inside erin
The AIF Newsletter

Letter from the Editor

There are a few things of interest currently happening in the community, and we've done our best to describe them in the other articles of the newsletter. Probably the most interesting – the thing with the most promise – is the discussion of a community-wide game development project. The concept is for a central theme (settings, characters, stories) to be shared among the entire community and for authors to then take that theme and build games around it. After a time, there could be a large number of games all exploring different aspects of the theme, with different visions of the settings and different adventures for the same characters. DrisArter proposed the project and, along with A. Bomire, is working to manage it through the AIF Community Portal site. See DrisArter's article on page 6 for more information. Readers are also encouraged to visit and contribute to the Game Ideas section of the forums.

The next interesting event is the return of GoddoG. I wasn't around during his previous tenure on the site, but I looked back

This Month in AIF

BBBen's "This Month in AIF" column will return next month. These are the new games that were released in August:

X-Men: First Day at the Institute – by Captain Cranky Pants, released 1st August 2005 – You're a rookie mutant who's been admitted to a school where your mutant powers will be honed. You meet and interact with popular X-Men characters.

Options – by David Whyld, released 6th August 2005 – Third game in the sequence of AIF gamebooks that began with *Choices* and continued with *Decisions.*

There was also an Inform port of Sly Dog's *Rachel Has a Bad Day* released. The port was created by Roger Pepitone.

Interview with David Whyld by A. Ninny

This month we have a very interesting interview with David Whyld, one of the more outspoken and controversial authors in the community. We're grateful that he was willing to sit down and give us candid responses to our questions about his outspokenness and criticisms of AIF.

AN: You have a lot of IF stuff going on, including writing games, operating your shadowvault.net web site, reviewing games, posting on RAIF, on the ADRIFT forums and on the AIF message boards. How do you manage to keep up with it all?

DW: Lack of social life <G>. Ha. Overall I look on it as a hobby that I enjoy (and one that gives me a breather from the

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Mission Statement

Inside Erin is written and published by people who enjoy AIF. It is done for fun, but we also have some goals that we seek to achieve through the newsletter:

1. To encourage the production of more quality AIF games by providing advice from game developers, and by offering constructive criticism that is specifically relevant to AIF.

2. To encourage activity and growth in the AIF community. We aim to generate a constant level of activity so that there aren't long periods in which people can lose interest in AIF.

3. To help document and organize the AIF community. This is done through reporting on games and events, as well as by helping to organize community-wide activities such as competitions and the yearly Erin Awards.

joys of working life). As a teenager I was obsessed with astronomy and spent countless hours staring at the skies. Before that it was dinosaurs. Now it's text adventures.

AN: You've written, by your own count, 39 IF games. The vast majority of them are not AIF, and our readers may not know much about them. Please plug a few of your games that you feel most proud of or that are most notable.

DW: Ah, plugging my own games time. A subject I *never* get tired of <G>.

My own personal fave is *Back To Life… Unfortunately* which is a comedy game about a king who gets resurrected by his adoring populace when they run into a few problems. Only he *liked* being dead. It was nice and peaceful… People seemed to really enjoy this game, although when I first came up with the idea for it back in mid-2003 I didn't think it was ever likely to amount to anything so I shoved it to one side for over a year and wrote other games instead.

I'm also fond of *Paint!!!* which was originally written for a one-room comp I was going to host, but which failed through lack of participation (and a rather silly debate on what the definition of 'one room' was). You play the part of an office decorator who has to motivate his three dim-witted assistants into painting an office, contending with a meteor crashing through the rooms, kidnappers and a Thunder God with a bad head…

Sophie's Adventure was a huge, sprawling epic that I entered in the IFComp in 2003 where it finished disappointingly low at number 16. It's the tale of a little girl who makes a birthday wish for an adventure and gets one like she never imagined.

Second Chance is a serious game which I entered in the Spring Comp 2005. It didn't do especially well (fifth out of six games) but seemed to be pretty well received and got one positively glowing review from a nice chap on RGIF. It's an adult game (minus the sex – sorry AIF fans!) which starts with the player dying and then parts of his life are told in flashbacks and he's given a 'second chance' at fixing some of the things he did wrong.

My favourite non-comedy game is probably *Shards Of Memory* which was the first of a trilogy of dark fantasy games (the other two are still 'works in progress'). You wake on a beach with none of your memories and must piece together what has happened to you.

A Day In The Life Of A Superhero I always liked, but clearly I was in a bit of a minority seeing as how badly it did in the IFComp in 2004 (23rd! Ouch!) Strange sometimes how a game you feel so positive about while writing it can be received so poorly.

AN: You are involved a nasty and prolonged flame war on RAIF. Can you tell us what precipitated that and why you felt it was worth pursuing?

DW: I assume you mean the one with Paul Panks?

Part of me feels kind of sorry for the guy. He's clearly dedicated to what he does – writing games – but he's just so bad at it, and reacts in the worst possible way to the least bit of criticism (even when it's meant in a helpful way), that sometimes it's a real struggle *not* to take him down a peg or two. The other part of me just thinks he's just a major pain. He writes games that no one aside from him likes, plugs them to an audience who don't care less about them and treats the RAIF newsgroup like his own personal blog. He's been doing this sort of thing for years and even though he knows how much trouble it causes, it never stops him.

AN: I've noticed you tend to be harshly critical of AIF games, and you've written at length on the subject of AIF quality. Leave aside whether or not the criticisms are accurate; what keeps you playing and writing about AIF when you apparently feel that it is substandard?

DW: I've never really made any bones about the fact that I think the majority of AIF is just plain bad. But, every now and then, a decent game comes along. I think that's what keeps me interested. Will the next game I play be one of the few good ones? Or will it just be the same mess as the last one? More often than not I'm disappointed but from time to time I play a game that was actually worth downloading.

AN: There's a reason for AIF's popularity, which is the explicit sex. I assume you wouldn't be playing AIF if you didn't get some enjoyment from that aspect of it. Are there any cases of games you recall in which the pornographic elements were particularly poignant or

integral to your enjoyment of the game?

DW: To be perfectly honest, I find the graphic sex in most AIF games to be tedious, poorly written and about as big a turn on as a kick in the nuts. *"He fucked her pussy then shot his wad onto her tits"* – does anyone find that sort of thing stimulating? I know I sure don't. Then again, I seldom play AIF games for the sex anyway. Kind of a strange admission to make admittedly, but I play them more for the gaming elements with the sex as a kind of added bonus. The icing on the cake so to speak. Which probably goes a long way towards explaining why I tend to criticize the games more than heap praises on them – some are barely even playable.

Saying that, there were a few moments in A. Bomire's *The Backlot* which were mildly a turn on. The fact that here you had an AIF game that was first and foremost a game, with a proper storyline, and there weren't fifth rate sex scenes dropped into every location meant that you when found a sex scene, it stood out from the rest of the game. It was something special.

AN: AIF seems to have a following of people who generally disregard poor technical quality in the games they play. You are often outspoken in criticizing them (both the authors of poor games and the people who support them), to the point where you've been asked to 'give it a rest'. What is your reaction to that?

DW: I can accept that I get carried away sometimes trying to get my point across, and there have been times when I've read over something I said a few months ago and felt I probably should have either kept quiet or said my piece in a slightly less aggressive manner. Having said that, part of the problem with the AIF scene is that everyone is so complimentary of everyone else's games, even the ones that are dire, that there's no real incentive for anyone to write better games. Bad games get the same amount of coverage as good games. Bugs get mentioned yet no one else seems willing to try a bit harder with their next game; they just release another buggy one. If more people spoke out against the bad games instead of just saying "great game, mate", it might encourage the writers of bad games to improve.

Maybe that's just me trying to force my opinions on everyone else, but harsher critics *would* mean better games in the long run.

AN: You recently completed a third AIF Gamebook. Why do you like writing gamebook-style games?

DW: I always liked gamebooks when I was a teenager – *Fighting Fantasy*, *Lone Wolf*, *Bloodsword* and all the rest. *Choices, Decisions* and *Options* are just gamebooks in a text adventure format. Aside from that, writing them makes a refreshing change from writing a regular text adventure. There's no need to worry about guess the verb, no lengthy item descriptions, no inventory or anything like that. Most of the time you can sit there and type.

AN: You seem thoroughly captivated by ADRIFT, far more than any other AIF or even any IF author. What is its appeal for you over object-oriented IF systems?

DW: Simple answer: it's easy to use and I'm not a programmer. I like to just sit there and write games without the hassle of learning the hows and whys of a proper programming language. ADRIFT allows me to do that.

Although I *have* looked at other systems. I'm not particularly enamored with the way work on ADRIFT seems to have stalled recently, especially with all the bugs still in the programme, and I've had a bash around with TADS, Inform and the new version of Alan. Unfortunately they're all programming languages, and while something like Alan seems easy enough to get to grips with, writing even a simple game with it would be harder than writing a complex game with ADRIFT. So short of another GUI-based system coming out any time soon, it's likely to be ADRIFT for the foreseeable future.

AN: What new projects do you have in the works?

DW: Several different ones. But then I always have at least several different ones in the works, only a small minority of which ever get completed. Of the AIF games I'm hopeful of getting done one day:

The Shadow features a deadly assassin hired to kill a bishop who is more than he appears to be. It's a serious adult game set in a fantasy world where nothing is quite as it seems.

The Case of the Scarlet Suspender is a comedy detective game featuring a hapless detective called upon to find a missing porn star, at the same time as fending off attacks from an angry ex-wife, an angrier ex-girlfriend and some psychopathic prostitutes he accidentally backed over in his car. Who are, incidentally, also very angry.

It Happened One Weekend was my first attempt at a straight sex romp. Four teenage girls go to a remote cabin in the woods and have lots and lots of sex. The idea died very quickly because it wasn't a game I was really bothered about writing, but I might get round to it one day.
And, somewhere along the way, I'll probably get around to writing the fourth game in the *Choices* series, though this time with a storyline that doesn't involve the player having to rescue Susan Harris from some more cock ups she's brought on herself.

David Whyld is a prodigious author of both IF and AIF. His most recent AIF is *Options*, the third game in the *Choices* series of AIF Gamebooks. He maintains a massive catalog of all ADRIFT IF and AIF games at his web site, www.shadovault.net.

Letter from the Editor (Continued)

over his old AGX posts to find that he was a very active member back in 2000 and 2001. We new whippersnappers [scurry to get off his lawn before he chases us with his broom] offer him a gracious welcome back – and nice to meet you. Back in the day, he was working on a game he called *The Orgone Convergence* (TOC). From what I could tell from reading those old threads, it looks like TOC was one of those ever-in-development-never-finished games. Rap and others around back then could probably confirm whether my impression is correct on that score. Today, GoddoG tells us that the original code for TOC is probably lost, but that he's close to beta on a new TADS game called *Fever Cabin*. Also relevant in this paragraph about GoddoG: at the last page of this newsletter is our brand new comic strip, "Erin! Adventures In Fantasy" by -3-. It's relevant because -3- and GoddoG are the same person. We're very excited about the strip; it is extremely professional-looking, and we believe it will prove to be smart, funny and a popular feature of the newsletter.

A recent discussion thread at AGX about images in AIF has been the first substantive discussion at that venue in a while. The basic question is whether AIF should have images, and if so, how many. I could certainly post my opinion over there along with everyone else, but the one big advantage to being Editor of this newsletter is that I get to blather on, using a very authoritative voice, and make it inconvenient for others to rebut me. WooT!

Multimedia, particularly images, have been used recently in numerous ways by different authors. Most recently, Captain Cranky Pants used cartoon porn in two different ways in the same game (*X-Men: First Day at the Institute)*. One way was to provide an image of each female NPC when the player typed 'x girl'. The other was a 'deck of pornographic playing cards'-styled bonus images that the player could choose to collect while playing. Of these two approaches, CCP should have deleted the former. 'X girl' images are very 'been-there-done-that' and the five or six additional stills didn't add anything to what was available in the twenty bonus pictures. In this particular instance, the bonus pictures concept was interesting and worthwhile; the 'x girl' pictures should have been omitted.

Another recent game with multimedia used it in a fairly unique way. A. Bomire's *Tomorrow Never Comes* provided a short video opening sequence and then punctuated changes of scenery with a still graphic. This was a particularly effective design for this particular game, mimicking as it does any number of James Bond movies. The images themselves are unobtrusive and even safe to view at work.

Cauldron's Hugo game *Sexbot* won the 2004 Erin for multimedia for good reason. It came as close as possible to being a graphic game while at the same time remaining a text game at heart. While I'm not intimately familiar with what Hugo can do, it seemed to use the best of that system in presenting a unique-looking AIF featuring the author's skillfully-done hand-drawn pictures.

That brings me to two big recent blunders. One is *Devil Child* by Sorgoth NoxSol and the other is *Birthday* by Johnny Reb. Of the two, *Birthday* is by far the lesser evil. Johnny Reb drew his own images to accompany his game, and they were reasonably skillfully done – I didn't have an issue with the images themselves. The problem I had was that the game uses the images as a replacement for some of the textual descriptions. When you entered a room, a picture of that room would appear on your screen. You were directed to use the image along with the text to know what objects you could examine in the room. What was frustrating and killed the whole concept,

however, was that only about half of the objects drawn actually were provided separate descriptions, while others were important objects in the game. There's no point in implementing an interesting, promising idea and then stopping halfway in implementing it.

Devil Child is another evil animal altogether. That game has 13 megabytes of oversized, under-qualitied porn pictures probably downloaded from the internet. They junk up the game and pop up at seemingly random times and cover the game's text window. It is *Poster Child* for how not to use images in AIF.

In short, multimedia in AIF can be welcome feature, but authors should consider what they're trying to accomplish. Merely tossing up photos of naked or nearly-naked women at random doesn't pass muster, especially considering how often that's been done before. There should be some discernible concept behind the use of media, whether it be done for comedy, illustration, punctuation or some other interesting purpose. Finally, not every person who downloads a particular game is going to have multimedia enabled, nor will they necessarily have a media-enabled interpreter. Authors should take special care to ensure that players can skip the multimedia features in a game and not be missing any of its necessary content.

The Erins: Early Warning by A. Ninny

Even with two months before the game submission deadline, it isn't too early to begin planning and organizing this year's AIFA awards. Any authors who want to have their games eligible for a 2005 Erin must complete and release them by October 31, 2005.

I administered the Erin awards last year, and I will volunteer to do it again unless someone else is eager to take on the project. Presuming I'm still the Erinbot (as Richard Gillingham aptly dubbed me), I will begin organizing the 2005 awards in early November. I will be looking to form a committee of individuals who want to work on finalizing and providing very concise descriptions of the revised list of award categories. Shortly thereafter, we'll need to decide on whether to change the nominating and voting procedures. The goal of any changes would be to increase voter participation and to make the nominating and awarding as fair as possible. Recall that there were only twenty-four ballots received in last year's final voting, and this was despite my incessant nagging.

One thing that was mentioned shortly after the last ceremony was web-based voting. I'd be interested in pursuing that, but I'd need someone able and willing to put in the effort to set it up. I'll also be looking for someone to create the 2005 Erin graphics (banners, awards, etc.). If you're interested in working on these jobs, please send me an email at the newsletter and we'll discuss what needs to be done.

This is the current list of twenty-three games that are eligible for the 2005 Erins (as of August 29, 2005).

The Reunion by Moriarty
Pool Party by Christopher Cole and A. Bomire
Crossworlds Part 3 - The Final Far Far Away Frontier by BBBen
Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Sex by captain_cranky_pants2000
Graduation Night at the Brothel by strgzr02002
The Cabin - Inspiration Does Not Come Standard by Blue Roses
Of Masters and Mistresses: Abduction by Grimm Sharlak
Tomorrow Never Comes by A.Bomire
Oakwood School by rav_p89
Choices by David Whyld
Rachel Has a Bad Day by Sly Dog
Ideal Pacific Coast University by NewKid
Escape Pod (expanded edition) by LoveLetterstoLove
Weekend by Pierre
Decisions by David Whyld
The Sex Artist by A. Ninny
Lauren's Awakening by TotalDirt
Those Annoying Aliens by EvilBob
Train by Sly Dog
Casting by fellatrix_uk
Crawler's Delight by A. Troll
X-Men: First Day at the Institute by captain_cranky_pants2000
Options by David Whyld

The Free City of Stolgar: Communal AIF Project by DrisArter

A couple of weeks ago, I was on a bus musing about how things with AIF were going, and how perhaps they could develop. While most of my thoughts dwelled on the development of the AIF Community Portal, another idea filtered through: the possibility of a sort of 'collaborative project' for the AIF community. It occurred to me that a great way of bringing the community together might be a project where thematic elements were shared across several games. The themes connecting the games may include the setting, characters, and locations.

The hope for this project is that it will lead not only to greater cooperation, but also an interesting storytelling method – the concept of the same general place being used in a variety of games. Obviously, this task requires some central coordination to make sure that everything is consistent, but I am confident that with careful attention and hard work, it can be achieved.

If it does succeed I think we will have created a truly interesting concept and framework for authors. While it could be seen as somewhat restrictive by some, this is not how I see it. I see, rather, that it could be used to give authors inspiration, or alternatively to provide a starting block from which they can develop their own concepts.

As for the players, I think they, too, would benefit. In addition to the sex, which is often seen as the core of AIF, we would be creating a genuinely interesting setting where the information gleaned in one game may, although perhaps not directly carried through, may give players hints or understanding in others. Such tie-ins can surely only help add to the overall experience.

All of this thinking, and the initial positive reaction to the concept by those who replied to my forum thread about the idea, has led to the setting I am starting to develop as a suggestion; the Free City of Stolgar. The setting, loosely described, is based in a steampunk-styled city where technological brilliance is overshadowed by excess and corruption. I truly believe that we can create a wonderful experience for all interested in the AIF community, and take the interactive element of AIF to a new level.

While this project is still in its early developmental stages, it is starting to grow more rapidly, and this progress is, to me, very exciting. If you would like to help out at all with the project, then the best way is to join up at the AIF Community Portal (portal.aifcommunity.org), and post your interest or thoughts on the forum thread there. Watch out for further news, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the project.

Erin Street: Interviews with AIF Players by A. Ninny

Another month of elbow-grabbing has come and gone, and I am pleased that I managed to snare four AIF players, shove my microphone in their faces and compel them to answer another bunch of questions about their AIF preferences and habits.

This is the second in a series of brief player interviews that will appear in *Inside Erin.* This month, we thank Goddog, Joe Zop, johnny5cents2003 and Mindtech for participating in the interview.

Inside Erin: **Most AIF has very detailed sex descriptions. Do you feel there comes a point where it's too much information? If so, how do you know when that point is reached?**

GoddoG: No, I don't really think so, though I think the case can be made that if it isn't handled with finesse it feels like too much information. Actually, if it's handled rather clumsily, even a lightly detailed description can feel like too much info. I think when handled by a talented writer, detail can be very immersive and draw the player deeper into the scene.
That said, I have found myself skimming scenes that did feel bogged down in detail.
I guess it boils down to Dirty Harry - "A man's gotta know his limitations..." (whether said "man" is male or female)

Joe Zop: The devil *is* in the details, and so is a sensory experience. As long as an author is being detailed in a way that is fresh and precise or truly inventive then I don't think length or amount of information matters all that much, as in a marvelous sensual experience there's no such thing as too much of a good thing. If you've seen a thousand sets of tits in go-go bars it doesn't mean the next pair you see is necessarily gonna result in a "been there, done that" reaction. On the other hand, if the writing isn't evocative, a one sentence sex scene can be too long (Cue the "Lessons from Vachon" theme song). If I find I'm skipping parts of the descriptions it's generally an indication that it's too much, but that's not an indication of length so much as quality of writing.

johnny5cents2003: This is completely and totally a matter of "each to his own taste." I think it depends how well the descriptions are written. For example, there are games such as *Stiffy MaKane* that have only a few words of description and it's still too much information, because the authors of these games tell us things we don't want to know.

Mindtech: When is too much too much ? When it impedes the flow of the scene. A detailed scene is all very nice when describing slow, intimate sex between two lovers. The same amount of descriptions is way too much when describing a simple wham-bang interaction. It is too much, regardless of the scene, when reading the text starts being work rather than pleasure. I don't need ten paragraphs describing her labia. Doesn't do anything for me.
At all.

Inside Erin: **How important is it to you that a game's sex scenes integrate with the story?**

GoddoG: It depends on how you mean "the story" - if you mean the plot, not necessarily so much. But I think it's important that the sex does feel like a part of the world in which the story is taking place. It can be a total diversion from the plot, or come screaming (sometimes literally) out of left field, but as long as it doesn't break the feeling of the game world, that's just fine.

Joe Zop: It really depends on the game. I'm in favor of mindless sex romps as well as compelling stories with puzzles, intricate plots and character development, outrageously unlikely shifts in the time-space continuum and so on. One of the nice things about AIF, as is true with other things like sports, literature, movies, food, etc., is that a variety of options are available and you can pick whatever happens to strike your fancy at any given time. Some days I want unexpected appetizers followed by an exquisitely prepared entree with a good wine, and some days I want bad fast food and plenty of it. I'm glad I get to choose.

That said, sex scenes are like character behavior -- they have to make sense on some level.

johnny5cents2003: To me it is vital that the sex scenes integrate with the story. If I wanted random sex scenes with no motivation, I'd watch porn. I am playing a game and reading a story and both games and stories are all about cause and effect.

Mindtech: Depends on the story. I do not require that the sex scenes are puzzles that have to be solved. Sam Shooter 1 has a number of sex scenes, none of which are required for completion of the story. Still, they feel integrated because they make sense in the Sam Shooter universe. This contrasts to Moist, where satisfying the women is part of a puzzle. However, *Moist* is, despite being my favourite AIF of all times, a rather simple game. In *Moist* it makes sense to have sex scenes as a puzzle.

Inside Erin: **Most games use cut-scene sex, meaning that each 'fuck chick' command issued returns an entire scene from beginning through both characters' orgasms. Other games use MMX, meaning "Moist"-like: repetitive incremental arousal until one or both characters orgasm. Do you prefer one over the other?**

GoddoG: As a writer/designer, I tend to prefer the non-cutscene approach. It has more of a sex-simulator feel to it if handled well, and a more game-like approach. However, as a player, I like both probably equally well. The arousal approach tends to feel more game oriented and the cut-scene feels more story-oriented. But I find both equally entertaining and think the coder should choose the approach that suits the feel of their work better.

Joe Zop: I tend to lean toward the MMX perspective, simply because it seems more realistic to me, but both can be effective if they're done properly, and there are any number of games using the cut-sex approach that are great. Both tend to suffer from the "endless supply of erections and cum" syndrome where no one ever gets tired or fucked out, but I recognize that's part of the fantasy part of the equation. I probably like the incremental approach more because it seems more participatory (hence more a simulation than a story) and also more like the sex I have -- not one single act followed by an orgasm and then onto the next position/action/orgasm, but instead a series of activities topped off by climax.

johnny5cents2003: I prefer incremental arousal since AIF is an interactive medium and the incremental arousal underscores the game aspect. However, it really doesn't make all that much difference to me. I have played games both ways and enjoyed it both ways. It all depends on the writing.

Mindtech: I am generally in favor of the MMX method. I like the feeling of control. *Moist* allowed the player to control pretty much every aspect of the sex act, which made it much more realistic, and a lot more fun. It makes for more dynamic gameplay.

Inside Erin: **Who are your two favorite female NPC's and why did you choose them?**

GoddoG: 1) Morghanna/Ilsa (*Moist*) - I'm counting these two as one since the reasoning is much the same for both. They are from one of the first AIF games I played several years ago, and yet I can recognize both by name and remember their distinctive characters long after most other AIF characters have merged into a nameless blur. That says a great deal about them, and that kind of stand-out-from-the-crowd uniqueness makes them worthy of favorite NPC status.

2) Gertrude/Cheyenne (*IPCU*) - From one of the first to one of the most recent. The way her character develops and changes toward the character over the course of the game made Cheyenne a more vivid and enjoyable character than most, and made the SSS with her more enjoyable when achieved.

Joe Zop: I've always had a soft spot for Pia Sanchez, the mother in *Rogue Cop*, for a couple of reasons. First, there aren't that many NPCs who have a true (and deserved) sense of melancholy about them, let alone nursing mothers who talk about feeding kids macaroni and cheese. Second, she reminds me of several women I know who carry around with them the scars of relationships and take refuge in their own inner worlds, which often manifests itself in a burst of frustrated romanticism.

My other favorite (if she actually qualifies as NPC given that she's the protagonist) is probably British Fox, a.k.a. Eleanore Windsor, who's pretty much the diametric opposite from Pia, being both a superhero and a highly active and aggressive character.

I like both of these characters because they have intriguing layers of complexity, well-drawn motivations and because both also ooze sex appeal in completely different ways.

johnny5cents2003:   Again a difficult question. If you mean by this which NPC's would I most like to bang in "real life," I would say Angie from *Last Minute Gift* and Kim from *Moist*.

In both cases, this is for the simple reason that the descriptions of these women aroused me. If I am choosing them on something other than sexual arousal, I like Bomire's Fairy from *Dexter Dixon*, *The Backlot* and *Santa's Little Helper* because of her unexpected appearances and humorous dialogue. The second choice would be Gertrude From *Ideal Pacific Coast University* because I like the arc of her character moving from repressed fundamentalist to haughty stripper to love of your life with all of these changes seeming in character.

Mindtech: Any of the women in *Sam Shooter* - they are just too damn funny.

Inside Erin: **Are there any technical features that some games offered that you think should be more prevalent, or are there any features that you wished someone would write into a game?**

GoddoG: Hmm... Ignoring rude thoughts of things like external hardware controllers.
The only thing I'd say at the moment is I'd like to see more versatility in some of the AIF characters. Sometimes they seem quite limited in their options strictly as a means of saving writer/ coders work, and it comes across as unnatural for the character.
Beyond that, I very much enjoy seeing someone come up with something that's just a new twist on using the already existing tech - something that catches the player by pleasant surprise. But, of course, I can't specify what that would be since the whole idea is to do something we haven't already thought of. ;)

Joe Zop: I like what David Whyld's been doing with multiple ways through a plot (even though I prefer exploration to the menu-driven approach he uses, which seems mostly like hyperfiction to me.) I think having a variety of ways to get through a game, so it can be replayed and still enjoyed anew once you've finished it, is something that should be integrated more often. Most often, this manifests only near the end, where choosing one character to boff means you can't choose another, but I'd like more of that earlier.

I like simulation more than puzzle completion so I'm less interested in the classic IF approach where I get to solve the game when I've done the most unlikely think I can think of doing, (put fish

in toaster) and then that's that. Instead, I'm a fan of randomness and dynamic descriptions, and while I recognize adding things like that makes for much more work for an author, I think the result is worth it and I'd like to see it done more. (At least that's what I keep telling myself as I struggle to pull together the scaffolding of a system like that I can use to create games.) I also like the way various authors have used time in their games to affect choices and outcome, though sometimes this works and sometimes not.

An example, though not a particularly well-done or complex one, of something that uses randomness in an interesting way is Sly Old Dog's *Train* where the female NPC goes one of three places, game unfolds accordingly, and it's thus impossible to see all the game scenarios in one play. I'd like to see (and have gone so far as to plot briefly out) a game wherein the player is randomly assigned to be one of several characters at the beginning of the game, and the game unfolds according to that character's interaction and perception of that world. There's a lot that could be done with this, I think, from a kind of *Rashomon*-like approach to simply having characters react differently if the character is assigned a particular age, race, physique, etc.

I've been spending time exploring integrating a big list of random functions into Adrift ALR files to see how far this can be taken. This technique has been well documented for quite some time, but it's something few ADRIFT authors have used to real advantage.

Johnny5cents2003: I like the fact that more and more games are including graphics and sounds. *Santa's Little Helper* has the most unique features of any game I've ever played with: hidden bonus graphics and the ability to skip the puzzles and go straight to the sex scene. I'm sort of surprised more people haven't picked up on these two things.

Mindtech: I would like to see an AIF version of Alter Ego. A change of personality depending on the choices one takes.

If you'd like to participate in a future "Erin Street" interview, send an e-mail to the Editor. If nobody volunteers, you might find yourself grabbed by the elbow with a microphone shoved in your face.

Game Reviews

Options, a review by A. Ninny

Game info:	*Options* released August 10, 2005
Author:	David Whyld
Platform:	ADRIFT 4.0
Size:	296KB
Content:	m/f, f/f, rape, BDSM, other
Game Type:	AIF Gamebook
Length:	Long
Reviewed:	August 2005
Extras:	None.

Basic Plot:

This is the third installment in the series of games that also includes *Choices* and *Decisions*. You once again play Melissa and are working to solve the mysteries of the ever enigmatic Susan Harris, your lesbian lover, who has disappeared under suspicious circumstances.

Overall Thoughts:

My reactions to this game are mostly informed by several obvious aspects of it, namely that it is a gamebook, and I'm not really enamoured of the format (more on that in Gameplay section); and that it is so big and involved that I only managed to actually see a fraction of it, despite several attempts. Having pointed out those things, I have to say that I did enjoy most of *Options*. It is well-written and the story, at least the first half, is smart and immersive. I think David got carried away with trying to make the story surreal in the latter portions of the story, and that is where I thought it became weaker.

The early part of *Options* is very involving. You're sucked in to the mystery of Susan's past and why she has disappeared. You investigate seedy bars and meet dangerous, desperate characters. It all seems like it's going in a certain direction – dark detective fiction with porn thrown in for good measure. The transformation into the really dark surreal fantasy that it becomes is abrupt, and, I think, ill-explained.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

The strengths and weaknesses of the Gamebook format have been discussed at length in reviews of the earlier entries in the series, and still hold true in *Options*. The main strength is that it's very straightforward to play. You simply choose from two or more options as to how you want to proceed at the end of each block of text. In the more cohesive sections of the game, I believed that I could make informed decisions as to what I wanted to do. But once the game entered the more surreal parts, I was just making wild guesses – nothing in the text really seemed like it gave me anything to go on as to what to choose. In some cases, the story hearkened back to *Choices* and *Decisions.* Perhaps if I had played those games more thoroughly, I would have had a better idea of the best options to select.

The Gamebook format also makes it necessary to replay the game – if you want to see a majority of it, that is. You'll never see everything unless you do, nor will you discover how to get the multiple better endings.

Sex:

This has been commented on before, but bears repeating: there's very little interactivity in the sex, due to the format. I knew that going in, so I wasn't surprised. The sex sections in the game are mostly shorter scenes scattered at regular intervals. They're well written and fairly detailed. One rape scene in the game I thought was more detailed and explicit than almost anything I'd read from this author in the past.

Technical:

David Whyld released a patched up version of the game, and that is what this review is based upon. I didn't note any inconsistencies or bugs, just a few minor grammatical and spelling errors.

Final Thoughts:

Options is a deeply considered, complicated (almost convoluted) story, a big game that requires a lot of attention and time; it's a dark, surreal fantasy with odd plot twists; it's a character study of people at their most desperate. Finally, it's fun, but it's a lot of work.

Rating: B

X-Men: First Day at the Institute

Game info:	*X-Men: First Day at the Institute,* released August 1st, 2005
Author:	Captain Cranky Pants
Platform:	ADRIFT 4.0
Size:	2.3MB
Content:	m/f, f/f, m/f/f, voyeurism
Game Type:	Sex romp (T&AIF), Sci-Fi
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	August 2005
Extras:	Contains 30 pictures

Basic Plot:

You are a mutant who has only recently acquired your powers. You have been sent to Professor Xavier's School both for your education and to learn more about using your mutant powers. While there, you run into several popular X-Men: Psylocke, Jubilee, Jean Grey, Storm, Emma Frost and even Mystique, as well as the school's headmaster, Professor Xavier, and Jean's husband Scott Summers. You spend time exploring the school, learning more about how to use your powers, and of course getting down and dirty with all the mutants you can!

Review by Grimm Sharlak

Overall Thoughts:

There's nothing like some pictures to grab your attention in an AIF game. Couple it with a famous

setting, and you've got quite a good gimmick. Luckily, beneath the gimmick is a classic AIF sex romp – what this community is sometimes lauded for but still what we all enjoy.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

As is the case with many a sex romp, puzzles in *FDatI* are few and far between. The ones that do exist are fairly straightforward, although one in particular had people struggling with the phrasing. However, I found it was more of a case of how to phrase the task in a variety of ways when it was an awkward one to describe.

The majority of the gameplay is made up of hunting around the mansion, meeting the various X-Men, and having sex with them. Outside of Professor Xavier, all the characters are female and can be interacted with to some degree. The idea is to simply find what "unlocks" each character.
A pleasant little diversion to the main plot are the bonus pictures, secreted around the mansion. This, coupled with the game having not much plot and an ending that comes only when the player chooses, shows that this game isn't meant to be a serious, plot-driven piece of AIF but a fun romp with some dream women.

Sex:

Those who like to rub, lick and screw every body part on the planet or those that don't like being lead through sex scenes probably won't enjoy the sex on offer here. What is here, however, is well written, hot sex. It is somewhat jarring to suddenly have the game tell you "now type this" but overall, the sex scenes are well done.

The only downfall with the sex is the lack of personality of the characters. Storm likes it in the ass. Psylocke likes it rough. Jubilee will do everything but have sex with you, and that's about it. While there are differences between the characters, this reviewer cannot help but feel that there is more you could do with characters with superpowers, especially Mystique, where the possibilities are endless. However, some may also say that this level of depth isn't necessary in such a game, and that would be valid also. But ah, the potential…

Technical:

There are some slight issues with *FDatI*, but they are more annoyances than anything else and there are certainly no game-killing bugs. Certainly, if you stick to simply scoring the characters rather than the pictures you more than likely will have no issues whatsoever. The issues themselves are easily fixed ones (double items, vague descriptions) so perhaps a little more testing was warranted here.

Intangibles:

The potential of being able to turn invisible in an erotic game is almost limitless, but is only used twice in the game, and the player cannot manually choose to use their power. Of course, the point here is to participate more than watch, but I don't think I was the only one who started the game and was later disappointed at the small amount of mutant powers being thrown around. This harkens back to my comments about the sex, as well.

Final Thoughts:

Captain Cranky Pants has written an enjoyable sex romp that delivers on all its own goals; hot sex with some famous comic-book characters, with some eye-candy to boot. However, the less than perfect implementation and the wasted potential knock this down a few notches.

Still, a fun game that is well worth your time.

Rating: B

Review by A. Bomire

Overall Thoughts

As far as I know, this is the second game using the X-Men (the previous being *X-Men Evolution: Jean's Quest for Rogue's Nookie*). I always feel these types of games are risky, simply because you are using characters with well-established personalities. You run the risk of completely butchering them for fans of the series (such as myself), or not defining them well enough for people

who are not fans. (Side note: As a big Marvel comics fan, I have resigned myself to constant butchering of long beloved characters, thanks to the entertainment industry's constant "re-imagining". But I digress.) I think Captain Cranky Pants has done a decent job of presenting the characters, with artistic license regarding their libidos. I think this is because of the limited interaction you have. The mutant characters basically show up for their scenes, and then disappear into the ether (or into locked and inaccessible rooms). This saves Captain Cranky Pants from having to come up with endless responses to player inquiries, while still providing necessary interaction with the characters. I feel it keeps the characters from becoming stale, while still giving the player a taste of their personalities.

Puzzles/Game play:

The game overall is pretty linear. You solve certain puzzles, which not only "unlock" characters for sexual interaction but also open the way to explore more sections of the game and thus interact with additional characters. For the most part, the puzzles are not too hard. Some of them are a little difficult not because of the puzzle, but due to oddly phrased commands. For example, there is a lever in the game behind a wall of fire. The puzzle is to figure out how to move the lever without burning yourself or any objects you try to use. A decent puzzle, yet you can "push lever" or "pull lever" without any problems. The game simply responds that this doesn't accomplish anything. I spent a lot of time playing with different variations on this command before I realized that I was on the wrong track. There are a couple of oddities such as this within the game, but it isn't too difficult to get through.

For each female character encountered, Captain Cranky Pants has included a picture of that character. He has also included 20 "bonus" pictures that depict scenes and encounters that have nothing to do with the game, other than that they deal with X-Men characters. Some of these may be copyrighted material, but I'll let the Captain worry about that. However, it does explain why the game is as large as it is.

Sex:

Captain Crank Pants uses a non-standard method of writing his sex scenes. Instead of having every female partner respond to every type of command ("rub tits", "lick tits", etc), they only respond to a very small subset of commands. Those commands are usually listed within the context of the scene. This is not a bad way of doing it, as every author (and player) has run into the tedium of repeated descriptions of mundane sexual encounters. He has concentrated on just a few encounters for each person (with the exception of one, who is more fully described). Players looking to try everything with everybody will be disappointed, but I think he did a good job with the way it is done.

There is one scene which takes place between yourself and someone who is confined. Although it is clear from the text that any sexual interaction between yourself and this person is mutually enjoyed (thus I rated it as BDSM instead of Torture), some players may find this sort of interaction distasteful.

Technical:

There are a few technical glitches, such as the one I outlined in the Puzzles/Game play section. There are a few misspellings and grammar errors, but not enough to make it completely unplayable. With the way the sex scenes are done, the actual body parts available to the player differs from female to female, which is a little inconsistent. You sometimes have to just try a sex command to see if it will work. Overall, the game plays well, and none of the errors are too horrible.

Final Thoughts:

This game has a pretty unique feel to it. It actually reminds me of some of the older AGT games in its playing style, with its unique commands and varying body parts. This is similar to Captain Cranky Pants' previous game, *Dead or Alive: Extreme Beach Sex*. Despite the oddity of some of the game play, I think I like the way he has done this. Granted, I prefer a more fully implemented sexual encounter, but not if you end up with 10 carbon-copy descriptions with only the name changed. Overall, I think most players will enjoy this short - but interesting - game, if only for the novelty of the way it is implemented.

Rating: C+

Casting, a review by Grimm Sharlak

Game Info:	*Casting* released July 8 2005
Author:	Fellatrix_UK
Platform:	Inform Z-code
Size:	119KB
Content:	m/f, f/f
Game Type:	T&AIF
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	August 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

As a young, hopeful British actress, you have come to America to try and get your big break. Unfortunately, so far you've given plenty of "favours" but received no acting parts in return. That's all going to change, however, as you stand outside the offices of Badger Studios.

Overall Thoughts:

I love Inform. While you'd never get me to program in it in a million years, playing text adventures in WinFrotz and the like just feels deliciously old school compared to TADS and ADRIFT. So right off the bat, playing *Casting* was a different experience to my usual reviewing. The differences don't stop there. *Casting* is played from the female perspective, still a rarity in the AIF scene. This provides a different playing experience, which helps the game stand out from the crowd.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

Casting is a fairly straightforward game, which is reflected in the puzzles and the gameplay. Essentially, you need to shag your way into an acting role, and that involves finding out how to go about shagging the people in charge of the movie. There are a couple of head scratching moments, but everything is fairly logical and never too taxing. This traditional style of gameplay provides no real surprises, but is pleasant enough.

Sex:

The sex in *Casting* follows the arousal pattern; using a sex act gets you a response dependent on that character's arousal level. In most cases this means you get one message for a sex act, and then a second, which repeats until the character reaches a climax, providing a third message.
The scenes you participate in are well written and fairly hot, with a good sprinkling of variety thrown in. As a woman you can fuck or be fucked, which provides a few interesting variations not usually seen. Having to tell each character what to do to you is simple enough, and doesn't impede the flow of the scenes at all.

Technical:

There are very few problems to speak of in *Casting,* and Fellatrix has done a fine job of crafting a game here. There are a couple of tricky verbs for the player to get their head around, but I never had any real trouble. There is one slight problem, however, in that one of the characters allows you to do some admittedly minor sexual acts when they are wearing a certain item, but as soon as that item is removed, it's no go.

Intangibles:

Once you've finished the game successfully, a couple of amusing things are revealed, including an option to turn on a director's commentary from Fellatrix. This ensures at least one more playthrough, and it's always good to hear an author's insights on characters, and why they did this, that, or the other.
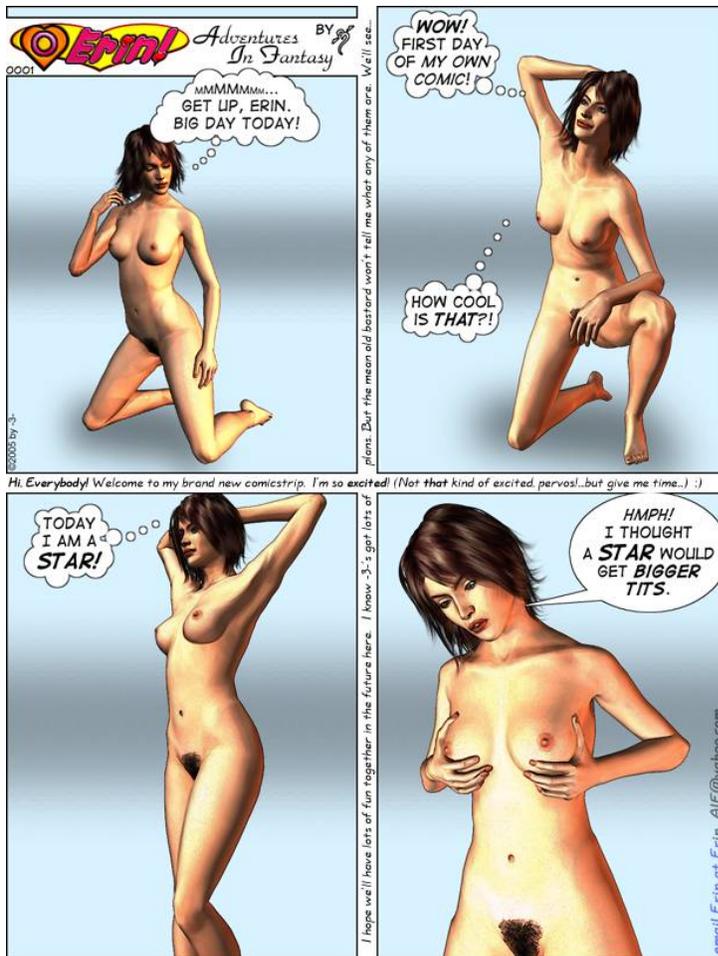
Final Thoughts:

Casting is good, clean, AIF fun. While there isn't an overabundance of sex or puzzles, what's there is simple and effective. Playing from a woman's perspective is always a nice alternative and it is handled well, and hopefully we get to see this character's future adventures someday.

Rating: B

AIF Wants You

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The newsletter is also interested in publishing your erotic short fiction. Send it to the Editor for review and inclusion in the next issue.

Staff

Editor	A Ninny is an AIF player, author of two AIF games and frequent beta-tester. His *Parlour* received an Erin for Best "One Night Stand" game.
Web Master	Darc Nite is a newcomer to the AIF scene. He is an avid gamer who heard the call for help with the AIF Newsletter.
Staff Writers	A Bomire is the author of several TADS AIF games, including *Dexter Dixon: In Search of the Prussian Pussy* and *The Backlot*. His Games have won numerous awards and Erin nominations.
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	Grimm Sharlak is the author of two AIF games: *Breakout* and *Of Masters and Mistresses: Abduction*.
	Richard Gillingham writes with a British accent. He does our proofreading and hopefully his column will appear regularly.

Submitting your work to "Inside Erin"

Please direct all comments, articles, reviews, discussion and art to the Editor, A. Ninny, at aifsubmissions@gmail.com.