

GABRIEL KNIGHT: THE SINS OF THE FATHERS

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Sierra On-Line

Publisher: Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 485,
Coarsegold, CA 93614

Rating: 

REQUIRED

386DX/25
4MB RAM
18MB Hard-drive space
MS-DOS 5.0 or higher
VGA
Mouse

WE RECOMMEND

486SX/25 or faster
Sound Blaster or
compatible sound card

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**MATTHEW A.
FIRME**

Almost all of Sierra's graphic adventures have turned into series: *Police Quest*, for example, and of course *Leisure Suit Larry*. With *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers*, we're witnessing the very promising birth of a new adventure cycle.

The eponymous Knight is an aspiring writer and book dealer, based in the colorful environs of New Orleans' French Quarter. He's a disheveled, hip, likeable character, and in the beginning of the game he seems to have a lot less idea where his life is headed than we do. His book store — left to him by his father — isn't making much money, and a severe case of writer's block has really slowed the actual writing component of his career. But he eagerly dogs his police-detective buddy Mosely, with whose help he hopes to crank out a real-life murderbook. He prefers field work to desk work — and that preference guides his life down a remarkable path.

The fact that Knight is a strong character is important, because ultimately all graphic adventures are pretty much alike. You talk to people, search rooms, pick up objects, and move on to the next scene. There's nothing wrong with that: in fact, it's those familiar ground rules that draw me back to the genre again and again. But a successful graphic adventure requires a character you'll enjoy playing as, and a story worth playing through to the end. *Gabriel Knight's* got 'em both.

As Knight investigates a bizarre series of murders, he's drawn into the New Orleans Voodoo subculture. It's a fascinating world, and the game's designers do a nice job of balancing the true origins of this strange religion with its more ominous implications. Compounding the drama is the gradual realization that Knight has a strange history of his own: He's descended from an old German family of *shattenjagers*, or shadow hunters. It soon becomes obvious that Knight's destined to become a *shattenjager* himself, and dedicate his life to hunting supernatural evil. This creates both a terrific ending for the game, and a pretty neat basis for future Gabriel Knight adventures.

Adding depth to the game's excellent framework are some unique settings and a cast of memorable supporting characters. You'll travel from Louisiana to Germany and even Africa, and inter-



act with people who are, on the whole, more fully developed than the secondary characters in most graphic adventures. And the game is considerably longer than many, giving you even more time to immerse yourself in its story and settings.

Considering the solid plot and cast, it's no surprise that the actual game mechanics are as good as they are. *Gabriel Knight* uses a stylized-but-familiar Sierra interface that never intrudes on game play. Knight moves smoothly to perform any action you assign him, even in those tricky action sequences where timing is everything.

Graphically, *Gabriel Knight* ranks among Sierra's best efforts, especially in its cut scenes and interludes. The music and sound are good, too. *Gabriel Knight* ships on both disk and CD-ROM, and the CD-ROM version makes pretty ambitious use of voice acting. Tim Curry plays Knight, Mark Hamill plays your policeman friend, and Efrem Zimbalist Jr. plays your old uncle Wolfgang. To tell you the truth, though, I enjoyed the game much more without the voice actors; I didn't think Curry was very good as Knight, and preferred my own "imagined" voice for him and most of the other characters. The one exception was *Star Trek* star Michael Dorn, who made for a pretty good Dr. John.

I enjoyed playing *Gabriel Knight*, and I'm already looking forward to the next game in this new series. Sure, the world of a *Shattenjager* can get a little hokey. But then I loved that old *Night Stalker* series with Darren McGavin, too.

