

## Steve Bauman uncovers evil in the new Gabriel Knight adventure

**H**orror was one genre that hadn't been done to death in the gaming world until the release of *7th Guest*. Now horror games are appearing in droves, with games like *Alone in the Dark 3*, *Phantasmagoria*, *11th Hour*, and *Harvester* appearing in early 1995. One game that will likely be quite different from all of those titles is Sierra's sequel to *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father*, called *The Beast Within*. Like *Sins of the Father*, it will feature a more cerebral and classic horror style that is more Mary Shelley than Clive Barker.

*Sins of the Father* has its limitations, but it's still a respectable design. Why? It's pretentious as hell, but how many games are there you can actually make that claim about? It is one of the few games to use imagery and mood to convey a lot of its inner meaning, whereas most games dumb down to their target audience and feature no depth whatsoever. *Sins of the Father* is talky, but features more character development and interaction than most adventure games. It also features a lot of extremes in emotion and is one of the few games that explore the dark side of religion and philosophy. That side of the game is most interesting; let's hope for more explorations of same in *The Beast Within*.

### Werewolves and Wagner

The plot of *The Beast Within* finds Gabriel exploring his German ancestry in what was formerly known as Bavaria. As is usually the case when Americans go poking around in foreign lands, he becomes caught up in an adventure, only this one involves werewolves, King Ludwig II, and Richard Wagner (games mentioning Wagner will replace first-person action games as the next hot thing — see the preview of *The Ring Cycle* elsewhere in this issue for further proof).

Since the game is set in Germany, expect a highly detailed and accurate history of the area. The designer of both *Gabriel Knight* games, Jane Jensen, is known for her careful research, and this game

will no doubt perpetuate that reputation. You will again control Gabriel, with your secretary Grace being a stronger character in the game and taking a more active role in helping you solve the mystery. You will be able to control them in separate chapters much like you could in *King's Quest VII*. Jensen and her staff spent over five months working on the plot and on a 700 page script, and it will be filmed in Sierra's new multimedia studio.

### It's got video

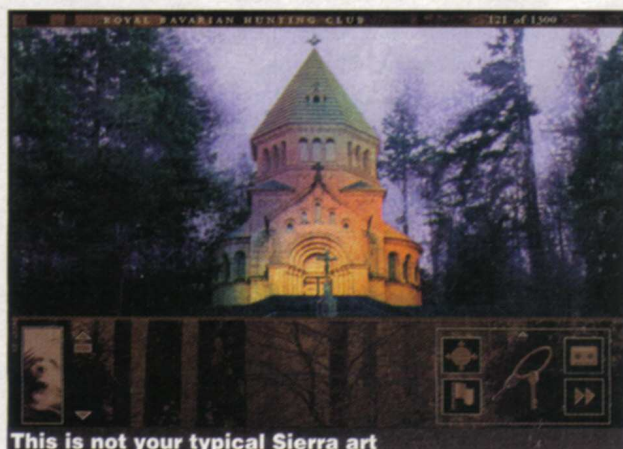
The first game uses hand-drawn animated graphics that are quite effective. The new game will use the now-standard digitized actors with computer rendered backgrounds. We will see if this will benefit or distract the gamer from the mood and atmosphere the first game has. The video included with our preview CD wasn't final, but looks quite a bit better than most other games of this ilk (and it was running under Windows™ to boot).

Because they are using filmed actors instead of just voices, Tim Curry, Mark Hamill, and Michael Dorn will not be back this time around. Casting is uncertain at this point, but designer Jensen is opting for actors that actually fit the roles, rather than picking name actors and forcing them to use accents and costumes. This is revolutionary thinking from an industry that seems obsessed with integrating Hollywood at all costs; it can only benefit a game that takes place in Europe.

*The Beast Within*, like its predecessor, is aimed not only at adults but also at more mature gamers. The game promises to represent werewolves in a more sensual light, much the way Ann Rice has done in her use of the vampire myth. The story should thus be familiar ground to anyone who knows the actual legends rather than Hollywood's version of them. Those looking for a more classic and subtle form of horror, one that takes the mundane and distorts it, will be certain to find something they like in *The Beast Within*. □



Note the changes to the game interface



This is not your typical Sierra art