

InsideADRIFT

The newsletter of the ADRIFT community

Issue 28

March/April 2006

News and announcements

Anticipation mounts for ADRIFT 5

With little real news in the community over the past couple of month, aside from the Writing Challenges Competition (More on that in The Comp Zone), there has been some more attention focused on the next version of ADRIFT, even though it is still many months away.

The hope must be that Campbell Wild will share his developments with us at regular intervals, but will make sure the new version is pretty robust before it is opened up to too much scrutiny.

Contents

News and announcements.

1. News (Anticipation mounts for ADRIFT 5)

1. Editorial
2. Interrogation of suspect `recorded by Christy Henshaw
7. Don't take it so hard by David Whyld

2. The Comp Zone

5. The Community Pool

Including: Drifters birthdays, Events diary, ADRIFT recent releases)

9. The Big Wide World of IF

9. InsideADRIFT merchandise

Issue 28 t 25 Mar 06

Editorial

Another two months fly by, and here I am thinking what to write again. You can see how short we have been of real news, which means this is on the front page.

Ken Franklin

Contact

Send any suggestions, requests or comments about the newsletter to: editor@insideadrift.org.uk

InsideADRIFT merchandise

You can now purchase an exciting InsideADRIFT mug, if you so desire. It has been updated with the new logo. The store is really not fully operational, if you are interested look at

www.cafepress.com/insideadrift



This is the home of competitions in the newsletter. Here you will find information on competitions past, present and future that are of relevance to the ADRIFT community.

The Writing Challenges Competition

David Whyld has been running this minicomp, and has offered some very nice cash prizes to entice drifters to enter.

The idea of the event is to create a game based on one (or more) of five locations that have been used in Nickydude's monthly writing challenges on the forum. To keep it as a minicomp there is a ten room upper limit on games, but no other restrictions. Entries had to be in by Saturday 18th March, with the result due to be released on 1st April.

There are four games entered in the competition. They can be downloaded from the main Adrift website at <http://www.adrift.org.uk/cgi/new/download.cgi?905>

InsideADRIFT Summer Competition 2006

http://insideadrift.org.uk/mwiki/index.php?title=InsideADRIFT_Summer_Competition_2006

The rules for the Summer Competition are now available from the above address. It is an event for any, non-AIF, Adrift games that have not been previously released. It is allowed to expand and release a game that has been entered in a minicomp, such as the Writing Challenges Competition.

Entries are due in by 30th June, with judging running until 31st July (unless there are too few entries, in which case the period could be shortened).

One Room Game Competition 2006

http://www.avventuretestuali.com/orgc/orgc2006_eng.html

This is an all-formats event that was recently announced on RAF. It is organised among the Italian IF community, but is open to everyone. (The site appears to be down as I write this.)

Interrogation of suspect 'Drifter' recorded 03/03/2006, 02:00 by Christy Henshaw

Interrogation room 3

Interrogated by 'M' and 'B'

'M': So, 'Drifter', what is your real name?

'Drifter': What's yours, 'M'? Or yours, 'B'?

'M': Fair enough. So, you've been posting on 'The Forum' as it's called, for what, two years? Three?

'Drifter': Three years and five months.

'M': And in all that time, you've only released one demo game, is that right?

'Drifter': Nooo, I've released loads of games!

'B': Oh? Doesn't look like it. What have you been doing all that time, posting, asking questions, arguing about 'mimesis' and suchlike, without actually writing any games? It's just a wee bit suspicious is all.

'Drifter': Who said I wasn't writing?

'M': Well, it seems pretty obvious. We've checked the Adventures page, Drift On, Shadow Vault, even trawled through the IF Archive. And somehow there's just the one demo.

'Drifter': Hm. Someone must've deleted all my games before you got there. I'm being framed I tell you!

'B': Framed by who? You're not exactly alone in this. We've got 246 other people under investigation – you just happen to be the worst offender.

'Drifter': Really. Cool. How so?

'M': For example, you're always going on about your games on the forum, and you've had at least two 'Works in Progress' in your signature for over a year now, without any actual delivery. You understand, we can't go into *a//* the intelligence we have on you. Security reasons.

'Drifter': Wow. I'm flattered, I mean, I'm outraged! This is all lies!

'B': So then, if you've been writing, as you say you have, can you please enlighten us on what you have actually been producing?

'Drifter': Well, now that's a question I can answer. Okay, let's see, first there's this game about a zombie hottie named 'Zelda' who can make you do...

-ten pages and 5 hours later-

...and if you forget to pull the little peeling strip of wallpaper in the storage room, you die. That's it.

'M': (yawning) So tell me 'Drifter'. If you have actually written all this, and you've actually programmed all those puzzles and character interactions, contraptions and real-time plots, etc., then *where are they all?*

'B': And don't say on your hard drive. We've already checked.

'Drifter': Well, okay, fine, I confess. I didn't release any of those. And they aren't on my hard drive. They're all history.

'M': 'History'?

'Drifter': Gonzo. Deleted. But listen, I've got this great new idea, and this one will definitely be released... It's about this vampire hottie, named 'Gerda', and she has these mind control powers...

'B': 'Drifter', please, just – shut up for a minute. Now. Why haven't you released any of these games you wrote? Out of exactly 38 of them?

'Drifter': It's complicated. I don't know. Actually, I never really analyzed it. I just didn't, okay? So arrest me.

'M': We did. And if you want to get back to your precious computer, you better give us some straight answers.

'Drifter': (Moans piteously). I can't tell you anymore! All I can think about is how I'm gonna program Gerda's leather whip so that it can...'

'B'. So you have nothing else to offer us? What about your colleagues? Why aren't *they* releasing any games? Why do some of them 'lurk' instead of post on the forum? Why do they talk about their games, and then these things never come to light?

'Drifter': Maybe the most fun is in thinking up the basic scenario and characters. Maybe because it's cool to spend 25 hours on programming one puzzle that's got you really stumped, then run out of steam. Maybe it's because thinking up a good plot is actually really hard, and getting a good ending out of it is even harder. There's a lot of pressure, you know? It's like a cartel, the IF world: you have your dons who organise everything and discuss things to the nth degree, and your freshers who just fool around and do basically nothing, and your final-years who are actually doing something, and your die-hards who really live for it, and...

'M': Isn't that more like Oxford University than a criminal organisation?

'Drifter': Not that different. I know, I went there.

'B': Oh? That isn't on your profile.

'Drifter': HA! That's because I'd never admit it! And if you spread it around, I'll only deny it.

->'B' looks at 'M'. 'M' sighs. 'B' closes his notebook.-

'M': 'Drifter', you're free to go.

'Drifter' leaves Interrogation Room 3 at 08:00.

'B': (muttering) Only 246 of these people to go.



Make a splash in...
The Community Pool

*All those regular bits and pieces about the community are gathered together in **The Community Pool**. At the moment it is the birthdays list, events diary and list of recent releases, but is there anything else that is missing?*

Drifters birthdays

April 2006

- 1 Echo (21); Hellspaw (39)
- 2 KFAdrift (45); Deadman (43)
- 3 sfzapgun (41); seigmann (34)
- 6 ifc6467 (39)
- 7 WebMonster (17)
- 8 TedEBearNC (45)
- 9 JamesBaldwin (36)
- 11 ToddWat (39); Slayerized (20); Cobra1 (23)
- 14 kICkAdEvIL (23)
- 15 Onierosv7point0 (19)
- 17 Leaflander (53)
- 22 Boredom Man (31)
- 25 wolf (26)
- 27 flea (17)

May 2006

- 1 Incoming (25); bluemoon (36)
- 6 gamerfreak1020 (18)
- 8 ShogunNZ (33); Kojiro (24)
- 9 Sandy Fowke (27)
- 10 Hawkrune (33); gscbw (23)
- 11 fairyale (23); azurestone (22)
- 13 cchillindawg (14)
- 15 jimtun (36)
- 16 Ray (60)
- 31 Heal Butcher (32); CowInParachute (17)

Events Diary

March 2006

31st **Spring Thing 2006** games must be submitted by today.

May 2006

27 **InsideADRIFT Issue 28** due out

June 2006

30 **InsideADRIFT Summer Competition 2006** Entries must be in by today

July 2006

1 **InsideADRIFT Summer Competition 2006** Judging begins, minimum 3 weeks duration

31 **InsideADRIFT Summer Competition 2006** Judging ends

ADRIFT recent releases

These are the latest releases from the ADRIFT site, why not try one or two?

Complete games

The Writing Challenges Comp (89 Kb, wcc.zip) By David Whyld, released Sat 18th Mar 2006

All four entries in the Writing Challenges Comp:

- * Man Overboard!!! - by TonyB
- * Glum Fiddle - by C. Henshaw
- * Too Much Exercise - by Robert Street
- * Jonathan Grim: Space Tourist - by Ren

Showtime at the Gallows (38 Kb, gallows_release.zip) By TDS, released Sun 5th Mar 2006

When faced by the Devil, what does one do? (Warning: subject matter may offend some)

The Makeshift Magician (12 Kb, Mag.zip) By Chenshaw, released Sat 11th Feb 2006

You learned magic on an internet course, and you're now conducting your first performance - can you keep the kids happy and keep thier hot moms at bay?

A new one-room adventure for your (brief) pleasure!

Demos

HOTEL CON FUEGO (28 Kb, Hotel_con_Fuego.taf) By Magic Dave, released Thu 9th Feb 2006

Welcome to Hotel con Fuego, a beautiful tropical resort on a secluded peninsula in the Caribbean Islands where the wealthy come from all over the world to find peace and relaxation. With its fifty luxury suites (all with ocean views), three different pools, spa, gym, tennis courts, golf course, three private restaurants and a Cabaret, the Hotel con Fuego is perhaps the most luxurious resort on the island. What nobody knows, however, is that the hotel will be nothing but smoldering embers in just twenty-four hours. Nobody, that is except for Joe Park. Genre:Comedy

Size:Incomplete . . .more to come soon! Comments: Please beta test this if you have time. I need input!

Elevator (2 Kb, Elevator.taf) By Magic Dave, released Mon 6th Feb 2006

This is a demo for creating a pretty realistic elevator (I threw a lame puzzle in there so you don't get too bored going up and down.)

X Me (2 Kb, Me.taf) By Hombre, released Thu 2nd Feb 2006

This is a demo of using tasks to change the description of the player based on what he/she is wearing.

Hold Breath (1 Kb, Hold_Breath_Demo.taf) By David Whyld, released Fri 27th Jan 2006

A simple demo with a couple of times events dealing with holding your breath to avoid poisonous gas in a room.

Don't take it so hard by David Whyld

The recent debacle over Greg Broulette's swift arrival and even swifter departure from the forum* got me wondering if people take what is, essentially, a hobby a bit too seriously at times**. And that's what ADRIFT is: a hobby. Sure, it'd be nice if you could get paid to write adventure games but you don't. So look on it as a hobby because at the end of the day that's just what it is.

* In short, he released a demo of a game he was working on, got people's opinions on it, acted completely reasonable and level-headed, released the game, had some negative comments made about it – and threw a full blown tantrum (it, apparently, being everyone else's fault for pointing out errors in his game and not his own fault for not fixing them all prior to release). Down came the game, down came the page on his website where he also had the game, off went Greg into the sunset... Perhaps the most disappointing thing is that, while his game was undeniably flawed and in definite need of some fine tuning, it showed he had potential.

** And ignoring the fact that I've tended to get worked up myself a time or two over this *hobby*.



So why is it people get so fired up about it? Yes, it's frustrating when you write a game and people don't like it (we've all been there). It's probably worse for newbies because it's the only thing people know them by so you're basically making or breaking your reputation based on this one game. Write a good one and people will remember it for a long time (as with The PK Girl and Unraveling God); write a bad one and you'll likewise be remembered... although for all the wrong reasons. Unfortunately, most newbies seem to take every negative comment their game receives as some kind of personal insult, even those comments that are trying to be helpful and the pointing out of errors is done in an attempt to advise the author how best to fix them.

Of course, you need a pretty thick skin if you're going to be writing games. People are under no obligation to play them and even less to like them. Don't release your first game and expect people to fall over themselves to tell you how great it is. In particular, don't assume that because it's free and you're doing this for a hobby that people are going to be any less scathing in their criticism of it. I've heard more than a few comments over the years from people who seem to be of the opinion that if the game is free, then it doesn't matter what it's like. It can be poorly written, riddled with bugs, impossible to finish. A complete mess in other words. Yet if it's free, the argument is, what right do people have to complain over it?

The answer is, simply, that "right" doesn't come into it. Write a bad game and people will complain whether it's a commercial work or completely free of charge. Even if you're donating the proceeds to charity, if the game stinks badly enough you'll have people giving you a hard time over it. In short, no one cares that the game is free because there are so many other free games out there. If they don't

like yours, they won't stick with it just because you put a lot of time and effort into it. They'll go play something else instead. So if you're going to release a game, prepare yourself for a few negative comments about it at the very least. In particular, don't throw a hissy fit if people don't like your game as much as you do. Take the game down and depart and you've only wasted your time writing it in the first place. Fix it and the time spent on it will at least have been time well spent.

Greg Brouette is hardly the first person this kind of thing has happened to. Check back over the past few years and you'll find lots of people who have come along to the forum, made a favourable impression, released a game that hasn't done very well... and then never been heard from again. Greg sticks in mind a little better than the others because a) he's the most recent one, and b) the others left somewhat more, um, *quietly*. But hunt around and you'll find plenty of others who have been discouraged from writing any further games because their first one hasn't done very well.

So what's the solution?

Should people reviewing or commenting on games by newcomers bear in mind that the game is someone's debut and make allowances for this, perhaps accepting that it won't be as polished or flawless as a game written by someone who has three or four games behind him? That sounds like a fine idea in theory but in practice I don't see it working. As *The PK Girl* and *Unraveling God* proved, newcomers *can* write great games first time round if they're prepared to put in the necessary effort. Step outside of the ADRIFT world and you'll find plenty of people who wrote great games with their first try. So there's no really no need to make such allowances for newcomers in this respect. If they've tried hard enough, and listened to advice, and tested their game thoroughly beforehand, there's no reason it can't be every bit as good as any other game out there.

My own view is that it isn't the reviewers, the commentators or the voters who need to rethink how they judge a newcomer's game. It's the newcomer himself who has to change his viewpoint and learn to take a few lumps if he wants to have favourable things said about his games. As said above, this is a hobby. That applies to both the game writer *and* the game player. Write a bad game, expect bad reviews. Write a good game, expect good reviews (although be prepared for the bad ones as well because not everyone likes the same things). As simple as that.

In other words, don't take it so hard if your game isn't as well received as you'd like it to be. Pay attention to the comments made about it (some will be just knocking the game in general, but most will have something constructive to say), fix whatever's wrong with your game and go on and write a better one.

Learn from your mistakes and maybe, just maybe, you'll write that great game one day



We have a very lively community for users of ADRIFT, but we are a small part of the wider IF community, and this section is intended to refer to what is going on out there.

2005 XYZZY Award Winners

The usual XYZZY Awards ceremony has taken place. Unfortunately no one has been able to follow through with an Adrift winner, though a former drifter, Roberto Grassi was among the winners – well done Roberto.

The full list of winners is as follows:

Best Game: *Vespers* (Jason Devlin; Z-code).

Best Writing: *Vespers* (Jason Devlin; Z-code).

Best Story: *Beyond* (Roberto Grassi, Paolo Lucchesi, and Alessandro Peretti; publisher: Mondì Confinanti; Glulx).

Best Setting: *Vespers* (Jason Devlin; Z-code).

Best Puzzles: *Distress* (Mike Snyder; Hugo).

Best NPCs: *Vespers* (Jason Devlin; Z-code).

Best Individual Puzzle: *Following the murderer in Beyond* (Roberto Grassi, Paolo Lucchesi, and Alessandro Peretti; publisher: Mondì Confinanti; Glulx).

Best Individual NPC: *The storyteller, in Whom the Telling Changed* (Aaron A. Reed; Z-code).

Best Individual PC: *Wendy Little, in Tough Beans* (Sara Dee; Z-code).

Best Use of Medium: *Mystery House Possessed* (Emily Short; Z-code).

InsideADRIFT Merchandise

Although this is not intended as a money spinning idea, more a way to create items for me, these items are available for the discerning drifter to purchase.



The boxer shorts, priced at \$13.49, with a discreet InsideADRIFT logo on the right leg.



Costing \$17.39, the baseball jersey comes in red/blue/black and white.

Also available from www.cafepress.com/insideadrift are: trucker hat \$11.79; sweatshirt \$22.39; sleeveless tee \$15.89; women's tank top \$15.89; mousepad \$11.49; teddy bear \$13.79; sticker \$2.69; journal \$7.69; messenger bag \$19.99.

© 2006 Edited by KF.

Please send any contributions or suggestions to editor@insideadrift.org.uk.