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Sextra Curricular Activities

This Month in AIF by BBBen

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This month six games were released (with one later re-release), so this has been a busy month for the community. More unusually, two games were withdrawn before having been posted for long, which to my knowledge has never happened before in the space of one month.

Ironically *The Cabin*, a game about an AIF author looking for inspiration for a game, came under suspicion of plagiarism. This turned out to be a mistake on the part of the author rather than a deliberate attempt to steal other people's work, and he withdrew the game to rewrite it.

Then another release that was apparently a mistake by the author, *The True Story of Hansel and Gretel*, excited just as much commentary because of its use of a picture of an apparently underage girl. While this picture was not pornographic, there was a general concern that there

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Newsletter Spotlights

In this, the inaugural issue, I have a great interview with NewKid, The Zen of Testing Part I by A. Bomire and Story in AIF by BBBen. I looked at NewKid's *Star Trek: The Sexed Generation*, a classic. Rap made an AGX suggestion. To finish things off, reviews of this month's games.

The Zen of Testing by A. Bomire

There has been a lot of discussion lately about the relative quality (or lack thereof) of AIF games versus mainstream IF. Most of it centered around the fact that most AIF games play like they were written in a week by someone who only vaguely knows what s/he is doing. The problem stems from testing - both alpha and beta. What do those terms mean? How do you, as a game author, go about implementing those tests? Well, in this three part series, I plan to outline exactly that. In Part I, I plan on talking about the first stage of testing - alpha testing, or testing it yourself. In Parts II and III, I plan on discussing the second stage of testing - beta testing, or having others test your game for you.

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NewKid: Interactive Man Of Mystery by Markaedw

I am excited to present our inaugural interview. NewKid is one of the premier AIF authors, having written numerous classic games. He was kind enough sit down and answer a few questions, about himself AIF and his games. I hope you learn as much from this as I have.

Markaedw: Would you give us a short introduction of yourself?

NewKid: No, Men of mystery Don't Do that. Seriously I'm in my late 30's male and write for (sort of) a living

Markaedw: In your opinion what makes an interactive game an adult game, what puts the "A" in AIF?

NewKid: Well, the "AIF community" as it is currently constituted pretty much has come to accept AIF as meaning sexual in nature. This seems to be the distinction in the larger gaming community as a whole, which frankly, disturbs the Hell out of me. I'm not saying that sex shouldn't be considered restricted material, just that a whole lot more stuff should be added to

the list. Every time I check out what teenagers are playing on the video game consoles these days, I shudder. Of course, not only do WE define AIF that way, the "mainstream IF" community defines AIF that way as well. They add a lot of other characteristics as well; chiefly bad writing, followed by bad coding. I can certainly agree with them that there is some pretty badly put together stuff out there with an AIF label on it. But the contention is unfair overall. There is a lot less AIF being produced than IF, so we tend to keep every work produced in one or another of the archives. The bad IF just gets ignored in favor of all the good stuff that is out there. Also, the best sources of technical help for writing games are over in the mainstream community. If you go over there to ask for help, you have to disguise your subject matter or risk a flame-war! That said, writers of AIF should make more of an effort to get help from the mainstream folks. They really know their shit, folks. And not all of them are prudes either. I've gotten the occasional letter from some of the names I recognize telling me they enjoyed one or another of my games.

Markaedw: What inspired you to get started writing AIF, or any interactive games for that matter?

NewKid: Well, let's see. Way back when, when some buddies and I had just invented fire.... Seriously, the first AIF game I played was a piece of crap that still holds a dear place in my heart called "Passion Pit". It really is bad by modern standards, but whoever wrote the thing was a good programmer. It was written from scratch as I understand. Anyway, I thought it was cute, but I hardly wanted to emulate it. A few months later, I thought I'd look around for anything like it, and stumbled across "XTrek" and "A Night With Troi". I thought of "XTrek" as a total hoot. "Night (with Troi)" was interesting enough, but it is cotton candy when compared to the triple-layer chocolate oblivion torte that is "XTrek...." Anyway, I read that "XTrek" was created with a program called AGT, that allowed you to make games a whole lot easier than fully programming them yourself. I thought I'd try one myself, which brings me to your next question.

Markaedw: Your first game (correct me if I'm wrong) "Mist", then the rewrite "Wraith", seems to be a prologue to another game, are you planning on a follow up?

NewKid: Actually, Wraith was the fourth or fifth publicly released "game-thing" I produced. My first work was "Star Trek: The Sexed Generation"(STX), written in a variant of AGT called Agility. As far as I can tell, "XTrek" had been out for a long time before I found it and wrote STX in response. I'm guessing a few other people had the same idea I did, because at least one other "xtrek" (shortly to become a generic term for any AIF work set in the Star Trek Universe) came out about the same time. Shortly thereafter, there was a plague of the things. Some were fun and clever. But many were terribly written, others were buggy as hell. There was a significant intersection of the last two subsets that were painfully unplayable, and largely responsible (I feel) for the reputation AIF has with the IF community. Anyway, I got a TON of feedback on STX, much of which told me how limited the authoring language was. So I cast around for another language to allow more flexibility, because let's be honest: FUCKING TROI just isn't sufficient unless you can also FUCK TROI'S TITS, right? Anyway, I finally selected TADS2 to work with and started my next project, "Ideal New England High School" (HI). From a standpoint of the story, I think it is my best work. A view which seems to be shared by a moderate majority of those I've heard express an opinion on the subject. I'm kinda glad I chose TADS, because another Grand Old Man of AIF, Scarlett Herring had chosen it independently and released the seminal (sic) "MOIST" a short while before HI. Together, these two games seemed to force an evolution of AIF. As usual, evolution kills some nice things as well as feeding the cause of progress. Xtreks virtually disappeared, as did AGT games, virtually overnight. The total number of new games being produced faded away to a very small number. But what did start coming out were mostly in TADS (or its bitter rival, Inform) and of a more complex and original quality. My next game was "Generic New York Apartment Building", my personal favorite. Like the xtreks, GNA is fanfic, though it is based on six or seven (eight?) different TV shows. It's big, it's complex, it has a gigantically important, though tiny, bug that I never fixed because I lost the source code! After releasing GNA, I wanted to try to help increase the number of games out there, so I tried to clean up my personal AIF libraries and released the Chick.t set of TADS libraries, along with the sample game: "A Night With Beverly", the last xtrek that I know of that ever got released. (If there are any others done in TADS or Inform since, I'd love to hear about it.) After that, I began work, slowly, on The Wraith. It was going to be my biggest game to date, and I still have it sitting on my hard drive, waiting to be reawakened. I did release the trailer for it, partly because I wanted some help testing a

few things I was doing with the chick.t libraries, and partly because I knew it would annoy people who could not play the whole game immediately. For the players out there who haven't read much of my commentary on writing AIF, I LIVE to annoy you.....
Unfortunately, I did not realize how much I was going to annoy people! Real Life intruded in the form of two children, which brought my writing (at least my non-commercial writing) to a screeching halt. Thus the Grand Hiatus in which the world is mired....

Markaedw: Have you written anything else? Any Current Projects?

NewKid: I have decided any further writing I will do will be in the new system TADS3. I really like it, and have been playing with it extensively. Some of you may have seen that I released a beta of the my latest version of chick.t, CHICK3.T, along with a sample sim, "A Night With Cathy", to demo its capabilities. It has gotten a lot of interest from authors, and it'll be interesting to see if someone actually releases a game with it before I do! I am working on a project right now. Not "Wraith", but another non-fanfic game. It is about as big as GNA, maybe a little larger. It is pretty far along, in fact. The entire game is written, though it is not yet playable enough to go to beta test. We'll see how long it takes to get there. The two children have not gone away....

Markaedw: Any words of advice, or warnings for those just thinking about starting out?

NewKid: Consider a few things before you start:

- * These things take a shitload of time to write. They take 3.14159265358979323846 shitloads of time to write well. Do you have that much time?
- * Can you string together words and sentences in a pleasing and readable fashion? Are you sure? Good.
- * Once you think it's done, you will need to invest another 1.2 shitloads of time beta-testing the thing. Get GOOD beta-testers. Listen to them. Make sure they also are real pricks about your writing. This medium is all about the written word, folks. Make sure your beta-testers also are your editors!
- * Have a thick skin once you release your magnum opus! Someone will not like it. They might even have some justification! They might not. They WILL be incredibly insulting, regardless. Let's face it, if we talked to each other face-to-face the way we do on the Web, dueling would be an every day event....
- * I am not a fan of AGILITY, the current AIF favorite. The parser is clunky as all get out, and it really gets in the way of enjoying the games. That said, I really like several games that have been written in it. If you want to try your hand at writing a first, short game, I'd give it a good look see. I never would have released a single game if I had started out with TADS. I never would have released a second if I hadn't migrated to TADS! Please understand, however, that I am NOT a programmer. If you understand Object Oriented Programming, you could probably start with TADS.
- * When you do get going with writing something, ask for help, early and often. Lots of us want to help. Look on alt.games.xtrek, the AIF yahoo group, and especially rec.arts.int-fiction. (Though please remember my advice about concealing your subject matter there if you do not wish to endure some measure at least of prude-twaddle!)

Markaedw: One last question, can you provide a list of your available games?

Newkid:

Full Games:

Star Trek: The Sexed Generation

Ideal New England High School

Generic New York Apartment Building

Trailers:

The Wraith

Mini-Sims:

A Night With Beverly

A Night With Cathy

Natch!

NewKid

This Month in AIF by BBBen

may be more pictures in the game that nobody had discovered. People were worried on three counts; firstly that a game with suspect pictures could get the AIF Archive banned by Yahoo, secondly that a game about a twelve year old girl might be in bad taste, and thirdly that the removal of this game would be censorship.

In the end the game was removed, simply to protect the Yahoo group. If I may venture an opinion, censorship is a valid concern in this community. We can't really lay down any rules about removing games, and frankly many of them could be considered to be in bad taste even by the rather generous standards we tend to apply. While the game seemed in bad taste to me, such things are very subjective and it is not purely the prose content that drives me to that conclusion (other authors have released games with similar content and those games have been accepted). Removing the game to protect the AIF Archive (which apparently will be removed by Yahoo after just one complaint) was a valid move.

Apart from those issues, there has been a proposal to split the forums into different functions; AGX will now deal with AIF theory and discussion, while the AIF Archive will deal with game help requests and so on. New game announcements should still be cross-posted. There was a fair amount of AIF theory discussion on AGX in its new role, and quite a bit of help request activity on the AIF Archive.

And of course the last thing to happen this month is the release of this newsletter, the first ever! Here's hoping that plenty of people will get involved and submit content for future issues. Remember: we need content every month, so help us out and keep the newsletter interesting by writing a review or an article or perhaps even producing some AIF-related artwork!

New games for January 2005:

Crossworlds Part 3 – The Final Far Far Away Frontier, by BBBen 4th Jan – The Cross-worlds series continues in space.

The Cabin, by Bluerose, 6th Jan – Subsequently withdrawn.

Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Sex, by Captain Cranky Pants
17th Jan – Based on the Xbox video game, *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*.

The Cabin – Inspiration Does Not Come Standard v1.5, by Bluerose 19th Jan – (re-release)
An AIF author seeks inspiration by going up to a cabin for the weekend.

Graduation Night Present, by strgzr02002 20th Jan – Your big brother buys you a night at a brothel as a graduation present, where you meet some very unusual women.

The True Story of Hansel and Gretel, by wb8fui 21st Jan – Subsequently withdrawn.

Of Masters and Mistresses, by Grimm Sharlak 24th Jan – You are a detective who has been hired to track down a missing woman. The only clue is a set of photographs of her engaged, apparently against her will, in S&M sex.

The Chinese say "May you live in interesting times." Well, we did this month.

The Zen of Testing by A. Bomire

Part I - The Art of Alpha Testing

The first stage of testing for any program (and I don't care what you think - if you're writing an AIF game, you're programming!) is known as "alpha" testing. This stage consists of testing the game while you are in the process of writing it. For example, say you are writing a small 3-room game for a competition, and you have one room completed. You would fire up your game and test that room before moving on to the next room. That is alpha-testing, the first stage.

Many years ago, I read an article by Kevin Weeks called 'Is your code done yet?' ("Computer Language", April 1992). It stated clearly and simply how to go about testing

your code. I cut the article out and pasted it to the wall of my office, where it helped me many times in my coding problems. I've since moved away from professional programming, but I still have the article. I'd like to reiterate some of the rules outlined in it, paraphrased for game -writing:

1) Every statement must be executed at least once.

This sounds simple, doesn't it? Yet, what does it really mean? It means what it says: if you put a statement in your game, you must test it to be sure it works. So, if you put in some obscure output if a player does something weird like try to lick the handrail, then you have to actually test it and not just assume it works.

2) Each conditional operation must be tested for true/pass and false/fail conditions.

This sounds more complicated than it is. If you have IF-ELSE conditions, test them for passing and failing. Let's say you have a door that can be opened and closed, locked and unlocked. You have to test it for all 4 conditions: locked and open, locked and closed, unlocked and open, unlocked and closed. How does it react? Can the player, for example, lock the door when it is open? Should the player be able to do this? What about the "other side" of the door? If the door opens into another room, it should have the same "state" on both sides. For example, if you unlock the door and open it, then pass through to the next room, you should find the "other side" of the door is also open and unlocked. That makes 8 conditions to test for just this one door.

3) Game -state changes should be predicted and verified.

This means that all of the above tests should be done multiple times, in various stages of game state. For example, suppose the above door requires a key to lock and unlock. The eight conditions I outlined above then have to be tested twice each - once when the player doesn't have the key, and once when the player does have the key. So, now our simple door has sixteen separate conditions to test. How many doors did you say you had in your game?

4) Boundary conditions must be tested for pass and fail.

"Boundary conditions" means things that have limits. For example, the player is only supposed to be able to summon the Spirit of Alimon once. Well, test it to be sure that issuing the "Summon Spirit" command only works once.

That sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? Well, it is! Especially if you try to do it all at once. But, fear not - I have some tips on how to make the process a little easier:

1) Test the code as you write it.

For example, test the above mentioned door just after you put it in the room, not when you finish the game. Why? For one thing, you might forget about it. For another, it will be fresh in your mind just what you have to test. Finally, when it works you can safely put it in your "done" box and move on.

2) Modularize your game

If possible, write your game in independent sections as much as possible. For example, the hero needs to break out of the castle dungeon before confronting the evil Sorceress in her stronghold. So, write the dungeon as a "module", test it, and then move on to other parts. This way, when a problem comes up in testing you'll know it doesn't spill over from your "safe" modules that you've already tested.

3) If possible, use a debugger to walk through your code.

This applies especially to TADS, where you can use the TADS workbench to step line by line through your code to see exactly where things are going wrong. If you can't do this, try putting test output lines in your code to let you know what part of the code is being processed. Things like: "Verifying door locked state" at the beginning of your test to see if the door is locked, and "Door verified to be locked" at the end. This way, if an error crops up after the first statement but before the second, you know approximately where the problem lies.

If you can follow all of these rules and tips, there is a very good chance that your game will be practically bug and error free. That's not to say that it is finished yet, not by a long shot. You still need to check it for grammar and spelling. There are a lot of useful tools that can help you here as well.

For TADS games, you can use a great little program called "TEXTOUT.COM", available at the IF Archive (<http://www.ifarchive.org/>), written by Rick LaBach. It goes through your game module and pulls out every little speck of text that the player could see and puts it in a text file. You can then take this text file and run it through any word processing program for spell- and grammar-checking. It won't catch everything, such as properly spelled words that are used wrong (such as using "their" instead of "they're"), but it will be much better than trying to catch them all yourself.

For ADRIFT, you can put much of your output in an ALR, and run that file through a spell- and grammar-checker.

Many game runners allow you to create an output file of the game as you play it (most times referred to as "scripting"). You can play through your game with the scripting turned on, and then run the resultant file through your word processor as well.

Okay, you've alpha tested your game until you are sick of looking at it. You've spell- and grammar-checked it until your 9th grade English teacher would swell with pride. Finally, the game is finished...right? WRONG! You've only caught the stuff you can think of. You still don't know if the game is really ready to play. After all, how do you know if you have a really nasty "guess-the-verb" problem? Well, for that, you need to Beta Test. For information on that, stay tuned for Part II of this series.

Oldies But Goodies-games that you may not be playing, but should

After reading NewKid's interview I looked at some of the old games that are available, and found the Star Trek game that he mentioned. It is definitely a fun game. Written in the AGT, the commands may seem a little clunky when compared to what we are used to but for Puzzle solving and sheer fun, it stands the test of time.

In it you're the new guy on the Enterprise, and your general orders are to be useful. Well you make yourself useful, by getting into the women's panties (for those that wear panties). You have the ultimate goal of nailing Dr. Crusher, but all the main leads are there as well, Tasha Yar, Ro Laren, and my favorite: Deanna Troi, plus a new character put in by NewKid: Krys-tel Imzadi. Along the way you need to get a few people out of your hair, kill some aliens, explore the ship and generally have fun.

Story in AIF by BBBen

There can hardly be a form of writing that is more known for its brilliant plots than AIF. By which I mean of course, that far and wide people comment that AIF doesn't tend to have plots, it's just a case of "show cock to [about to be willing woman]" and away you go. Well that's somewhat true for many games, but let's get into the domain of theory here and I'll put forward a few of my thoughts on AIF storytelling.

Does AIF really need a story?

Well, no. Some sort of set up for the sexual shenanigans is all that is really necessary for a good AIF game. Many people cite *Moist* as their all-time favourite AIF game, and though it has a story, it's really a pretty ridiculous one that simply pokes fun at itself and kind of gives the impression of, "who cares about the story, you're here for the sex!"

And that's more or less correct in most cases, of course. A sex romp is a perfectly justifiable form for an AIF game to take and may be fundamentally what most of the audience is actually looking for. However you may actually want a story in AIF, as it can make the sex more gratifying and potentially give you another reason to play the game. It is generally more entertaining to enjoy a sex scene with a character that you have fallen for than one you have, as a player, just met.

Character driven stories

Erotica has to be, by its nature, reasonably character based. Of course all good writing should have strong characters, but most writers of erotica will instinctively focus on character because that is what's most interesting in sex. In this case the best thing to do is make the events of the story reflect and draw out the characters.

Ratio of sex to story

Deciding how much sex should be in a game in relation to how long it is can be a point of concern for anyone planning to make a plot-driven AIF game. If the plot hints and teases at sex then the delaying of sexual encounters can be quite effective. Take, for example, the way the more linear hentai games such as *Three Sisters Story* and *Runaway City* are structured. There is quite a bit of build-up between the sex scenes, but it is hard for the player not to be thinking about sex for most of the game. Sex can be a 'page-turner' to encourage the player to 'read on'.

However, if there is not enough sex and if the reward does not satisfy after the build-up then the player can end up feeling disappointed and frustrated. Basically the more plot you have in relation to sex, the better and more hard-working your sex scenes have to be. It might also be a good idea to make a little bit of sex available early to ease tension.

Integrating sex into the plot.

In a good plot driven game, it is sometimes commented that the game should stand up without the sex. The sex, it is said, should be something of a bonus to what is already a good game. I feel this is somewhat incorrect. To me, probably the main purpose of an AIF game is the sex, and if it is treated as something of a throw-aside from the story then it will probably wind up being less successful.

Ideally I feel that the story should integrate the sex as an essential and important part of the plot. Consider a movie (not a porno, just a normal movie. Preferably a good one like say... oh, I can't think of an appropriate example... *Gattaca*! If you've seen it, of course) in which two characters have sex. Now there is no actual sex scene in *Gattaca* but two characters do have sex. This is not included as some sort of a throw-aside just to titillate the viewers and keep their attentions long enough to finish the movie, it is instead a natural flow through of the character relationships. In a more linear plot it is obvious that everything really should serve the purpose of the narrative, and that is also true of AIF.

In a simplistic way this can mean that a plot should have ways in which sex is natural and necessary for the plot development. I'll try to illustrate the difference between integrating sex and not integrating it with an example.

Say for instance that a tough police detective is assigned a new female partner. They have to crack a drug ring that turns out to be run by corrupt police, including their own captain. One way of developing this could have the detective picking up a series of clues that lead him and his partner along a trail through the seediest parts of town. While they are there, the detective discovers his partner has a fetish for S&M, so he purchases some toys, they go back to her apartment and have sex, then get back on the case.

Another way of looking at it could be that the detective doesn't like the idea of a female partner too much. They don't get along, but there is a distinct attraction between them, and after they are thrust into the heat of a gun fight together and they find themselves fighting for each other's lives, they finally yield to their chemistry and have sex. This leads them to develop trust in each other, which proves essential when they realise the police force is overrun by corrupt cops and outside of each other they simply don't know who to trust. Now the second example seems a lot more interesting to me, even if you managed to develop a much more sophisticated investigation in the first one. The second example is more character driven and the sex makes sense. It also has continued importance in the way the characters relate, whereas the sex in the first example sounds kind of boring and doesn't seem like it would even be brought up again later in the game.

Conclusion

So what am I saying, exactly? Basically, if you want to put a strong plot and sex into the same game, you would be best off if the sex was important to the plot. This doesn't necessarily mean having your main character a person who just *has* to have sex all the time, it just means that sex should impact on the plot, and it should arise from circumstances that come naturally from the plot.

Check Out This Month's Games By Markaedw

We'll start with "The Cabin" v1.5

The first version had some issues, but Bluerose came back with a rewrite, and it became a good solid sex romp.

You are renting a cabin and get to "meet" your neighbors and the owner's daughter. The commands are simple. There is the six inch penis, I hope he means that is six inches soft. The trunk key that is necessary is still invisible and "rub" and "suck" are the same except for one time, and that has a tendency to throw people off.

It's a good start, but it still has some coding issues that I hope the writer fixes for future games. I've played it once, it is your basic game and doesn't have too much replay value.

Overall rating: B

Next "Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Sex"

This is about Everybody favorite Xbox babes . You are one of the staff of Zack's hotel and get to score on all the DOA girls that are there to relax.

Not much to talk about, there are three commands to run the game, no puzzles, although the sex scenes were well written they only have one command, which is too limited for today. I hit a bug that required a restart, and never got around to it playing again.

It's not bad for a first try, but I'm sure captain cranky pants, can do better.

Overall rating B (hey, it's it gets a few point because it's the DOA girls)

And the award for the most unfulfilled potential goes to....
"Of monsters and Mistresses: Abduction" by Grimm Sarlak

This applies to version 1.1 also, I had hoped the rewrite would solve these issues but it did not.

This one is a generic detective story; track down the missing girl and get a little nookie along the way. That's a great premise, unfortunately the game gets in the way, or more specifically the coding does. With general guess the verb problems and actions that are counterintuitive, this one becomes an exercise in frustration more than sex.

Great writing for a sucky game, this one (still) needs to be reworked at the code level. The writing in itself is good quality work, the sex scenes are full and imaginative. If Grimm Sharlak learns from his mistakes then one day he could be known a top notch writer, but just not today.

Overall rating: C-

Next: "Graduation Night Present" by Strgizr02002

In this one you just graduated high school and your older brother books you a brothel for a reward. It has 3 girls with some varying roles involved, which is something missing in AIF, good old-fashioned sexy role -playing.

It is a good game, nothing bad about it, but nothing spectacular either, I get the sense that this one was intended to be bigger, but Strgizr02002 just couldn't work it out for his first try. But hey, there is always college.

Overall rating: B+

Next we have "Pool Party" by Christopher Cole and A Bomire

You're back from "Encounter 1: Tim's Mom" and "Encounter 2: Study Group. You've just graduated high school and Tim is throwing a party with girls to spare. Definite replay value, well actually, you have to play it through at least twice just to see everything.

What can I say, it fulfills everything that we have come to expect from these guys, but the endings were a bit of a let down. Beware there are many dead ends ahead.

Overall rating: A -

And finally "Crossworlds 3" by BBBen

Continuing his Crossworlds series is CW 3 in space. This time you have to stop evil mom Jessica from conquering the galaxy with her wormhole suppression technology. Each task along the way is rewarded with sex.

His sex scenes are always fun, the commands are standard and the necessary actions very intuitive. If you like puzzles, adventure and sex mixed together, it is definitely worth your time to play CW 3 and the rest of the Crossworlds series. By the way, you've got to love that third tit!

Overall rating: A

That's it for this month. I hope in future releases will have previews of new games, so writers: nose to the grindstone, or the keyboard, fandom awaits.

AIF Wants You...

to be a beta tester and put your name and e-mail address here.

AIF Soapbox

With the release and deletion of "The True Story of Hansel and Gretel" the advantages of the Google forums over Yahoo forums were brought to light. While in Yahoo there were only a few post on the subject, the Google forum went on for quite a while. So Rap at AGX (alt.games.xtrek) made this proposal. I have done minor editing for ease of reading.

WARNING: EVEN LONGER THAN RAP'S USUAL RANTS. RAP SEEMS TO THINK LENGTH MEANS EVERYTHING.

I figure as long as old fogies are delurking, I may as well throw in a post or two. I'm in the midst of Pool Party, which has provided not only a couple nights of ... diversion, but also some thoughts on What Makes Good AIF that I know you all love reading. More on that some other time.

I don't know about you, but due to RL I don't get to check newsgroups or websites for AIF news all the time. So I am sort of annoyed that I have to look at agx and Yahoo Groups in order to find out what's happening in the community. If I want to post something of interest, I have to pick where to post it - or post it on both for safety. In that case, which forum should people respond on? So it's not only time-consuming, but also makes discussions more fragmented.

I don't particularly like Yahoo Groups because:

- I need to sign on to read. (Recall: my time is so precious to me, I want to spend every possible free moment reading porn, not typing passwords in.)
- Yahoo throws an advertisement at me every ten messages or so
- Google's Groups interface is 8 zillion times better than Yahoo (or you can just use any Usenet newsreader).

Because I'm a certified member of the agx Old Guard, I was going to propose that Yahoo Groups aifarchive go away. Then I realized that (a) everyone would just laugh at me and (b) Yahoo Groups has some good things going for it. Viz. (Old Guarders like saying things like "viz."):

- Yahoo has a place to put files, tho as we've seen, that runs out pretty quickly. This can be important every couple years when AIF web site owners disappear, cuz we're at least pretty sure Yahoo won't disappear any time soon (without warning).
- Yahoo presumably backs up our files better than we do (Maybe we should start another group for storing source code. NewKid, I'm talking to you [and everyone else who lost a major WIP]!)
- Yahoo provides a links page & other services, so that we have a (backed up, as mentioned above) community website, not just a discussion group.

Then I thought of something totally different. I don't know about you, but I always loved the way that agx in the old days had lots of discussions on AIF theory, What Makes Good AIF, etc. Stuff like the recent "Talk to X" vs. "Ask About" thread, or how to do sex in TADS, or whatever.

Btw, why not post reviews to agx in addition to on a website, so others can chime in and agree or disagree? I'd be interested to see differences of opinion on these games, or we could build some more consensus on what's good (beta testing) vs. what's not (not beta testing).

agx nowadays doesn't have that much traffic, which is why I was surprised to see that we've had more game releases in 2004 than , I think, ever. But then I realized there's lots of discussion on Yahoo Groups, but then I realized that a lot of it is requests for help, walkthroughs, etc. Which is very important for people playing the games, but frankly not so interesting to me, especially since I don't play the majority of games that come out these days :(

 OK, THE PROPOSAL: I propose that we make an official designation that agx and aifarchive. Yahoo become analogous to raif and rgif. That is, agx is generally reserved for discussions of AIF programming & AIF theory, while Yahoo is reserved for game help requests, walkthroughs, etc. Sure, there may be some overlap, but I think in general it'll be clear where to post.

Heck, maybe people have already made this distinction, w/out my noticing, but I figure we should make it official, so I can stop reading Yahoo Groups.

Whaddaya think?

-Rap the Longwinded

Ok, now my take, this is actually a good proposal. Yahoo is good for the casual gamers, with the main advantage being, Yahoo posts appear almost immediately, which is good for when your stuck, you may get a reply within minutes. The deep philosophical and technical stuff , can be discussed over in AGX, which is easier to keep track of the reply to the conversations.

If you want to join in the discussions and can't get the link. Go to Google groups And type in atl games xtrek in the search field.

Something To Look Forward To

Well this months newsletter is finished and we are already getting to work on the next one.

Next month you will get part II of A Bomire's "The Zen of Testing", I'm thinking about looking at the only game, at least that I know, where the game play differs based on the gender you choose to be (not for homophobes). I will be interviewing Lucilla Frost, the writer of *British Fox and the Celebrity Abductions*, in which we will discuss, among other things, women ,or the lack there of, in AIF. Also A Ninny promises he will have his tips for beta testers ready.

Until then,
The Staff