

Churchill's Ark

Date - 4/06/2008

Genre

Adventure RPG

High Concept

Churchill's Ark is an adventure game where the player controls a detective whose crime-solving skills increase with the more mysteries he solves.

Premise

In Churchill's Ark, Alan Steinbach is a young private eye who has just recently started his own detective agency. His first case is brought to him by the mother of a young man who mysteriously disappeared a few years ago. He has been missing for so long that the police have given up trying to find him. By trying to track down the missing son, Steinbach uncovers a dangerous plot. An extremist underground cult is attempting to destroy all humans on Earth except for their own chosen ones. Steinbach won't stand for any of this nonsense and sets out to stop them.

Churchill's Ark plays as an adventure game where you control Steinbach through a point-and-click interface. The way in which Steinbach solves any given mystery depends on his skills. For example, if he is more charismatic, he can convince non-player characters to do more for him; if he's more intelligent, the puzzles he comes up against will be easier; and so on. Steinbach improves these skills through solving more and more cases.

Goal

The goal of the game is to solve the main case involving the missing son.

How It Works

Basic Mechanics

The gameplay is focused around solving cases. There will be a large variety of cases that Steinbach will solve throughout his journey. Though the main case is the focus of the game, there will also be a multitude of side cases which Steinbach can take on as well. Cases are solved by talking to other characters, gathering and using items, and solving puzzles.

Money will also play a key role in the game. It can be used to buy goods and services, as well as bribe characters. These purchases can often help to bypass difficult problems; for example, if Steinbach can't find the key to a door, he could buy a lockpick set. Money is acquired through solving cases.

Detective's Abilities

The following four abilities shape the way Steinbach solves cases: Charisma, Intelligence, Perception, and Fitness. Charisma determines how well your character interacts with others. Intelligence determines the complexity of the tasks you do. Perception increases your chances of finding or picking up on important clues. Fitness assists you when your wits aren't good enough to solve the crime and need to bop some heads.

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Steinbach levels up these abilities by solving problems that use them. For example, if he manages to talk his way past a security guard, he would gain experience in charisma. Steinbach can also take classes to gain experience, but these will cost money. When enough experience in an ability has been gained, that ability goes up a level.

Side Cases

A player can choose to take on some side cases while trying to solve the main case. These side cases are provided to give an opportunity to make more money and level up Steinbach. The availability of side cases will be dependent on Steinbach's progress through the main case – continuing the main case will unlock harder side cases. Side cases will occasionally relate to the main case (and possibly help in solving it) but they usually will be separate from the main case.

Success & Failure Conditions

The player succeeds if he solves the main case. There is no way to lose the game, though the player can fail to solve a side case.

Carrot Says:

Title: Churchill's Ark

Written by: rkcr

Week 3

High Concept: Succinct and to the point, plus it gets across what the game is about, nice job.

Critique: It seems to me that the main draw of *Churchill's Ark* is the strong, interesting, story and the tough puzzles. I would love to say that it could be a really fun game; but there really isn't any example of either two given. A tiny bit of back-story is discussed, but the extremist cult bent on world destruction is a bit trite in the realm of interactive entertainment, so it isn't really all that interesting. Puzzles are talked about even less; without even the glimmer of an example given. Now I know that it can't be expected that this Treatment contains a fully designed and well thought out puzzle; but can't there at least be a bit of an example?

The most interesting mechanic found in *Churchill's Ark* to me is the variable difficulty based on the player's stats. I like it because it gives the player something of a choice as to how hard the puzzles in the game are; even if they can't undo their choice. My only problem with the system (the level up system as a whole actually) is that it seems that the player doesn't have a choice as to whether or not they level up their skills. Currently, the player gains experience and levels up a skill if they use said skill; it seems to me that unless the game is balanced perfectly, the difficulty curve will actually go down as the game progresses instead of up. I think that it could be interesting if the player is given

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more of a choice when leveling up, maybe they don't want their intelligence to go up because they want the challenge of the puzzles and maybe they don't want to extend their fitness to make fights that much tougher.

Presentation is top-notch; the document flows nicely, paragraphs are succinct and to the point, useless information doesn't clutter up the page and there aren't any spelling or grammar errors assaulting my eyes. I also enjoy the flavor text sprinkled in that imbues the character of the game; sentences like "*Steinbach won't stand for any of this nonsense...*" and "*Fitness assists you when your wits aren't good enough to solve the crime and need to bop some heads.*" really add some spice to the read.

Overall; a generally dull and old genre looks like it can be revitalized by some interesting twists to the gameplay and a charmingly well written cast of characters. This is the type of game that would be a cult favorite, with critical acclaim from all the reviewers, which never sells enough units to warrant a sequel. Who's to say if that's good or bad, but with strong characterization and a well written story, I believe it would be able to buck the trend.

Fun: B-

Presentation: A

Originality: C