



SECRETS OF THE ARK: A BROKEN SWORD GAME

Lots of cheek, filled with really good tongue

PUBLISHER: DreamCatcher DEVELOPER: Revolution Software GENRE: Adventure AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Everyone
 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 1.4GHz CPU, 256MB RAM, 2.6GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: None VERSION REVIEWED: Gold Master

REVIEW

Y When you start saying things like, "Give the salami to the Rottweiler" to yourself, you're either into zoophilia (yuck), remembering Zoo from the 2007 Sundance Film Festival, or using really elementary adventure-game logic. Let's choose option C. In *Secrets of the Ark*, sure, you'll see that kind of sophomoric solution, but this title also manages to conjure up some of the best puzzle-solving you've seen since the heyday of LucasArts adventures. If you don't remember those, think "a whole lot of great brainstorming."

This is developer Revolution's fourth act in the *Broken Sword* series that debuted over a decade ago. Returning hero George Stobbart—self-proclaimed private dick—has become a bail bondsman after his last (mis)adventure, but gets drawn once again into investigative mode when a curvaceous blonde shows up, stammering about a lost manuscript/treasure map. The game premise is pretty well-worn; yet another case of "What are those wacky Templars up to now?" And with *Da Vinci Code*-ism running rampant, you don't feel anything truly fresh here. With nods to Indiana Jones all over the place as well, you really don't feel anything fresh...but for some reason, the story works (don't hold your breath for a big finale, though). Even in its predictability, the game builds enough tension to drag you through the longest stretches of dialogue. Yards and yards of dialogue. Miles of it (which you sadly can't skip when you're replaying a scene). The thing is that—even when tediously verbose—much of it is really...catchy.

If your ears are double entendre-sensitive, and you can pick out tongue-in-cheek stuff from the most deadpan delivery, you might question the Everyone rating. Hey, the subtleties probably went right over the collective head of the ESRB.

NO, NO, PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME DANGLE

The minute you start having fun with the puzzles (the hacking and circuit-building ones are particularly awesome) and enjoying the weirdness of some lesser characters, *gameus interruptus* sets in: You'll get hung up on the scenery and never quite get comfortable with the keyboard-mouse controls, even if you WASD-configure them. Same goes for the re-aiming, switching, reversing, and fussing with directionally challenged camera angles. You'll run into walls or back into the room out of which you just exited.

And then we have the *dangling*: For some reason, the creative types at Revolution believe that even a semblance of arcade action is better than none. It isn't. They think it adds richness. It doesn't. You'll find yourself sidling along ledges—on top of them or dangling from them—swinging from fire escapes, and dangling some more. If falling to your doom were a real possibility, that might offer a challenge...but, as it is, you can't fall, making this sort of navigation feel like a complete waste of time.

You might learn fun stuff, though—like how to translate Latin, or that England's St. George was actually born in what is now Turkey, or what to say to naked priests frolicking in bath-



• Anna Maria insists upon more foreplay.



• You never know what'll, er, arise in a steamy Turkish bathhouse.

houses, or how to tamper with Communion wafers. Really. The devs are going straight to hell. • Cindy Yans

THIS TITLE MANAGES TO CONJURE UP SOME OF THE BEST PUZZLE-SOLVING YOU'VE SEEN SINCE THE HEYDAY OF LUCASARTS ADVENTURES.

VERDICT

✓ Clever dialogue; creative puzzles; maintains tension without punishing you.

✗ Clumsy controls; confusing camera; noninterruptible dialogue; primitive visuals.

7/10

GOOD



**NEW COMPANY
OF HEROES!**

CRYSIS EXCLUSIVE
NEW PC
SCREENS!

THE ULTIMATE
PC GAMING
AUTHORITY

MAY \07



TM

Games for Windows®

ISSUE 06 \ MAY 2007 \ THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

WORLD EXCLUSIVE
**COMPANY OF
HEROES:**
OPPOSING FRONTS
THE SECOND STAND-ALONE CHAPTER
TWO NEW CAMPAIGNS • TWO NEW ARMIES

INTERVIEW
**JOHN
CARMACK**
DOOM CREATOR SPEAKS

SPECIAL REPORT
VIDEOGAME DOCUMENTARIES
FIVE UPCOMING FILMS
EVERY GAMER NEEDS TO SEE

REVIEWED
**IS VISTA
WORTH IT?**
PLUS: 20 ESSENTIAL TIPS



PREVIEWED
CRYSIS

6 PAGES OF EXPLOSIVE,
ALL-NEW SCREENS



REVIEWED
**COMMAND &
CONQUER 3**

BAD ACTORS, GREAT GAME



REVIEWED
VANGUARD

WORLD OF WARCRAFT HAS
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA™

MAY 2007 ISSUE 06
\$4.99 U.S., \$6.99 Canada



Display Until May 15

GFW.1UP.COM 1UP