



Issue 10

September/October 2003

Contents

News and announcements

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1. Congratulations to the Wilds
1. InsideADRIFT Awards
2. ADRIFT games index
2. ADRIFT Mass Room Builder
2. Competition news roundup (includes Summer Minicomp results; End of Year Comp; DavidW's Halloween Minicomp; Annual IF Comp; Italian One Room Comp)
3. Forum news
4. ADRIFT Events Calendar

Regular features

2. Editorial
2. Drifters birthdays
3. Events diary
4. Drifters toolbox: TownGen
5. Portrait of a Drifter: Woodfish
10. Interview: Woodfish

Articles

5. One year down – where to now? By KF
6. Minicomp round up: Summer Minicomp
8. *The (big) idea*: Look at other IF systems
8. *Think piece*: Can ADRIFT earn respect from a wider audience?
10. *Failed game intros*: WA Crabstick
- Stairwell: Mystic librarian

Reviews

12. "The Night That Dripped Blood" by Cannibal

Puzzles, competitions etc

7. Newsletter quiz DavidW (answers p11)
9. ADRIFT games wordsearch

Reference

14. Manual p17: Object advanced features

Issue Details

September/October 2003 edited by KF

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Congratulations to the Wilds

Last week Campbell Wild was married to Suzanne, in an amazing few days that also included both of their birthdays. (Unfortunately we don't yet have the pictures (or much in the way of details))

The InsideADRIFT Awards

To coincide with the ADRIFT End of Year Competition, I am going to launch the first InsideADRIFT Awards to honour the best in the world of ADRIFT.

My aim is to have about ten categories of award, get nominations by the end of November, and to then offer a voting form with voting to be completed by the end of December.

My first thoughts for some of the categories are:

1. ADRIFT game of the year.
2. ADRIFT Author of the year.
3. Best short game.
4. Best ADRIFT game by a new author.
5. Most unusual ADRIFT setting/plot of the year.
6. Biggest contribution to the ADRIFT community.
7. Most innovative Drifter.

That is for starters, I will start a thread on the forum for others to put in their suggestions. My aim is that *ADRIFT game of the year* would be the winner of the end of year competition, so the judging of that will be important.

Editorial

This is the first issue of the second year of publication. The first issue, edited by Woodfish came out at the end of August last year.

Hopefully it will be an interesting issue for you, Woodfish is our star interviewee, and MileOut is providing us with a big tutorial in the use of expressions. Thanks to them for contributing.

My big initiative is the InsideADRIFT awards. There have been frequent discussions about some awards, so I have decided to act. As described in the article they are meant to add to a sense of community and to reward those who have contributed over the past year.

Contact

Send any suggestions, requests or comments concerning InsideADRIFT to editor@insideadrift.org.uk

Find the newsletter at:

<http://www.insideadrift.org.uk/>

Drifters birthdays

September

1 Astridian (20)
4 RansomDchs (46); cewilson (44);
Lailokken (47)
5 Campbell (27)
10 Lycaon (20); brucehum (32)
13 Chaos (18)
17 Mystery (31)
20 ondre (25)
27 MadTom (17)
28 kolya (26)

October

1 ImpShial (32); SoftIron (23)
2 Narnigate58 (35); Morpork (20)
4 TheDataHacker (26)
12 skater_paulish (20); Lady_Juliet (22)
14 baXter (29)
17 Lil Dot (36)
23 davidw (30); theleaf (16)
28 Sarazar (16)

ADRIFT games index

On 31 August DavidW announced that he had compiled an index of full ADRIFT games released, listed by author and title. There are currently 155 games listed and you can find the listing at <http://www.shadowvault.net/database-g.htm>.

This has led to some interest in the idea of gathering all such games together in one location, with the IF Archive seeming the logical location.

ADRIFT Mass Room Builder

Lancer Sykera has announced his intention to create the *ADRIFT Mass Room Builder (aMRB)*, a utility to allow you to map out your game and then import the rooms as a module.

Having requested input via the forum, Lancer is intending to produce a simple freeware version, with 4 room compass. After which he is looking to produce a shareware version which builds in extra support for things like the 8-way compass.

Competition news roundup

In the ADRIFT world things have kept up the busy competitive pace, one comp closes and another one opens is very much the story of the summer.

The ADRIFT Summer Minicomp 2003 has come to an end and the winner was "Sun Empire: Quest for the Founders (Part I)" by Tech, from DavidW's "Jim Pond & The Agents Of F.A.R.T.". The competition had five entries and eight judges voting, both highly respectable figures. Tech has made the decision to give the \$20 prize for a second prize in the ADRIFT End of Year Competition.

The complete results and other details can be found on the site at http://www.kfadrift.org.uk/comp_sum_03.html as well as in the round up later in this issue.

The ADRIFT End of Year Competition 2003 is an event for any games released during the calendar year of 2003, and they can be updated for the competition. It is designed as an ADRIFT end of year showcase, so get out the polish and shine up any games you have that qualify. Remember that any author can have up to two games in the competition. (http://www.kfadrift.org.uk/comp_win_03.html)

Events Diary

September 15, 2003

SPAG out today

The new issue of SPAG is out today with reviews of a couple of ADRIFT games.

September 27, 2003

2003 Interactive Fiction Competition

Entries to the comp to be in today.

October 01, 2003

2003 Interactive Fiction Competition

Judging for the Annual IF Comp is due to start today.

October 24, 2003

DavidW's ADRIFT Halloween Minicomp 2003 - entries in

ADRIFT Halloween Minicomp 2003 has been announced by DavidW to fill in all those spare hours we all have in the autumn. The competition is limit to games with 20 or fewer rooms and unsurprisingly it has to be on a Halloween theme, though there is a bit of debate as to what this needs to be. Entries need to be in by 24 October, with the judging completed by midnight on 31 October. Full details are posted on the forum in the Halloween Comp thread.

October 25, 2003

InsideADRIFT Issue 11 out today

The November issue of the ADRIFT newsletter is due out today.

October 31, 2003

DavidW's ADRIFT Halloween Minicomp - judging ends

November 15, 2003

2003 Interactive Fiction Competition

All votes must be submitted by the end of the day.

November 29, 2003

InsideADRIFT Issue 12 out today

The December Issue of the ADRIFT newsletter is out today. This is the last one to be issued in 2003.

ADRIFT Halloween Minicomp 2003 has been announced by DavidW to fill in all those spare hours we all have in the autumn. The competition is limit to games with 20 or fewer rooms and unsurprisingly it has to be on a Halloween theme, though there is a bit of debate as to what this needs to be. Entries need to be in by 24 October, with the judging completed by midnight on 31 October. Full details are posted on the forum in the Halloween Comp thread.

Meanwhile in the wider world of interactive fiction things are moving on with the monolith that is the Annual Interactive fiction competition.

The 2003 IF Competition, the major event of the IF calendar, is in the final stages of the authoring phase. By 1st September, when authors had to state their intention to compete, 96 have put their names forward. Although this may seem a large number, it is only marginally ahead of the last two years when 52 and 38 entries resulted.

The next target date is 27th September 27 when authors should have uploaded their games to the competition site. The games are then due to be released on 1st October for six weeks hard judging period. All votes must be in by 15th November. All timings are set to 11:59 Eastern Standard Time on the stated days. All the details are at <http://www.ifcomp.org/comp03/>

Italian One Room Competition details were brought to Drifters attention on the forum by Woodfish. There is an English language page that gives the rules for this all formats event.

http://www.avventuretestuali.com/One_Room_Comp/ORGC2003/Orgc2003_eng.htm

Forum news

A proposal for an ADRIFT Store was made following some discussion elsewhere. The idea of being able to purchase a variety of ADRIFT branded merchandise was popular, although there was some feeling that it needed to wait until we had a more stable release of ADRIFT to advertise.

In the end such an idea really needs to be run by Campbell Wild as he created ADRIFT and should have any benefit. He is yet to comment.

An idea of what was proposed can be found at <http://store.gcn.cx/>

December 21, 2003

ADRIFT End of Year competition 2003: entries in and judging starts

This is a competition for any game made using the Adrift Interactive Fiction Creation System that was released during the calendar year 2003.

The entries must be sent to competition@kfadrift.org.uk, arriving no later than 15:00hrs GMT on Sunday 21 December 2003. I will then try and get everything together for judging to commence that evening.

January 04, 2004

ADRIFT End of Year Competition 2003 Judging ends

Judging ends today, with marks to reach KF by 15:00hrs GMT on Sunday 4 January 2003.

January 10, 2004

InsideADRIFT Issue 13 due out today

The January/February issue of the ADRIFT newsletter should be out today.

April 18, 2004

ADRIFT Spring Competition 2004: entries due in

This is a competition for new ADRIFT games, there is no limit on the game size except that it should be less than 400kb OR if larger it should be hosted elsewhere and a link supplied. More details will be posted later. Judging will take place in the 2 week period to 2 May 2004.

May 02, 2004

ADRIFT Spring Competition 2004: judging ends and results

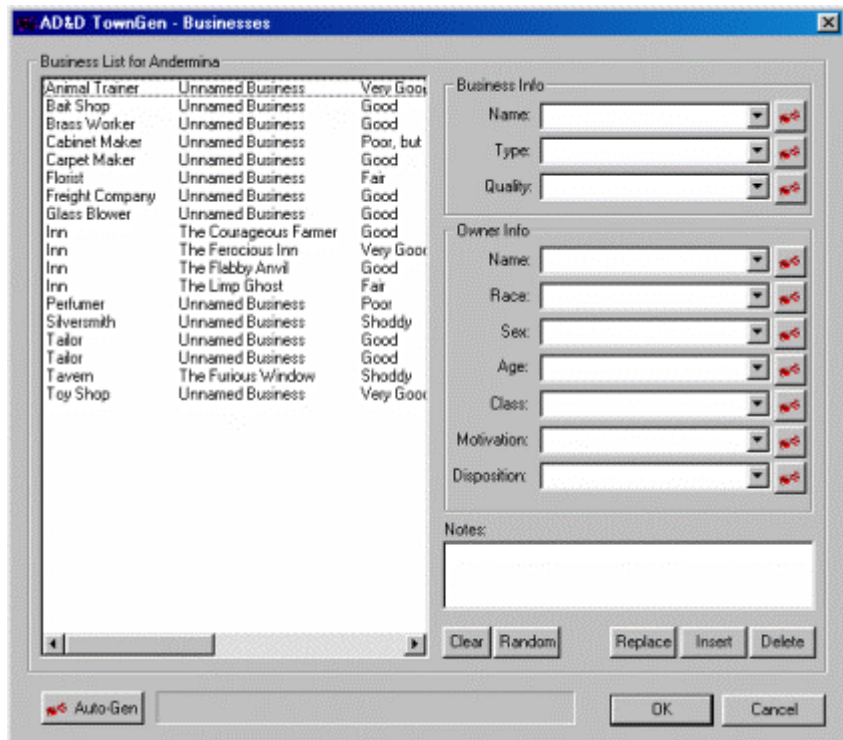
ADRIFT Events Calendar

I have set up an online calendar to disseminate the various dates that are hopefully of interest to the community. Once you are registered you can add any ADRIFT/General IF dates that you think will be useful. Already there are the dates for ADRIFT competitions through to April 2004.

The Events Calendar is at <http://www.calendric.com/kf/index.html>

Drifters Toolbox: TownGen

This is a rather different tool from others that have been looked at here. What it will do for you is, when you specify a size of town, create an appropriate number of tradesmen/businesses for your town, giving them names, ages, backgrounds and personality traits. All of these bits of information can then be edited and saved.



TownGen businesses window

Although it was originally designed for use with RPGs and, by the authors own admission is buggy, I would recommend it for Drifters looking for some inspiration.

Portrait of a Drifter

Woodfish on Woodfish

I am a teenage boy, living in a seaside town in the south of England, in my last year of school, and rather pleased about it. I'll be off to study English and Media Studies in college, amongst other things, and I suppose 'Media' covers most of my interests. I enjoy reading, film, play guitar, and regularly listen to music. Also, I like computers, and especially interactive fiction. My two favourite things about ADRIFT are the friendly community, and the power and creativity it allows you, through such a simple interface. At present I have only released two games, and they have been very small ones - 'The Game To End All Games' in the first one-hour-game completion, which ranked highly, and 'Forum' in the second one-hour-game competition, which came first.



Unfortunately Woody couldn't supply a picture, but I found woodfish.jpg which will have to do.

Downloading TownGen

The software is available from:

<http://www.telusplanet.net/public/vesivus/toolware/index.htm>

You will need the roll tables as well as the TownGen download (and update).

One year down – where to now? By KF

After so many false starts Woodfish released the first ADRIFT newsletter at the end of August 2002, so this tenth issue represents the start of the second year of publication. In the first year we have reached our third editor, as well as third title.

History

The first two issues, under the name Drifters Monthly were edited by Woodfish, with a website by NickyDude the results can be seen at <http://www.madladdesigns.co.uk/driftersmonthly/index.htm>. Issue one, produced as a plain text file, can probably be seen as a high point of the newsletter as it was the culmination of a lot of speculation over such a project. Additionally the number of contributors was never to be reached again, a favourite of mine is the *Let's talk interactive fiction* discussion between En Kerklaar and a camel.

Mystery took up the editor's quill with issue three, and went for a web based format, with an additional PDF version available. In many ways she set down the format that has continued through to this issue. Issue three had the catchy title of ADRIFT Newsletter, as a competition on the forum was deciding the new name. Issue four, with the winning title of InsideADRIFT appeared. The June issue seven was Mystery's last as editor, due to family responsibilities over the Summer holiday.

Taking up the cudgels with the July issue, I restricted my changes largely to stylistic matters, except for the new logo, and that pattern has been followed with issues nine and ten. That said I am pleased to say that the amount of content not supplied by me in this issue is up a bit. One of my innovations has been to create an index for the issues so that we can look back to when an article or review appeared. I have purchased the insideadrift.org.uk

Minicomp round up

Notes on the running of the Summer Minicomp

One of the more interesting comps to run as for ages it looked like we would have just two entries, from Mystery and DavidW. Then Mystery knocked up a conditional entry to make sure the three entries lower limit was reached.

Later on in the week Tech sent in an entry, followed on the morning of the closing day by two more entries.

My part in this

Putting the competition together involves:

1. Putting out the details including dates and rules, normally at least three or four months in advance. Announced on the forum, RAIF newsgroup and my website.
2. Monitor expressions of interest and keep up encouragement to enter.
3. About a month before competition closes start planning for game distribution. I go for online and also an executable installation for offline use.
4. As judging period starts upload entries and details to site and announce availability on forum to judges.
5. During judging period continue pushing on forum in hope someone will judge. Receive marks and collate them so that you keep up to date.
6. Competition ends, last duty is to announce results, also send any

domain name and created a new website there. My aim is to expand the information stored there as a major resource for all, this includes making ADRIFT files available for download.

Future

My intention is that there will be nine issues a year, as last year, this will give me some breathing space in the schedule. Currently the three double issues will be Jan/Feb, May/Jun and Sep/Oct, although this may change. These timings coincide quite nicely with my competitions.

I hope to continue the policy of mixing in interviews with non-ADRIFT figures from the wider interactive fiction world as I feel it is important to try not to be too insular. If I can keep up the level of interviewee it will be gratifying as Stephen Granade and Emily Short are names known throughout the IF community.

The thing I will continue pushing is to recreate the breadth of input from around our group. The only way that InsideADRIFT can move forward is for it to not be the result of the editor scratching together articles because no one else will. One thing I do plan is for the Jan/Feb 2004 issue to include a review of the ADRIFT year of 2003. If any of you have things you want to contribute feel free, and I will then pull the bits together.

I will do all I can to see InsideADRIFT through the next year as editor, and hope that I can reflect in a year's time on the development of a thriving ADRIFT community. The hope is that the current inertia caused by some annoying, indeed critical bugs, along with Campbell's quite natural preoccupation with matters in the real world, will be replaced by a more upbeat feeling that things are back on track.

comments received to authors, to help them improve games.

7. Take breath and then think about next competition.

Entrants

"ADRIFT-O-RAMA" by Mystery

"Jim Pond & The Agents Of F.A.R.T." by DavidW

"The Leviathan Labyrinth" by Cheryl Howard

"Sun Empire: Quest for the Founders (Part I)" by Tech

"The Worst Game In The World... Ever!!!" by DavidW

"Crimson Detritus" by Mystery was withdrawn when the third other entry arrived.

Results

Reflections

I have to say I am relieved, and grateful to DavidW and Mystery for their assistance in boosting this competition. It can be demoralizing to put in the effort to run a competition and get just two entries, so this looks pretty good by comparison.

This competition has achieved a good number of entries and a decent number of judges, and I will call it a success, thanks to all who have participated.

The next competition, being open to games that have already been released, should have a fair sized entry I hope.

Newsletter Quiz (Compiled by DavidW)

Are you a real ADRIFT game spotter? If you are can you answer these questions? (answers at the end of the newsletter)

Section 1 - Black Sheep' s Gold

1. Where is Campbell' s salamander hiding? (1 point)
2. For one point each, name the items you need to pick up in the cave system to sell later at the store. (3 points)
3. Name one of the Trask boys. (1 point)
4. What is the name of the sheriff you report the Trask boys to? (1 point)

Section 2 - Doomed Xycanthus

5. What is the name of the wizard who has cursed you? (1 point)
6. How do you get the key from the statue? (1 point)
7. How do you defeat the toads in the temple? (1 point)
8. Name the home city of Malevol. (1 point)

Section 3 - Goldilocks Is A Fox

9. What is the name of the cow? (1 point)
10. What does the big bad wolf want when he comes knocking on the door? (2/1 points)
11. What do you order off the Fairyland Shopping Channel? (1 point)
12. What kind of creature has Prince Charming been turned into? (1 point)

Section 4 - Miscellaneous

13. In which game do Aphrodite and an acoustic guitar playing giant leech appear? (1 point)
14. Vorgon is a dragon worshipping cult member in which game? (1 point)
15. In which game does the organization known as R.O.S.A. feature? (1 point)
16. The Blue Keg Pub appears in which game? (1 point)
17. Which horror game is set in the district known as Black Hill? (1 point)

The (big) idea

Look at other IF systems

Too often when a Drifter says that they are looking at TADS and INFORM we tend to say "Oh no, there goes another one". There is no need for it to be like that, looking at other systems can be a part of developing as an IF author.

Some will find that they like the flexibility of a programming language, while others will be horrified at the complexity of programming.

Only the most blinkered of Drifters would say that ADRIFT is perfect, and cannot be improved upon. Looking around will give a better idea of what is possible elsewhere.

18. The bizarrely named Devil of Operose makes an appearance in which equally bizarre game? (1 point)

19. In which game does Chris Tyson (Sarazar) pop up as the Devil? (1 point)

20. Which game features two boys sucked through a time warp in a closet? (1 point)

21. Which ADRIFT game is based on the Spectrum classic, Skool Daze? (1 point)

Maximum score – 25

Think piece by KF

Can ADRIFT earn respect from a wider audience?

There has been a lively discussion in the rec.arts.int-fiction newsgroup. Starting out trying to answer the question what is the easiest system for a new author to write a game in, it has moved on to be very largely about whether ADRIFT is a good system for producing good games.

It is intriguing to see the attitude of some in the wider IF world, as well as some members of our community. A point that must be conceded by us is that there is no ADRIFT game that can be put forward as the great work. This does not mean there are no good games in ADRIFT, merely that none of them is a must play game.

A spin off of this thread is a discussion of ADRIFT as a programming language, with questions about how, for example, you could program the game with 250 lockers, all of which can be looked at, and unlocked/opened if necessary. It has been largely a question of how things are perceived. With very little effort I can do looping and branching in a manner using tasks and variables, yet the perception is that there is no if then else take construct. The truth is that there is using restrictions and task calling. The programmer should think of a task as a procedure or function, that is a building block.

ADRIFT does have a great limitation which is that you cannot access the guts of the system from your tasks. A question came up as to whether you could program so that a thief could steal a random item from the player. A number of us have looked at the problem but, as there is no easy way of selecting an item randomly, and ensure it was held

Adrift games wordsearch

CDOGGNILEVARNUM
QSLYMOQZPKGIRLC
URACLMLWJOGYOVA
XEWOPDADKVUKTBM
FDNWLETRIGMKCJP
ANWBLKWEOLPOMWW
ROFOICDXSOOAQLI
FWOYWERSSTNCFLN
RFRBSRSXLEVEKDD
OOUAWOJPJMTDSY
MEMUMMENAGERIEL
HVWELBTSOLSRPGA
OATSEDDQBUKKFZK
MCYXSLYADFAUEEE
EMYSTERYMANORGS

Can you find the following names of ADRIFT games in the word square above?

MENAGERIE
SELMASWILL
FORUM
COWBOYBLUES
PKGIRL
UNRAVELINGGOD
FARFROMHOME
CAMPWINDYLAKE
CAVEOFWONDERS
GOLDILOCKS
LOST
MYSTERYMANOR
MAROONED
WRECKED
YADFA
TEST

Remember, it is just for fun, no prizes, just the knowledge that you did it. Sorry if I missed your favourite, but there wasn't space for more.

by the player. This is an important fact as it does prove that, in certain cases, ADRIFT is not as capable as the more general IF languages.

A lot of us would like to see ADRIFT expanded by changing the nature of the file structure to implement a language, as the module system sort of does. Were modules to be expanded to provide an interface to the whole game we would be in a stronger position, although the ease of breaking your game would be a problem.

Where ADRIFT can always score, and it is interesting that it is now THE default system thought of when discussing GUI IF creation systems, is that a new user can put together something without great effort. As always this is a double edged sword as the new users efforts will normally be lacking technically and be open to attack. Nevertheless it is the new non-technical user who is the lifeblood of ADRIFT. If we just tell them they have written rubbish, rather than suggest where they went wrong, they will probably look elsewhere.

Perhaps ADRIFT will achieve a place in the niche market of short story IF. While major works will probably be put together with INFORM or TADS, that may well be a lot of effort for someone who is in essence writing a short story. This is not a bad thing as the short story is a large market, if we can just target it right. Remember that the writing is just as important in a short story as a long one, and because you have less words to tell the story the text has to be better written to get the story over in a more limited amount of time.

Failed game intros

Just an idea, we all have on our hard drives games that we have started, but have failed to get to the point of release. Thought it might be interesting to see how some of these games start off, to that end I have included one of my many failed game intros.

It is inspired by the weird story of T. Lobsang Rampa, who was originally a plumber. He wrote books of a spiritual nature after allegedly being entered by the spirit of a Tibetan Monk. Many completely believed him because his stories so actually reflected Tibetan life.

W.A. Crabstick Stairwell: mystic librarian

W.A. Crabstick Stairwell was contemplating, as he often did since his body was entered by the spirit of a Tibetan monk, the meaning of life. As a librarian who had discovered the spiritual Nirvana that is UDC, he had concluded that although, you could never classify everything that happened in the world, you could have a pretty good try. You are his pupil learning the art of Zen librarianship.

If you have an intro or just an idea you think Drifters might enjoy, why not send it in to InsideADRIFT.

Interview: Woodfish questioned by KF

Thank you for agreeing to answer a few questions for InsideADRIFT.

Q1. In preparation I have been looking back to the first couple of issues of the newsletter that you edited. I was quite surprised by just how good the content was at that time, there appeared to be a lot of Drifters contributing. What are your memories of that time when you managed to actually get something published after all the false starts?

I was overjoyed at first, to actually have worked at something and had it published, where others have tried and failed. To add to this, it was something that the whole community was involved in, so as well as me trying hard at it, everyone else was eager to contribute and make it a success. When the first two issues came out, they were quite packed and I was pleased at the assortment of content we had in there - it took a lot of organizing, but the end result was worth it, and led the way for others (such as this fine publication!)

Q2. In a bid for inspiration, I have been looking at your interview with DavidW. The important question appears to be, how did you get involved in the world of interactive fiction, and more particularly ADRIFT?

I have always been a fan of adventure games, but since I am fairly young in relation to other fans of the genre, I don't have the memories of the 'adventure era'. When I first got my PC, a friend introduced me to interactive fiction, and being the sort of person who isn't content with just playing a game, I took to the internet and began to search for something that would help me fulfill my desires. ADRIFT was the first one I actually found, and after downloading the software and playing around with it, I logged onto the forum, began chatting, and I was hooked. The close forum and community are still one of the main reasons I stick with ADRIFT.

Q3. The last few months have been quite tricky for the ADRIFT community. So many of us have had bad experiences with bugs which caused them to consider other ways of creating their IF. What was your take on the situation?

Newsletter Quiz

Answers

Section 1 Black Sheep's Gold: 1. In the toilet; 2. Plate, cross, watch; 3. John, Mike or Bill; 4. A Marcus.

Section 2 Doomed Xycanthus: 5. Malevol; 6. Kiss it; 7. Throw the pouch containing the dead snake into the pool; 8. Helipoli.

Section 3 Goldilocks Is A Fox: 9. Daisy; 10. He says he wants the three pigs (1 point) but you actually get rid of him by giving him the pork chops (2 points); 11. toast-o-mastic 3000 atomic 3 slot toaster; 12. A frog.

Section 4 Miscellaneous 13. Invasion Of The Second-Hand Shirts; 14. O.N.N.A.F.A.; 15. The PK Girl; 16. The Lost Mines; 17. The Woods Are Dark; 18. The Wheels Must Turn; 19. When Beer Isn't Enough; 20. The Timmy Reid Adventure; 21. Report Espionage.

Maybe I'm just lucky, but I think I have only ever encountered about three bugs with ADRIFT in my life. On the forum, though, I've seen bugs springing up all over the place, and I understand it is a big obstacle currently blocking ADRIFT's advance through the IF community. I think that now Campbell is back working on ADRIFT after his absence, there will be more solutions to these problems.

Q4. Recently you ran a competition for ADRIFT games to be written in one hour. As well as organizing the competition you were the winner with the highly amusing "Forum", for which many congratulations. What sort of experience was it running the competition?

Well, that's a hard question to answer, because it doesn't really come into the category of an 'experience'! I simply liked the idea of these short minicoms which people can easily enter, not have to spend too long working on, but still receive good comments and feedback. Also, the very spirit of finishing a game and coming high in a competition, however 'mini' it may be, can be inspiring and make people want to release proper games of their own. And, of course, it's a bit of fun for everyone. I am very happy I came first in the One Hour Competition, and I'm grateful for all the comments people have given me - I also hope I haven't offended anyone in their 'mutilations'!

Q5. Do you have any views as to the future of ADRIFT and the community? Are we on the up, steady, or heading for a fall?

I think the main selling point of an authoring system is a good number of amazing games, which people will play and be inspired by. This also gives the chance of the system to show off its capabilities, which I think ADRIFT should be really trying to do now, as many people seem to underestimate its power. The PK Girl was a good example of this, and hopefully there should be many more heading for release and following along its lines. We also need to sort out all these bugs, and hope that v4 will eventually turn back to freeware, which I think will increase the popularity a lot. So over all, I think that we are rising in popularity, and hopefully that will be highlighted with the Annual IF Competition coming up.

Q6. Do you have any current projects that you are prepared to discuss at this time?

Of course! I have a fantasy adventure in development at the moment, which will be my first full-sized game released. It is a story-based adventure, and I intend it to contain a mix of genre elements, but I don't want to say too much about it, because I might jinx it. I am very proud of it so far and I hope I get round to finishing it off. Also, I have a surreal adventure called 'Active Fiction' awaiting release, which I may enter into a minicomp.

Thanks once again for cooperating with this interview, and for your great contributions to our community.

A pleasure.

Review by DavidW

"The Night That Dripped Blood" by Cannibal

The Night That Dripped Blood isn't, as I'd first suspected, a story

about vampires but instead about the sinking of a U Boat from the Second World War and... well, saying more would give away too many details of the storyline. The gory title aside - which brings to mind the sort of blood 'n' guts image of pulp comics - there isn't a lot about "The Night That Dripped Blood" that is particularly horrifying. Only once is there any real violence in the game and even that is over with pretty quickly.

The town of Critch, where the adventure place, is large and sprawling with several non-critical locations thrown in for the player to wander around. The game is quite linear though the few extra locations go quite a way to making it seem like there is more to do than there really is.

One of the game's major failings is a lack of items to be examined. Listed in the rooms description are numerous items yet attempting to examine them invariably leads to the dreaded "you see no such thing" - never a positive sign. Indeed, interaction with static items is on the whole quite poor. You can't open cabinets, lie on beds, turn on or watch the TV, etc... While static items often play no real part in a text adventure as such, it's never a good idea to not

programme a response for at least a few of them. In this sense, "The Night That Dripped Blood" harks back in a way to the text adventures of the 1980' s which seldom contained descriptions for all but a few of the static items, but whereas those adventures were restricted by size and thus couldn' t include descriptions of everything, this adventure isn' t. Due to lack of examinable items, playing the game can quickly become frustrating. Trying to examine one item after another and being told you see no such thing leaves a lot to be desired. Indeed, there were a number of locations that didn' t seem to contain anything I could examine

and I found myself wondering at one point if this was really a finished work and not a demo in progress.

One feature which is used, though not very well, is the ability to choose which sex you are. Unfortunately, as is often the case with choosing the sex of the main character in a text adventure, it makes precious little difference whether you choose to be a man or a woman. Indeed, I had sex at the end of the adventure with a woman whether I played as a man or woman which I felt was strange. Kinky, but strange. A little more effort into programming some separate responses for male and female characters would have been nice.

On the plus side, The Night That Dripped Blood is well written and as the storyline unfolds there is a genuine sense of unease. The only time the game really lives up to its title is at the very end when the submarine rises from the depths of the sea. A sequel, we are reliably formed in the end credits, is forthcoming. I judged "The Night That Dripped Blood" as a first attempt at a horror game that doesn' t really work that well but suspect that the follow up will (hopefully anyway) be quite a bit better.

Logic: 7 out of 10

Nothing terribly illogical although several of the events seem strange to say the least.

Problems: 5 out of 10 (10 = no problems)

Lack of examinable items was a major flaw but aside from this there was little actually wrong with the game.

Story: 6 out of 10

A slow starter but a reasonably good storyline starts developing towards the end of the game.

Characters: 3 out of 10

Several different ones but, alas, they have little in the way of conversation aside from a few programmed pieces.

Writing: 6 out of 10

Above average.

Game: 5 out of 10

An okay game that could have been a lot better.

Overall: 32 out of 60

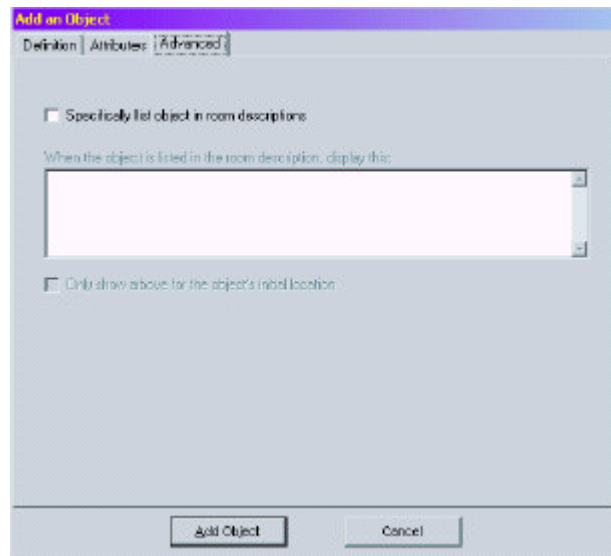
Reference

Finishing the manual pages that cover objects we come to advanced features. This details how you can customize how the program will describe objects, changing the default options. This is a powerful feature that came in with Version 4.0 and can often be ignored.

Manual pages 17: Object advanced features

Advanced features

Clicking on the **Advanced** tab brings up the following display:



By default, all dynamic objects are listed in a room description if they are in that room, and static objects are not listed – you are expected to describe them explicitly in your room description.

In the advanced tab, if your object is static, you have the option to select **Specifically list object in room descriptions**. This lists the object in the form "Also here is ..." as though it were a dynamic object.

If the object is dynamic, the checkbox becomes **Do NOT list object in room descriptions**. This prevents the object being listed. The object will still be there; just there will be no notification. You would usually want to use this feature if you were to explicitly write the object into some other description.

You can also override the default "Also here is <objectname>" with your own custom message by filling in the box **When the object is listed in the room description, display this**. This will then be displayed on it's own after listing any other objects.

If you want the custom description of the object to only occur when the Player first comes across the object (i.e. before they take it for the first time), check the **Only show above for the object's initial location** box.

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