



Sextra Curricular Activities

Letter From the Editor

The month of April started off slowly, especially when compared to all the activity in March, although even March wasn't particularly busy for new games. I'm thinking mostly of the announcement of the 2004 AIFA nominees and the voting and awarding of the Erins that took place on March 29th. The main thing that happened around the newsletter offices this month was that Markaedw decided to step down from his post as editor of this newsletter and I agreed to take it over. I (and, indeed we all) owe him a great deal of gratitude for all his hard work getting the newsletter on its feet – I have it comparatively easy in simply keeping it going.

Yes, April started off slowly, but we are a patient bunch, and our patience was richly rewarded on the 22nd by the release of NewKid's first full-length new game in over six years, *Ideal Pacific Coast University*. I consider myself fortunate to have

Continued on page 3

This Month in AIF by BBBen

April started as a reasonably quiet month for AIF, but the AIF Archive had an explosion of activity after the long-awaited release of Newkid's enormous new game: *Ideal Pacific Coast University*. The sheer scale of the game led to literally hundreds of comments and help requests – a quite unprecedented response as far as I know.

The announcement of the new AIF competition being run by A. Bomire and Christopher Cole was also of note. This competition (details available [here](#)) is different from the mini-comps of previous years, and will hopefully give authors room to create some large and high quality games. I recommend that anyone thinking about making a game soon take part in the comp, as there is still plenty of time to get a game finished.

The newsletter has had a change of editor. The outgoing editor, Markaedw (who has had to stop editing due to time constraints), has agreed to keep contributing some content, so the newsletter has landed on its feet. We should thank Markaedw for holding the newsletter together until now, and we should also thank A. Ninny for taking up the reins.

Continued on page 6

An Interview with One-Eyed Jack, by A. Bomire

At the closing of the recent 2004 AIF Awards ceremony ("Erins"), it was clear that the overwhelming winner was One-Eyed Jack for his latest installment in the popular *Sam Shooter* series: *Sam Shooter IV: Children of the Damned*. *SSIV* was nominated for 10 awards this year, and gathered in 7 of them. This seemed like the perfect time to talk to the popular author.

AB: Can you tell us a little about yourself?

OEJ: Well, I consider myself a fairly average guy who's had some unique experiences during the course of life. I tend to dwell on the darker side of things, but with a few exceptions, life has

Continued on page 2

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Newsletter Highlights

In this issue:

A. Bomire interviews One-Eyed Jack; Lucilla Frost writes about writing the same game in both TADS and ADRIFT; Grimm Sharlak reviews *Choices* by David Whyld; Markaedw reviews *XTREK* by Badman.

Table of Contents

[Page 1](#)

Letter from the Editor

This Month in AIF

One-Eyed Jack Interview

[Page 4](#)

TADS and ADRIFT compared

[Page 7](#)

AIF Scuttlebutt

Oldies but Goodies

[Page 9](#)

Review of *Choices*

[Page 10](#)

Reflections on The Erins

[Page 11](#)

Short review of *ICPU*

[Page 12](#)

Something to Look Forward To

AIF Needs You

Meet the Staff

been pretty good to me so far. I shouldn't complain, but I usually do anyway.

AB: Why did you first start writing AIF?

OEJ: My two greatest passions are creation and deconstruction. My first loves were music and art, but unfortunately a few years back I suffered an injury that ended my ability to make either of those things. I turned to writing stories, but after knowing what it was like to play live music in front of real people, writing stories felt so distant and detached. I wanted people to be able to "experience" what I created, rather than just be strung along, and somehow that led me to Interactive Fiction.

Injecting the "Adult" part just felt like a natural progression at that point. Sex and violence make everything better... even taking grandma to seniors' bingo night at the church.

AB: I think you mentioned at one time that Sam Shooter I: Graduation Day was written mostly as a joke. If this is true, what was your reasoning for writing such a game?

OEJ: This goes back to my love of deconstruction and intense hatred of what passes for "erotica" in general. My goal in Graduation Day was to take all the idiotic clichés of the genre and exaggerate them to epic proportions. I'm not trying to imply the game was meant to be scathing commentary on the tenets of AIF, it was more just lame "observational humor" than anything else.

AB: How did you react to its success?

OEJ: It seems so long ago now, but I remember being surprised at how well the game was received. Not so much because of the sarcastic nature of it, but because it had some fairly objectionable content, and was coded in a very short period of time when I didn't even understand the things I was typing in. I copy/pasted my way into AIF history.

AB: The Sam Shooter series is one of the more popular, if not THE most popular, series in AIF. Players certainly enjoy it - four Erins for Sam Shooter II, five Erins for Sam Shooter III and a run-away seven Erins for Sam Shooter IV. Why do you think this series is so popular?

OEJ: I really have no idea. I try to approach everything I do from an angle that I believe is rarely, if ever, taken. I like to think, when someone plays one of my games for the first time, that they have NO IDEA whatsoever to what is going to happen or why. It's my hope that the games offer fairly unique, memorable experiences that aren't going to meld together with all the other "me too" games or stories they have come across. It's the road less traveled, so to speak...

AB: Some would describe Sam Shooter as controversial, some as an anti-hero. How would you describe him?

OEJ: A Freudian experiment in terror. Sam is the personification of id.

AB: What, if anything, is on the horizon for you? Do you have any future games planned?

OEJ: I've got a number of things in the pipeline, most of which I'm sure will never see the light of day. My next game will likely be a collaboration with a female co-writer that is proving to be shockingly absurd, though I can't even guess when it will be released. Sam Shooter is always up to something stupid in the back of my mind, as well.

AB: Off the top of your head, what are your favorite 3 games?

OEJ: You mean AIF right? HA...

1. *Dexter Dixon*. To me this game is the best proof that character driven stories are significantly more enjoyable than the alternatives.

(AB: Thanks!)

2. *Moist*. Sentimental favorite, and the first AIF game I ever played.

3. Beyond those two games, I tend to just lump them together as either good or bad. I will say that I tend to be drawn to interesting settings and characters more than anything else.

AB: Do you have any advice for any new authors out there?

OEJ: Stop thinking and just do it. Start small, don't be afraid to learn as you go, and simplify. Build on what you learn, understand what you are doing before moving on. You don't need to be a programming genius, technical complexity is rarely appreciated anyway. Quality of writing, much like love, conquers all... except for game-stopping bugs. Strive to succeed, but don't be afraid to fail. Be aggressive. Keep your opponent in sight at all times, strike without remorse or pity. Kill or be killed...

AB: Do you have anything in particular you'd like to add?

OEJ: Not that I can think of...

Our thanks to One-Eyed Jack for taking the time to answer our questions. For those of you who are interested in playing some of his award winning games, visit his website at www.geocities.com/oejackaif. Here is a list of the games you can find at this site:

Sam Shooter: Graduation Day

Sam Shooter II: Through the Dimensional Rift

Winner of four 2002 Erins: Best Male PC, Best Male NPC, Best Supporting Female NPC and Best Orgy

Sam Shooter III: Come in Sixty Seconds

Winner of five 2003 Erins: Best Damn Game, Best Sex Overall, Best Male PC, Best Female NPC, and Best Humor

Sam Shooter IV: Children of the Damned

Winner of seven 2004 Erins: Best Game, Best Sex Overall, Best Male PC, Best Male NPC, Best Female/Female Scene, Best Atmosphere and Best Humor

Letter from the Editor (continued)

been included in the beta test for this game, because it seriously rocks. The story, writing and sex are all top-notch, first rate and re-establish NewKid as one of our premier AIF authors. Don't make us wait six more years for the next one, NewKid! That I was a beta-tester means I won't be able to write a full-length review of *IPCU*, and due to its being released late in the month I expect we will have to wait until next month to publish one.

The main event continuing through April and May is Chris Cole's and A. Bomire's AIF competition, which was announced on April 2. Information is available at <http://geocities.com/abomire/> or <http://www.geocities.com/cjcole144/cjcole.htm>. I strongly encourage everyone even considering contributing a game to the comp to do so. The deadline is only a month away (as of publication date), so get cracking! Remember, the more games the merrier, everyone!

I'm pleased to present what I think is a pretty balanced edition of the newsletter this month. We are continuing the tradition of including an interview – this month A. Bomire interviews One-Eyed Jack, a very timely interview, as it comes on the heels of OEJ's 7-Erin haul for *Sam Shooter IV: Children of the Damned*. We have an article that will be of great interest to authors: Lucilla Frost wrote a detailed comparison of TADS and ADRIFT. She is uniquely positioned to comment on the two systems having written *British Fox and the Celebrity Abductions* in ADRIFT and then porting it to TADS herself. We have a number of game reviews, including one from Grimm Sharlak, a new contributor to the newsletter. In addition to these contributed articles, I reflect on the Erins and consider ways they can be improved upon. I am also starting a new 'AIF Scuttlebutt' column, in which I update the community on goings-on behind the scenes. I invite anyone who is interested in publishing info on what they're working on to write me at aifsubmissions@gmail.com.

A. Ninny,
Editor
April, 2005

TADS and ADRIFT: A Comparison by Lucilla Frost

Having now completed the port from ADRIFT to TADS of the sole game I've finished I was assured by A. Bomire that it wouldn't be shockingly arrogant to write a short piece comparing the two platforms from the point of view of an author. My experience is with TADS 2.5 and ADRIFT 4.0, though I imagine that my comments will apply in general terms to TADS 3.0 and ADRIFT 3.9. In neither system did I make any effort to use multimedia so I am unable to make any observations about it.

ADRIFT – overview

ADRIFT is a Windows-based programme which allows you to construct a text adventure from scratch. It allows you to define rooms (locations in which items and characters can exist), objects (both fixed and moveable), characters (specific type of objects with additional features), tasks and events (see below). The interactions between these five basic building blocks allow extremely complex scenarios to be created. The 'task' can either be triggered by input from the player (e.g. "attack monster") or automatically as a consequence of another task or event and can move objects from place to place, change variables, open/shut entrances etc. The 'event' is a series of descriptions, usually triggered by a task, at the close of which a separate task can be triggered (e.g. opening a door triggers a trap which will kill the hostage in three turns).

ADRIFT – advantages

The advantages of ADRIFT, like its disadvantages, stem from it being a programme, rather than a language. Its biggest advantage is just how easy it is to use. You can download the programme and start writing a complex adventure straight away. For example: in order to make an object you click on the "new object" button, enter the description, define key characteristics and add it to the game. Alongside this, ADRIFT *looks* easy to use and this is important in encouraging the budding author to continue with a project.

The second big advantage of ADRIFT is how powerful it is. It might not be very elegant but you can make anything happen with a task simply by saying "it is so". For example, when the player types the correct word or phrase the actions defined by the task occur. There is no need to write lines and lines of code spread between a number of different objects so a particular effect works. This could lead to hideous 'guess-the-verb/noun' problems but this risk is reduced by the 'wild card' function in which you can simply use * to mean 'any word or sequence of words'. This allowed me, for example, to use (spoiler alert...) "* **clitoris** *" outside the mansion's front door in *British Fox* so that "say clitoris to intercom" "tell intercom clitoris" "password clitoris" etc. all work. It also means that "rub clitoris" "show clitoris to camera" etc. will work too of course... However, this wild card function is very helpful given that the task system is quite rigid.

ADRIFT is reasonably flexible, so for example you can supply alternative descriptions of things if particular tasks have been completed, keep track of numeric variables, collect rooms together in groups or create and change text variables to allow more variation in descriptions. It also allows you to define synonyms, which is very helpful for AIF given that everyone has different favourite words for anatomical regions. There are a number of 'little things' which make things much easier, such as the 'can only score once for a single event' or being able to change the room started in (very handy for playtesting) and it's clear that the author (Cambell Wild) has tried very hard to anticipate and overcome problems.

ADRIFT – disadvantages

The disadvantages of ADRIFT stem also from its nature as a programme. For one thing, there are a number of bugs and not everything that is supposed to work actually does. For example, I couldn't limit the number of objects *British Fox* was allowed to carry despite there being a function to do this. As another example, trying to use the "separate description for object before it is first picked up" feature led to some very odd results.

Although with the tasks and variables you *can* do pretty well anything it can be very cumbersome to do so, particularly if there are a series of contingencies involved. So you end up with this stack of tasks all dependent on each other, which for me felt at times like a precarious pile of Jenga bricks so that if there was a mistake made in one task the whole lot would come crashing down to earth.

The ‘event’, while a very useful idea, is too limited for a complex sequence of occurrences. For the central loop in *British Fox*, I had to alternate task/event/task/event some seven or eight times which caused a lot of trouble with timings and different points at which the loop could be broken. Again, while it was in no way impossible to overcome this it felt very cumbersome and fragile.

There are a number of minor nuisances such as the failure of the programme to manage third person grammar and the lack of a “when player enters/exits room execute this task” condition. None of them are significant on their own but they do grate.

One factor which may be a disadvantage for some is that ADRIFT 4.0 is not free. It will cost about twenty quid for more than the taster (which is good, but they’ve been very skilful in setting it so that writing a full adventure is extremely difficult without purchasing the whole programme). I think it’s worth it, but then I have a good job and low living expenses.

TADS – overview

TADS is a C based programming language designed to allow the writing of sophisticated adventures, and as such requires that the author actually learn to programme. If you already understand object-oriented programming then this will stand you in good stead; I, on the other hand, could never even manage a for-next loop in BASIC – even my little brother was better at it than I. When writing in TADS you define a large number of ‘objects’ (everything is an object, including verbs...yeah, I know) and then ‘compile’ your programme so that the game can be played. TADS comes with a basic set of definitions (in the file adv.t) which cover picking things up, opening things, moving from room to room, but in order to do anything more the author must specify the effects of every interaction between any two or more objects.

TADS - advantages

I found the biggest advantage of TADS was just how much fun it was. As a complete non-programmer it was very exciting learning the new skill and there are a number of things in the *British Fox* port which are there simply because I wanted to see if I could do them (the first of these is the iris valve in the lab at the Institute). The tutorial helps a lot in the actual process of learning the language and assistance from others (e.g. my friend A. Bomire) was very welcome, but just playing around with it probably taught me as much. On one occasion, I hang my head in shame, I proudly sent a bit of code to A. Bomire to show him how I’d solved a problem.

Because you define everything yourself, you can do anything and once you’ve wrapped your head around it this becomes quite easy. So you could define a property ‘magic’ and say that only objects which have this property could affect a particular character. Chains of contingencies are quite easy to set up, although they can involve a lot of lines of code, and there is no problem with if/or/unless. The central loop in *British Fox* was much, much easier in TADS; it involved just a single sequence of events with alternative descriptions depending on a random number.

TADS is very elegant. Although you can get yourself in terrible knots, in essence you define things to always do ‘x’ under circumstance ‘y’, and once this is done you can identify exceptions in a logical fashion. So for example ‘openable’ objects can be opened, except if they’re locked, except if the character is *British Fox* as she’s strong enough to force them, unless she’s had her powers removed. So no Jenga piles, and if you need a one off effect you can write that as well.

TADS – disadvantages

Probably the biggest disadvantage is that in order to get anywhere with TADS you really have to spend quite a while learning it, even to write something very simple. While the tutorial is very good and the assistance available from others will probably be able to resolve any problem, there is no way you will be able to just start writing the erotic opus you want to. I’m pretty smart, and it took six months to write *British Fox*/TADS when all the hard creative work on the story and game play had already been done.

Many of the disadvantages are sub-sets of this one. For one thing there is an awful lot of jargon that you need to know. What are functions and scripts? What does it mean to verify things? What’s the difference between an argument and an object? Also, because TADS is big you

forget things. I had to ask A. Bomire twice how to sort out the “hit x with y” effect because it was three months since I’d done it and I’d forgotten.

TADS is sometimes not very intuitive. Like organic chemistry there can be two (or more) ways a thing might work and you may just have to learn which it is because there doesn’t seem to be a way of working it out. For example with “hitting x with y”: the effect could be written either as part of the code for x (i.e if you hit x with y this happens) or as part of the code for y (i.e. if y is used to hit x this happens). I got horribly stuck with this because I wrote perfect code to do it one way, but it actually should have been done the other so my perfect code was never used.

Some things are extremely cumbersome: doors, for example. In ADRIFT you just say “it’s a door” and it will open and/or lock from both sides. In TADS you have to write two doors, a front and a back, then make sure if you open one side the other side will open along with it, ditto lock...or you might end up with a door you can open from one side but which remains firmly closed and locked on the other.

Outside of ‘problems with learning TADS’, one problem can be the ‘runtime errors’. This is where the programme looks alright to the compiler but you’ve made a mistake somewhere which causes it to go tits up when you’re running it. Although TADS includes a sophisticated debugger I couldn’t make head nor tail of it and found this kind of error very hard to overcome. Also, with any attempt at writing a TADS game you will need a proper text editor. I use Textpad, which I paid to register to stop all the annoying reminders, but I understand there are a large number of good entirely free ones out there. Trying to write TADS in Notepad is a recipe for suicide.

Finally, because you can do anything in TADS there is a significant pressure to do just that and to try to cover every eventuality. I think I did stop short of writing code to say what happened if you hit various guards with the Britmobile, but I feel guilty about it, it wouldn’t have been that difficult, there’s already code to say what happens if you hit them with a tree, it wouldn’t be much to add another line “if (io.britmobile) then...” While this isn’t strictly a disadvantage it could add months to the design process.

Overall

Overall I stick by my original statement in the Forum which is “yay for ADRIFT, yay for TADS”. I think TADS is better, slicker and more elegant, and also more fun. On the other hand it is more difficult and more time consuming. If you’re keen on writing a work of interactive fiction and want to get started then use ADRIFT because you could begin work thirty minutes from now. Perhaps the deciding factor should be which factor of the authorship of IF you are most interested in. If it’s the F bit (i.e well written descriptions, atmosphere and plot) then ADRIFT is everything you need. If it’s the I bit (puzzles, sequences, tricks and clues) then you will probably find TADS better able to meet your needs. Having said that, I doubt that there is much that simply *cannot* be accomplished in ADRIFT, witness the large number of good, complex ADRIFT games out there, and there is nothing about TADS which prevents good writing although your first month or so will be taken up with learning how to pass through the gates of heaven and turning a flashlight on and off.

Lucilla Frost is the author of *British Fox and the Celebrity Abductions*, which was first released in ADRIFT and then ported to TADS by the author and re-released.

This Month in AIF (continued)

Judging by a recent discussion on the AIF Archive there are a decent number of works in progress (look on page 7 for an article on that), so we’ll just have to wait and see.

New games for April 2005:

[Ideal Pacific Coast University](#) by Newkid, 23rd Apr 2005 – The thematic follow-up to his classic game, *Ideal New England Prep School*, this mammoth game is the long-awaited new release from the 2004 Badman Lifetime Achievement Award winner.

Also, the following does deserve mention:

[Choices](#) by David Whyld, 14th Feb 2005 – Not technically a new game (or a game at all, since it’s a gamebook), *Choices* was only announced to the AIF community recently. In *Choices* the player chooses options like in a choose-your-own-adventure game, and explores a story about a schoolgirl who wants to sleep with her female teacher.

AIF Scuttlebutt by A. Ninny

Hey, Kids! I'm here to fill you in on who's doing what in the world of AIF. If everyone I say is working on a game actually releases a game, we should have a very fun remainder of the year, with lots of stuff to write about in this newsletter in the months to come. So here goes:

Pierre, author of the classic TADS game *Cruise*, recently posted a request for beta-testers for not one, but *two* games. That is a pretty good sign that we should be getting to see them soon, though I haven't gotten involved in beta-testing either of them myself.

Meanwhile, new author but long-time AIF'er **PSurge111** reports progress on a sci-fi/fantasy themed game being written in Inform. This will be the first Inform AIF game since *Flora*, which had its most recent version released in 2003, but was originally released much earlier.

Long-time crowd-pleasing favorite author **Chris Cole** reports on his web site that he is working on a sequel to his much-loved *Gamma Gals*, expected out this summer. He notes that this will be a serious romp! He's also planning a horror-themed game, slated for release this autumn. He also hinted at a new 'Encounter' game to be finished this year. Keep cranking 'em out, Chris!

The author of the recently released *Of Masters and Mistresses: Abduction*, **Grimm Sharlak**, reports nearing completion of its sequel, to be entitled *Salvation*. Give me a ring when you're looking for beta-testers, Grimm. If I'm not too deeply buried in writing my own CCAB competition game, I'll be glad to help.

Another new author, **totaldirt2000** reports beta testing is in progress for a game to be entitled *Lauren's Awakening*. On April 10, he reported that he expected to complete it by the end of April. As of this writing, though, we're still waiting.

Crossworlds series author **BBBen** is reportedly working away on several projects. One is *Crossworlds Part 4 - Scream For Me*. The ever-changing themes in the series keep the main characters jumping from genre to genre, and this time they get dropped in a horror film. We don't really care so much where they are, we just want more **Debbie!** Another thing he's working on is a large project tentatively entitled *Perverv Action Crisis*. I was also fortunate to test a snippet of an idea he has for a Hentai-themed game, with graphics. BBBen's web site has a whole list of other projects that he has stewing in his mind. I won't list them here, but you can see for yourself by following the link to his page from the newsletter web site.

I don't have a good idea right now for how many entries we'll see in this year's comp. Since the requirements are a little more stringent than last year, and since the games need multiple actors, I'm guessing fewer games will be released than in last year's Mini-comp. I'm looking for some stiff competition, though, so hopefully we'll have a good crop.

If you're working on something and want it mentioned here (or if you think I know about it and want it concealed), write me at aifsubmissions@gmail.com. Seeya next month!

Oldies But Goodies by Markaedw

XTREK is the second AIF game I played, the first being the AGT version of *Night with Troi* (also by Badman). This game is considered to be one of the parents of modern AIF. I thought about it when we were working on the 2004 Erins, being that it was created by Badman, the first recipient of the *AIF lifetime achievement award* which was later named after him.

XTREK, a review by Markaedw

Game info:	<i>XTREK</i> – released 10-July-1991
Author:	Badman
Platform:	Agility (AGT)
Size:	33.67 kb (zipped)
Content:	m/f, m/f/f, m/f+, f/f, voyeurism
Game Type:	T&AIF
Length:	short
Reviewed:	April 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

You play the newest crew member on the Starship Enterprise from the “Star Trek – The Next Generation” television series. At the time of your arrival on board, you don’t have any assigned duties, so you just explore the ship and try to screw the female NPCs: Deanna Troi, Beverly Crusher, Tasha Yar, and Sonia Gomez.

One gameplay issue to mention: there is no “talk to NPC” command, so if you try to engage an NPC and they are not ready or want you to do something for them, they will tell you what it is if you try to have sex with them. So saying “fuck NPC” to them gets a response, even with the male NPCs.

Overall Thoughts:

This is by far one of the best X-Trek games available. The puzzles are not too hard, and for its age it holds up remarkably well. The sex is actually varied and includes the use of sex toys—something not common in the games of the time. On the downside, there are some commands that are a little difficult to use. For instance: to use the dildo you need to type “dildo NPC” and “push tits,” commands that we don’t use today and that can cause some consternation during play.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

The only real puzzle in the game surrounds something Dr. Crusher wants, and she will tell you what it is. There is no item limit so grab everything you come across. If you have taken everything, when you need something you will have it or can trade it for a more important item.

There are no dead ends and no situations where you can die, although you can win without collecting all the points. But if you looked at and picked up all the items and nailed all the girls then achieving the full score is easy.

Sex:

Granted, the sex is not as varied as we are used to now, but the scenes are good—as good as those in some of the newer games. You can ask for and give head, but the girls have only one sex command, plus use of the dildo. Still, don’t let the lack of control over the sex slow you down, because Badman wrote good scenes that make the most of the technology.

Technical:

It is difficult to tell how far the game pushes the limits of the parser. As it is one of the earliest games it should be considered a pioneer, so it gets credit there. It holds up to a lot of play despite being one of the smaller AGT games.

The one bug I found is that if you yell at an NPC too many times she may disappear.

Intangibles:

XTREK became so popular that it spawned many games and gave its name to a whole genre of IF.

Final Thoughts:

Even for being more than 10 years old (an antique for the computer age), it still has a lot of play in it. Its size and length make it great for a quickie. A must-have for any Star Trek or X-Trek fan.

Overall Score: B

Game Reviews

Choices, a review by Grimm Sharlak

Game info:	<i>Choices</i> version 1.1 released April 1, 2005
Author:	David Whyld
Platform:	ADRIFT 4.0
Size:	83kb
Content:	m/f, f/f, f/f/f, voyeurism, bondage, S&M
Game Type:	AIF Gamebook
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	April 2005
Extras:	None

Basic Plot:

You play Melissa, a lesbian schoolgirl who has found herself utterly head over heels for her teacher, Miss Harris. The game details Melissa's lusting after Miss Harris and attempts to woo her, with a few side trips along the way, before you learn the dark truth behind Miss Harris...

Overall Thoughts:

I've always been a big fan of Choose Your Own Adventure, etc, and it was great to see an AIF game along those lines. There is no pointless wandering, guess the verb or overly difficult puzzles. This reduces game time by quite a large amount (thanks to the UNDO command, you can try every option at every branch with little consequence) but also makes for a fun, frustration-free game experience. The plot is a solid little thriller, with interesting subplots thrown in: Melissa's parents and brother all have little plots of their own, not to mention targets for Melissa's sexual advances outside of Miss Harris.

The only real letdown for me was the sex. While after five or so playthroughs I never obtained full points (or the "good score" of 60+), I did see every ending, and quite frankly the sex was a bit lacking. Still, this game is truly AIF – there are scenes of violence alongside the eroticism to ensure that even without the sex this ain't for kids. However, when the 'best' ending is a sex scene only a paragraph longer than the 'good' ending, which wasn't too long to begin with, a player can be left feeling a little disappointed. More on this in a moment.

Puzzles/Gameplay:

As mentioned, *Choices* plays like an electronic Choose Your Own Adventure novel. Aside from being able to look, the player can only select from a number of options at certain points, which determines their score and the path they take through the game.

This leads to a very streamlined experience, as a player need only take note of what they chose the first time through and choose other things (and other combinations of options) to see all the game has to offer. Some may decry the lack of control, but I enjoyed it, especially considering that in the end you can only perform tasks the programmer included in any game. However it shortens the play time, and in some cases none of the options lead to good outcomes, but that goes with the genre.

All in all, easy to play and fun as well.

Sex:

Much like David Whyld's previous entry into AIF, *To Score or Not to Score*, the sex is somewhat lacking. The 'best' ending in the game provides a few paragraphs-long scene, with no interaction whatsoever, and the same goes for both the 'good' and 'moderate' endings. While what is there is solid, it lacks the interactivity and length that gamers may have come to expect from AIF.

I much would've preferred for the choices format to continue, so the player could direct the sex scene, going from one piece of it to the next, to at least allow some interactivity and lengthen the scene somewhat. Instead all the sex scenes in the game lack detail (there are some during

the game, in addition to those at the endings) and are over quite quickly. Some may prefer it over jumping through hoops to guess what to rub or lick next, but I thought that if David toned it down just a touch, he could probably submit this game as straight IF!

If the point of the game had been to just complete it, this wouldn't be so much of an issue. However, when you finish the game the first time (regardless of how) you are told of a moderate, good and best ending. And since these sex scenes are touted as the reward for a job well done, they could leave the player feeling somewhat let down. Still, as I said earlier they are solid and do have their moments.

Technical:

Since David Whyld has released a second version (the one reviewed here) with a fix of the only bug found, this reviewer didn't find a single problem with the game. This is mostly due to the Gamebook format, but ensuring that the game kept track of each choice made (as early choices affect later choices) is a good effort and works quite well.

Intangibles:

Some may feel that some choices aren't influenced by what you see earlier in the game, but I found the flow of the game to be quite good.

Final Thoughts:

The long and the short of it is that I thoroughly enjoyed *Choices*. David Whyld brings not only some decent writing to his games but a good sense of humour as well. The only drawback is the somewhat short sex scenes, which in the age of A. Bomire and Chris Cole leave the player feeling a bit let down. Still, a great effort.

Rating: B+

Reflections on The Erins by A. Ninny

I'm happy to say that I believe the awarding of the Erin Awards—from the conception of the idea to give them to the nominating, balloting and awards ceremony—was an extremely successful endeavor. I was worried it would be difficult to winnow down to one winner out of over fifty games for each of the many categories we were giving awards in. Kudos go especially to the nominating committee for being unbiased in picking the nominees and for picking the best games to be nominated. The committee was: A. Bomire, BBBen, Heartpoutput, Christopher Cole, Johnny Freebase, Dave Wester, rav_p89 and myself. Markaedw, while not participating in the nominating, did help arrange for artwork and provided publicity as Editor of this paper.

Thanks go, too, to everyone who voted. Twenty-four votes weren't as many as I'd hoped to get, but fortunately they were sufficient to determine who deserved the awards, and I think we can all agree that the winners are worthy.

There has been some discussion in the aftermath of the awards as to ways they can be improved. The discussion has focused in two main areas:

1. How to get more people to be involved in voting and
2. How to improve the list and descriptions of the awards categories.

So far, our best idea for increasing involvement is to have online voting. This would streamline the process, which currently requires a voter download a ballot, fill it in and e-mail it back. In order for this to work, we'd need a volunteer to program the ballot web site. Anyone interested in helping out with that should contact me when the next Erin cycle rolls around (December 2005 – January 2006).

The issue of the Erin categories has sparked much more debate, and will probably continue to be debated throughout the year. Some less controversial proposals include:

1. Changing the 'Best f/f scene' award to a 'Best Lesbian Scene' award and allow it to include f/f+ scenes (which would then not be eligible for 'Best Orgy').
2. Split the 'Best Technical / Use of Medium' award into two and better define the criteria for

them. The two new awards would be ‘Best Technical Implementation’ and ‘Most Innovative Game’.

3. Combine ‘Best Story’ and ‘Best Atmosphere’ into one award: ‘Best Writing’.
4. Add a new category for ‘Best New Author’.

More controversial proposals are also being discussed:

1. Eliminate ‘Best Humor’ and wrap it in with ‘Best Writing’ (popular sentiment appears to favor keeping ‘Best Humor’ as a separate category)
2. Eliminate ‘Best One Night Stand (ONS) Game’, or possibly add ‘Best Romp’ and ‘Best Puzzle-Fest.’
3. Add a category for ‘Best Beta-tester’.

My personal feeling is that “Best Humor” should remain. Humor is not unrelated to the quality writing, but it isn’t necessarily a function of it either. I also believe that is far more difficult to write comedy (especially FUNNY comedy) than it is to write drama, and that games that succeed in being truly funny deserve special recognition.

I believe that the ‘Best ONS’ category will only remain if there are at least four or five games that qualify. Last year there were *fourteen* ‘ONS’ games (thirteen in A. Bomire’s Mini-comp plus *Stowaway* by Johnny Freebase), and so the category was worthwhile. This year, so far, there is only one ONS game, and the competition is not an ONS-comp this year. Likewise, if there are no games with images or other multimedia this year, we won’t award an Erin in the ‘Multimedia’ category (*Tomorrow Never Comes* is, I believe, the only qualifying game so far). To wit: we need to be flexible and be prepared to give awards that reflect the types of games that are being written.

Finally, I do think that an award should be given for the best beta-tester. However, I haven’t heard a really good suggestion as to how this person would be chosen.

Overall, administering the Erins was very positive experience, and I’m glad I could contribute to our community. Hey, I’d even be willing to do it again next year.

Ideal Pacific Coast University — A Short Review

I am happy to report that NewKid’s return as an author is a triumphant one. *Ideal Pacific Coast University (IPCU)*, the thematic sequel to his *Ideal New England Prep School (HI)* (1999), is a very worthy descendant of that classic game.

In *IPCU* you are the president of a discredited off-campus fraternity at your university. Your overall goal in the game is to redeem your fraternity and regain control of your house, which is being occupied by a sorority.

The puzzle design is particularly strong in *IPCU*, but atmospheric effects, descriptions and humor are far from neglected. In fact, in one scene there are so many overlapping atmospheric daemons running (some with randomly-generated descriptions) at once that it is amazing that NewKid was able to keep them all straight. The puzzles, storyline and sex are interwoven in the game so as a result many puzzles require you to perform or observe sex acts. This helps integrate the sex scenes into the game and they never feel like they’re just tossed in as afterthoughts.

The sex writing is some of the best I’ve encountered. It is extremely varied and, considering the number of female sex partners in the game, impressive that each actress stays completely in character throughout her scene. As a result of this skillfully-crafted character writing, the sex never feels generic and always remains fresh and extremely hot, even after multiple play-throughs.

The game is quite clean, technically, though there are a few bugs that have been cropping up in its first release as reported on the AIFarchive message board; I’m certain NewKid will correct these in subsequent releases. More impressive than its relative buglessness, however, is its technical ambition. The previously-mentioned scene with the numerous atmosphere daemons is one of the most complex I’ve ever seen.

If I have a complaint, it is just that when compared to *HI*, *ICPU* distinctly lacks a build-up of emotion concerning any NPC. Your relationship with Wynne in *HI* is a tour de force of sexual tension, and there’s no equivalent feeling to this game. Still, *ICPU* is destined to be a classic and is not to be missed.

Something To Look Forward To

Next month we're publishing our interview with Chris Cole that was put off from this month. Other than that, we're hoping for quite a few new games and competition entries to talk about!

We are continuing to refine the newsletter's website. We're putting reviews that appear in the newsletter on the site, and it, along with the database at <http://www.aifcommunity.org>, is slowly developing into a portal for the community.

Until next month,
The Staff

AIF Wants You

If you can write game reviews, articles, cartoons, opinion pieces, humorous essays, or endless blather, we want you. Contact the editor for suggested content or just write what you want and send it to us.

Classifieds

The newsletter will run your AIF-related ad for free. E-mail the editor for details.

Meet The Staff

Editor	A Ninny is an AIF player, author and frequent beta-tester. His one released game, "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 <i>Dexter Dixon: In Search of the Prussian Pussy</i> and <i>The Backlot</i> . His Games have won numerous awards and Erin nominations.
	Markaedw has beta tested one game, <i>Hell in Highwater</i> . He written walkthroughs for <i>Ginger's Island</i> and <i>Hell in Highwater</i> .
	BBBen is an AIF author. He has released six games, including the <i>Crossworlds</i> series and <i>Normville High</i> which won A. Bomire's 2004 mini-comp. Debbie, his popular character in the <i>Crossworlds</i> series won the 2004 Erin award for best female non-player character

Where to send your stuff in

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

