch and a new, original and challenging episode named Thy Flesh Consumed.

The plot and the storyline are very simple. You are an unnamed space marine sent to investigate Phobos after experiments by the Union Aerospace Corporation go wrong and demons suddenly pour out, overwhelming and even infecting the UAC personnel. You are alone and armed with only a pistol and 50 bullets. Your mission is to survive

THE ULTIMATE DOOM

THY FLESH CONSUMED

R | REVIEW

Publisher: GT Interactive ##############
Developer: id Software #############
Release Year: 1995 ###########
Genre: First-Person Shooter ############
Themes: Sci-Fi, Horror, Hell, Demons ##
Status: Sold (on Steam) #############

the entire onslaught of demons and try to prevent them from invading Earth. You must fight through Phobos, then to Deimos, then to Hell. It's a simple enough plot, but it's not the story that really shines.

G ameplay is what really shines the most in Doom. You might wonder… "How is Doom different from every other shooting game today? It's just shoot, kill, shoot, kill." Well… take a generic shooter. Add weapons with different uses. Then design monsters that pose different threats

■ **ded**

■ **Doom's level design is often very unique, as seen here.**

to the player. Spice it up with great levels. Create an interesting atmosphere. And then serve. Doom's action is fast and flowing. There's almost never a dull moment, even if it's just shooting at monsters over and over again.

Part of why it is still so good is because of the way the weapons, monsters, levels and powerups were made. All weapons and powerups are useful in many different situations. The monsters are varied and each one of them has a role to play. The levels are well-designed and they use the resources they have very well. In fact, the great level design pretty much gives the game a fair

level of challenge on any skill level, even on the hardest difficulty setting.

Graphically, the game holds up admirably. Despite the age, it's still quite the looker in some areas. Every texture is natural and has a purpose. The architecture is simple enough to be non-obtrusive to

gameplay and complex enough to give you a sense of atmosphere and immersion. The lighting is excellent, especially because of the way it is used, it adds a lot to the horror and tension of fighting the hellspawn.

Sound-wise, it's great. The sound effects are decent, though I think that the PSX version of Doom has the better samples. However, the music is of another level, another dimension even. It's only MIDI, but it's one

of the best MIDI compositions ever. Even now the music is awesome and really adds to the game. In fact, the music is so awesome that you may just find yourself listening to the MIDIs more often than you normally would for any other game.

Overall, The Ultimate Doom is a really solid package. It may be a simple shooter, but it doesn't feel bland or generic. Rather it feels fun, tense, and even scary, all because of the other elements that support the game. If you wondered why first-person shooter games have become so good today, turn your eyes to Doom. It is an amazing standard-bearer for first-person shooters all over the world. If you haven't played it yet, well don't just stand there. Do it!

■ The lighting is used to excellent effect.

■ The satanic references caused quite a bit of controversy.

Trivia
⊛ In 1995-96 a series of four novels based on the first two Doom games were published by Pocket Books. All four were co-written by Brad Linaweaver and Daffyd ab Hugh. The first two, *Knee-Deep in the Dead* and *Hell on Earth* loosely follow the main storyline, while the other two, *Infernal Sky* and *Endgame*, go beyond it.

Score of

10

out of 10

■ Doom's graphic depiction of violence and gore also generated controversy.

■ Crates, crates, crates and crates.

■ The iconic Bruiser Brothers have come.

DOOM II Review
written by Ronstock

The date was October 10th, 1994. Many avid followers of ID Software rushed out to purchase the sequel to one of the most vision changing game created in the mid-nineties… It was Doom II, and though it was titled "Hell on Earth", to me and many others it felt like heaven.

After the ridiculous success of the first Doom, it was a no brainer to create a bigger and more bad-ass sequel. I can't tell you enough how pleased I was and in all its thirty-two level glory of goriness Doom II not only lived up to its predecessor, it surpassed it. I'll never forget that moment I booted it up.

It was 'on like Donkey Kong' and I was happier than a fat kid in a candy store. There was my virtual representation facing off against my favorite Doom creature of all time. The Cyber Minotaur. Man I couldn't wait to fight him in the game… again. So into the bowls of Hell I dove.

The graphics at the time were phenomenal. There was no such thing as polygons really. That would have to wait until Quake was due to release. The 2D sprites were awesome though, and the gore level was spot on. The music and sound effects also had an

eerie tinge to them and I swear that Imp's roar has been used time and time again in other games and even in a few Hollywood flicks.

As the game opens up it's only you and a pistol. You start off fighting your average zombie troopers and shotgunners, but soon enough the minions of Hell grow nastier and much more maniacal. Along the way you'll find full body armor and small armor bonuses along with your standard health packs that will keep you alive.

Not long after your game begins you will find the beloved shotgun and then the real

chaos ensues. This is a one hit wonder weapon for most of the small enemies and a well placed shot will net you more than one kill at a time.

The level design is pretty much the same as the first Doom. Though the levels themselves are a little bit trickier. Doom 2 did add more scenery like dead bodies, upside down crosses and other satanic decorum, but other than that the graphics remained pretty true to the original.

■ I murder a couple of troopers with one blast from the shotty.

The purpose of the game is clear and concise… kill baddies, collect keycards, and kick-ass through the levels until you reach the end. Each of the thirty-two levels had a certain amount of creatures, items and secrets that you could find. Three colored key cards would help you unlock that same colored door and sometimes finding these cards was half the challenge, as if a throng of Hell's demons coming after you wasn't

■ The first screen of the first level in Doom 2.

■ This red keycard was on a platform only reachable after stepping on a pressure plate that would lower a box so that you could reach it. Also notice the double barrel shotgun… the new weapon in Doom 2.

enough in the first place. Once you reached the end of the level it would give you a percentage of how well you did. I can remember beating the game for the first time and then wanting to replay it and try to find all the secrets… this was truly a daunting task for some levels…

■ The EXIT door for the levels… always a good sight to see.

■ After finishing a level you could see how well you did.

One of the best features of the Doom series was the gore. You could shoot enemies with a range of different weapons and some of the bigger guns had a fantastic effect of turning the creature into a pile of red goo. (This is of course before gibs were invented) You would also get the same effect when using the rocket launcher and the BFG (Big F$%*^& Gun). With those two weapons, you could turn a room full of monsters into a room full of monster mash! A particularly cool feature was the exploding barrels that would also disintegrate any baddie who dared to venture too close to one.

The true grit of the game lies of course in its creatures. When you first begin it's almost like you're playing the first game,

WolfenDoom for Doom II
What is WolfenDoom and Who is the Man Behind It?
Doom II was a great game. It wasn't a very original one, but it gave us more of what we all wanted, more Doom! Doom II was also the perfect environment for a lot of great mods made by an enthusiastic community, and here are some of my favorites. They are all part of a mod series people usually like to call WolfenDoom, enjoy!

WolfenDoom was created by Laz Rojas. Other than creating mods, Laz is an artist, cartoonist, actor and a writer. You can find out more about his exploits in the entertainment industry on his own website (www.lazrojas.com). There, he also showcases his game-related projects, including the mods we're about to review. The WolfenDoom website was last updated in 2003, and so it's very unlikely we're going to see any new WolfenDoom mods in the near future. RIP WolfenDoom!

Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

■ An imp gets turned into a mess of crimson ichor from a nearby exploding barrel

but after a few levels, the first chaingunners show up and man can they mow you down quickly. As you delve deeper into the dungeons of 'Hell on Earth' you cross a familiar yet smaller version of the cyber spider that was the big boss of the third episode in the first Doom. These tiny arachnotrons fire plasma at you and if they aren't bad enough the mammoth Mancubus can ignite you with his dual flame launchers. Remember the giant floating Cacodemon in the first game? Well theyre back and this time they brought their little brothers, the Pain Elementals. These smaller, brown, orb-like demons can spit flaming skulls at you. If you don't take them out quick, you'll soon find yourself surrounded by a horde of flaming skulls and they'll just keep on summoning them. The Hell Knights are a weaker form of the Barons and the Pinky Demons are back too of course. That about wraps up the menagerie of monsters in Doom 2, but lets

DOOM II BESTIARY

■ The Heavy Weapons Guy/Chaingunner.

■ A Pinky Demon eats lead.

WolfenDoom for Doom II
Click & Play
To play the way I did you need the Doomsday game engine (http://sourceforge.net/projects/deng/files/), the doom2.wad and the WolfenDoom files. Get the wolfendoom.zip file from here, it includes everything you need (except the Doom2.wad).

Another thing to know is that Doomsday engine actually creates a real 3D world from the wad file. In other words, not only does it allow us to run old wads, but it makes them look damn good too at the same time! But that's not all! You can play Doom I, Doom II, Hexen and Heretic using the Doomsday engine as well!

Wait, did I mention it has support for multiplayer too?

Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

DOOM II BESTIARY
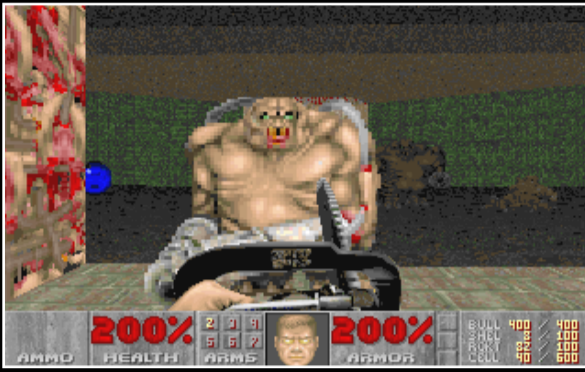
- The Mancubus wields dual flame launchers.

- The Arachnotron fires off a barrage of plasma at you.

- The Pain Elemental is about to spit another skull.

- The Arch-vile summons hellfire upon you.

not forget the most vile one of them all, the Arch-vile. This skeletal looking demon can summon a pillar of fire at your feet and if there are any dead baddies around you he can bring them back from the dead to wreck havoc upon you all over again.

Although Doom 2 officially ended at level thirty, there were two secret levels that you could warp to from various locations in earlier levels. One of these levels paid homage to ID's first game of this ilk, Wolfenstein. The graphics were updated of course, but the swastikas and iron eagle flags gave it that "Wolfensteiny" feel. Except of course that a cyber-demon minotaur ran rampant around the level firing off rockets at your face.

- The hidden Wolfenstein Level.

- The CyberDemon, one bad mad mofo.

WolfenDoom for Doom II
Halten sie! (halten.wad)
The plot for "Halten sie!" is simple. You are a spy sent deep behind enemy lines to investigate the defenses of a losing Germany. Unfortunately you're caught off-guard and end up being captured by the Nazis. You find yourself in a prison, but not for long because it is time to escape! What I especially like about this wad is the new artwork, it's a nice sneak peak on what's to come in Mr Rojas other wads.

Halten sie! is probably one of his earlier works. It doesn't really have the WolfenDoom feeling and the walls can all be seen in the Original and Nocturnal Missions. Still it has its charm, it's well done and fun. Halten sie! is almost like a step right between Wolfenstein 3D and Doom II. It takes a little bit of both worlds; it feels close to WolfenDoom, but still far away.

Score: Three Blazkowicz heads out of five!

Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

The end of Doom 2 was a far cry from uber challenging, instead of another big boss, you had to launch a number of rockets down a narrow tunnel in the center of a gigantic demon skull that was etched onto the wall. This was made harder because an infinite amount of creatures would be summoned and shooting at you while you tried to raise yourself on a podium to center yourself with this tunnel. Of course… you could always enter IDDQD and make your life much easier. Yes, those five letters will stay with me until the end of my days. Granted I didn't like using cheat until I first

WolfenDoom for Doom II
The Original Missions (original.wad + orig15.wad) + Nocturnal Missions (noct.wad + noct15.wad)
The Original Missions include the first 3 episodes from Wolfenstein 3D created from scratch for Doom II. It's a feast to the eye! It's great to see the old levels again and they are probably as close to the original as they can get. All I can say is that it's a pure joy to play and it really brings some great old memories back.

The Nocturnal Missions wad continues where original.wad left off and includes episodes 4-6 from Wolfenstein 3D remade specifically for Doom II. There's not much to say, except that once again I'm blown away, its just so terribly great to be back playing on the Wolfenstein 3D maps again.

These are two great wads loaded with tons of nostalgia and if you're going to play only a couple of WolfenDoom wads, make sure it's these two.

Score: Five Blazkowicz heads out of five!

Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

WolfenDoom for Doom II
Spear of Destiny (sod.wad)
Yes, that's right! Even the Wolfenstein 3D expansion was made into a Doom II wad by Mr Rojas! 21 levels of classic first-person shooting await you in this gorgeous remake. The original plot puts you once again in the role of the world-saving hero, B.J. Blazkowicz, as Hitler steals the Spear of Destiny, thought to be capable of making anyone invincible. Your mission - infiltrate Castle Nuremberg and take back the sacred weapon.

This mod delivers what it's supposed to, and it does it very well. There aren't really any ups or downs, it's just Spear of Destiny.

Score: Four Blazkowicz heads out of five!

Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

finished a game fairly, but it sure as hell was fun to go back and rampage through the game again with no fear of dying (and it also helped me take many of these great pics).

Doom 2 also shipped with a level editor which led to a smorgasbord of modders making and sharing levels for years to follow the game's initial release. This is really one of the first games I can remember that came with its own level editor and was fairly simple to learn and use. I would make

WolfenDoom for Doom II
The Portal & Astrostein 1 (astro.wad & portal.wad)
The Portal is the prolog to Astrostein. Based on a single map, the plot revolves around a time portal that you are sent to destroy. It's a great wad, it even has a cool underwater sequence. It also used some kind of a basic waypoint system with small white orbs to guide your way. The system is good, but not great.

In Astrostein you wake up on a spaceship on your way to a slave colony. You failed to stop the Nazis' time portal and now you are stuck in the future, in 2043. Your mission is to get back to Earth and finally to your own time. Astrostein has some very impressive level design and weapons, considering the limitations of the id Tech 1 engine.

The only real downside is probably the difficulty level. It can be really really hard from time to time, but all in all it's a great wad.

Score: Four Blazkowicz heads out of five!

Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

gigantic arena levels and fill them with a hellish amount of baddies that I could lay waste to with my rocket launcher and BFG. Oh how I miss those days!

Doom 2 was in my eyes the epic follow up to a fantastic game that pretty much started the 1st person shooter era. Duke Nuke Em' would follow shortly and then you could fly up and down the levels. It wouldn't be till Quake that we would begin to see true 3D graphics, but Doom and Doom 2 were so amazing for their time that I didn't have any trouble playing them until something better came along. ID the company really outdid themselves by creating the mold of a genre that would continue on for who knows how long? Many years later Doom 3 was released and so was Doom the movie. I think we can all honestly say the memory of the early Doom games will live on in video game infamy. Without this wonderful game to start the craze, the 1st person shooter might have never lived to see the years that it has. Quite frankly, it might have been 'doomed'.

■ The end level to Doom 2 and the BFG snug in my hands.

Score of

10

out of 10

WolfenDoom for Doom II
**Astrostein 2 (astro2.wad).
Final Words**
Astrostein 2 continues where Astrostein 1 ends, you have now made it to the Moon. Too bad you have to fight (again) your way through the base and find a cargo ship as your only means of reaching Earth.

Astrostein 2 is like Astrostein 1, but with more of everything. It doesn't really have that "extra" found in many other WolfenDoom wads. It's not bad, but it's not the best one in the series either, and to be honest, I was expecting a bit more content than it delivered.

Score: Two Blazkowicz heads out of five!

Next time! I will look at more WolfenDoom mods, including (but not limited to) "Operation: Rheingold" and "Escape from Totenhaus", so don't miss it!

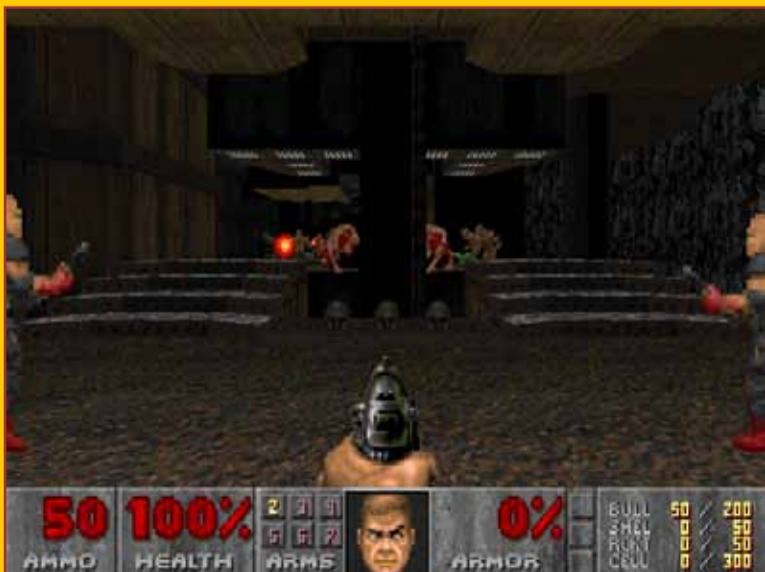Kristian "Sajber" Nilsen
WolfenDoom Fan

DOOM I/II
VS
DOOM³

by red_avatar

V
E
R
S
U
S

The Doom trilogy must be the best known series on PC. Heck, they even made a Doom movie! Yet, despite that, there's only ever been three games made that carry its name, and the second was arguably more of an expansion pack than a whole new game. It took 10 years for a sequel to Doom II to arrive, and it was one of the most anticipated releases in gaming history. Yet, a few weeks after release, the fever had already passed because Doom III, while a technological marvel, just couldn't stand up to the expectations of Doom fans all over the world.

There's been endless discussions about the current value of Doom 1 & 2 and whether they still are fun to play despite their age. Speaking as someone who has completed both games more times than I can count, I'd say the answer is a resounding "Yes they are!". While Doom may have first wowed people with its excellent graphics, it's the flesh on its bones that kept people playing and playing. The brilliantly designed maps, the haunting sounds, the thrilling music and don't get me started on the excellent weapons! But what made Doom stand out, was the way it combined all these things so perfectly. A healthy variation in weapons, a mix of open areas and claustrophobic corridors, a ton of weak zombies mixed with tougher ones and so many

more quality aspects all mixed into one of the best First Person Shooters the PC has ever seen.

Doom 3, on the other hand, tried to be something Doom 1/2 never was. Instead of giving us the pleasure of mowing down horde after horde of zombies, they went for a cheap horror movie approach. You're always in some dark corridor where each room seems to trigger a script that sends a zombie or monster your way. It's scary the first 5 times until you realise it happens over and over again. Oh, the weapons are far from bad and the monsters are very well made, but why did they make the terrible decision of making everything so damn DARK? Yes, it does add to the atmosphere, but the decision to only let you either use a gun or a flash light was a very bad one.

It's also no fun when you need to pump a monster full of lead. Nothing satisfies more than taking down an imp (the brown guys in Doom 1 that throw fire balls) with a blast to the head but for some reason, it took several shots in Doom 3 with the same shotgun! The many MANY scripted sequences make you feel you're not so much playing a game as you are just jumping through hoops id Software set up. It's meant to be cinematic but instead it feels tired after a while. Enter room, wait for monster to spawn or creep up on you, shoot. Rince and repeat.

I do need to tip my hat to the graphics in Doom 3, however. At the time, they really stood out. Sadly enough, it only goes to prove the point I made earlier: graphics alone won't save a game.

Let's hope a proper Doom 4 will be made some day yet. And let's also hope they learn from their mistakes and take a look at what made Doom 1 & 2 so popular. Lots of monsters, powerful weapons, beautiful open areas and great locations. id Software, make us proud of you again! ◆◆◆

DOOM³ REVIEW

by Dumitru Condrea

R

First-Person Shooters are a relatively static genre from a gameplay point of view, constrained by three-dimensionality, which nowadays tends to reproduce reality as close as possible, and a main character destined to shoot at everything that moves. Attempts were made to introduce various new features such as time manipulation in Timeshift and Singularity, medieval weaponry in the now-cancelled Project Offset, the gravity gun in Half-Life 2, the nanosuit in Crysis and many other gimmicks. In the end they didn't stray too far from the core gameplay - you still had to aim and shoot everyone that opposed you from a first-person perspective - and if the games did manage to depart from the formula pioneered by id with Wolfenstein 3D and Doom, they had to drop their FPS attire and maybe give birth to new genres. Just like that, out of a 3D engine meant to create shooters, came out Portal, a First-Person Puzzle, and Zeno Clash, a First-Person Fighting game.

▪ **Look! Behind you! A three-headed monkey!**

That's why when John Carmack admitted a new generational leap with Doom 3 in a 2003 interview for Computer and Video Games, he mostly focused his attention on the technological side of things. According to him photo-realistic renderings were not a very far-off objective, but for optimization's sake he saw fit to pursue balance between a detailed environment and an active game world. In the same interview,

■ **Closer to Heaven.**

he mentions the team's prior decision to implement a simple and elegant gameplay, without many innovations. The result? Even after 6 years, Doom 3's indoor locations remain graphically impressive, except now your hardware has enough horsepower to play them at Ultra High settings with no performance drops. But adding no innovation is a risky approach. Here Carmack just can't boast about the game having a high replay value. The claustrophobic spaces and the small number of enemies which spawn in scripted events will leave you completely satisfied after the first run. There's no reason to try it a second time when there aren't multiple strategies for the same battle. It's just shoot and kill, shoot and kill... and don't forget to reload your weapon!

■ **Mars hides a dark past. Balls!**

The same gameplay principle was used in id Software's previous games, but in its evolutionary line, Doom 3 lost some of its series' initial charm. The first Dooms were more fast-paced, your movement looked more flexible and the general experience more fun, hence you could play them in a deathmatch type of fashion over and over again. Entertainment has however different forms, and we can't dismiss Doom 3 as

■ **Best place to build a resort.**

as boring. For starters, it tries to accomplish something completely different than its ancestors: to integrate the cinematics into the player's perspective, successfully accomplished by Half-Life 2 around the same time, and recreate true horror, by keeping us in suspense in a spine chilling atmosphere...

There are many means of doing this, and the most important one is a well-thought storyline. Originally, the game was referred to as a Doom remake. And it is somewhat, considering the main plot outline: in a future world, humanity colonises the nearby planets, and lead by Union Aerospace Corporation (UAC) conducts teleportation experiments on Mars, which of course go completely wrong and a gate to Hell is opened; you survive the cataclysm and become our only hope of defeating the forces of Evil. The rest... you're going to experience it yourself. Compared with the "manual" storyline from the original, Doom 3 gives us a nice selection of cutscenes, characters to talk to, emails to read, audio logs to listen and video disks to watch, but just like before, your objectives don't change much,

■ **Our dream, our vision, our future.**

■ **What experiments will we do today, Dr. Frankenstein?**

being reduced to clearing out levels and travelling between them up or down, and sometimes through the martian landscape. No matter the circumstances, your main goal is still to reach the last boss, who is right at the bottom, in the Hell pit. Sometimes "progress to Alpha Labs", "meet Bravo team there", "reach next level" can get really tedious and you start wondering if there's a good reason for stating the obvious or if the developers think you're a complete moron.

However, there's plenty of interesting information to gather along the way. The emails and the audio logs, which besides announcing the arrival of your new package from MartianBuddy.com relate occasionally about the first signs of the catastrophe experienced by workers on the base, serve as efficient ways to add to the player's tension and feelings of distraught. As you collect every PDA you'll find and load them into your own, you'll discover how the colony's inhabitants were constantly terrorized by screams and voices in empty hallways, sudden acts of madness from the crew

members which sometimes ended in violent deaths, and certain people muttering verses in unknown languages. Aye, we all know where this is going - demons, hell, the Exorcism of Emily Rose, that kind of thing... Well, not quite, but it is pretty wicked. At times, it resembles F.E.A.R. and Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth in atmosphere.

Going deeper into Mars brings you in front of a multitude of UAC experiments (both public and secret), as if confirming the sci-fi setting. It's 2145 we're talking about, after all, and UAC is determined to transform Mars into a green planet and "bring mankind one step closer to Heaven". Important devices including the Plasma Gun have their own presentation videos stored in video disks. After viewing them on mounted TVs scattered around the base, you can watch them again using your PDA. I need say no more: the PDAs and the video disks are the niftiest things around and you'll find yourself collecting them like diamonds in a platform game.

concerning reports of suspicious activity happening under Dr. Betruger's supervision. Completing the main cast is Master Sergeant Thomas Kelly, your direct commander. After meeting him in the game's introduction he rushes you to your first mission, which is locating a missing scientist. However, you only manage to find the guy and all hell breaks loose, literally.

Which can only mean one thing: it's time to pulverize some green monster butt! But who's the victim? Demons? Aliens? Strogg? Cthulhu? Irrelevant, they're all squid faces to me. Hellspawn or demons might be the most appropriate terms for creatures that came out of a Hell portal, though. And they come in different flavors. The most common are the Zombies, proved to be usually harmless and the scariest at the same time. They're the previous inhabitants of the base, guys who could've been your drinking pals up in Mars City, but instead became

keeps his distance he'll suffer minimal or no damage at all. The doors are usually left open, so you can back off as much as you want. This trick can prove to be game-breaking and it won't work so easily in Quake 4, where you'll be locked often in the same room as your dear Strogg friends. A rare case in Doom 3, and it's reserved especially for boss fights. Two: certain enemies have the ability to leap or teleport in order to get closer to you. Three: to ensure you won't run without at least a scare, the devs have stuffed imps (or zombies) in almost every hidden place possible: vents, toilets, behind fake walls etc. You're going to love this. This is the main shock factor in the game besides the natural dark environment.

id played with shadows for the entire game's length. It's so dark, that every corner looks suspicious without the flashlight on. Generally, Doom 3's gameplay can be characterized as one half flashlight and the other - guns, since you can't use them both at the same time. Whether the decision to make the player constantly switch between them

■ **Dear gamers of the Solar System, today id Software has confirmed Quake 43.**

■ **Name - Bill Tyson. Status - Dead.**

■ **Pinky sure loves grenades.**

The video game industry was always tempted to place big corporations at the center of all troubles. Remember Umbrella Corp. from Resident Evil? This time around, the great distance from Earth left the research facilities from Mars with a relative autonomy - a perfect nest for director Malcolm Betruger to become the next Frankenstein, only less obsessed with necromancy, but more attracted to what's on the other side of the teleporter. Of course, a calamity such as a massive invasion by hellish forces wouldn't go unnoticed in its preparatory phases. This way, in the same shuttle as you arrives a team of two inspectors, Elliott Swann and Jack Campbell, sent by the UAC board of directors to investigate the

mindless, downgraded versions of themselves and are seeking to feast upon your tasty flesh. Later in the game, smarter versions like the Marine Zombie and the Commando Zombie are introduced. Compared to the simple ones, they're able to wield weapons. Doom 3's trademark enemies are the Imps and their variations, humanoid/lizard-like bastards that have both melee attacks and ranged fireballs.

One big difference from Quake 4, id's other major title crafted with the same engine, is that half of the time you'll be fighting enemies that use primarily melee attacks, from the small Trites and Cherubs to Wraiths and the hugely popular Pinky. That means several things. One: if the player

is good or unfortunate is one of the main points of debate among gamers. The only certainty is that it puts additional psychological pressure, though most enemy spawns give you some time to change weapons: the Imps' entrance is flashy, the room gets dark and the spawn point irradiates a red light; the Marine Zombies will usually arrive from the rooms up ahead or are waiting for you behind covers; other monsters (Cherubs for example) have loud sounds that make you aware of their presence in the room. Thanks to this, running around with the flashlight is not that big of a problem, and it brings Doom 3 closer to what one would call "survival horror". Personally, it didn't bother me at all, but not everyone agrees with me.

■ One of the few ladies on the red planet.

Chainsaws on Mars! Seriously... ▶

■ You! Shotgun kill you.

That's why, I think, in the expansion Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil, the flashlight was integrated in most of the weapons. Maybe it's because I played way too much original Doom 3, but that makes the game less scary and at the same time introduces smoother action, unobstructed by the constant switching. Interested how the whole flashlight idea ended? Quake 4 had it integrated into only one weapon, the Machine Gun, which is one of the most effective and comfortable weapons in the game. It's a wise, balanced decision that makes sure you have firepower even when exploring the darkness.

Speaking of guns, there's plenty of diversity to be found, from the traditional pistol and shotgun, to the more futuristic plasma gun and BFG9000. Therefore, Doom 3 has all the original Doom's weapons plus the machine gun, the grenades, and an ancient artifact called the Soul Cube, which can kill a common enemy with a single shot. There aren't exceptional weapons that have complete advantage over the others, although close combat demands you use the shotgun more. They all have some weak points. Specific enemies have their own style of fighting. Finding the most suited weapon for them is part of what makes this game interesting. To kill them fast and clean you'll have to develop certain skills, particularly strafing, which will allow you to avoid non-bullet projectiles like fire- and plasma-balls. At the same time, the AI isn't very bright. Only the Marine Zombies use covers, and when they do they won't move too much around - aka perfect targets for your grenades. Frankly, most of the monsters are

too massive to hide behind a crate anyways, and they'll just rush towards you while popping projectiles (if they can). This way, you won't need to use covers either, but instead learn to always move around and use your surroundings. And by the last bit I mean shooting into barrels to kill nearby enemies - a gameplay trend that infected a lot of FPSs.

And that's it for the gameplay. From this point of view, Doom 3 may seem boring to a lot of you: you're a nameless marine, with a decent array of weaponry; the enemies have max 2-3 attacks and they

■ The cube can't insta-kill bosses. Unfortunately, it was too late for me.

spawn in predictable scripted events; you have to constantly switch between the flashlight and your weapon; no gameplay innovation except maybe the Soul Cube etc. However, this is just the impression written text gives you. It's a completely different story when you experience the game personally. Doom 3 is a very polished First-Person Shooter, that gives you full control over your weapons (in other words, when you aim at a barrel in front, you won't destroy "the fan on the ceiling", like I've seen in some games); there are many types of enemies and bosses and you can encounter more than a couple during the same level; hidden Zombies and Imps, or enemies spawning behind you always keep you on the edge etc.


■ Walking on flames... If only I could.

■ Ouch!

For an FPS the game has a decent length, though sometimes I thought the story-based events were scarce and with little impact, and the level design was a bit too similar at the beginning. Doom 3 is indeed a horror title, with blood splattered over the walls, creepy zombies... and is one of the few games where you often get startled by your own shadow, seriously. It's because of the strange way light dissipates around the rooms. I might add that, in my opinion, without darkness, the game would become another shallow FPS, another Doom-clone that never learned to grow up. Instead, it's a worthwhile experience with a simple, yet well-thought plot, never-dying graphics, polished gameplay, but... Yes, that's the word, I had to use too many "buts" (no, not Pinky Butts). "But" it's not extraordinary in any way; "but" it doesn't have a noticeable soundtrack (hmm, was there even one?) etc.

Doom 3 plays as it was originally designed by id Software, and you can see from a mile that it's the engine, being tech-oriented as it was, who put perhaps too many limitations on gameplay. Somehow, for such a long-awaited title, gamers expected more.
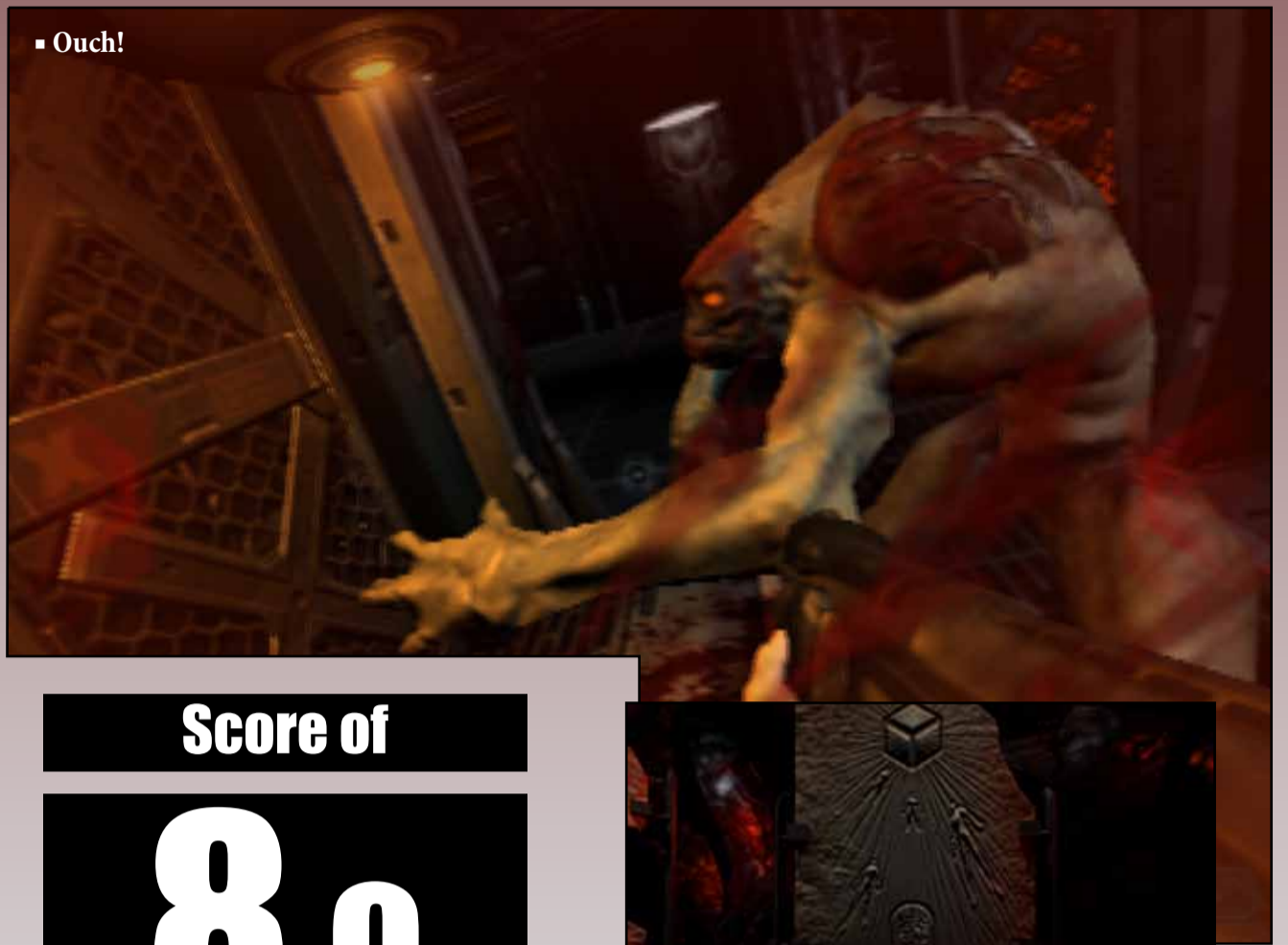
Score of

8.0

out of 10

DOOM³
RESURRECTION OF EVIL

by Dumitru Condrea

R

Doom 3's ending probably left you somewhat satisfied. You kicked some Cyber-Demon butt, you dropped the Soul Cube into the infernal abyss and went back to Earth as nameless as you arrived. Except you forgot something - you forgot to kill Dr. Betruger and now he's enjoying a nice tan in the depths of Hell. Yes, he's coming back, hoping to continue his original devious plan. But this time, the one who'll open the gate to Hell will be you. Seems that UAC didn't have its share of demons, and decided to organize yet another archaeological expedition on Mars, two years after the main game's events. It appears that deep into martian soil there's a beacon which keeps emitting signals and can probably shed some light on the ancient civilization that once inhabited the planet. Headed by Elizabeth McNeil, which is the employee who warned the Board of Directors of Betruger's

Publisher: Activision #############
Developer: Nerve Software ############
Release Year: 2005 ##########
Genre: First-Person Shooter ###########
Themes: Sci-Fi, Horror, Hell, Demons ##
Status: Sold (Everywhere) ############

misdoings before Doom 3, this small team of "archaeologists" manages to get a hold of a heart-shaped artifact. This event will act as a catalyst for a new demonic invasion of Mars. Since you, another nameless marine, were the one who touched it, you survive, while everyone else is desintegrated into thin air.

Resurrection of Evil is Doom 3's only expansion and was developed by Nerve Software. Their collaboration with id goes way back in 2001, when they created the multiplayer component for Return to Castle Wolfenstein.

■ Hello Handsome!

■ Rise my minions! Our prey awaits.

■ Mini Game - Sarge's Big Game Hunt.

■ Taking a box using the Levitator.

20 100
MAINTENANCE ELEVATOR
21 50
■ The red planet looks as desolated as ever.

After that, Nerve Software ported some of id's classics onto consoles, like Wolfenstein 3D and the first two Dooms; they've also made the multiplayer for 007: Quantum of Solace and the X360 version of Enemy Territory: Quake Wars. With such a lineup, it's crystal clear that RoE may be the only noteworthy title this studio can boast about.

Since this is an expansion, it would mean the devs could depart quite a bit from the original idea. There are indeed some novelties here, but at the core it remains the same linear experience you felt in Doom 3. For instance, the Grabber (or Ionized Plasma Levitator) which we see for the first time in Resurrection of Evil has almost no primary use in the game. This contraption is a type of gravity gun, similar to the one in Half-Life 2. id claimed it was intended for the original game, but it wasn't implemented because it proved to be too buggy. I haven't seen problems of such nature, but apart from clearing some crates that were blocking my path, I had no reason to manipulate objects with it. I tried to levitate explosive barrels and throw them towards enemies, but this idea proved

to be inefficient. However you can still use it, but mostly as a weapon. The Grabber is the perfect choice against smaller enemies like the Trites, the Cherubs and especially the Lost Souls. It allows you to grab them and pulverize them instantly. A harder thing to do is to grab enemy plasma bolts and throw them back in their direction.

■ Compared to the expansion, sentry bots in the original Doom 3 (pictured) are actually useful.

Another addition is the comeback of the Super Shotgun (or Double Barreled Shotgun), which we last saw in Doom II: Hell on Earth. It has double the power of the simple shotgun, but it's also slower when reloading. In any case this is probably the weapon of choice in Resurrection of Evil, as it can kill

bigger monsters with just one shot. It will send Pinky and Commando Zombies flying across the room. However the introduction of the new artifact had the greatest impact on the gameplay. The artifact from the original Doom 3, the Soul Cube had the sole purpose of killing demons instantly. The heart-shaped Hellstone from RoE is more complex. It's powered up by consuming the souls of the dead people, and after several upgrades during the game it will give you a couple of abilities, like slowing down time, super strength and ultimately - temporary invulnerability.

For the players who expect a simple run-and-gun gameplay, the game may seem unbalanced because in the first half you're supposed to use the Grabber to deflect enemy projectiles as the ammo for the other weapons is scarce. In my first playthrough I never mastered the plasma bolt-grabbing technique, so I totally ignored it, in exchange for a more traditional gameplay. It means that I usually ran out of ammo and was forced to be more... creative. How can one kill enemies without ammo and the Grabber? I know! Let's use the Artifact, slow down time and whack

■ The Artifact slows down time, allowing you to avoid bullets with ease.

■ Brilliant minds worked here... All dead.

Resurrection of Evil is a good expansion for attempting to enhance the original with new gadgets and abilities, but they shouldn't lower the difficulty, making the player almost a god. Despite a story that leaves room for improvement, taking the gameplay in a different direction is logical for an expansion, and because it's not a "full" game, RoE gets away from too much criticism.
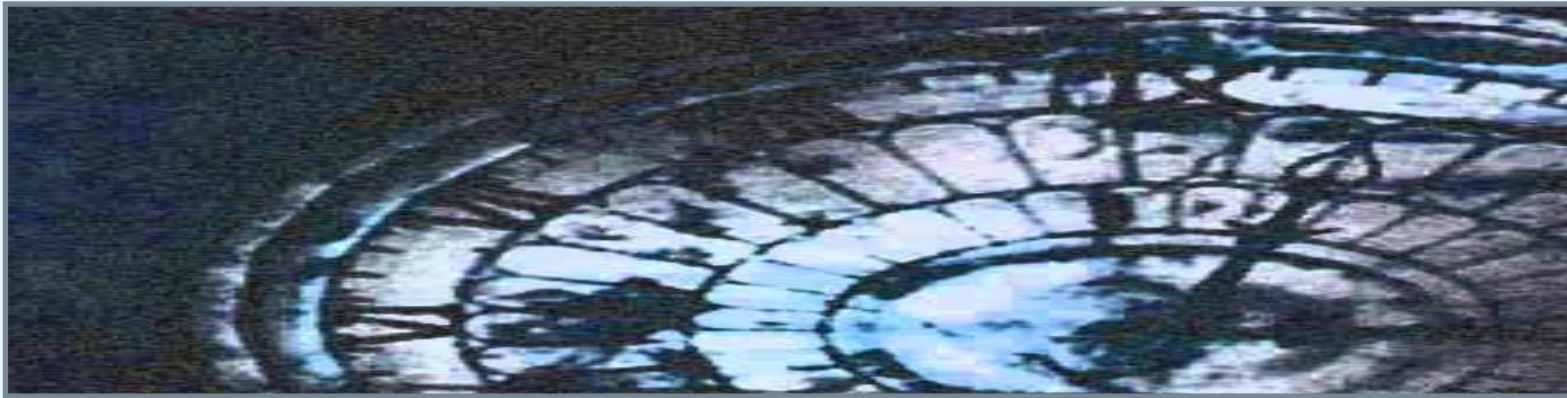
them with the flashlight! Amazingly, it works. In my second play, after I started using the Grabber when needed, Resurrection of Evil actually became very easy, even more in the second half, when your artifact receives the other abilities as well, including the invulnerability. Other points also suggest it being less polished. I know the AI in Doom 3 wasn't particularly bright, but it's ridiculous how many times in RoE I've seen the Marine Zombies or the Cacodemons bumping into walls, without trying to kill me.

Somehow, though, Nerve Software managed to get closer to what the first Dooms were - pure slaughterfests. Resurrection of Evil was stripped down of its suspense and fear-instilling darkness. There are a lot less horrifying emails and audio logs, and all the weapons have flashlights mounted. I wasn't afraid at all when exploring the martian halls, thus the experience felt more action-oriented, smoother, without constantly switching between the flashlight and the weapons. It's a shame that things at which Doom 3 excelled were left aside though. I personally like atmospheric games, and slowly exploring the darkness with a flashlight is as fun as shooting swiftly through hordes of demons.

Score of

7.5

out of 10

THE HISTORY OF HORROR GAMES
From the Dark Ages until the Cthulhu Renaissance
Volume I: Before 1989

written by Dumitru Condrea

✳**This article is focused on the DOS scene.**

This period is seen as the age of text adventures, or interactive fictions, as many of you would like to call them. The first DOS games with a strong horror theme were certainly them. Often without graphics, they demanded a high level of writing, explicit details about the environment you're in, about the dangers you're going to face and the events that preceded your disastrous situation. At first it would seem that without an excellent style of writing, you can forget about immersion, instead, your curiosity will be crushed after the first step you make into the game world. Funnily enough, the first horror titles are just that. They lack a living, organic story. I was really unimpressed when I read the background for Uninvited or Stephen King's The Mist. Banal sentences ornate the descriptions of items and the overview of your surroundings. On the other hand, there was always a niche these games exploited in order to
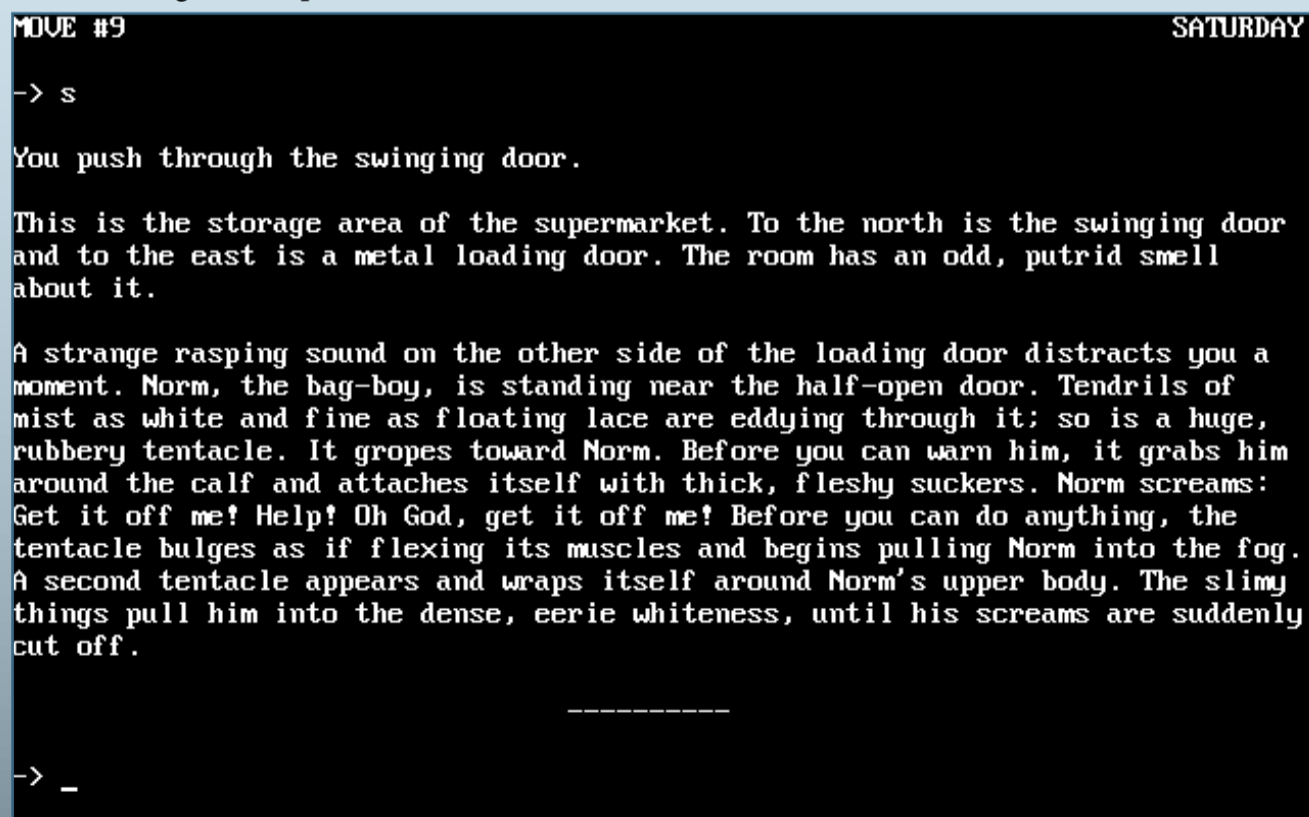
avoid downright criticism. Uninvited featured graphics and an interface that didn't require typing, while The Mist was backed up by the extensive universe formed around Stephen King's works. Taking this into account, you can fully focus on the exquisite puzzles you stumble upon.

One of the most outstanding problems that game critics are facing today is the

of the gaming's cauldron, like IGN did by relating them with Haunted House from the age of Atari consoles, the one which defined the term and its elements was the first Resident Evil. They added a bunch of traits to make it acceptable as a genre, such as "a mix of action adventure with a strong horror theme and plot, constantly torturing you with a lack of weapons, ammunition

> "While many can seek its origins far deep on the bottom of the gaming's cauldron, like IGN did by relating them with Haunted House from the age of Atari consoles, the one which defined the term and its elements was the first Resident Evil."

existence of survival horror as a genre. The notion was fervently questioned starting with the release of Resident Evil 5, which is almost a pure action game. Such an overturn in the continuity of a series thought to be traditionally "survival horror", was destined to shake heads in doubt. While many can seek its origins far deep on the bottom

■ Now this is what it means to be alone in the dark (Haunted House for Atari 2600).

■ Creepy ghosts and monsters make a comeback in this unfortunate 2010 HH remake.

and other special resources that you need in order to defeat monsters and other sinners which hinder your progress". In other words, this definition is as foggy as Silent Hill itself! If the genre was just about surviving, I'm afraid it would've been too easy to include Doom 3 and other communists in the whole

```
MOVE #9                                    SATURDAY

-> s

You push through the swinging door.

This is the storage area of the supermarket. To the north is the swinging door
and to the east is a metal loading door. The room has an odd, putrid smell
about it.

A strange rasping sound on the other side of the loading door distracts you a
moment. Norm, the bag-boy, is standing near the half-open door. Tendrils of
mist as white and fine as floating lace are eddying through it; so is a huge,
rubbery tentacle. It gropes toward Norm. Before you can warn him, it grabs him
around the calf and attaches itself with thick, fleshy suckers. Norm screams:
Get it off me! Help! Oh God, get it off me! Before you can do anything, the
tentacle bulges as if flexing its muscles and begins pulling Norm into the fog.
A second tentacle appears and wraps itself around Norm's upper body. The slimy
things pull him into the dense, eerie whiteness, until his screams are suddenly
cut off.


                         _____

-> _
```

■ A HUGE, RUBBERY tentacle grabs Norm into the mist (Stephen King's The Mist).

scheme, a move that probably fans will not like.

The reason why I've started with the explanation of what is survival horror, is to show that even old games can easily feature some of its particular elements. Stephen King's The Mist for example features ammo limitation, and you can practically waste it by shooting in the empty air. You can even kill some of the people inside the mall, and some situations may indeed require such a rash decision. But generally you're supposed to use the gun when facing the dangers of the eerie whiteness that governs the outside world. There aren't many puzzles, if you can call them as such, and they are about either finding a means to access a new zone or one to kill a certain monster. This way it's more of an action game squeezed into interactive fiction garments. The relative freedom makes me believe the end product was planned differently, and due to certain reasons they had to finish it prematurely. Otherwise, I can't understand how the protagonist can hold in his hands a shovel, a raid, a key, a sprayer and at the same time kill monsters with his Colt M1911A1.

▪ **A venerable end for a popular franchise; in full VGA splendor (Transylvania III: Vanquish the Night).**

The Mist was released in 1985, in the same year as Skeleton Crew, Stephen King's collection of short fictions, including the original novella. Therefore it's one of the earliest horror games seen on PC. The others were late conversions, being originally launched on other platforms several years prior. Such are the first Apple II Transylvania games, ported in 1985-86 using the new Comprehend interpreter, which was to allow more freedom between the player and the game - bigger sentences and a wider vocabulary. The trilogy ended in 1989 with Transylvania III: Vanquish the Night, featuring some captivating VGA art from the same Antonio Antiochia that worked on the previous titles. In the first part you were constantly being chased by a werewolf, which you couldn't kill within normal conditions - only after acquiring a pistol with silver bullets. Such overpowered enemies are not a rarity in horror games. They're often introduced to amplify the uncertainty and to keep the player on the edge. Perfect examples are the Werewolf from Ecstatica,

▪ **Like in Ectatica and VTM Bloodlines from the next decades, the werewolf was considered a formidable foe in the 80s as well (Transylvania).**

Nemesis from Resident Evil 3 and Silent Hill's Pyramid Head. However these are more or less traditional archnemesises, with event- or time-based appearances. There are other games that are entirely centered around invulnerable enemies. The Clock Tower games, the Siren series, Frictional's Penumbra franchise and the more recent Amnesia: The Dark Descent are part of this second category. Traditionally, they have zero ways of killing the antagonist or the monsters, and you'll have to rely mostly on running and hiding.

strongest horror element, although it isn't wrong to say that the other two explore dark themes as well.

12 years before Silent Hill, Uninvited (1987) featured a similar prologue, worthy of a lawsuit on plagiarism with Konami... well... almost. The protagonist of the game saw a figure in the middle of the road and crashed his car into a nearby tree, only to wake up after a few hours, with his

> ## "...but on DOS systems, even in the late 80s IFs with graphics were relatively scarce."

Having graphics, but also requiring direct typing, Transylvania represents the logical connection between pure Interactive Fictions and later command-based adventures. Both simple IFs and those with graphics were almost as old as the gaming industry on older platforms, with roots stretching to late 70s, but on DOS systems, even in the late 80s IFs with graphics were relatively scarce. As I said previously, though, we also have to take into consideration the second transition, which took place around the same time. Early command-based games were not quite like Maniac Mansion, LucasArts' 1989 classic. You could select the action and the respective object by simply clicking on them with the mouse, of course, but the environment and the result of your meddling with it was still described using text. There weren't many either. I personally want to focus only on those created by ICOM Simulations: Shadowgate, Deja Vu: A Nightmare Comes True and Uninvited, because they were rather unique for its time, and because the adventure genre evolved a bit differently outside the horror umbrella. Out of the three, Uninvited has the
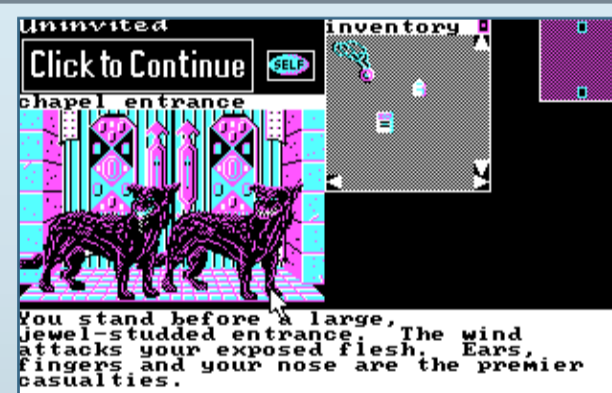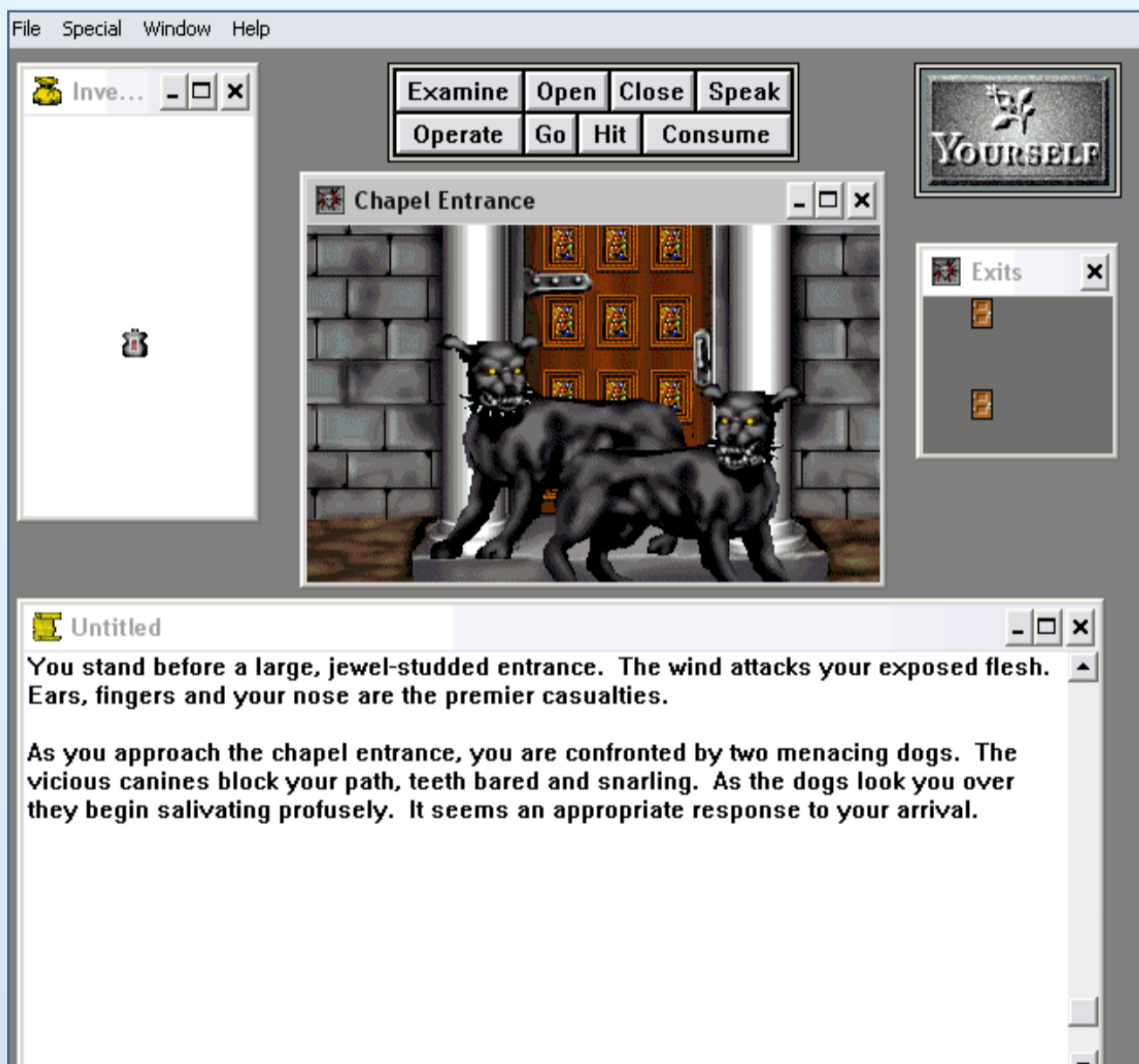

▪ **Except for the moment of your death, this is as scary as the game gets (Uninvited, DOS).**

brother missing. Limited inventory, ghosts, isolation, a creepy mansion... Uninvited has it all. You must search for your brother and hope that nothing terrible has happened to him. For the time it was certainly innovative, since it gave you the option to select commands, instead of writing them, and to easily interact with the graphical environment. There's a nice number of obscure puzzles, add the non-liniar gameplay and the maze section and you'll find yourself sometimes lost, blanked out, frustrated, without knowing what to do next. The walkthrough might seem the best option then.

The poor writing, occasional jocular atmosphere and the persistence of magic in the storyline made this game hard to take seriously. It was ported on multiple systems, including DOS, NES and Win 3.X, but I don't think it had a large influence on later horror titles, except, maybe for the Horror Soft games. Not to mention that the first version ported on PC had horrible CGA graphics, that totally misunderstood the term "dark setting", since using three colors won't make me run in fear. Fortunately this was fixed in the 1993 Windows remake with colorful VGA graphics and a flexible new interface.

King, there's Poe, and Clive Barker is even directly involved in the video game productions that bear his name, but critics everywhere always search for that authentic lovecraftian experience. It's generally accepted that they found it for the first time in Infocom's The Lurking Horror. In it, you're a student at G.U.E. Tech determined to finish one of his assignments. While browsing through the files on your PC, you read a mysterious message which ends up triggering a vision - maybe you passed out and had a nightmare, or maybe you were sucked out in an alternate reality and barely escaped its firm claws. You're not really sure, but when

that keeps getting in your way. As you go deeper, you'll stumble across evidence hinting at some dark rituals that took place in the University's confines. That's where the plot element comes in: what is the "Lurking Horror" and is everything happening to me a mere coincidence? The answers await you inside. You won't be meeting many characters, and it seems it's even harder to find some topics they'd be willing to discuss with you. Well, with the violent snow storm outside it's pretty clear the corridors won't be brimming with life. As a matter of fact, I find Interactive Fictions quite appropiate for a horror setting. You stare at text, text stares back at you... in utter silence. I have to point out that Lurking Horror features some sounds and music, and not just simple beeps, but real recognizable ritualistic drums for example. The rest (the environment, the atmosphere...) is for you to imagine; after all, that's where fear comes from - our creative mind.
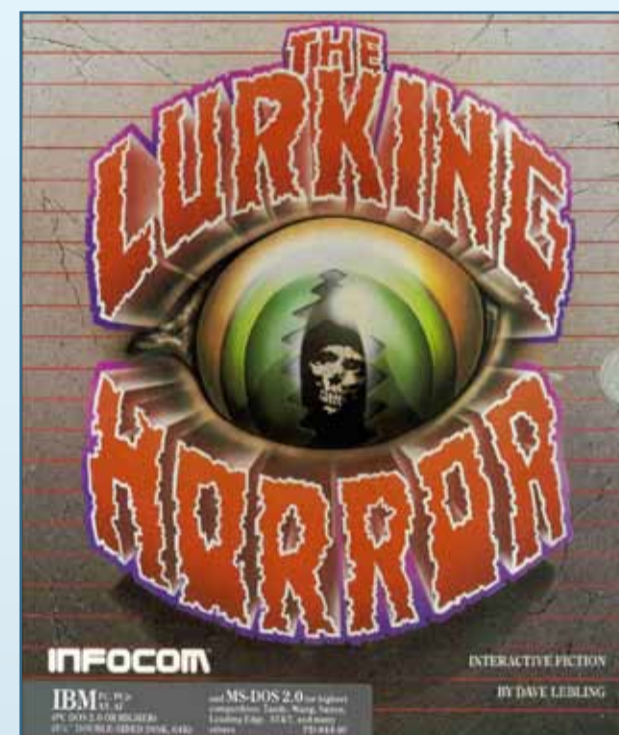

■ Back to haunt us on Windows 3.x.

■ Despite some preconceptions, Lurking Horror is still a Zork game, albeit a weird one.

> "Of course there's Stephen King, there's Poe, and Clive Barker is even directly involved in the video game productions that bear his name, but critics everywhere always search for that authentic love-craftian experience."

The downfall of Interactive Fictions was symbolically represented by the 1989 closure of the original Infocom by Activision, at the time called Mediagenic. The studio that brought us the Zork games and Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, managed in 1987 to develop, among others, a text adventure inspired from Lovecraft's works. H.P.Lovecraft has become an emblem of horror in games. Of course there's Stephen

you woke up, a critical error deleted some of the files you needed for your assignment. It's time to head out to the Department of Alchemy, where some backup copies might be stored... as if...Don't be surprised if you don't find much of a storyline here. It's pretty safe to call Lurking Horror a dungeon-crawling text-based game, in the vein of the first Zorks. This way most of the puzzles are about exploring the compound and gaining access to important closed-off areas, as well as disposing of certain creatures and "stuff"

On this note I'd like to finish discussing the genesis of horror games on PC. Sometimes, Interactive Fictions may lack strong storylines and memorable characters, but they excel at offering interesting puzzles, and their charm lies in solving these exquisite problems and gradually advancing through the game world. The graphics and mouse-based control are just refreshing extras.

ALONE IN THE DARK

REVIEW
by DarthHelmet86

▪ A zombie dinner, are you the food?

▪ Get ready to see this and other death scenes the first time you play.

This game is meant to be played in only one way: in the middle of the night with the lights off, the sound up and no one else in the house. Alone in the Dark got a Guinness world record for being the first 3D survival horror game, the one that started the sub-genre that Resident Evil and others have now taken over. The game itself is still scary, or more correctly it builds the tension up and has you on the edge of your seat for most of the playthrough. Frankly, it's all about escaping the mansion you are in, and avoiding the many ways of dying, however this is not going to be easy. The mansion is one large puzzle really, requiring many hours to try countless different items and ways of solving the puzzles thrown at the player. A first time player will die many times over and more than likely will get stuck with many of the puzzles, but if they battle through, they will find an enjoyable experience full of terror and suspense.

▪A box of shoes? You should look inside to be sure.

The story is based around the mansion, which is called Derceto, and the person who used to live there, Jeremy Hartwood. I say "used to" because he has recently died; after a cursory investigation the police have

concluded that Jeremy had committed suicide. You are offered two choices of who to play with: Emily Hartwood, the niece of Jeremy or Edward Carnby. Emily heads to Derceto to prove her uncle was not insane, and thinks that in a secret drawer hidden inside a piano she might find what she needs.

▪ Shhh! Don't disturb the ghosts.

Edward is a private detective tasked with going to the house and finding the same piano for an antique dealer. However once you have chosen which one you want to play as, the game starts and their mission is the same: to escape this house of horrors known as Derceto.

The mansion soon fills with creatures that you have to battle using your wits and strength. Here is one of the few parts of the game that I find hard even today; fighting is not that easy to pull off. Starting with your bare fists and your feet the monsters will

quickly defeat you; in fact I find that punching is completely useless, so stick with kicking. However, after some searching you will find yourself armed with some weapons. A rifle, pistol, bow and arrows, knives, swords - the weapons are varied and plentiful. The problem really comes about because of the controls used to attack. You must first select an attack option: figthing with your fists and feet, or using a weapon. After that you must hit the spacebar and hold one of the arrow keys pressed to perform the attack. The manual helps to explain which arrow key to press, but it is still sometimes a slow process. Occasionally, you can get stuck in a corner and be unable to attack before you are hit by your enemy - being hit stuns your character and you cannot attack while you are in that state, leaving you open for more attacks.

While this can be frustrating, with practice it becomes easy and easier to defeat your enemies. Luckily a lot of the enemies do not even require you to fight them; rather they require your wits to defeat. Once again this might frustrate you but with some thinking you can find your way past the creature. With all of that in mind I recommend that you save often and in different slots to spare you from having to start over.

The graphics have held up well in some parts, in others not so much. The reason for this is that 3D graphics are only used on the objects and people that you can interact with, the backgrounds are pre-rendered. Guess which ones held up... If you said the backgrounds you would be right, the 3D characters and items tend to look very bad today. This isn't the game's fault, a lot of 3D graphics from the first half of the 90s look

horrible now, and in fact this game had a few innovations in it for its characters' animations. I understand very little about the special animation tricks they used so I shall quote Wikipedia. "The original game's engine is the first known to use interpolated animation. This key frame-driven system relies on the computer to render frames between the key frames. This approach has the advantages of reducing the game's memory footprint (requiring less memory to store) and adapting to each computer's power." This system was then used all the way through to Alone in the Dark 3, released four years after the original title.

You pour the Jug's Content on the Cigars

▪ See?! I told you smoking was evil.

▪ Even the paintings are deadly, best to find out who is the better shot.

▪ This time the painting won.

▪ Secrets can be found in all kinds of places.

The sounds are some of the best I have heard in a game from its time. The music sets the mood just right, and while the sound effects are basic, they fill the role they need to. Some of the creatures' sounds still make my hair stand up on the back of my neck.

As I said at the beginning of this review - play this game with the lights off and the volume up and you will be on the edge of your seat, waiting for something to jump out and get you. I highly recommend Alone in the Dark to any lover of the horror genre, try it out and see if you can defeat the many traps and dangers inside Derceto.

BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS LIES THE TRUTH

*Third-Person View
*Free Movement
*Up To 30 Enemy Types
*Cthulhu Mythos
*Compelling Story
*Original Use of Lighting
*and more

From the creators of Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth, a new game inspired from H.P.Lovecraft's writings and daringly set in modern New England.

CALL OF CTHULHU
DESTINY'S END

headfirst

November 2007

Score of
8.5
out of 10

Veil of Darkness

by DarthHelmet86

Veil of Darkness, developed by Event Horizon Software Inc. and published in 1993 by Strategic Simulations Inc., is an adventure game with some RPG elements like an open world and non-linear plot. I would even say it's more of an RPG with adventure game elements, but as it goes with a lot of hybrid games, everyone has their own idea of which genre(s) it belongs to. However, it is very obvious that this game fits into the horror theme, although it is not

about. Luckily it can be read at any time, and you will need to keep on checking it to figure out what to try and do next.

The gameplay is very open-ended; nothing is linear and nothing is what it first appears to be. The puzzles will have you thinking about every person you meet and every item you find, trying to figure out how it fits into the prophecy. Aside from this complex puzzle there is also combat, you will need to fight of the creatures of the night. Fortunately, you can wield two weapons at once and

■ A mysterious invader from space forces our hero to crash into the country of all possibilities, Romania.

an overly scary experience.

Horror games fall into a few different categories: some rely on sudden scares to keep the player jumping out of his/her seat, and others use a hugely tense environment relying on emotional pressure to make the player freak out. Veil of Darkness doesn't fall into either of these; the horror is only in the setting - a good setting at that. It won't make you hide in a cupboard crying for your mummy, but it will have you on the edge of your seat as you try and solve one of the more complex puzzles and fight off the creatures of the night.

Veil of Darkness is a game about Vampires, set in a valley that is covered by a neverending night and ruled by a Vampire Lord. While flying overhead, this Vampire forces your plane to crash, drawing you into a world lost to the outside, and shrouded in mystery. Not long after waking up you are informed that you have fulfilled part of an ancient prophecy, one that will save the village from eternal darkness. The prophecy is in fact one huge puzzle, requiring the player to think about who and what it is talking

use them in turn. Behind the scenes of the battles is a form of AD&D; not surprising since SSI published this game. At the beginning, you can choose how hard the combat will be - for a first time player I would stick with the Medium combat. It offers a nice balance, as the computer gives you some small bonuses and the enemies are not overly strong.

The main screen is divided into two areas. The top is the world, where you can control the character, talk with people,

■ The town is very run down.
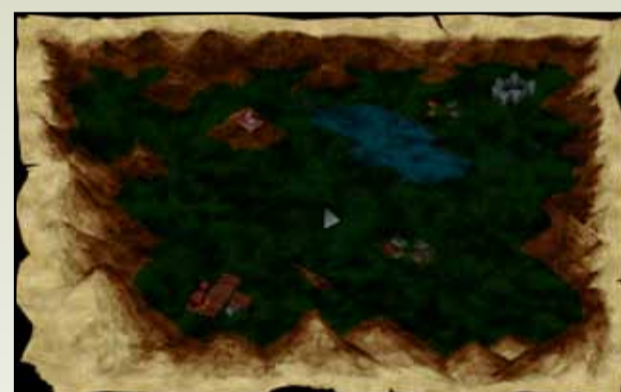
■ The map screen, at first it will be blank but after a short while will be full.

fight creatures and find items. The bottom part is a combined status and inventory screen. It is resizeable, allowing you to focus on it while in a safe area, to move items around, check your health and arm your character. While in a dangerous area you can drag it down, allowing you to see more of the world. Your character's health is represented by a doll: as you lose health it turns into a skeleton from the feet up. A certain person will offer the ability to heal your

■ A small video of you walking up the stairs.

character, and heading back to them often is advisable as well as saving often too.

The way you talk to people in the world is a unique feature of this game. While the person talks, certain words will be underlined. Clicking on these words will advance the conversation, allowing you to ask questions about what the person is saying. Once they have finished talking, the words will be listed allowing you to go back and ask about the ones you missed. Besides this there is also the option to type in a word to ask about - every character has a few that will need to think heavily about what to ask.

"Sorry, I don't mean to ramble. I'll tell you what, if you break open that bottle, we'll drink a toast. A toast from that fine gold goblet of mine."

▪ A conversation with the barman... come on - think more about saving the world rather than drinking.

DarthHelmet
15.5 lb.
Full Combat

▪ The status screen, dragged up to its full height.

▪ What's that figure doing in the window?

▪ Oh talking about drinking was just to get the cup... to save the day.

▪ The man who sets you on this epic quest... and his cigars.

The music itself is very good, and fits well with the tone of the game and even though it is different in each scene, it is all made up of very short music clips that get repeated over and over. This can lead to a once loved music effect to become grating and very annoying. Graphic-wise Veil of Darkness is superb and the style of the setting is kept consistently throughout every scene, making it seem like a real place. Every scene is full of small details that make the game more alive and dynamic.

I recommend this to any horror game lover, any adventure game lover and any RPG lover. It brings something special to all these genres, and is easily one of the best RPGs I have ever played, and one of my favourite adventure games too.

Score of

8.0

out of 10

The veil of darkness shall be lifted
And the evil reign of terror shall at last come to an end

Realms of the Haunting

Goodness reflects the Light; and evil bears the seed of all Darkness. These are mirrors of the Soul, the reflections of the Mind. Choose Well.......

Written by Thomme

R **E V I E W**

Realms of the Haunting is one of those games that proves you don't need to play a game with an amazingly powerful 3D engine, amazing graphics or multiplayer to have a truly invasive and encapsulating experience. Realms of the Haunting is also one of those titles that unfortunately flew too low under the radar, that few have heard of it and even fewer have played it. This is extremely unfortunate, as it's easily one of the most admirable attempts at combining genres and immersing the player in an extremely deep and intense story.

Realms begins with a full motion video introduction that explains why the player character, Adam Randall, arrives at a seemingly haunted house. Upon the game's

integral part of the gameplay. Seconds later and the first person shooter tropes play out, as the player finds the standard Handgun. Typical horror tropes also play out at the exact same time, as the Colt .45 is found right next to a typewriter typing on its own. The game immediately shows its colors as a genre bender.

I'm not willing to expose much more of the story, as it's extremely intricate and very fulfilling to unwind through playing. The graphics are actually subpar for the time the game came out and certain parts seem to

■ Evolution of AI - Bumping into walls since the 90s.

The graphics can be forgiven, though, due to the immense size and vision of the game. It packs several universes branching from a central world used to travel between them all. The worlds all have their own look and feel, and range from sanctuary-like gardens reminiscent of Eden to hellish worlds that haunt you as you play. Even with the subpar graphics the worlds pop and feel amazing. The only world that lacks in both subtlety and atmosphere is The Tower, and once you reach it, you'll realize why.

Live videos take up most of the 4 discs and is used to describe the key plot points and really helps to keep the game interesting - it transforms it into a very cinematic experience. The only downside is the

■ Occultism always needs strange-sounding words.

beginning, Realms seems very little unlike any first person shooter before it, except for one thing: the player has the ability to examine items and the environment. Interactions are extremely abundant in the first few minutes of the game, and become an

clash with the overall game engine. The weapons seem to be rendered from photographs and look much more realistic than the rest of the environments, the live action videos also contrast with the otherwise dated look of the game.

■ Me?! Evil? Oh don't be ridiculous!

constant disc switching and the way it takes you out of the game so quickly. Another means by which the plot is conveyed to the player is through ghastly journal entries that require several minutes, at minimum, to even scan through. This is another way that Realms really takes the player out of the action.

The game is alive with characters and it gives the impression that the player's choice impacts the way things play out, like in an RPG. This is untrue, the only path, other than completing the game, is death through bad decisions. You can talk to characters and ask them a series of questions, but the only thing that it really changes is what information you get depending on what you ask. It's interesting to learn what is driving the characters through their journeys, but it's teasing to think that you have some kind of impact when you in fact don't.

The inventory is quite customizable and reminiscent of RPG's, another way that this game supersedes genres. You're able to customize which weapon goes in which slot and can pause the game to choose weapons and items in combat.

The combat is actually quite poorly done. The mouse is used to aim the weapon, but not to look or turn the character, that's relegated to the keyboard. Hitting enemies isn't as easy with the mouse as one would think, as there's a bit of lag regarding mouse

▪ **Looky here, I'm showing off my Colt. Sometimes the combat is so clumsy it seems that's the only purpose it actually has.**

▪ **One staff of power to rule them all!**

movement at times, luckily the AI is one of the worst AI's ever encountered. The enemies will often ignore the player, unless he is within their direct line of sight. This makes pot shots to the back of enemies easy, since they don't immediately turn around. Even after you've garnered their attention, they can't walk up or down stairs in many cases, nor can they walk through doors. It's very easy to take down the hardest of foes simply by standing in an open door and pelting them with weak weapons.

Despite the flawed AI, clashing imagery, outdated graphics, annoying disc swaps and other minor inconveniences, the game is extremely cerebral and intense. It's one of the most terrifying games I've ever played (maybe not top ten, but it's in the top 30), has an amazing narrative worth its

weight in discs and will wrap you up into its story to the point that the 40 hours of gameplay will seem like a breeze and a dream. Realms is extremely hard to find at this point in time, and unfortunately the world seems to have forgotten it. Torrents and Abandonware downloads of the game seem to have dried up over the last few years and the game has gotten harder and harder to find. It's definitely worth hitting up your local used PC game retailer, Ebay and Amazon to try and get a copy. It went down in history as a forgotten game, but this is me telling you:

PLAY THIS!

Score of
9.0
out of 10
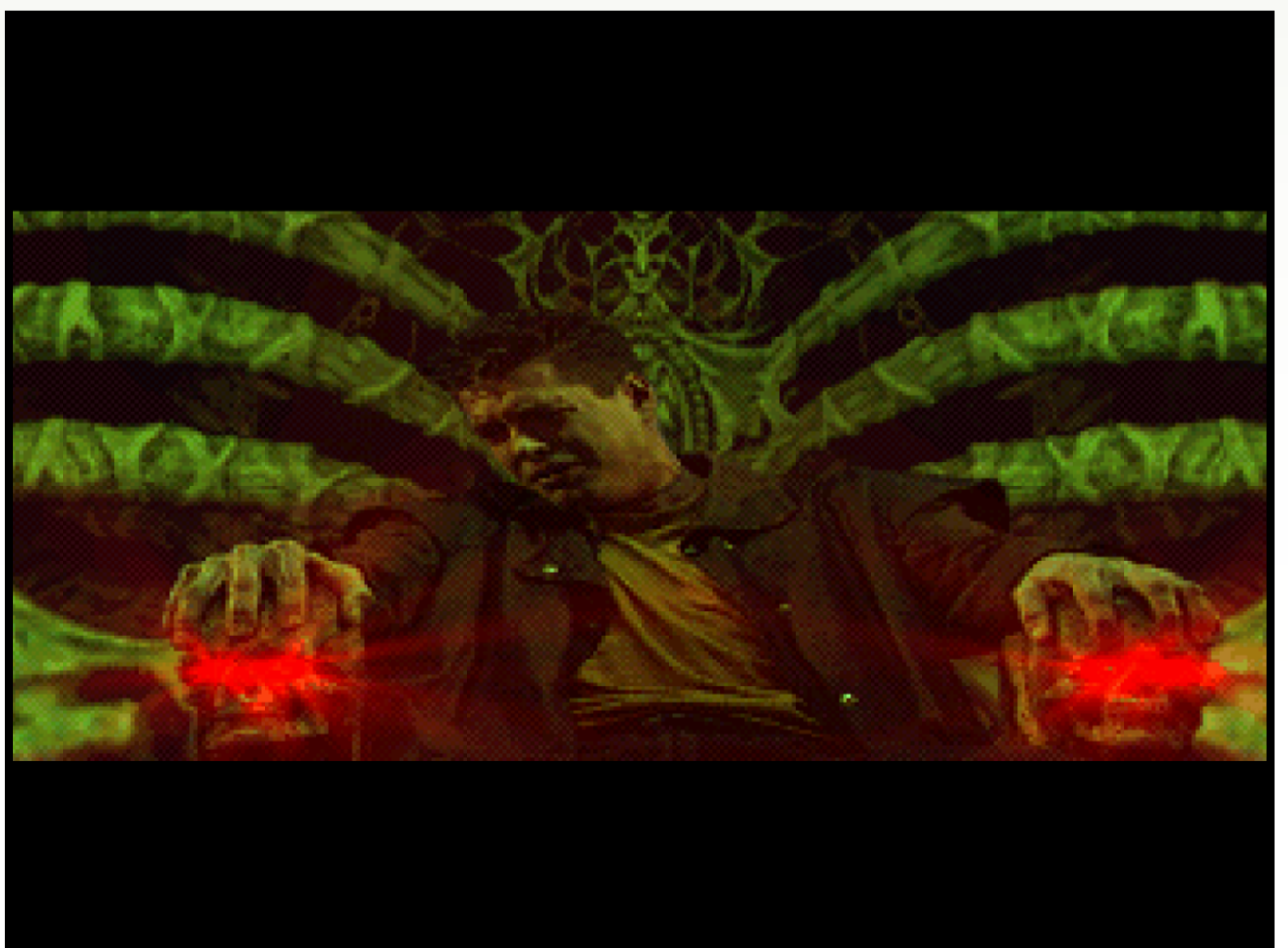
▪ **Sitting on such an inviting throne might've been a mistake.**
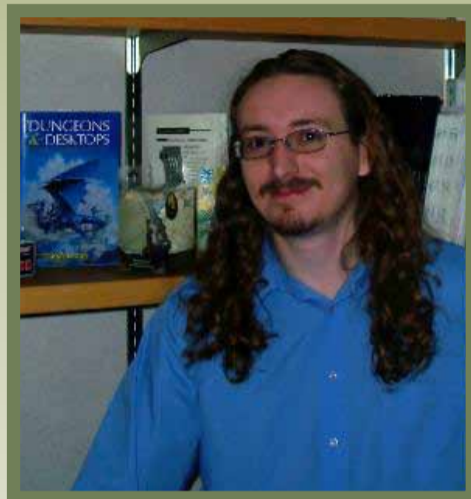
INTERVIEW WITH MATT BARTON

Matt Chat on YouTube

by Łukasz Bobrecki

This time we visit Matt Barton, co-founder of the Armchair Arcade website and co-author of two books on videogames ("Dungeons and Desktops" and "Vintage Games"). This interview however focuses on his own youtube channel, Matt Chat, where he explores different aspects of gaming history and harasses well-known game developers with questions that should definitely tickle your interest.

1. On the Internet there is a lot of material about games - reviews, gameplay videos and so on; some of these things are prepared by casual gamers, others - by professional journalists. It seems like everything has been said, displayed or written already. What was the goal of creating your YouTube channel?

No matter how much is said, there is always more to say. No two people will play the same game exactly alike, nor will they appreciate the exact same things. It's nice to hear different perspectives or see different styles of play. There are many different types of videos contributed by YouTube's retrogaming community. Sometimes you may just want to watch some gameplay footage. At other times, you might want to hear funny commentary. Certain videos focus on how to play the game or whether it's worth playing. My goal was to make a channel that looked at some of the greatest games ever made, trying my best to learn about them and tell the stories of how they came to be (and what role they played in shaping the game industry as we know it today). I'm not always an expert at the games I play on the show, but I enjoy them and think they're worth sharing.

2. What in your opinion is special about MattChat, what keeps the audience growing and coming back to see new episodes?
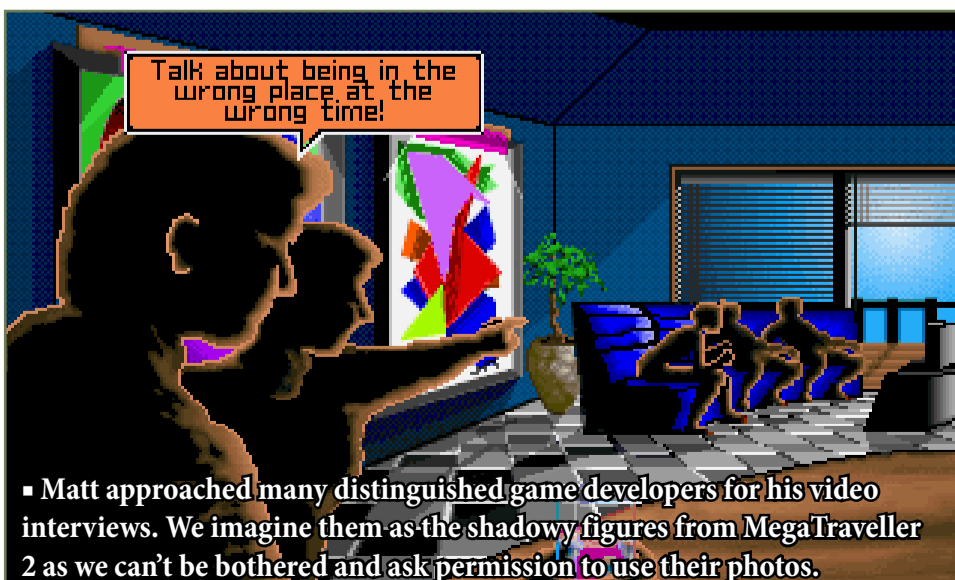
People tell me that they enjoy my commentaries and editing work. I know that people are very busy and there are so many other things to see on the internet, so I try my best to make every second count. I'm also a friendly guy and try hard not to disrespect anyone or make anyone upset. I also try to chat and watch other people's videos that are similar to mine. If people like your comments, they may go over to your channel and check it out. It's very important to be nice to people and not put anyone down.

Talk about being in the wrong place at the wrong time!

■ Matt approached many distinguished game developers for his video interviews. We imagine them as the shadowy figures from MegaTraveller 2 as we can't be bothered and ask permission to use their photos.

3. Do you make your videos for the people or do you just like what you do? And if there were only a few viewers, would it be worth spending your time?

I probably wouldn't do it if the videos weren't being watched. Part of the excitement is logging in to see how many people have viewed a video or subscribed, and I especially love reading people's comments (when they are positive, of course). I think it is easy to get too focused on these things, though. Some people do silly things to get more subscribers, such as begging people to look at their channel. I believe that if you really concentrate on making good videos, eventually people will discover your channel on their own. Of course, it helps to have good, descriptive titles for your videos (not just "video #2" or whatever), and appropriate keywords so people can find it in the search engine.

4. Each episode is about 10 minutes long. How much time does it take to prepare this kind of short video?[1]

I spend pretty much all day working on a single episode, and sometimes a couple of days if I have a hard time getting the gameplay footage. Many people are satisfied just to film themselves talking without any editing whatsoever, but I prefer a more structured approach.

5. From time to time there is a competition in the show, and you are sponsoring all the prizes. Is it worth it to spend not only time researching and creating videos, but also real money on these rewards?

I have tried using contests and the like to get more people interested in the show. Sometimes they work, but sometimes people just aren't interested. Some of the other YouTube channels I watch actually do give out cash prizes, though they usually have games or hardware as prizes. It's probably better to just focus on making good videos rather than try to lure people with prizes and giveaways.

6. Where do you find inspirations for new episodes? Do you have a bigger plan and work on multiple games at once or is it more straightforward, like an impulse: one week - one game?

I take note of whatever games people recommend for future episodes, but I usually just pick games that I enjoy or want to know more about.

7. YouTube is not your first attempt to share your knowledge about games with the use of Internet, can you tell us more about your other online activities?

I've been doing retrogaming related stuff for many years. I started off by posting in a retrogaming forum. A few of us on the forum decided to start our own online magazine called Armchair Arcade, and we published several issues. We got a lot of publicity for our stuff, including many posts on Slashdot and elsewhere. Eventually we decided to quit making issues and just make blog posts instead. I also wrote some articles for Gamasutra. A book publisher contacted me about doing a book based on the articles, and that became Dungeons & Desktops. Meanwhile, Bill and I had been working together on a book about game consoles and computers. We couldn't find a publisher for that book, but one of the publishers we contacted (Focal Press) suggested that we do a book just on the best games ever made. That project eventually became Vintage Games. A movie producer from Lux Digital Pictures saw the book and contracted us to write and produce a feature film based on the book. That project is now called "Gameplay" and should be released sometime next year.

8. In your videos you not only review the game and showcase the gameplay, but you also add a lot of additional information about the title, its author and its genre. Isn't this part more time consuming than actually playing the game?

Not really. Most of the information is easily found on sites like Mobygames or Wikipedia. I try to check several different sources to verify as much as possible.

1 Since the moment this interview was taken, the 10-minute cap on Youtube has been removed and as a result the Matt Chat episodes have become relatively longer.

▪ Even though we noticed that Matt prefers PC classics, the consoles have their share of spotlight; like with Super Mario Kart.

9. Your works are in nearly all kind of media: Books, Articles, Internet, upcoming film – that's a lot of different experiences. Do you feel it's better to try many other new things or is it preferable to stay with one favourite way to express yourself and share knowledge?

Each medium offers unique features that allow you to tell stories in different ways. For instance, in a video you can show gameplay footage - that is often far more effective than just describing it in text or showing a screenshot. On the other hand, writing is often deeper and more sophisticated, offering a richer analysis. It also seems that people are more willing to read a long article than watch a long video. That's why we have novels that can take days or weeks to read, but you hardly ever see a movie longer than 3 hours.

10. You mentioned earlier that you like to hear or read comments about your show. With MattChat you can see within a day if what you do is appreciated and what can be done to improve the quality of your show. How does that apply to writing a book? It surely takes a lot of time and work, and when the book is published you cannot edit it anymore - could you compare these two mediums from an author's perspective?

You're right. One reason I love doing stuff like Youtube videos and blog posts is that the feedback is often immediate. Writing a book takes much longer, and I get little to no feedback along the way. After it's published, I get maybe a dozen or so reviews. I think part of the problem is that books are just so big that it's hard to have a discussion about each part. The problem might be that the gaming community's interest in books is still growing, and it's just easier to watch a quick Youtube video than to purchase and read an entire book.

11. Most of your works are about retro-gaming. Have you ever thought about making an episode about recently released titles?

Sure. I recently covered World of Warcraft and plan to cover Dragon Age: Origins and probably Super Mario Bros Wii at some point.
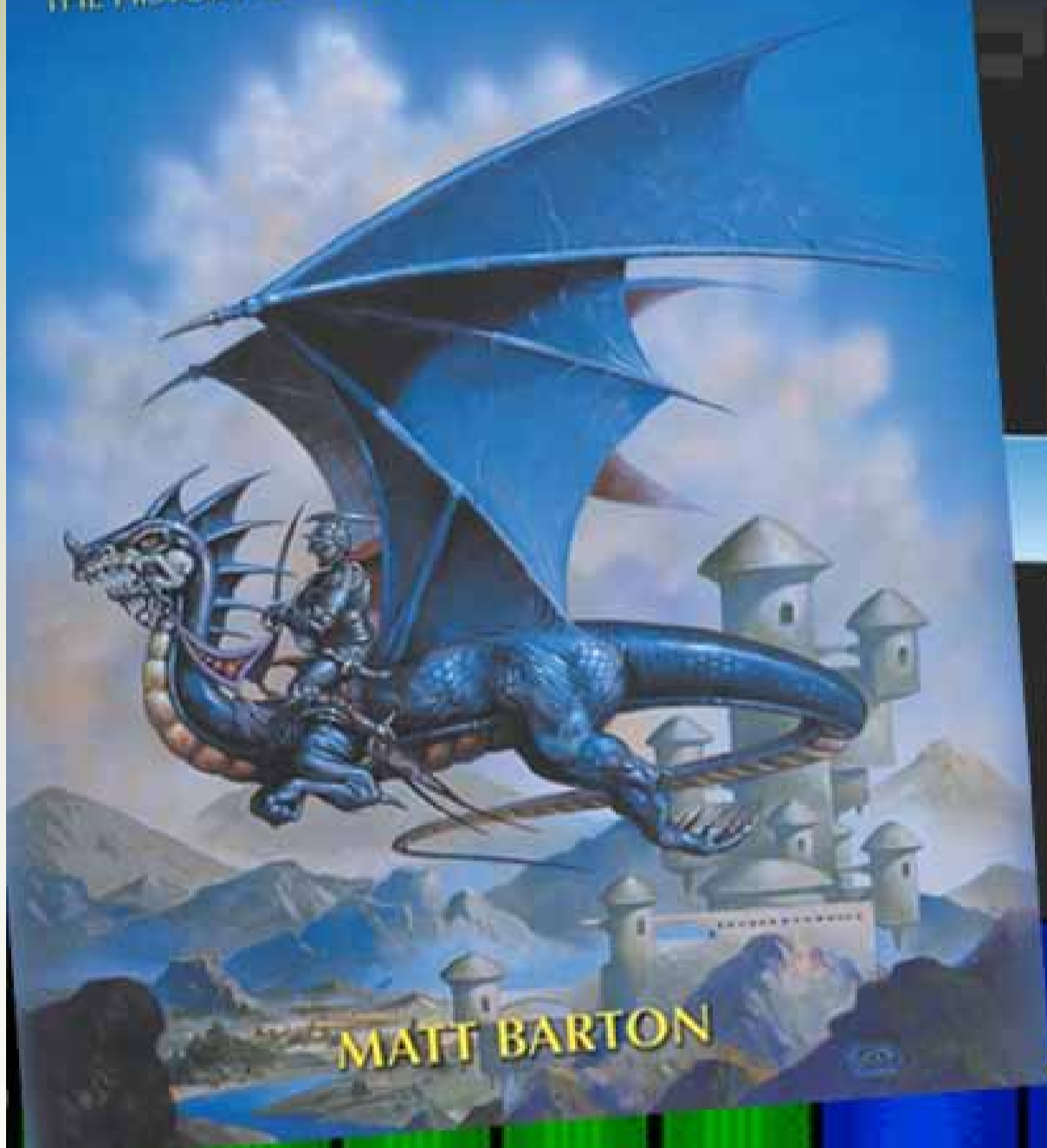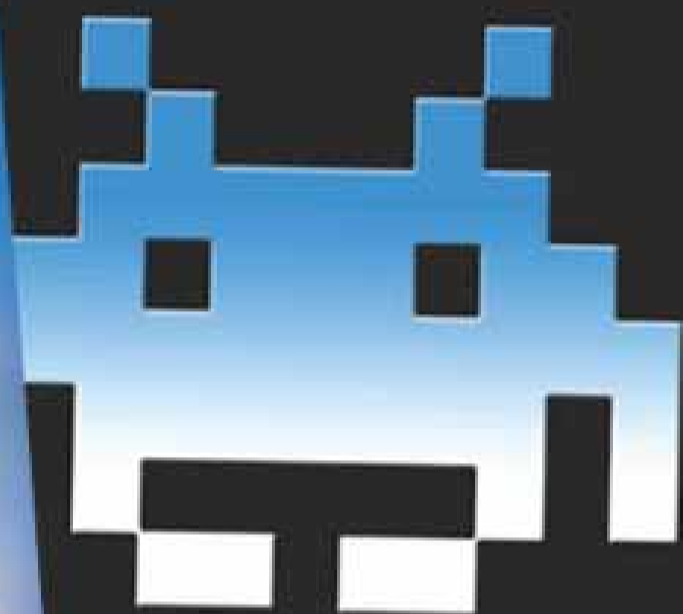
12. You're always selecting the best games or your personal favourites. Would it be a good idea to talk about bad games? Warn people about games not worth playing?

I occasionally mention games I don't like (there is a whole chapter on bad RPGs in Dungeons & Desktops), but in general I'd rather talk about what makes great games great than what makes bad games bad. It's too easy to see a bad game and point out why it stinks. But it's hard to nail down precisely what it is that makes a good game really fun to play. Besides that, life is too short to waste playing bad games.

14. Think about a situation when you will have to choose only three games, and nothing else would be possible - which ones would be your pick?

In that case, I'd probably go with MMOs, since the worlds are so huge and there are people to talk to. So, maybe World of Warcraft or a good MUD. I'd probably also take Neverwinter Nights since there are so many user-made modules to enjoy. I'm not sure what I'd choose for the third game. I really love Bubble Bobble as long as I have somebody to play it with. I love so many different games that it'd be torture to only have three.

■ No genre is ignored if the games are fun. Star Control II, Syndicate and Betrayal at Krondor are only a few examples of titles discussed on Matt Chat.

13. What would require research or studies in video games?

There are many different aspects to study, as well as perspectives. I prefer to study gameplay mechanics as well as how elements like stories, dialog, and characters are integrated into the gameplay. Game developers have taken many, many different approaches over the decades, and it's some fascinating stuff. Just compare something like Captain Blood and King of Chicago, for instance. I'm also fascinated by virtual worlds and how players interact with them.

    Others study things like the cultural or social impact of games, how games work internally (i.e., the coding and so on), or even games as literature.

15. Playing games is a time consuming activity. Did you ever come into trouble because your gaming time messed up your real-life activities?

Not really. When I have important work to do, I turn off the games and do it. Fortunately, playing games is a professional activity for me. There is a lot of interest in game studies developing in the academy, and I've presented often on my research. Some people seem to think games are a waste of time, but I don't see them as being any more wasteful than watching movies, TV, or reading books. It's something we enjoy doing, and if truly love games then you will naturally want to learn more about them.

■ Matt Chat talks about titles that are remembered fondly by most gamers. Sid Meier's Pirates! is one of them.

■ Youtube offered gamers the opportunity to share their gaming experience with other people. Here we see our fellow AB member DarthHelmet86 doing a Let's Play for Freddy Pharkas.

16. You have left a parting thought once: "The best game ever made is the one waiting for you to code it". Have you ever tried to create or participate in the development process of a game?

Yes, I have tried many times over the years. A few years ago I taught myself C++ and made a crude text adventure game. I had a great time coding and would recommend it as a hobby to anyone interested in games. Even if the game you make isn't that great or doesn't get finished, you will have a much better appreciation for your favorite games and a better idea of how they work internally.

17. You are a member of the Abandonia community - what brought you to this site?

Abandonia is an important site because it provides information and often downloads of historically important games. It's not always feasible or even possible to purchase old games, and even if you had the means, you might still have to work with all kinds of obsolete equipment. On the other hand, modern emulation is very sophisticated and easy to use. Finally, Abandonia has a forum with helpful individuals who can help you find a game or get it running, as well as general chat about your favorite games of the past.

I don't remember exactly what I was doing when I came to the site for the first time, but I'm sure it was searching for one of my favorite old games. ◆◆◆
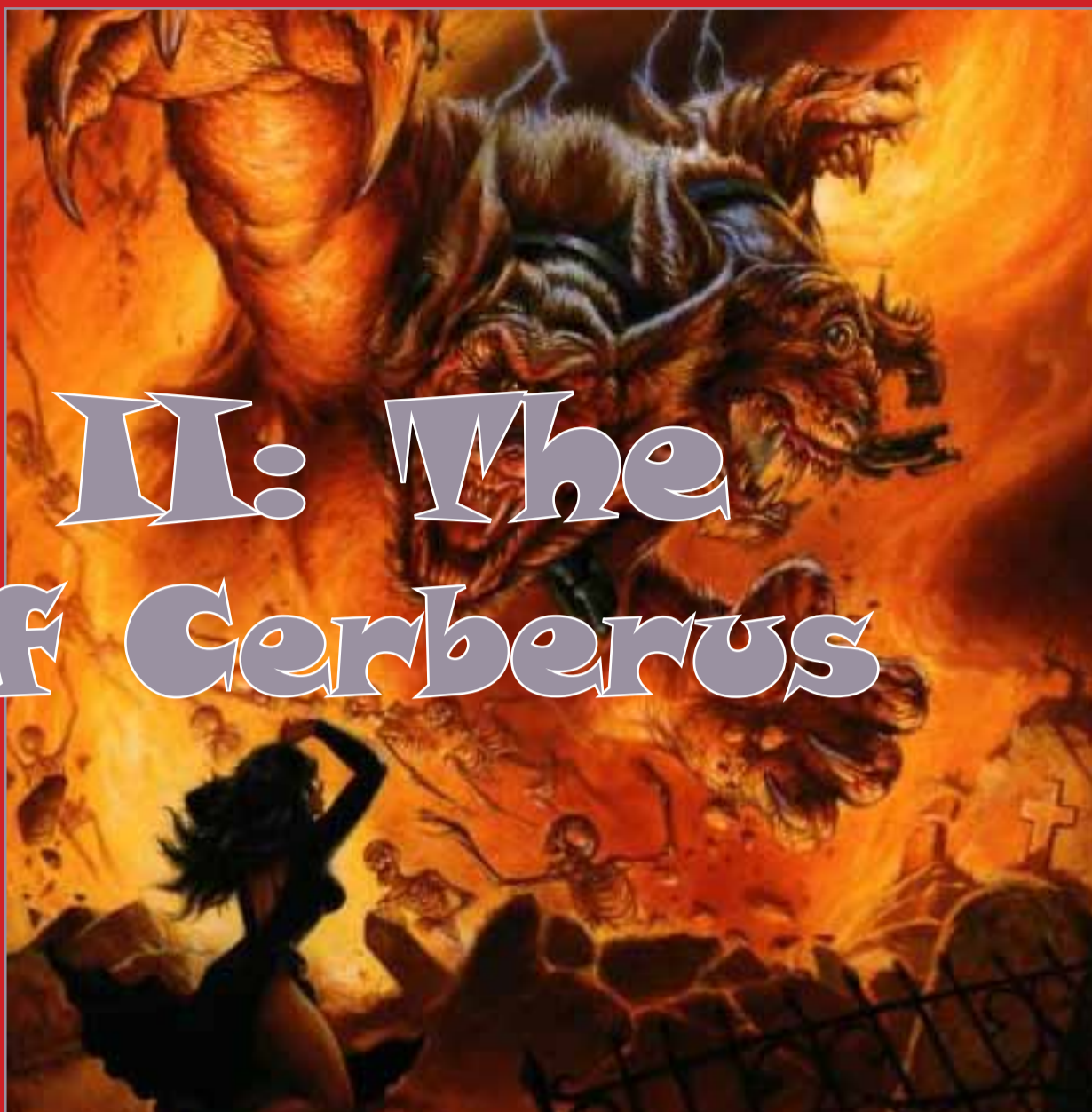
Matt Chat
on
You Tube

Matt Chat 40
Sword of Fargoal with Jeff McCord

Matt Chat 66
Fallout with Tim Cain

Matt Chat 115
The Life and Times of Chris Taylor

Matt Chat 15
The PLATO Computer System

Matt Chat 44
Ralph Baer, Father of Videogames

Matt Chat 86
Wasteland II with Rebecca Heineman

Matt Chat 63
Planescape Torment with Chris Avellone

Matt Chat 31
A Rockstar Ate My Hamster

Matt Chat 77
Darklands

...and yes, the links won't work unless you click them.

Elvira II: The Jaws of Cerberus

REVIEW

Written by Trebuchet

Horror Soft, an unfortunately short-lived company, brought us this gem. It is the sequel to Elvira: Mistress of the Dark, a game that I regrettably didn't play - but it's not necessary to enjoy Elvira II: Jaws of Cerberus.

Elvira II allows us to step into the shoes of Elvira's boyfriend, who can have one out of four professions. At the beginning, you decide whether you'll be a stuntman, a detective, a knife thrower or a computer programmer; this choice affects your initial statistics.

For you see, Elvira II is best described as an adventure RPG. Sometimes it gets more adventure-like - as in the haunted mansion, where you spend most of your time collecting things and figuring out how to use them - and sometimes it becomes more of an RPG, with the usual dungeons, where you just fight a lot and wander around. Both

■ Dinner is served.

elements are well designed and work together quite well.

Anyway... From the very start, the situation does not look good: a demon named Cerberus has kidnapped Elvira. Cerberus' evil lusts for Elvira's witching power, so that he may make use of it for his own, dark desires.

Your goal is to somehow liberate her in just one night, despite knowing nothing about all this fancy "magic" stuff. Thankfully, Elvira manages to contact you via a spell. She even gifts you her Spellbook to give you a fighting chance.

During the game, you observe the world from a first-person perspective. You begin in front of a studio that specializes in

horror movies. As you enter, it becomes apparent that something is very wrong. Not only there isn't anyone inside except for an old Indian janitor (who may or may not be more than he appears...), but the horrors and monsters that festoon the movie sets seem to have become real! Three separate stories, all inter-twining.

You will visit all three movie sets in your attempt to find Elvira, searching for the things that you will find essential in defeating Cerberus once and for all. The controls are interesting. You move by clicking the arrows and you manage the inventory by

dragging items. For example, to pick up an object in a room, you drag it from the play screen into your inventory box at the bottom or on the icon representing your inventory. Alternatively, you can click on the "room" icon, that will display all the items found in the current room. Drag an item from there into your inventory icon. To combine or use different objects together, just drag the first object onto the latter. Very interesting!

While we're on the topic of items - an interesting thing about this game is that you can pick up almost everything! Plants, carpets, candlesticks... you name it. It's most visible in the 'haunted mansion' studio: when inside the kitchen, you'll find about 50 separate items. Every single plate and knife is accounted for!

■ The flavor of the sewers, the cemetery and rotten flesh in one gust of breath.

◄ The foxy Elvira is still pushy, even though she got easily captured by the antagonist, and I had to save her.

Overall, Elvira II is a pretty nice game, with great graphics. However, the music isn't that good - it sounds really bad for such a horror title. There are some tunes that are far too jolly-sounding! Thanks to some great gameplay it's sure to be at least a bit fun for you.

Spells are another interesting feature. To make a spell you need ingredients. Rather than listing specific ingredients, most spells tell you to use, e.g. "3 metal items", that allows you the freedom to use any item you have! Those plates and forks will not be all accounted for very long! But beware, it is easy to accidentally use a vital item for a spell and thus lose it forever! A word of warning: save often because it's easy to get stuck in the game or be unable to progress without the crucial item you may have used in a spell, remember?

The RPG elements I spoke of... Well, as you explore the game, cast spells and confront monsters, you gain experience. The higher your experience level is, the better your stats are and more spells become available for you to create. Be prepared for some level grinding though...

Is the game scary? Well, sometimes yes, sometimes no. Some of the things are really frightening (the ghosts in the dungeons,

aaaargh!!!), but most are too camp to be terrifying. However there is indeed some gore to chase your children away from the computer.

Score of
8.0
out of 10

PSYCHO

HIDE YOUR BUTCHER KNIVES. CLUTCH YOUR SHOWER CURTAIN... NORMAN IS AT IT AGAIN!

The relevance of a video game's title to its contents is certainly a diverse variable. Some games - such as e.g. "Alien Shooter" - do what they say on the tin. Some of the game titles, like "Doom", aren't as directly connected to the gameplay, although they are ultimately a good description of the game. Some of them, like "Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together", don't have much to do with, um... pretty much anything. As for "Psycho" - it doubtlessly is one of the former: you have to be a psycho to see anything good about this game.

by Jacek Dobrzyniecki

Bound by the unspoken codex of game reviewers, I shall now elaborate on the plot. After a lot of worthless blah blahs blahs, you finally figure out you're playing the role of a detective, determined to
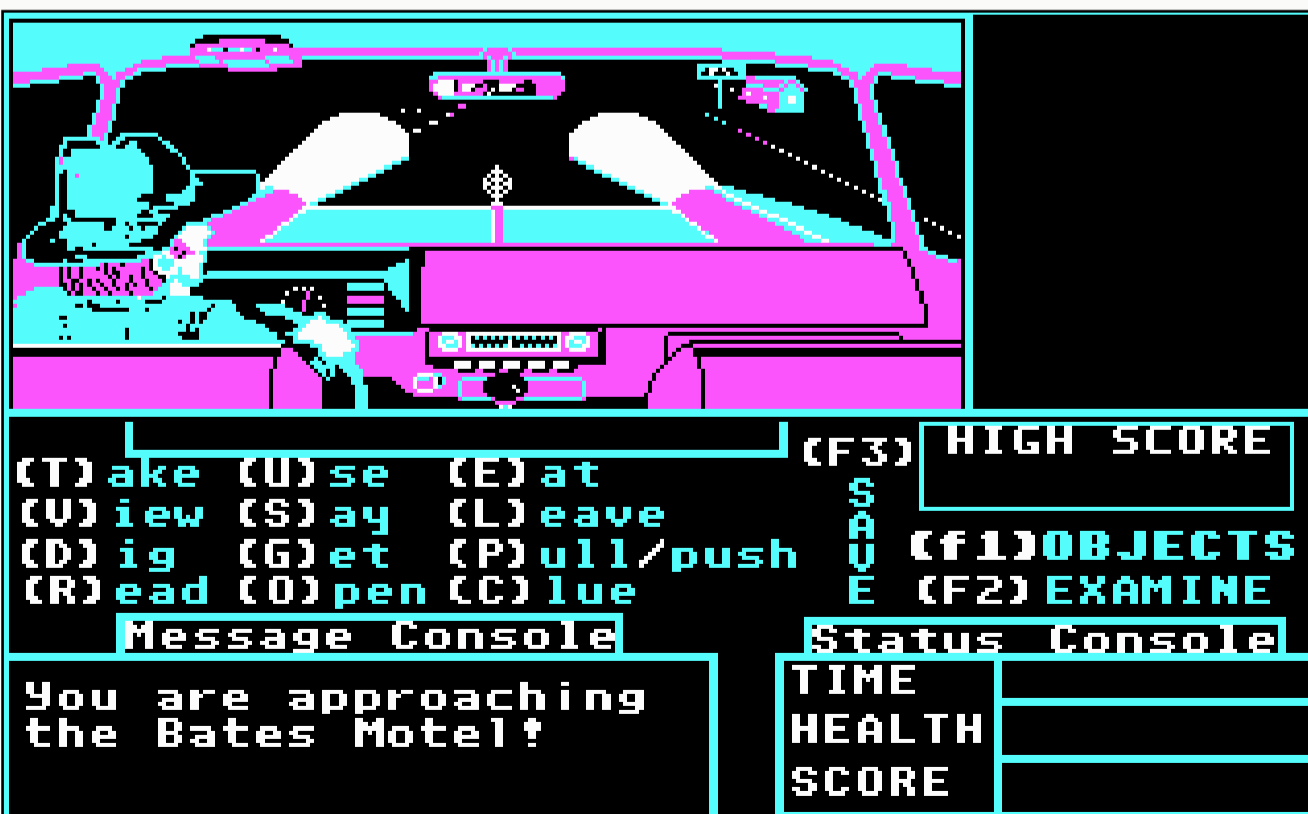

■ Shame on you, Scott Adams. SHAME ON YOU!

retrieve the jewels stolen from the Metropolitan Showcase of Arts and to save the curator who had them in his care. All clues lead you to the Bates Motel. So, here you are, standing on the front porch of the house, your magnifying glass (which you never actually use for anything, so I guess you have it just for looks) held tightly in your hand. Can you solve the mystery... er, no, there's no mystery. I mean, can you find the loot and the kidnapped individual? WELL CAN YOU?!

You control the brave law inspector with your keyboard. To move him, just use the arrow keys. You'd think that would be simple, but unfortunately Bates Motel is plagued by peculiar atmospheric glitches, so our protagonist is sometimes blocked by faraway pieces of furniture, or just by some particularly dense sections of air. This makes 'walking across a room' a puzzle all in itself. This is a good thing, since the game itself has very little 'puzzles' and can be completed within a few minutes. The fact that all of this is presented in CGA graphics (with the classic black/pink/blue/white palette) somehow fails to improve the experience of playing this game. In case you're wondering about

■ Planet of the Apes XVIII?

the sound, the authors clearly didn't work on it very much - the only sound is the gunshot (which is a single PC speaker beep).

By pressing letters on the keyboard, you can make the detective do stuff. For example, you can tell him to look around the room. The room descriptions all begin with "I found", even when it doesn't make sense. Generally, the actions are standard fare - take, open, push/pull (never used for anything), etc. Another exciting thing you can do is reading the clues you can find

■ The interface presented in the intro differs greatly from the one in the game.

Comparation screen (Amiga). ▶

scattered 'round the house. Although I don't know why you would do that, since they are pretty useless.

Our progress can be thwarted not only by peculiar invisible obstacles, but also by the evil enemies who pop up and chase you every once in a while: ghosts, dogs and a crazy woman with a knife. No, they don't really kill you, they just put you to sleep (and you wake up some time later). Yes, even the woman with the knife. Even though she shouts "KILL" every few moments. I guess she's new at this maniacal-murderin' business.

Anyway, I suggest you avoid such encounters, lest you run out of time and end the game at 6:00 AM with a game over. However, you'll probably voluntarily run into one of the enemies once or twice, just for the amusement of seeing our detective whining "It caught me! I feel so sleepy!".

This isn't the only example of awesome prose style in this game; really, some T-shirt producer should get interested in "Psycho". It's simply impossible for the teenagers to resist incorporating such great lines as "I found this is the same big room" or "Skeleton keys open doors, not skeletons" into their slang. I mean, this is freakin' Hemingway quality of writing we've got here!

I believe that is pretty much everything you can say about this game. While I said at the beginning of the review that only psychos might like "Psycho", it's not necessarily true. This is one of those games that are so bad they're good. In fact, this game should be brought to public consciousness, so that everyone can enjoy the 'masterpiece' that is "Psycho".

Despite the title, the game apparently doesn't have much to do with the movie of the same name. Probably. Maybe Hitchcock, in his days of yore, made a movie about an ape detective and the sleep-dealing ghouls. I'm not really an expert in this field.

■ That's probably what the authors of this game were consuming...

■ Our detective fails to find anything to read in a library. Sherlock Holmes he sure ain't.

■DOS version vs. Amiga version.

Score of

2.5

out of 10

R | REVIEW

SATAN

By marko river

When you browse through the old horror game titles, you simply have to notice this one. Satan appeared on several home computers, but never managed to be more than average. However, it did succeed in drawing some attention, since there were not many games with a theme like this, and there are surely not many where you get to fight Satan himself.

The game is divided into two parts, which was often done in Dinamic's productions. You need a password to play the second part, which you acquire after successfully finishing the first one. At the main screen you can set up the controls and taste a sample of the FX sounds, though without music the FX can get a little stale. At least the title screen should've had some tune playing, like in the Amiga conversion. Considering the EGA limitations of the time and the size of the characters, the graphics are good and detailed.

The first part is platform-based and is much like the arcade hit Black Tiger, but it's not nearly that good. You control a warrior that shoots spikes and jumps over platforms. There are many upright pillar-like platforms on which you can't stand, but can hold onto them and use them to climb up or down. You can't move the warrior while jumping, so you have to be very precise when doing it. Missing the platform may be fatal, which can become very irritating.

■ Nice landing, nice welcoming party.

■ Considering this guy's size, I'll keep shooting from the distance.

■ No, I'm not casting Dancing Lights. I'm brutally hit by a demon's firebreath.

■ He should definitely try the Olympics if he can pull that off.

■ Fighting the axe-demon and it doesn't look good.

■ The bone dragon is not exactly moving, except for his head and neck.

Demonic creatures will attack you and colliding with them will take away much more of your energy than their fire. This can also be irritating since there are parts where you need to progress by jumping, and avoiding enemies there is almost impossible. There are also side rooms where you can find extra items, lives or power-ups. The biggest problem is the lack of time. This way you are constantly pressured to find extra time (shown as hourglass). You can get power-ups by destroying enemies and blue spheres. There are three levels in the first part, and at the end of each level you have to fight some sort of bone dragon.

In the second part you play as an axe wielder. According to the game cover it is the same person, as the magician initially transformed himself into a warrior. Although there are platforms, the gameplay is quite different. The second part is a simple arena and defeating Satan is your only goal. You have additional command buttons for teleporting and the ability to jump on

▪ In the 2nd part you play a magician. Not exactly a regular one judging by his heavy equipment.

on higher or lower platforms. If you duck, you will use your shield. There is also a shop for spells and items (my my, there are merchants even where demons dwell - is he paying a rent or has some other sort of deal?) where you can buy health potions and better weapons. The inventory can be accessed by pausing the game; from there you can use the teleport card or health potions.

When you kill Satan, he will split into two medium demons. Both medium demons will split into two small ones, and only when you destroy those four small demons,

▪Your wizard has been upgraded to the status of beggar. You have run out of money.

▪ Retreat, Satan, or I'll cast my new offensive spell: a huge double bit broad-axe!

▪ So, this awaits the prisoners... Is that really an worse faith than staying here with the Lord of Hell?

Satan will be defeated and you get a simple "Congratulations" message. Whenever you kill a demon, some gold coins will appear so you can do more shopping. Once again time may be a problem. When the demons are on the screen, they will start attacking you. However, until you can see them, they wander around the arena and you have to find them. The backgrounds of the arena are nicely drawn, with towers, statues, prisoners etc.

T he game may seem good, but generally, it doesn't have much to offer. The first part may be interesting for platform lovers, but there are much better titles from the same period. You always need to play fast, since the timer doesn't reset itself even after killing the bone dragon and finishing a level. You're going to be constantly on the edge. The second part has an interesting concept, but it's underdeveloped and can be finished quickly. With proper equipment, those Satan-demons don't stand a chance. However, you can't really enjoy facing all those demons knowing that time is your most dangerous enemy. This game could be so much better with just a little more time and effort invested in it. You can give it a try since it is a mixture of fantasy and horror, and in the end you can brag about emerging victorious from a battle against Satan himself.
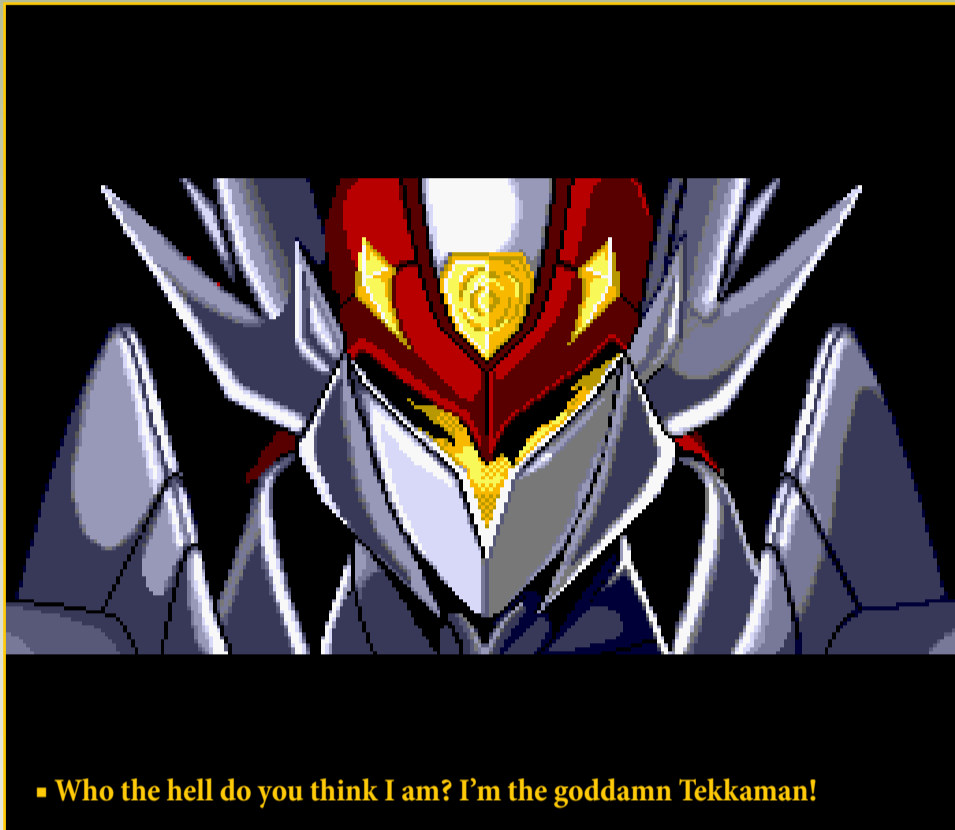
Score of

5.5

out of 10

Uchū no Kishi: Tekkaman Blade Review

Written by The Fifth Horseman

■ Who the hell do you think I am? I'm the goddamn Tekkaman!

■ Wonder how much it would fetch on eBay?

Uchū no Kishi: Tekkaman Blade roughly translates as "Knight of Space: Cyborg/ Robot Blade" (Space Knight Tekkaman Blade). It is based on the anime show of the same name - in Western countries its redubbed and, unfortunately, modified version is better known as Teknoman). When first reaching for the game, I expected it to be something really cool. Hey, it's Tekkaman Blade - there's no way you could make something bad out of that.

...as it turned out, the game's not just bad - it's horrible (and then some).

The gameplay is comprised of seven levels, each but the last divided into two parts. The first, a side-scrolling "shooter" sequence, has you fighting your way through the regular enemy forces that are present in varieties beyond what is seen in the series,

■ ...this fight wasn't in my script!

Publisher: Interbec #########
Developer: BEC Co., Ltd. ########
Release Year: 1993 ##########
Genre: Side-Scrolling Action ######
Themes: Sci-Fi, Mecha, Anime ######
Status: Console Game #########

and for some unfathomable reason also include tanks and mecha (in the anime, Radam "technology" was clearly organic in nature). It culminates with a pair of subbosses, and immediately thereafter a boss fight against an enemy Tekkaman.

The "shooter" part is mediocre at best. Blade (the player character) only has his Tekklance as a weapon, so you can either clash with enemies in close combat or spear them from a small distance by throwing your lance.

The Voltekka (a massive energy charge that heavily damages all onscreen enemies) and Crash Intrude (an energy field that damages enemies on direct contact) are additional attacks, both available after collecting specific power-ups.

On the subject of power-ups, there are usually four per level: one each of Voltekka (a red crystal that can be used at any point) and Crash Intrude (a blue crystal that activates immediately when collected) and two health refills (green crystals), each appearing after you destroy a wave of four floating containers. As it turns out, however, you can find yourself unable to collect the power-ups on a regular basis - contrary to what you might have seen on the show, Blade has all the agility and maneuverability of a flying brick.

To pass to the next level, you must destroy a pair of minibosses who move around

■ I should get hazard pay for this.

the screen in regular patterns. Only one type (that you'll meet twice) poses any real threat.

The battles against five enemy Tekkamen (in case you wonder how that makes six boss fights possible - you'll fight Tekkaman Evil twice) take the form of a fighting game

on a 30-second timer. It actually looks good at first, but this impression shatters once the Tekkamen start fighting. Armed with two different attacks at a time, you are forced to rely on the Tekklance until the enemy knocks it away, at which point you discover it completely sucked compared to ye olde roundhouse kick. The fighter sequence is technically on the level of a NES fighting game - coupled with sluggish character movement and awkward animations, in 30 seconds it manages to be as unpleasant as a 30-minute session with the dentist.

The difficulty level of the fights is infuriatingly uneven - rather than being progressively stronger/faster/more skilled, the enemy Tekkamen are either complete pushovers you can beat just by repeatedly hitting a single attack button or utter bastards who'll wipe the floor with you in seconds!

If you suffer through all six levels, you get to face Tekkaman Omega... who deserves the name of the most pathetic final boss of the decade. The combat carries

▪ **Now you know what happens when the mold survives long enough to discover gunpowder.**

through three phases, and Omega's movements in each phase repeat a single very short pattern: attack, leave a damageable area of his armour exposed, withdraw and repeat. He goes down so fast you'll be asking yourself "what was the whole point of this?".

Multiplayer, you ask? Yeah, there is. Unfortunately, only as a re-enactment of the fighter sequence, with each player controlling one of the six Tekkamen. I don't think I

need to repeat what I said about it before...

However, the final nail in the coffin is that you just can't do a 6 level video game out of a 49 episode TV series. Uchū no Kishi: Tekkaman Blade is a prime example of this. In their attempt to achieve this insane objective the producers have amputated most of the plot, skipping large chunks of it between the levels (at least those which actually follow the series' continuity - one doesn't, but I'm not telling which one that is), including a number of rather important storyline points.
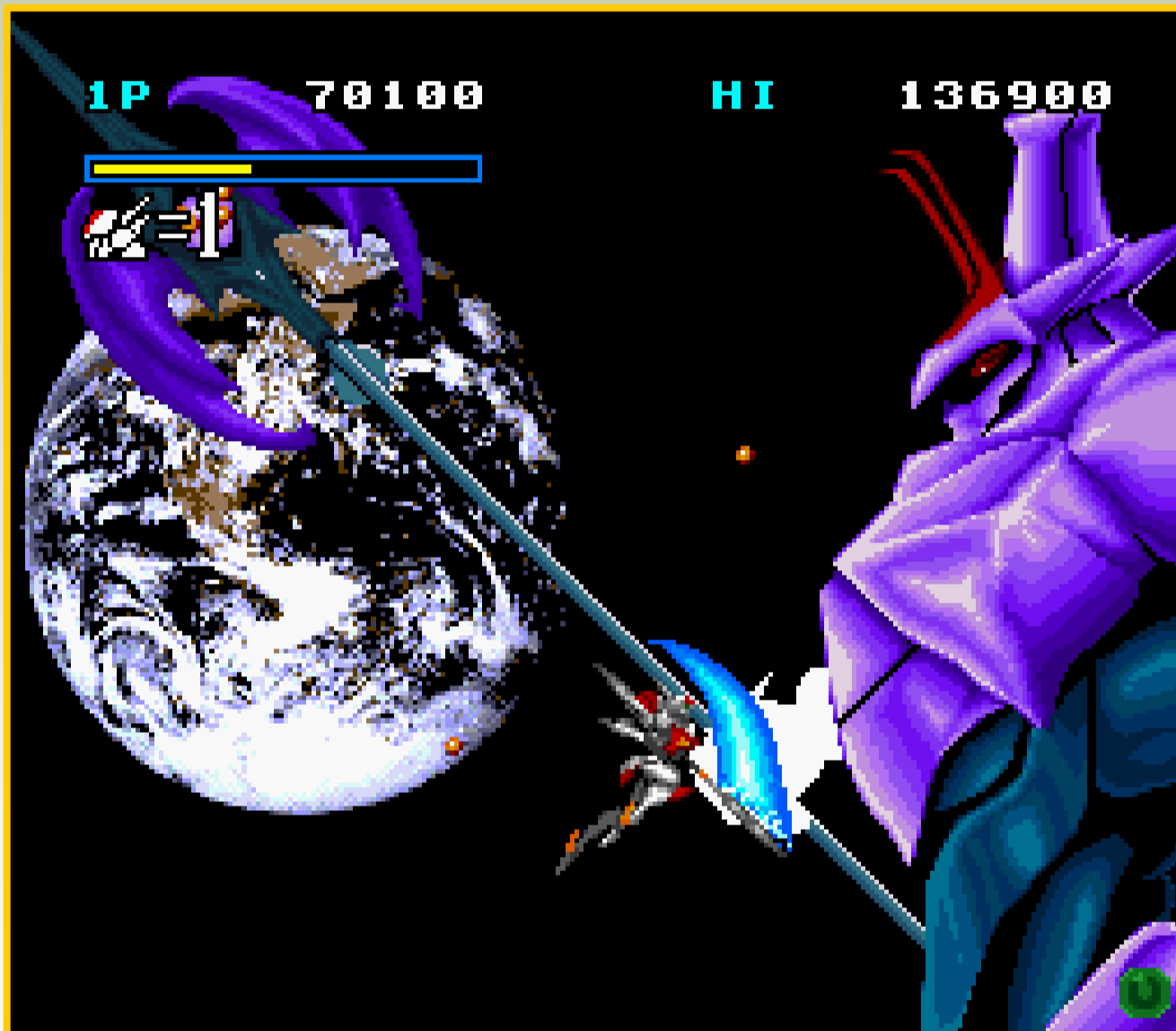

▪ **Another proof that self-proclaimed "Ultimate Warriors" never are (Final Boss - Tekkaman Omega).**

The only reason I'm not giving this game the lowest score possible is because I'm a fan of the series it's based on. Other than that, the game is nothing but a load of FAIL. Unless you're fans of the anime, stay the hell away from it. Actually, do so even if you are. Your fandom just might not survive the confrontation.
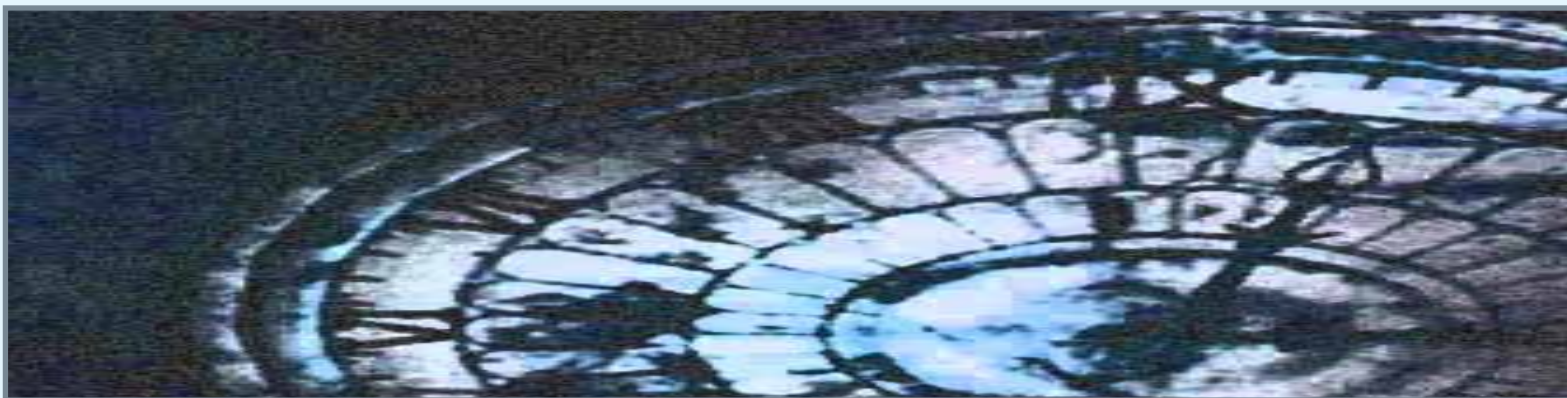
Score of

3.5

out of 10
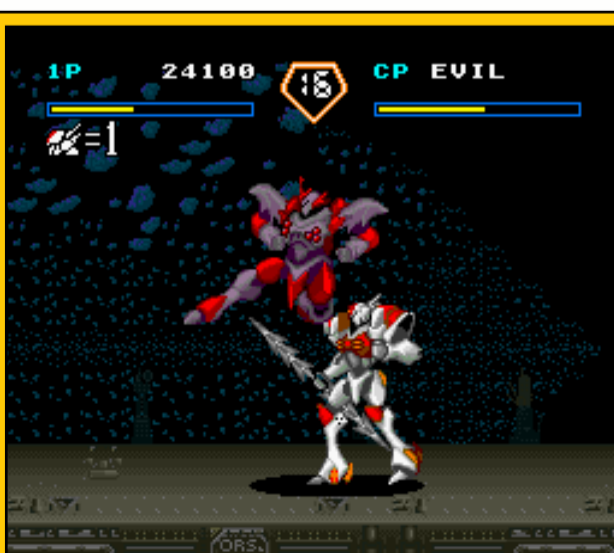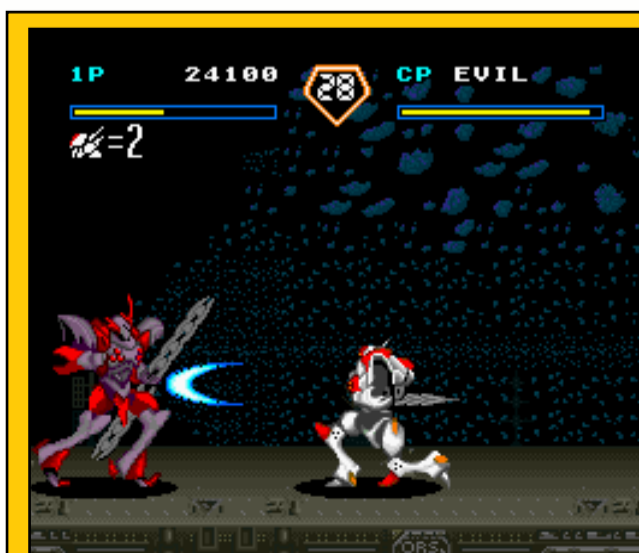
▪ **Even my brother's fashion sense is evil - and not in a good way!**

THE HISTORY OF HORROR GAMES
From the Dark Ages until the Cthulhu Renaissance
Volume II: 1989-1992

written by Dumitru Condrea

The next period is remarkable because the games were branching into multiple subgenres and genres. For example, the first developer to dedicate itself to horror games, exclusively, Horror Soft, has brought with it a series of Might & Magic-type RPGs with a strong adventure core, featuring Elvira.

They made their debut on the market with a generally mild attempt, Personal Nightmare (1989), but it will gradually distinguish itself as the bloodiest game creator in the pre-CDROM era. Personal Nightmare is an adventure with text-based commands in the vein of later Legend Entertainment productions such as the Gateway and the Spellcasting series and the previously mentioned ICOM games. Your father, a pastor in a small village, has disappeared without a trace and you're going there to search for him. But the once small quiet village has many dark secrets, and in your quest you'll meet many representatives of Hell's hierarchy, who corrupted the locals' minds. You'll have to gather evidence against these people

and make the police arrest them. Of course, this won't work against Satan himself...

Not a revolutionary feature, since it was already present in Uninvited, is the time limit. Each click brings you closer to the game over screen, so you'll have to think twice before you'll decide to touch everything you see. This is a common trick to increase the player's anxiety and make him do mistakes, which will not always be overlooked.

But Horror Soft isn't about Personal Nightmare, its essence lies in the later titles: Elvira: Mistress of the Dark (1990), Elvira II: Jaws of Cerberus (1991) and Waxworks (1992). The developers made sure to include an unprecented level of gore and blood, that

▪ **You gotta be pretty wacked to make killing into a form of art, I guess (Elvira II).**

became more detailed with each title. Corridors of flesh, blood squirting from a bitten neck, a beheaded corpse swimming in its own intestines... this is the kind of artwork you'll admire in the many gothic locations,

> "Corridors of flesh, blood squirting from a bitten neck, a beheaded corpse swimming in its own intestines... this is the kind of artwork you'll admire in the many gothic locations, all to save the poor and powerless Elvira."

all to save the poor and powerless Elvira, and banish the evil who imprisoned her, or in Waxworks' case, Horror Soft's last effort as a company focused on horror - rightfully claim your wax museum, inherited from your uncle, and fix your family's past mistakes. Still, despite the shocking nature of the images, the games weren't truly frightening, being more of a "gory horror", and relying also on levelling up after several fighting sequences in order to advance further.

After that, Horror Soft dissolved into slime and part of the team became Adventure Soft, creators of the Simon the Sorceror franchise. Waxworks hasn't been the last parting gift to the genre, though, since in 2005, the founding family of both companies (particularly Mike and Simon Woodruffe) will venture again into our beloved gaming realm, with Headfirst Productions'

You can see The Gardener.

The gardener waves his pitchfork at you menacingly and tells you to shove off.

▪ **This little rural crusade shows no signs of Horrorsoft's blood-soaked future (Personal Nightmare).**

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth.

Influenced by people's fresh interest in popular RPG series at that time, like M&M and Ultima, there were undoubtedly other titles which borrowed from the role-playing universe. A fine example would be Don't Go Alone (1989), a party-based RPG with the

■ Headfirst's farewell game - Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth.

> "There's nothing innovative in selecting characters specialised in different fields that would prove imperative later in the game, nor there is something new about combining potions, but nobody can ignore the fear meter."

good old creaky wooden mansion (called Nostrodomo) serving as the minoic dungeons that our heroes need to explore. From 16 characters you'll select a party of four and venture into a labyrinth with almost identical corridors, where strange occurrences have been happening lately. Thankfully there is an automap. There's nothing innovative in selecting characters specialised in different fields that would prove imperative later in the game, nor there is something new about combining potions, but nobody can ignore the fear meter.

In Don't Go Alone, your characters don't get hurt, there aren't any Health Bars. Instead, each one of them has a fear level, that increases when you fight an enemy. If it gets too high, you'll run scared into another corner of the mansion. But be careful, you won't be this lucky forever. Eventually, you might just go mad from terror and ultimately die, for even the bravest of adventurers

■ And this is what happens when they finally break under the pressure (Don't Go Alone).

have a heart of flesh that turns into jelly when facing the evil forces. This fear meter can be considered similar to how the character's sanity is affected in Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth (2005), Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem (2002) for GameCube, or it can be even associated with the first days of the Clock Tower franchise, when the health bar was replaced by specific colors showing the character's panic

◄ Slowly, but surely the tricksters of the mansion manage to nullify the team's morale (Don't Go Alone).

level.

Every one of those games punishes the player in a specific way for constantly losing sanity. For example if CoC's protagonist Jack Walters looks too much at a monster, or at a disturbing scene, he starts having hallucinations, visions; if you don't stop torturing your character, he'll decide to meet the Old Ones, by killing himself with the weapon at hand. In Eternal Darkness, as Alexandra

■ Jack Walters in one of his bad days (Call of Cthulhu - Dark Corners of the Earth).

Roivas, you'll encounter various phenomena, from different camera angles, to surreal noises, gameplay deviations (walking on the ceiling, for example) and health penalties. And finally, Clock Tower (1995, 1997) leaves you more vulnerable to Bobby (The Scissorman) if Jennifer is panicked, by increasing attack probability and sometimes bounding you to misstep and fall down when chased by the antagonist.

But Don't Go Alone might be too humourous for your taste. And for every comical game, you need two serious ones. In 1994, SSI, well-known for its old games placed in the licensed Dungeons & Dragons world, released one of its last decent RPGs in the same universe, but in a totally unexplored campaign setting, Ravenloft. Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession (1994) and the sequel, Ravenloft: Stone Prophet (1995) were special mainly because of their creepy gothic atmosphere and the focus on a horror plot and enemies, so common for this realm of dread. As with most FP RPGs using the first-person perspective, the Ravenlofts do not excel at combat mechanics. In the eyes of an experienced player it usually looks dumbed down. It's easy to fight, but harder to win and advance. After creating your two permanent characters, you later hire other mercenaries and allies, leading a party with up to four blokes through a seemingly medieval Transylvanian setting in order to defeat a vile and corrupted lord, Strahd von Zarovich. The sequel features the same type of gameplay, but prefers a more fantastical approach: the arid lands of

■ I'm not in the mood to shake hands with a guy emerging from a curtain of fog (Strahd's Possession).

Har'Akir are plagued by a wrathful mummy, Anhtekpot. •••

Across the years, the fusion between fantasy and horror proved to be very effective and sometimes it's hard to discern a strict boundary between them. This is where I wanted to lead the reader. Of course, in a legitimate historical dissection of horror games, considering the Ravenloft franchise might be a mistake, because certain genres like RPGs and platformers tackle with horrifying beasts and ghouls all the time. You got to ask yourself why didn't I talk about Castlevania? It does have vampires, medusa heads, ghouls and Dracula himself... Or why I won't offer as much space to the fear-instilling missions in Thief: The Dark Project compared to a puzzle-

Games discussed in this part:

Stephen King's The Mist - 1985, Angelsoft
Transylvania trilogy - 1982-1990, Penguin
Uninvited - 1988, ICOM Simulations
The Lurking Horror - 1987, Infocom
Personal Nightmare - 1989, Horror Soft
Elvira games - 1990-91, Horror Soft
Waxworks - 1992, Horror Soft
Don't Go Alone - 1989, Sterling Silver
Ravenloft games - 1994-95, Dreamforge

Next Issue:

Clive Barker's Nightbreed - 1990, Impact
A Nightmare on Elm St. - 1989, Westwood
Alone in the Dark - 1992, Infogrames
Dark Seed games - 1992-95, Cyberdreams
The Dark Half - 1992, Symtus
The 7th Guest - 1993, Trilobyte
Veil of Darkness - 1993, Event Horizon
Ecstatica - 1994, Andrew Spencer
Shadow of the Comet - 1993, Infogrames
...and many others

"...most early action games use horror elements in a superficial way – I never got and never will get the chills from playing a Castlevania game and if someone asks me to characterize Ghosts 'N Goblins, the only words I can come up with are cute and adorable."

Stay tuned for the next issue, kids!

-oriented Realms of the Haunting? Why will I disregard Diablo completely? I think the issue is pretty subjective. In the end, everyone of us will decide which games are genuine horror experiences and which ones are not.

I pretty much went with a genre-based equation to determine which titles get included in this article. While this has eased my work when researching and writing, it inevitably led to an unwanted paradox. Sure, most early action games use horror elements in a superficial way – I never got and never will get the chills from playing a Castlevania game and if someone asks me to characterize Ghosts 'N Goblins, the only words I can come up with are "cute" and "adorable". However if that is the case, there's no reason to include the cheerful Don't Go Alone…

Join us in our next issue as we face terror and despair once again. We'll explore the decrepit halls of our gaming past, and don't worry: just like I exceeded the timeline with Ravenloft this time, I'll go back to some titles that I've intentionally avoided in order to keep a logical line, such as Clive Barker's Nightbreed and A Nightmare on Elm's Street. ◆◆◆

■ It's based on a D&D campaign setting, but it manages to be more frightening than most of the horror titles released before it (Ravenloft - Strahd's Possession).

F

TOP 10

# My Hand is Not Where it Should Be
BOX ART

by Dumitru Condrea

We live in a world where in order to sell your product you need to work a bit more on its image. That should mean art and love towards your project. I don't know what went wrong, but things aren't exactly like this in real life. In order to massively sell your game it's not necessary for it to have a complex boxart. Instead it should stand out, so that the buyers could identify it fast among the store's other products. At least that's how publishers think. This way, more and more games got out on the market with rather simple and bland boxes. So let's take a look at how limited certain box designs got nowadays. I'd also mention that this top could've easily been about eyes or symbols. Just start with the Condemned games and Manhunt 2 and gradually search for older games and you'll eventually find 10 games that will always stare at you with the coldest, saddest eyes the gaming industry has ever seen.

10. Pathologic. The boxes I usually see are strong modifications of their source material, stylised in some way to show a connection with the virtual world you experience in the game. Yet, what do we have here? A simple black and white photo of two hands kept together by an invisible force, a dull knife that probably can't cut even a cake and some blood prints here and there. Not to mention the backround is actually someone's skin. Since I don't see any rope or hands restricting them, I just don't understand what the guy is trying to do. Unfortunately the confusion persists even in the game. You won't be able to make any sense out of that convoluted storyline, trust me.

2005, Ice-Pick Lodge
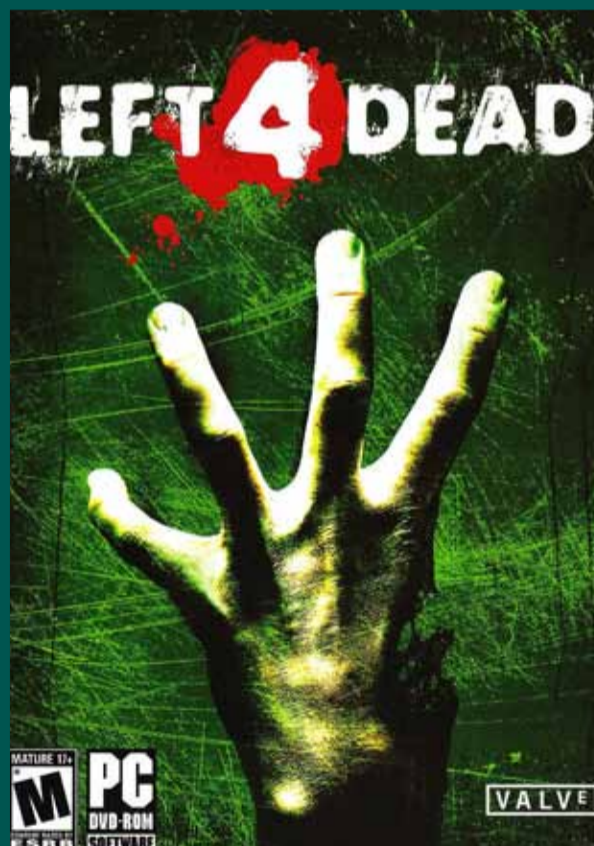
9. Left 4 Dead. Guess they thought it was real original when they came up with this idea. Well, this TOP 10 is trying to prove how wrong they were. This is one of the simplest, most bland boxshots I've seen in my life. Notice how the thumb is the only one ripped off to associate the hand with the 4 in the title? And now think about it, if the zombie did indeed scratch that entire board on the background, shouldn't those 4 fingers fall off first, and the thumb last? Mysterious.

2008, Valve

8. Left 4 Dead 2. Generally we have the same hand as in the first part of the series, with minor "improvements", so I should've placed it lower in the top. Except, this is not how they originally designed it.
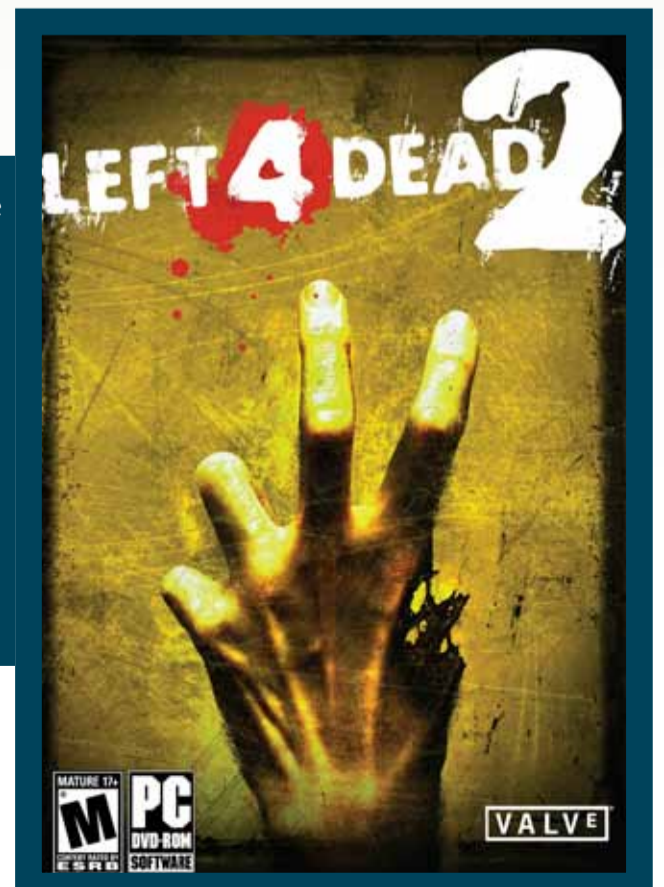
Initially three fingers were ripped off, and not gripped, but it was tagged as too "violent" by certain classification boards for the rating Valve was hoping to receive. Obviously it was redone. Bonus points for one of the few box arts that bothered the people who care about our mental health, because it depicted "violence" too explicitly.

2009, Valve

7. Blood. It's the oldest game among these ten, and for the same reason it scores higher than the L4Ds - I could never put a classic on the last spots. This is the source of all our problems, this is the Bhaal who populated all of Faerûn with his progeny, and together with other FPS series, like Quake, it paved the industry's way toward simpler box covers that we see today. Previously, you could admire entire paintings on the games' boxes. This time we have only a hand print in blood, similarly to the prehistoric attempts at art made by cavemen in the Altamira caves (for example). They preferred red ochre, though, instead of blood.

1997, Monolith

6. Dead Space. Being launched in the same year as Left 4 Dead could easily earn Dead Space one of the last spots in this top. It's interesting how I can't say anything bad about a hand floating in a no-gravitation zone. Now that I think of it, if they'd choose an in-game scene instead, many "smart" people will start tagging it as pornographical material... for aliens. I just hope it's not my body who's disintegrated into the void, there.

2008, EA

5. Obscure II. When I saw it minimized, I easily confused it with the disfigured human form on the box of the first Obscure. How can you confuse a hand with a man? Actually, this hand is kind of creepy, it doesn't try to grab you, nor say hello. Maybe he's constipated? Either way, it's very disturbing and rightfully deserves the 5th place, or maybe I just didn't want to give this 5th spot to the previous candidates...
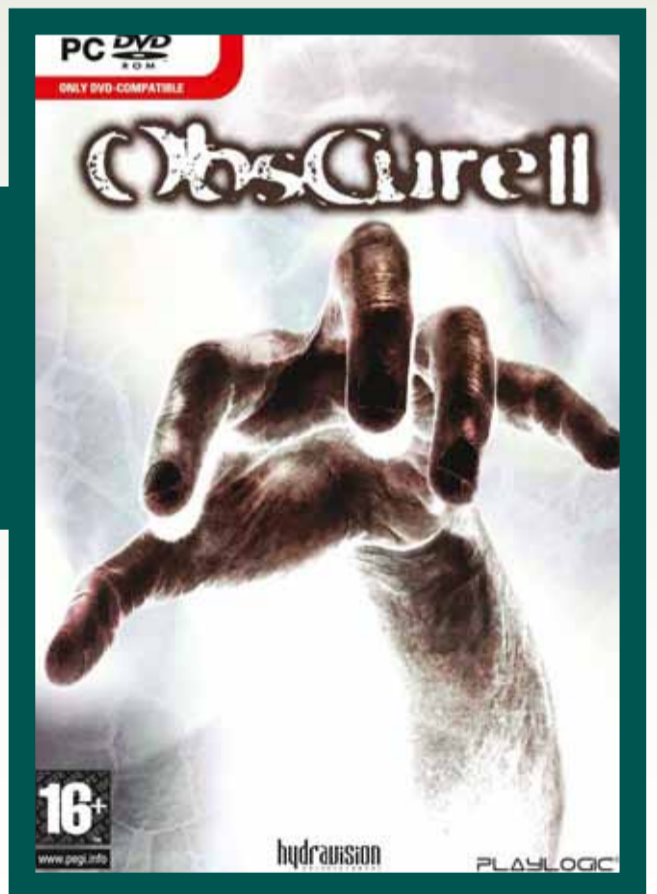
2007, Hydravision

4. Land of the Dead: Road to Fiddler's Green. It catches the right feeling that a zombie-themed game should have. Human survivors trying to isolate the infected with barbed fences, and the zombies trying to have an innocent snack by tearing them down. A hopeless and horrifying situation. But the main reason why it's so high, is because it deviously convinced many of you to buy such an abysmal game.
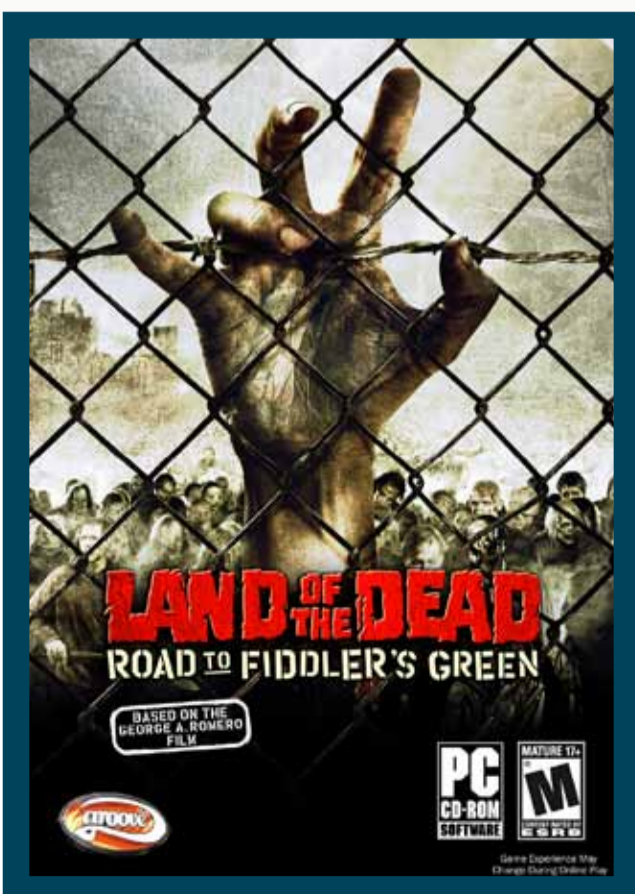
2005, Brainbox

3. Dementium II. Aaargh, what's a hairy hand doing coming out of my mouth?! Looking at this one, I remember how terriffying is the feeling to know that the monster hunting you is nowhere else than within you, waiting, thinking of you as its prey. Only minutes left till he slits your chest open and eats whatever is left of your body. Aww, hell, watched Alien too much.
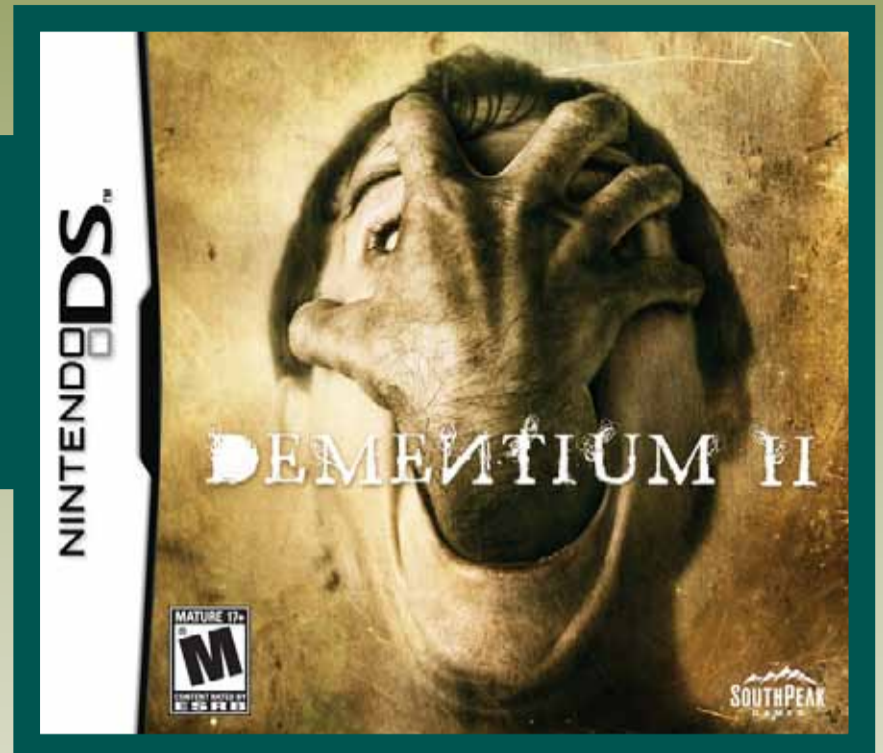
2010, Renegade Kid
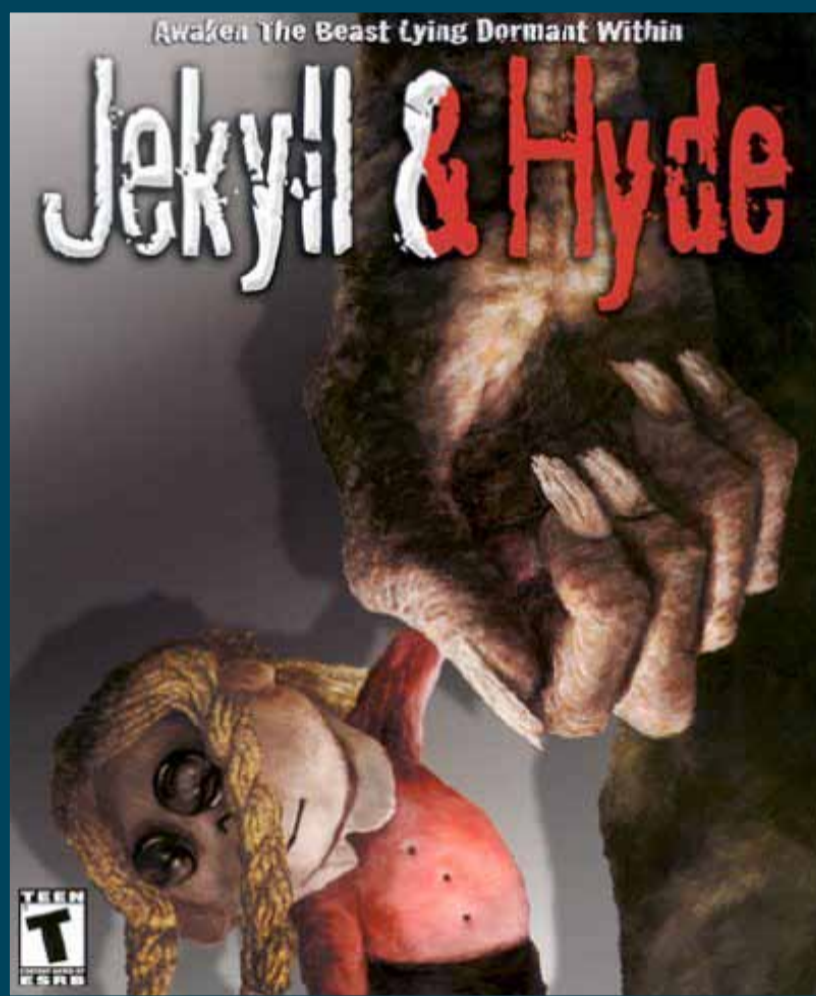
2. Jekyll & Hyde. I don't know why I liked this one so much. Maybe because it's based on one of the literature's classics or maybe because it has more than a hand displayed. The doll speaks. It says the story of a young boy. He was isolated in some dark cellar. With time, the loneliness consumed him. He grew claws, he became a beast. Only the doll is proof of his human past... But then again, if it's based on Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, it's probably wrong.

2001, In Utero

1. Dead Man's Hand. Originally, I didn't want to give this award to any game. I planned to photoshop L4D's boxshot to show the middle finger only, as a message to the artists who came up with these ideas. But, then decided to take a classy approach instead. See, Dead Man's Hand it's not that impressive, and it doesn't have a horror theme like the rest, but even though, in design, it's only average among all game box covers, it is certainly better than any of the others you've seen in this article.
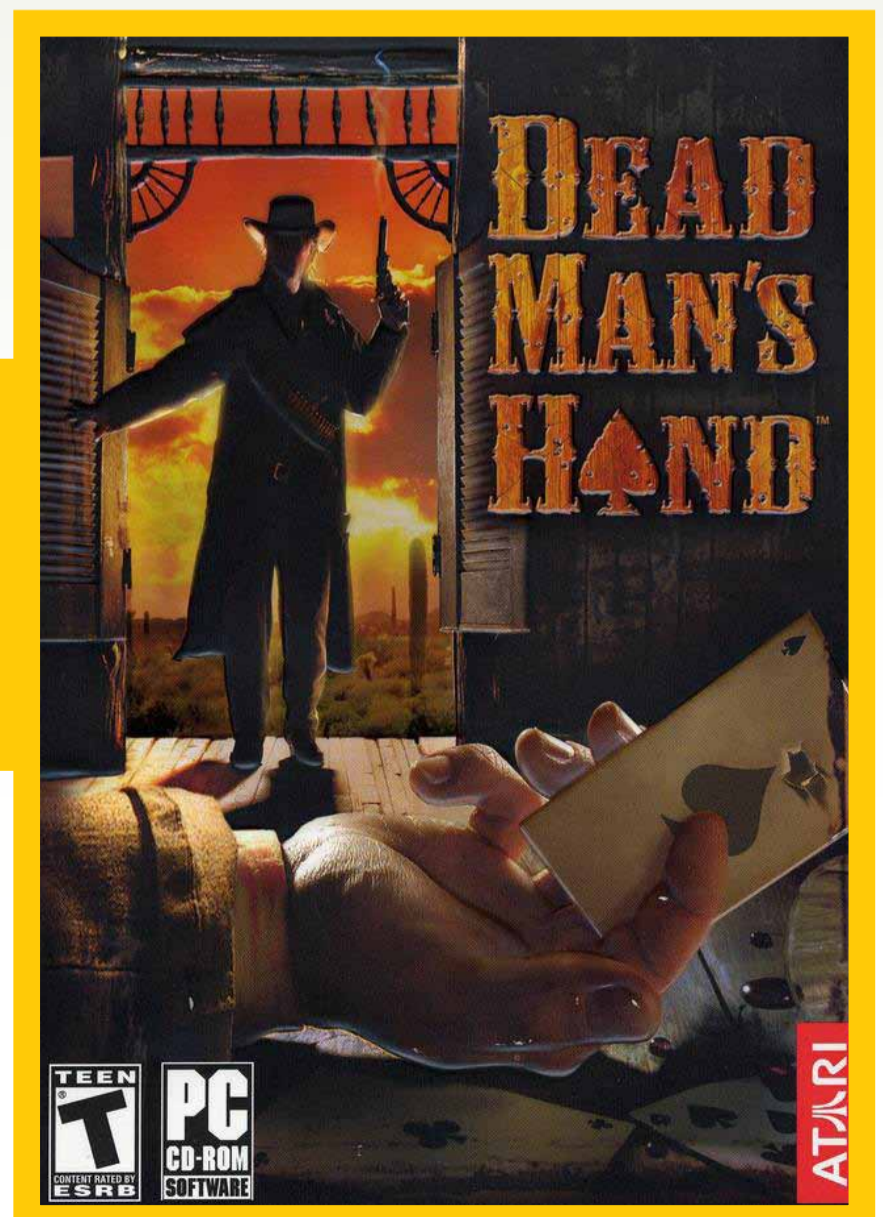
2004, Human Head

NOCTROPOLIS

by DarthHelmet86

R

Noctropolis, released in 1994 by Flashpoint Studios and EA, is a point-and-click adventure game with a heavy comic book feel, mostly inspired by Batman and other dark comic book series. I have to say, when I first heard about this game I was quite excited - the idea behind it sounds right up my alley - but after playing a while I found it has some flaws that really killed it for me. While it's not one of the worst adventure games I have ever played, it suffers from some of the same faults. But let's talk about the good things first...

The art style and story of this game is awesome: a dark city comes to life in front of you and the digitized actors do a pretty good job of acting out their part - we will talk more about them in a bit. The events are set in Noctropolis, a fictional city from a comic book which follows the exploits of the super-hero called Darksheer. He is a superhero in the same style as Batman, a dark champion of the night.

You start the game as the owner of a bookstore who's also an avid fan of the Darksheer series, which just had its last issue ever printed. In the game you actually get to read this awesome comic book, and I really enjoyed it. However, after doing so, a knock at your door disturbs you: a courier brought you a package along with some cryptic messages... Once you open the package you find a new Darksheer comic and some coins, one of which transports you to Noctropolis. The city is in turmoil as Darksheer has vanished and some of his greatest super villains have escaped from jail. It's up to you to take on the part of Darksheer.

For me, this is where the game falls over: the premise and story lead-in are great and give you the sense of a well thought out game. However once you start playing you will find the game gives you few hints about

■ The opening credits.

■ The city map of Noctropolis.
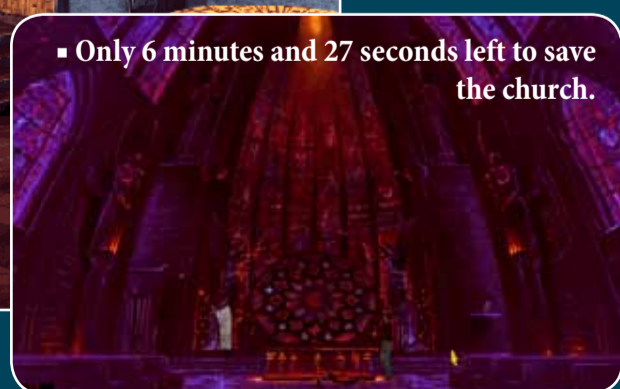
■ Only 6 minutes and 27 seconds left to save the church.

■ Is the Batman Cosplay Convention on the tenth floor?

■ The pyramid control panel took a little getting used to.

Conversing with a newspaper man on a dark street. ▶

■ A simple bookshop, only one question, how does he get to the second floor.

what to do or where to go. The guy you play should be sprouting lines about the city from the vast knowledge gained by being an avid fan of the comic books, but instead, he is almost silent the whole time. In most adventure games, looking at things gives the player a small hint indicating what it might be used for - the character throwing in a little bit of info here and there. In our case, looking at things only gives you a basic description and no personal thoughts from the hero - this makes the game a lot harder than it would be otherwise. It's not a bad thing, but a little bit of a hint here and there on what to do would have been nice from time to time.

The next bad part of this game, and this is a big one for me, are the controls. Noctropolis uses a similar system to Lucas Arts titles: right clicking brings up a cool looking selection of control buttons: look, get, go to, etc.. However, there is no hint as to what these actions can be used on: when you look around the map, your icon just shows whatever action you have chosen instead of what your cursor is pointing at. This, once again, makes the game harder than it had to be. What's worse, is that the awesome looking backdrops can easily hide the items and places you need

to use. More than once, I have had to look at a walkthrough only to find out I missed an item that was hidden in the details.

I am not a huge fan of the FMV style because it was too easy to mess up and very hard to get right, but the actors for the digitized characters did a good job most of the time although they occasionally fall flat with the delivery of the lines. Despite the fact that acting in this game is actually above par, and generally pretty good compared to others in its style, the bad bits really jar the senses.

So in summary, this is an okay game that could have been a very good one. Its

setting and story are awesome, but the controls and lack of interaction with the world pull it down. I would say that hardcore adventure gamers will still enjoy this game, but others not as much at all.

Score of

4.0

out of 10

■ The villains in all their glory.

◀ The entrance to the Greenhouse is locked, why don't bad guys make it easy to get them.

TUROK
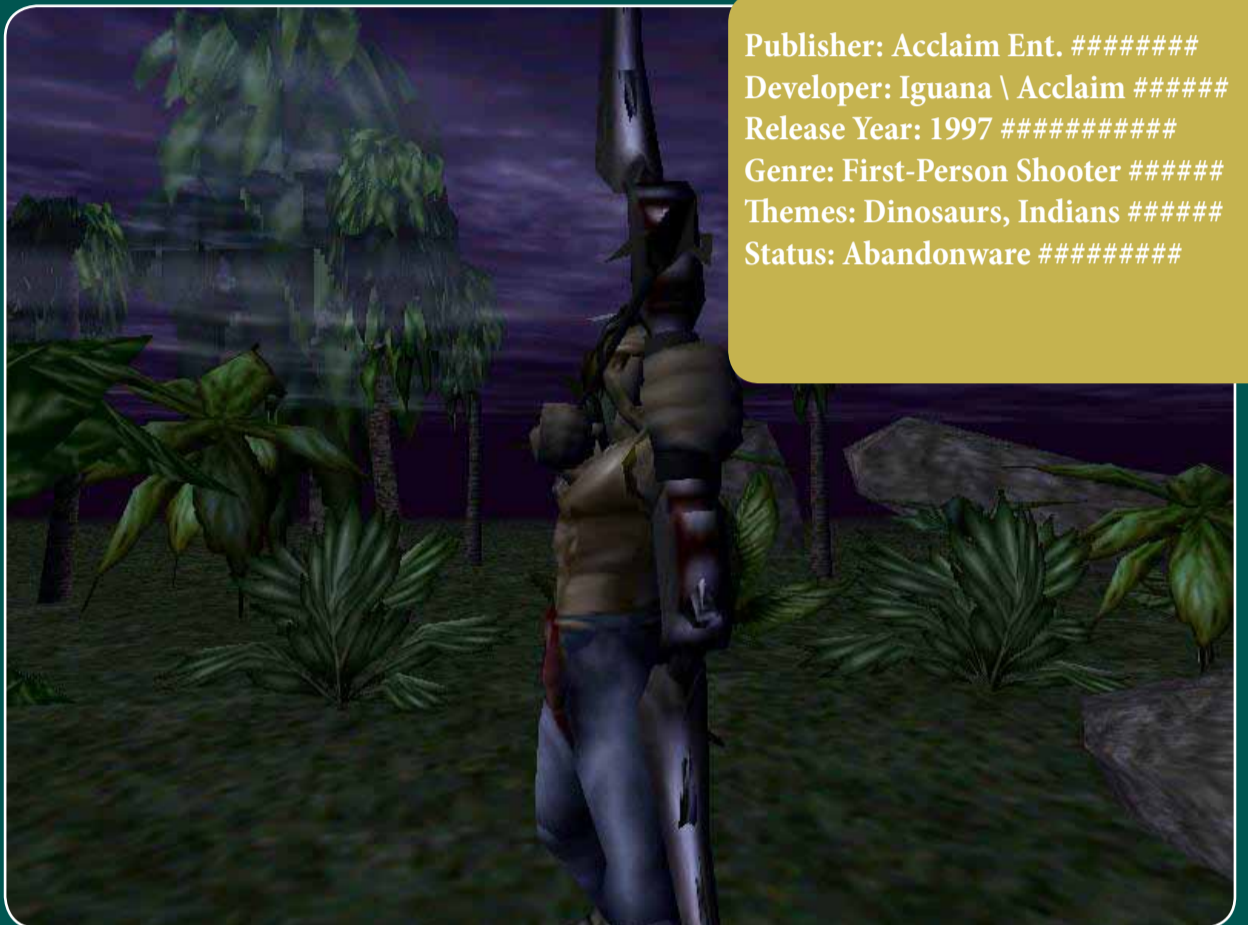## - DINOSAUR HUNTER -

R

WRITTEN BY THOMME

First-person shooters have long been a staple of videogaming, and it's no surprise that we have countless first person shooters that seem to be carbon copies of Doom in the early 90's, Duke Nukem 3D in the late 90's and Half-life and Call of Duty in the 2000's. Not only are there games so seminal that they inspire copies, but their game engines and gameplay become staples for years to come. There are those games that come along and don't adhere to what the industry prescribes. Turok is one of them.

When Turok came out, players on the N64 had already seen weapons, items and gameplay of that caliber in first person shooters, but PC gamers had Duke Nukem 3D and other Build Engine games. They offered beautifully rendered weapons, but ultimately had a flat feel and two dimensional graphics. The N64 gave us true 3D environments and in 1997, Turok brought those same environments to Windows.

Playing the game today is extremely simple. Downloaded from Abandonia, it runs directly without the need to install the game, additional patches or use an emulator such as

Publisher: Acclaim Ent. ########
Developer: Iguana \ Acclaim ######
Release Year: 1997 ###########
Genre: First-Person Shooter ######
Themes: Dinosaurs, Indians ######
Status: Abandonware #########

■ Turok (Tal'Set) is mad because someone overloaded the interdimensional barrier.

DOSBox or Virtual PC. Yes, the game boots right up in Vista 32bit, no problem! It does not, on the other hand, support a mouse. This is no surprise, as most games at the time did not use the WASD and "mouse to look" control set-up. Oddly, the N64 version of Turok supports a control scheme more akin to modern first person shooters than the PC version. The PC version plays more like Duke

Nukem 3D or Blood.

Graphic-wise, this game holds up better than most of its contemporaries. Comparing the graphics of Goldeneye 007 on the N64 to Turok on the N64 and PC, you would find that Turok has much smoother looking models and textures that flow much better from one to the other. The enemies are no longer visibly blocky, but they do have a much more cartoonish look to them. Comparatively, it looks much better than id Software's Quake from the year before. Not thematically or artistically, but Turok feels more vibrant and 3D than Quake does, just proving that the now defunct Iguana Entertainment had the tricks up their sleeves to compete with the monsters of the industry.

The graphics and controls do not count for everything, and unfortunately that is where Turok starts to show its limitations. The entire game feels like a messed up Zelda story playing out. As Turok, the player must recover eight pieces of a weapon to stop the big-bad Campaigner from destroying the world. So, it's two and two-thirds of a Zelda

game with guns and dinosaurs. The game doesn't really hold up over time, and I don't mean the type of time that's passed since it came out, I mean the time that you're playing it. You quickly become disconnected, due to the vapid storytelling and standard id-style key grabbing.

The enemies and weapons are really cool, but don't really do anything to recover from the mediocre level design, repetitive objectives and the constant fog. Oh, god, the fog! SO MUCH FOG! I'm not sure whether it's a method of allowing the game to avoid
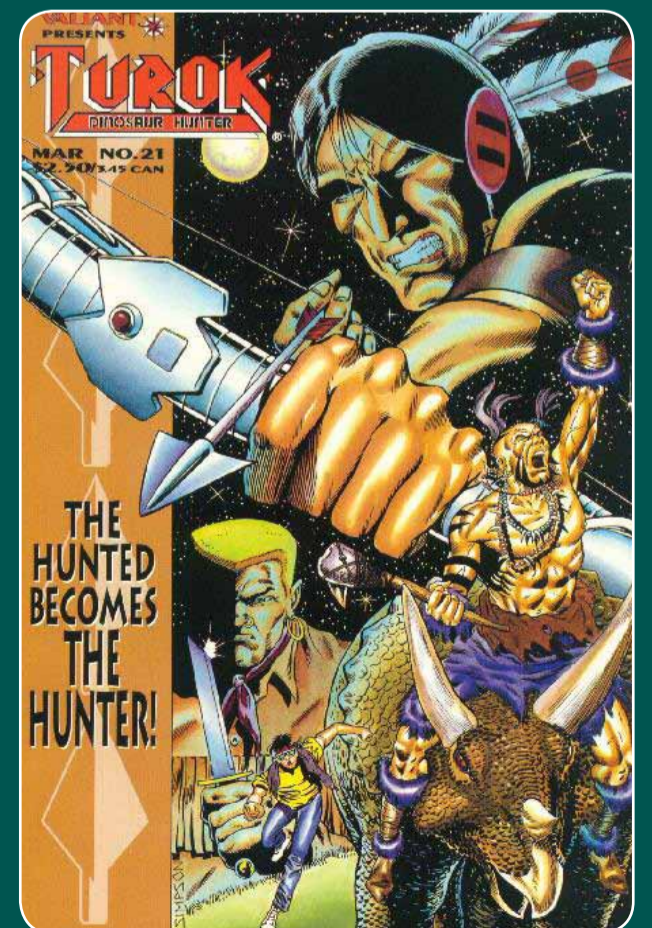
and you get a mild game, at best.

It is a shame that a game with such beautiful visuals and amazing detail had to be so gimped by the levels, fog and story. The game is worth giving a spin, but it's most likely not worth spending the time to try and complete it. Your mileage may vary, though. It's amazing that Turok, which is a seminal point in the history of first person shooters, has so many horrible flaws. It seems that Turok has everything that Goldeneye 007 didn't, but also missed out on all the good parts of Goldeneye 007. Not only that, but Turok lacks any type of multiplayer features (local, network or internet). It would have been nice to have a multiplayer option, which is what allowed Quake to achieve and maintain its popularity in 1996. Iguana was able to develop and make a game that looked beautiful, but in perfect Daikatana fashion, it lacks anything truly revolutionary.

▪ Err no, I'm afraid the bow just won't do.

▪ The most ferocious bipedal predator - the human.

Score of

5.0

out of 10

drawing so far, or if it's something they used to intentionally create a certain mood in the visuals. For the most part, I found that looking at a wall of fog for more than a couple of hours at a time would drive me insane, which is probably why I didn't like Superman 64. The level design often features long jumping sequences that would cause keyboard damage through frustration and points where you're pitted against too many dinosaurs with too few bullets. Top it off with some of the hardest to find keys in any first person shooter,

Turok game series:

Turok (2008)
Turok: Evolution (2002)
Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion (2000)
Turok: Rage Wars (1999)
Turok 2: Seeds of Evil (1998)
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter (1997)

▪Theoretically, games based on comics should be the greatest thing bestowed upon our realm...

The Most Popular Male and Female Characters

FROM HORROR GAMES

So here I was thinking of the most appropriate way to end this issue of Abandoned Times, and concluded that using the most dreaded white text on black background is the way to go. Nevermind my trollish tendencies, though. We selected a bunch of Abandonia veterans and asked them just who is their favorite horror game character. Here is what they say…

James Sunderland

Silent Hill 2

Nominated by:
TotalAnarchy

Grace Nakimura

Gabriel Knight

Nominated by:
TotalAnarchy & Lulu_Jane

The Scissorman

Clock Tower

Nominated by:
Professor Oak

Claire Redfield

Resident Evil

Nominated by:
DarthHelmet86

Edward Carnby

Alone in the Dark

Nominated by:
red_avatar & ayoeness

Anezka

VtM - Redemption
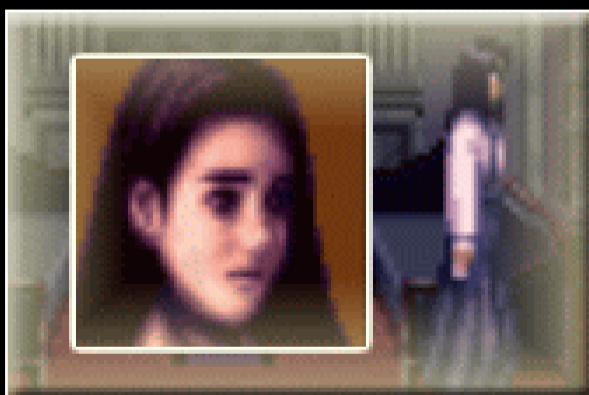
Nominated by:
bobson

Smiling Jack

VtM - Bloodlines

Nominated by:
The Fifth Horseman

Jennifer Simpson

Clock Tower

Nominated by:
Professor Oak

Leon S. Kennedy

Resident Evil

Nominated by:
DarthHelmet86

Alma Wade

F.E.A.R.

Nominated by:
ayoeness

Trilby

Chzo Mythos

Nominated by:
Lulu_Jane

Rayne

BloodRayne

Nominated by:
The Fifth Horseman

Pyramid Head

Silent Hill 2

Nominated by:
bobson

Elvira

Elvira

Nominated by:
red_avatar

Some will fall.
Others will write.
Write or fall.

Abandoned Times

Abandoned Times

Not* DONE BEFORE DUKE

*editor

Thank you
for reading
Abandoned Times
Issue 2!