

April 2003 Issue 5

Inside ADRIFT

Welcome to Inside ADRIFT! As time goes on, the ADRIFT Community continues to grow. I'd like to welcome all of our new members. Don't forget to stop by the [ADRIFT Forum](#) and get great tips on using ADRIFT! If you have any content you would like to contribute, please mail me at mysterydrifter@netzero.com

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Manual-Information right from the ADRIFT V4 Manual. This issue features Alternate Room Descriptions

Announcement!

There isn't much time left! The ADRIFT Spring Competition is open for any unreleased, but complete, ADRIFT games. Competition entries must be in by 20 April 2003, with judging taking place in the following week. [ADRIFT Spring Competition](#)

Happy Birthday Drifters!

Echo-18, KFAdrift-42, WebMonster-14, TedEBearNC-42, ToddWat-36, Slayerized-17, Leaflander-50, Boredom Man-28

News

ADRIFT BUGS/ENHANCEMENT LIST

Campbell Wild has added a bug/enhancement list for ADRIFT users to report any bugs request enhancements. You can view the list and report bugs and request enhancements at <http://www.adrift.org.uk/bugs> Thank you for your patience.

The Amazing Poodle Boy's One Room Mini Comp, held during March 2003 has closed. The winner is an entry by 30otsix called **The Dead Man**. Following in second place was **The Office**, by Davidw. Third place went to The Mad Monk with **Montahue Scott And The Mobius Belt**. Thanks to everyone who took the time out to enter and participate. It can't be done without you.

Breaking out of Writer's Block- Part 2

By Apryl Duncan

Part I of Breaking Out of Writer's Block examined the many factors that could freeze your words. Now, let's take a look at how you can write your way through Writer's Block.

The Cure!

After you've beat your fists on the keyboard and taken two aspirin for that migraine, try these cures for writer's block:

- **Revisit**
Re-read some of your previous works. Maybe it was a journal entry. Perhaps you wrote a poem once. It doesn't matter if you're working on a novel. You can still gain insight and even inspiration from something else you've written.
- **Change of Scenery**
How many times have you heard a song that reminds you of something? Perhaps you heard that song a dozen times a day when you were in college. So that particular song brings back memories. The same goes for scenery in your every day life.

If you're sitting in the same room, day after day, the scenery's going to get old. That scenery starts to remind you that you're not writing.

That you're stuck in what seems like a hopeless case of Writer's Block.

The solution is simple. Seek out a change of pace. Go for a walk. Take a drive.

- **Rewrite Another's Work**

Check out a newspaper or magazine article. Now rewrite that story from a new angle. Maybe a young girl was kidnapped. Police are still looking for the suspect and the little girl.

Your version of the story might portray the young girl as the daughter of a lawyer. Perhaps one of his clients wasn't happy with the way his own daughter's murder trial was handled. So he kidnapped the defending lawyer's pride and joy.

Apryl Duncan is the founder of fictionaddiction.NET, a Writer's Digest Magazine Top 101 Web Site for Writers. She is an author, workshop instructor and professional freelance writer who enjoys writing everything from mystery novels to how-to articles on the writing craft.

Coming next Issue- Part 3 of Breaking Out of Writer's Block!

Interview- Special Guest Stephen Granade Interviewed by KF

Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Sometimes it may seem that the Adrift world is somewhat insular so it is good for us to get input from the wider IF community.

KF- First a broad overview. As the organizer of the Annual Interactive Fiction competition, and the creator of the Brass Lantern site (<http://brasslantern.org>), what do you believe is the current state of the interactive fiction community? (is it going forward or stagnating)

SG- It's certainly not stagnating, but I don't know that "going forward" is right, either. That implies a goal towards which the community as a whole is striving, and one of the strengths I see is that people are pushing the envelope in all sorts of directions. Even in the area of language design there are a number of different approaches being tried. For example, ADRIFT's intended audience is authors who don't want to focus on programming, while the upcoming new version of TADS, T3, has a lot of strong simulationist aspects.

When I first became involved in the community, the overarching goal was to recreate the Infocom experience. We've done that, and done a lot of the easy things. What's left now are harder, less-obvious things. How do you make it easier to write interactive fiction? How do you do a better job of simulating the real world? Is that even a goal to strive for? What types of IF gameplay are there beyond what we've seen so far?

KF - What do you feel is the role of competitions in game development? Should they be seen as a goal in themselves, a showcase for talent or just a challenge?

SG- Different competitions have differing purposes. For instance, Neil deMause started IntroComp to encourage authors to think harder about the first impression their games give. The Annual IF Competition was begun to encourage the development of short games written in Inform. Competitions can help direct authors' energies by giving them a potential common goal.

KF- What is your preferred authoring system? Would you ever consider producing a game with Adrift?

SG- TADS is my preferred authoring system, and has been since 1993. I doubt I'd write a game in ADRIFT. For one, I'd have to learn a new language. For another, I'd have to pay for this language. For a third, my needs are currently met by TADS, and I'm very excited about T3.

KF- Adrift games were noticeably higher placed in last years Annual IF Competition, from your reading of things, do you think that there has been a change in the way Adrift games viewed?

SG- The quality of ADRIFT games in the competition has generally been viewed as increasing, and any system for which you get decent games will be viewed more positively.

KF- Taking this into account do you have a view as to how the image of Adrift can be improved with the greater IF community? Do you think that the current jAsea (Java runner) and SCARE (C based runner) projects will have a big impact?

SG- I think jAsea and SCARE will have a big impact on the IF community outside of the current ADRIFT one. One of the biggest drawbacks to ADRIFT games has been that they are available for Windows only, and there are a number of people who run MacOS or Linux. Widely-available ports of the

ADRIFT Runner will widen the potential audience for ADRIFT games.

Ultimately, though, the "image of ADRIFT" is created by the games written using ADRIFT. Far more people will be exposed to ADRIFT via games rather than via writing games in ADRIFT. Better games equates to a better image - and I'm not talking about games that are good only in comparison to other ADRIFT games. Saying, "This game is pretty good for an ADRIFT game," is a backhanded compliment, rather like saying, "This book is pretty good for a science fiction novel." Such ghettoization should be avoided if at all possible.

KF- Are there any projects that you are currently working on and can give some details of?

SG- I'm currently toying with the prerelease version of T3. With any luck, I'll actually use it write a game. At this point, though, I have nothing specific to talk about.

Thank you once again for agreeing to answer these questions.

Review -One Room Minicomp Reviews *by various authors* Reviews by David Whyld

The Dead Man by 30otsix

Pretty good for a game set entirely in a single room. The writing and storyline were way above average for Adrift games... but it wasn't without its problems.

Guess the verb was bad in a few places - using the syringe was a long way from straightforward - and the events that had the screen flashing white and then moving all the items you were carrying onto the floor left a lot to be desired. It was also annoying having to stand up again every time the event ran or be told that certain tasks couldn't be completed because you were lying on the floor.

Most of the events could have done with some speeding up: being forced to sit and wait through the intro or the time when the man bangs on the metal door each time you play the game was irritating and cuts down on replay value although with it being a game set in a single room there isn't a lot of replay value anyway.

But bad points aside, this was a great example of how you can get a reasonably decent game in just one room.

6 out of 10

Montahue Scott And The Mobius Belt by the Mad Monk

A strange interpretation of the "one" room rules aside (the game is set in one room but the player needs to travel to another to find an item needed to complete the game) this is actually quite amusing. The plot makes no sense whatsoever – although the title may have given away the fact that this isn't an entirely serious game – but there is enough gameplay packed into the one and a bit rooms to make up for any shortcomings.

Though Montahue Scott And The Mobius Belt can be completed in a fairly short number of moves, it isn't a particularly easy game. The task involving getting the communication device fixed had me stumped for a while although in hindsight it was a reasonably straightforward puzzle.

5 out of 10

Escape From Insanity by Mel S

With echoes of The Evil Chicken Of Doom (another of Mel S' games), Escape From Insanity is a strange little game in which you have been consigned to an insane asylum and must figure your way out. Though quite inventive, the game was let down in parts by guess the verb problems and also by the player being alternatively referred to as "I" and "you", making things more confusing by the moment.

A short game, but not an easy one. Escaping from your padded cell at the insane asylum isn't easy and requires quite a bit of thought to make much progress; sometimes obvious things don't work and it's down to a simple case of try everything and hope something succeeds.

5 out of 10

Everything Emmanuelle by MileOut

I was expecting to like this one (MileOut's first game since Panic) but it left me quite disappointed. It's certainly well written and engaging up to a point, but it also seems vaguely pointless. There's no score system so it's difficult

to judge whether you're actually making progress or not, and while the multiple endings of the game are a nice touch they don't really seem to indicate if you achieved anything. Ultimately I was left with the impression that this was an attempt to do something different and while it succeeds at being different it doesn't succeed very well.

4 out of 10

Dreamland by Echo

Even for a one room game, this was small. Dreamland seemed to consist of nothing more complicated than filling a waterskin and then subsequently emptying it, although this wasn't as easy as it sounds due to some truly dire guess the verb problems.

Writing a review for a game like this is a struggle because there's so little on show here it's difficult knowing where to start. The intro was at least reasonably engaging and there's the makings of something worthwhile here, but ultimately Dreamland suffers from being so straightforward that it's essentially over before it's even started. A few more puzzles – indeed any puzzles – would have been nice.

3 out of 10

I by Christopher Cole

Not the sort of game I was expecting from someone with the writer's reputation for adult fiction, and not really my sort of game either.

The one room in this game is a coffin in which the player is lying (presumably having died at some point). Making progress isn't just hard, it's downright nightmarish: indeed it's one of those games where I just couldn't figure out a way to progress at all, ended up looking in the Generator to see what I had to do next and then sat there thinking "well, how is anyone going to figure that out?"

Sorry to say this but I'd have sooner had one of the games Chris is more usually known to write. It would have beaten this one hands down.

2 out of 10

Trapped With A Girl by Schoolsinger

Well, one game had to be my least favourite and unfortunately it was this one. There was a strange event in the game that kept repeating itself every turn and which gets steadily more irritating as you go along (didn't the writer notice this during playtesting?) The spelling was truly dire - vaccum instead of vacuum, Jasmin sometimes being referred to as Jasmine, excuse instead of excuse and so on.

I actually found this the hardest of the competition entries to play and after making little progress I just gave up, cheated, and looked in the Generator.

It's probably unfair to judge a one room game by the same standards as you would a full game but by any standards Trapped With A Girl doesn't rate very highly.

1 out of 10

In The Manual

Page 10 of the ADRIFT V4 Manual

Alternate Room Descriptions

Alternate room descriptions allow you to change what is displayed dependant upon certain circumstances. To add a new alternate description, simply click on the Add button. You can also click on the Description Details tab – if you do this, you will be prompted with a dialog box asking you if you want to add a new description.

To see a screenshot, please check page 10 of the ADRIFT V4 Manual

You can change the description of a room depending on:

- Whether or not tasks have been executed
- What state particular objects are in
- Whether the Player is or is not holding, wearing, or in the same room as a particular object

Once you have selected the circumstance for the description change, you can enter the description into the relevant box. You can also have it display

a different description if the circumstance has not occurred.

You can get the main room description to change also. This is useful if you want to create a dark room and don't want to give away any details about the room. For example, you could create a restriction that a light switch must be in state "On", have a description in the "else" part of the room being "It is dark." and have the short description displaying "In a dark room".

There are three occasions when you can display the alternate description. These are:

- **Start room description with this one** – This overrides the main room description completely, displaying only the alternate description. Any other alternate descriptions higher up on the list are completely ignored.
- **Start directly after Long Room description** – This appends onto the end of the Long Room description. Any other alternate descriptions higher up on the list are completely ignored.
- **Append to other descriptions** – This appends the room description to any other descriptions higher on the list which are being displayed.

There is also the option to hide objects in the room. Again, this is mainly useful if you are setting the room up as a dark room. Simply check the checkbox.

Directions

To allow movement between rooms, you must define which rooms you can move to from the current room.

Clicking on the Directions tab brings up the direction screen: See ADRIFT V4 Manual for screenshot.

Here, you can define for each direction, which room you wish to move to. You will notice, initially, the off-Cardinal directions are greyed out. To enable these, you must select Enable 8-point compass from the Options screen.

You can limit movement in these directions based upon certain criteria. These are:

- A task must be either complete or not complete

- An object must be in a particular state

To do this, select the relevant options from the drop-down menus. When relying on object states, the last drop down menu will only populate items for objects that have defined states.

Coming next issue.....OBJECTS!

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Mystery is the editor of Inside ADRIFT. Thanks to everyone who made contributions to this issue and continue to show support. If you have something you would like to contribute, please e-mail me at mysterydrifter@netzero.com