

Leisure Suit Larry 6: Shape Up Or Slip Out!

Studio: **Sierra On-Line**

Designer(s): **Al Lowe**

Part of series: **Leisure Suit Larry**

Release: June 15, 1993

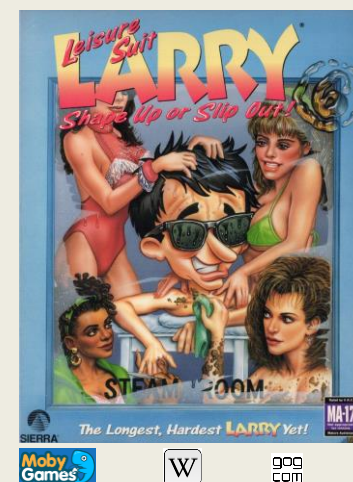
Main credits: Lead programmer: **Juan Carlos Escobar**
 Graphics: **William D. Skirvin**
 Music: **Dan Kehler**

Useful links: [Complete playthrough, parts 1-7](#) (7 hours 36 mins.)

Basic Overview

With the release of *Larry 5* in 1991, it may have easily seemed that this was the end of the road for the leisure suit loser — and a pretty inglorious end, too, plagued with issues of bad design, super-stupid plot, and borderline «funny» humor; if the most interesting thing about a Larry game is seeing what happens when you combine your restaurant napkin with your bank card, this is more than enough incentive to never buy another Larry game. However, despite its generally (totally deserved) poor reputation, *Larry 5* still seems to have sold reasonably well — and, after all, the *Larry* franchise was easily the second most solid pillar supporting the Sierra building (*King's Quest* being the first one), so it was more or less clear, I guess, that as long as there'd be a Sierra at all, there would be an Al Lowe in it, working on yet another *Larry* game in some cubicle or other, next to Roberta Williams.

To Al's credit, he must have understood and taken to heart all the problems connected to Leisure Suit Larry's crossing over to the age of the point-and-click interface, and if you play all the titles in chronological order, *Larry 6* gives a very clear impression of a lesson learned. First of all, Al decided to return to the series' roots in that he completely stripped the next game of anything even remotely resembling a plotline — from now on, it would all be strictly about Larry's attempts to get laid



within the confines of a certain mini-universe, precisely the way it was in the *Land Of The Lounge Lizards*. While, in theory, this was not necessarily a perfect decision — after all, there was nothing wrong with the plot elements in *Larry 2* or *3* — in practice, if you were given the choice between a plot-based *Larry* game like *Larry 5* and a *Larry* game that refused to tell a story on principle, the choice would be obvious. By the early 1990s, adventure games had evolved, demanding better and deeper developed storyboards, and AI, a natural joker but not such a natural storyteller, clearly had to struggle to satisfy those demands (remember that AI's funniest story-driven game, *Freddy Pharkas*, actually required collaboration with Josh Mandel to get off the ground). So if you cannot come up with the idea of a great adventure for Larry Laffer, better not let have Larry Laffer experience any adventure at all — other than the greatest adventure of them all, that is (you know what I mean).

Second, with Sierra gradually learning to adapt to the strategies and aesthetics of the point-and-click universe, a lot more care was invested into the overall design of the game — especially now that it was completely plot-free and left everybody's hands untied for deepening and broadening the little closed open world of Larry Laffer. Graphics, music, puzzle design, depth of interaction, optional choices, Easter eggs: *Larry 6* has improved on the quantity and quality of all these aspects, and on top of that, it was the first *Larry* game to finally endorse voice acting. What was not to like? Clearly, it was a return to formula, and, in fact, an iron endorsement of said formula for eternity; but as long as the formula could come in fresher and brighter colors with each new game, it was sure to find a base for support, at least among the hormonally active segment of the gamer population (and that's, like, approximately 150% of it).

Even if the overall results did not particularly amaze critics and fans at the time — it would be fairly difficult to make as much of a sensation of *Leisure Suit Larry* in 1993 as it made in 1987 — the game still had a solid commercial showing (which ultimately guaranteed the future of a *Larry 7*), and, in retrospect, is frequently seen in retro-reviews and top lists as one of the best entries in the entire franchise, beaten out only by the first game (for reasons of historical importance, because how could the first game not be the best game?) or by the last one (for reasons of a more technical nature, because how could the latest game not be the best game?). Certainly it is the first *Larry* game which — potential offensiveness and issues of «misogyny» aside — could be fully palatable for a modern audience, given its halfway decent graphical resolution, voice acting, and near-total independence from the previous titles in the series.

Whether it is the perfect and quintessential envisagement of the iconic character of Larry Laffer is another, more questionable matter of a more philosophical nature (and few of Sierra's franchises, of course, raise as many philosophical discussions as *Leisure Suit Larry*). In any case, One thing is certain: unlike *Larry 5*, *Larry 6* is definitely a game I would enjoy to write about, so let's just get to it.

Content evaluation

Plotline

As I already wrote, *Larry 6* has none, though I guess this is not entirely true if you embrace a very literal understanding of the term «plotline». At the beginning of the game, our old friend Larry Laffer — probably once again suffering from acute amnesia, since no details of his eventful past ever resurface during the game — is found loitering around the beach, where he is chosen to take part in a TV game show and rewarded with a week-long stay at the lush tropical health spa of «La Costa Lotta» (big hello from *Leisure Suit Larry 2*, but one thing you gotta get ready for is Al mercilessly rehashing motifs from older games).



Once over there, our hero quickly learns that he can check in any time he likes, but he can never leave — at least not until he has ~~paid his bill in full~~ done his best to seduce every single single girl staying at the hotel, each of whom, accidentally, is named after a brand of wine (all the way from Chardonnay to Burgundy) and each of whom has to be pampered in her own special way in accordance with her ethnic, cultural, and sexual preferences. The top prize is Shamara Payne (Sham-Payne, get it?), a gorgeous lonesome (anti-)socialite meditating in her solitary penthouse — in Larry's own words, "just another self-made, wealthy, healthy, New Age, 90's fast-pace dropout looking for meaning in an otherwise meaningless existence", getting into whose pants for Larry becomes the meaning of his life, and for you, the chief condition of beating the game (and everything else).

The story is thus laid out in a hierarchic fashion: to get to the Top Girl, you first have to go through a series of Everyday Girls, each of whom eventually leaves you sexually dissatisfied but with a little special «gift», all of which you then have to bring back to the Top Girl in order to win her respect and have her accept you as her spiritual and, ultimately, physical guru. This is, indeed, the exact same formula that had been used by Al in the first (and, with a few extra twists, in the third) game, except that this time around, you can actually get to Shamara's penthouse very early on in the game (Eve, the Top Girl of *Larry 1*, could not have been found until almost every other puzzle had been solved), meaning that your final goal can be clearly defined right from the start, so that the game does not produce such an «aimless» feeling as its predecessors.

Predictably, all of your game time will be spent roaming the (rather vast) expanse of La Costa Lotta in an open world manner: you can tackle the Everyday Girls in almost any order you like, but the Top Girl shall remain out of your reach until you properly go through all of them. Along the way, Larry will also bump into various other stereotypical characters, such as the Strong Sexy Black Lifeguard, the Wimpy Gay Towel Attendant, the Stupid And Pervy Security Guard, and, of course, Ken Williams and Al Lowe themselves (don't let the name «Art» for the latter fool you — the appearance is unmistakable). But, as befits the spirit of the franchise, male presence throughout is strictly limited compared to female one: as the narrator admonishes our protagonist during an unfortunately embarrassing move in the male shower, "why are you looking at naked men? you are supposed to be looking at naked women!"

It goes without saying that you are not going to remember much of the «story»; however, you may well be left with memories of some of the characters, because the sarcastic, satirical vibe that Al had in him from the start had only strengthened and expanded with time, and this time around, Larry's «victims» are written much more sharply and in juicier detail than ever before. There is a funny stereotype of a Latin American immigrant ("you must enjoy working with children?" — "no, *making* children much more to my liking!"), a super-sporty girl suffering from «bungee addiction», a health-crazy socialite who enjoys bathing in yak's milk ("besides, the yaks seem to really enjoy seeing me naked!"), a dominatrix who "got more leather for you than you know what to do with", a sequin-dressed Southern gal who "ain' no goddam blues singer, am country thru' and thru' and proud of it"... and, well, others.

Modern sensitivity will probably be ticked by some of the ridiculed clichés, and particularly by the portrayal of a trans character — or, more accurately, the portrayal of Larry's reaction when he learns that the character is trans — but this is where a smart person will just have to keep in mind the age of the game. In general, however, the one simple thing that you have to remember about Al Lowe is that he always tries to be funny, never hateful; and, additionally, that both male and female stereotypes that he makes constant fun of are every bit as real in life as non-stereotypes (but you do not even have to play a *Larry* game to be aware of that). If there is a *true* downside to Al's humor, it is that with each new game in the series it tends to go a little deeper down the toilet (almost literally so) — episodes such as Larry's subjection to Rose's "High Colonic Treatment", or all the incessant dick jokes, are something that the game could probably live without and still be hilarious, as the earliest, more cautious and generally self-censoring, games in the series prove all too well.

On the other hand, with the help of the character of Shamara Payne Al delivers probably the most vicious and brilliantly worded destruction of the «New Age philosophy» type that I have ever seen in a video game — I have no idea which particular spiritual leader pissed in Al Lowe's coffee around 1992, but it must have been a big one, given the sheer amount of ridiculously

pseudo-mystical dialog he wrote for his character. Perhaps the underlying idea — that Shamara's one-woman journey toward Spiritual Enlightenment is really just a side effect of her sexual frustration — is rather predictably cheap, but hey, you have to consider it in light of the general philosophy of *Leisure Suit Larry*, which is, of course, that «nothing is real but the sex», and that the sooner all of us, men and women alike, give in to our animal urges, the closer we are to achieving true bliss. That one true bliss you always achieve at the end of a *Leisure Suit Larry* game, that is. (Except for *Larry 5*, but this is precisely why that one was such an affront to the franchise!).

Puzzles

Enough philosophizing, though, let us rather discuss the puzzle design. First, the game is smart enough to retain what was good about the re-design of *Larry 5* — namely, the impossibility of getting stuck and the lack of death scenes requiring the player to restore a game — and correct it to better match the classic Sierra spirit. This means that death scenes are back with a glorious vengeance — the health spa of La Costa Lotta packs more dangers to your health than a trip to the Central African Republic — *but* after each of these you have the additional option to «Try again», reverting you to the precise location at which you were in that game before taking that fatal, fatal step (such as unzipping in front of Gary the Towel Attendant!). I may be wrong, but I think that *Larry 6* was the first Sierra game to implement that trivial, but efficient mechanics, ensuring that you can leisurely explore all the risky options without crossing your fingers or having to press the Save button every five seconds.



Second, the challenges this time are *real*, compared to the laughable lack of difficulty in progressing through *Larry 5* — but very rarely are they *tough*; completing the game is more a matter of meticulously exploring your surroundings, picking up all the necessary hints, and keeping sharp track of your surroundings and inventory than of rising to some sort of outstanding intellectual challenge. As usual, in order to get where he is going, Larry has to demonstrate occasional elements of street-savviness, but I can remember of only two puzzles which did indeed include a few cases of putting two and two together — the quest to steal a pair of handcuffs from the security guy, and the quest to provide Merrily the Redhead with free means of admission to the Bungee Jumping Tower. Everything else was more or less self-understood...

...well, maybe except for a few cases which could have been designed better. In one situation, for instance, you have to take a couple of items from an NPC without actually seeing them on the screen — you have to blindly «Operate» on the guy to come into their possession. In another situation, you are commissioned to bring a bottle of mineral water which appears out of the blue in a location that you most likely have already explored previously (and far from the most obvious one, either): this feels like a bit of lazy, last-minute design that should have either been rethought or altogether cut out. In yet another case, in order to get a required object you have to «Operate» on it several times in a row without getting any serious hints that you are getting anywhere near your goal — also far from an ideal strategy to save players from frustration, the necessity (in 1993) to order a hintbook, or (in 2020) to keep that Internet connection close.

These are, however, little nitpicks in comparison to all the big lessons which AI must have learnt from the failures of the previous game. Another nicety carried over from *Larry 5* is the lack of arcade sequences, which in this case is observed by AI with military-level loyalty — there is not a single moment in the game that would require nimble fingers, which, I think, goes fairly well hand-in-hand with Larry's general character. You are simply encouraged to walk around, take in the sights, try out potentially useful and useless actions, and beat the game by using nothing other than simple logic. Speaking of which, while some of the situations in which Larry gets himself are patently absurd, in keeping up with the laws of Larry's universe, pretty much all of the puzzles are surprisingly logical — yes, even the one about inflating a beaver. Okay, *maybe* the task of producing the world's smallest swimsuit defies logic a bit... but maybe don't knock it until you've tried it.

Atmosphere

Well... this is a game about meeting a lot of beautiful, rich, spoiled, (mostly) vapor-brained women with early 1990s hairdos on the grounds of a lush, gaudy, grotesque, (mostly) tasteless tropical resort. What sort of atmosphere, really, would one expect from such a setting? At least all the previous *Larry* games took place in less confined environments — even in the city of Lost Wages, you had the relative freedom to move from seedier to gaudier areas of the town, whereas further titles would have you travel all over the world (*Larry 2*), between civilization and jungle (*Larry 3*), or at least between different coasts of the US (*Larry 5*), much as the game's budget made them all look similar.



Larry 6, in comparison, feels almost theatrical. At least you can go outside the hotel building to visit the local gardens and beaches — otherwise, it would be not just confined, but claustrophobic. The building itself is loaded with artefacts springing out of the deep well of Al Lowe's berserk-libidinous imagination — hot tubs in the form of huge champagne glasses, barrooms with windows into the bottom of the swimming pool, bungee towers with warning lights for airplanes, and an entire Cellulite Drainage Salon in which you are guaranteed to spend a long time (not because you are in need of draining some cellulite, but because it takes a whole lot of operations to repair the damn machinery). But whether it is truly «atmospheric», and whether there is some sort of weird pleasure to be derived from exploring its nooks and corners, I could not truly say, since I always felt weird about trying to intentionally immerse myself in this «atmosphere».

Instead, I think, both *Larry 6* and its sequel (which follows an almost identical formula) draw 99% of its atmosphere from the dialog — either between Larry and his inner voice (the Narrator), or between the both of them *and* the beautiful, rich, spoiled women. Do remember that even at their most rambunctious, the *Larry* games are not only not pornographic games, they are not even erotic games — they are essentially comedies, where even most of the erotic moments are played for fun. In a good RPG, you get your kicks out of running through the woods, hunting rabbits, watching out for monsters, and listening to tiny wisps of wind on the water (or at least *pretending* to listen, if your RPG is old enough to not support serious sound cards). In a Larry game, you get your kicks out of mouse-poking scantily clad women over various parts of their bodies and getting humorous replies in response ("you surreptitiously extend a finger and, as gently as possible, touch her hand. Instantly you feel a jolt of pure chemical attraction pass between you, a spark of sexual tension that can only mean one thing: raw mutual lust!" — Gammie: "OW! You shocked me! Stop rubbing your feet on the carpet!"... you know, *that* sort of dialog).

It's all silly, and the corny titillation factor is there all right, but in the end, it is all played for parody, and if it is not New Age philosophy to come under Al Lowe's warhammer, it can be erotic pulp fiction, Cosmopolitan, healthy lifestyle ads, Southern charm, or BDSM. Considering that Al has always valued quantity over quality, you have to be prepared for plenty of cringey banality in the amount of silly jokes he throws at you with that dialog — but for every bit of cringe, there is something genuinely funny or even witty. (Sue me, I have even laughed out loud at a couple of *beaver* jokes, hard as it may be to believe that one). I do not know if it is necessarily a good or a bad thing, too, that the focus of Al's sarcasm has largely shifted from the social to the personal in between *Larry 5* and *Larry 6*: on one hand, good humor about corporations and the record industry can be more intelligent and less offensive than humor targeted at human stereotypes — on the other hand, the latter kind of humor is arguably the one that Al does best, and I'd much rather hear him crack jokes about Southern belles, Valley girls, leather-clad mistresses, and even gay people than about the hip-hop industry or the US Congress. But to each his own, I guess.

Technical features

Graphics

Like many other Sierra products at the time, *Larry 6* was originally shipped in a floppy disc version, without any voice acting and with low-res 320x240 VGA graphics. The following year it was re-packaged on CD-ROM, replacing the original pictures with hi-res 640x480 SVGA, a major and stunning improvement on the original back at the time — and even today, might I add, looking fairly respectable when you run the game in full screen mode on modern displays, arguably the first Sierra game to do so.



For *Larry 5*, Jane Cardinal had been the principal graphic artist — I do not know too much about her, but she was clearly a newcomer and outsider to the series, which did result in a relatively unique cartoonish style, as bizarrely incompatible with the spirit of the franchise as were so many other things about the game. Fortunately, for *Larry 6* Al got back veteran Sierra artist Bill Skirvin, who had been there for him ever since *Larry 2* — and even though some changes could no longer be reverted (such as the new big-headed Larry sprite), Bill does his best to return the visual aesthetics of the game to the slightly more traditionalist «tastelessly realistic» look, one that might occasionally poke fun at Modern Art, but does not try to *become* Modern Art, if you know what I mean.

While most of the hotel interiors still retain the weirdly angular style of *Larry 5*, as opposed to the generally straight and unassuming lines of the EGA-era games (for instance, all the doors look like unevenly sided parallelograms rather than being rectangular), overall emphasis is still placed on detailisation: the fact that you are strictly limited to the prison space of La Costa Lotta has to be compensated for by cramming as much *stuff* as you can into these small interiors. Rooms such as the Cellulite Drainage Salon, with its overabundance of weird-looking machinery, or the High Colonic Treatment Suite, with its dazzling ikebana arrangements, are likely to bring terror to the souls of knowledgeable gamers because of all the potential hotspots on which they should be clicking (luckily, most of these details in practice turn out to be irrelevant for progressing in the game). All of this rococo aesthetics, along with elements of garish art design (e.g. the "innocent blush brush about to be penetrated by a large lipstick" on the walls of the makeup salon), contributes heavily to the atmosphere of the game, making La Costa Lotta the epitome of Rebelliously Bad Taste for the Rich and Stupid, not to mention a living symbol of all the

unhealthy side effects of the sexual revolution.

Then again, who are we kidding? You are not here to admire the weirdass design decisions for a health spa; you are here to ogle the lovely ladies, and in this department, Skirvin and his team deliver the goods with so much gusto that *Larry 6* is officially the first Larry game whose girls have graphically survived into the modern age — as good as the art was around 1989, it would still take some serious retro-adaptation to get excited at the sights of Tawni or Bambi from *Larry 3*, whereas the beauties of *Larry 6*, while obviously not up to the technical standards of the 21st century, are nevertheless every bit as eye-captivating as... actually, with de-sexualization of the female image in video games being a common trend right now, they might be more eye-captivating than just about anything. Naturally, you'd have to look past the affronts of the late Eighties / early Nineties look (all that large hair!), but on the whole, there is no denying that the portraits were done by big admirers of the female face *and* the female form (of course, most of the close-ups picture the girls from the waist up, giving the player ample point-and-click opportunity to practice their perverted fantasies).

It is, however, amusing to note that there is even less actual nudity in the game than there was in *Larry 2* or *Larry 3*, where the problems of pixellation actually allowed to play a bit around the issue — here, at the very best, as a punishable Easter Egg you can get a quick look at a single pair of boobies before suffering an inevitable and ignoble death as a result. (The endgame, too, will be disappointing for all you horny players, as the final triumphant consummation between Larry and his gal is played out in clichéd allegories).

In a serious (and relatively rare for Sierra) change of design, the main graphic screen of *Larry 6* is compressed to about 2/3 of the screen, with an irretractable status bar at the top and a large, also irretractable, dialog screen at the bottom, making it look somewhat similar to the classic LucasArts design. This is not a big issue, considering that *Larry 6* is not that hot on panoramic views and most of its action takes place in relatively small rooms and corridors; it does, however, give the artist an opportunity to have a mid-size close-up of Larry and a mid-size close-up of most of his talking companions on screen at all times, which helps enliven the game a bit. Larry himself looks a little less grotesque and deformed than in *Larry 5*, though many of that game's aspects of his depiction have been retained — including the disproportionately huge head, the ridiculously large nose (anybody ever accuse Al of anti-Semitism?), the clear signs of middle age, and, worst of all, that constant lecherous grin on his face (somehow we could avoid having that and still have our fully authentic Larry Laffer back in the days of 1987-89). Oh well, at least all those appearance features seem to agree fairly well with Larry's new voice, so let us now turn to the audio aspects of the game.

Sound

The musical soundtrack for *Larry 6*, credited to Dan Kehler (who also wrote the music to *King's Quest 6* and *Space Quest 6*, if you are truly interested), is not particularly interesting: I think the artist was simply told to write a set of reasonably catchy, but inobtrusive lounge muzak tunes, and this is precisely what he did. In a nice nod to *Larry 3*, many of the «sex scenes» (more accurately, «anti-sex scenes») are accompanied by the same variation on Ravel's Bolero (I don't exactly know why Al chose this theme as his dream soundtrack to *Foreplay Fiasco*, but I have to admit there is something mystically appealing about the idea). In another nice nod to the *Larry* franchise in general, the main Larry theme, reasonably stripped of annoying extra flourishes, plays every time you enter your personal suite. That's about all the nice nods there are.

Arguably the most memorable musical moment in the entire game is a full-fledged country-western tune, played and sung by Burgundy (one of Larry's potential love interests) in the spa's barroom — called 'Cell Block Love', with lyrics written by Josh Mandel, it will be of particular interest to fans of the *Police Quest* saga, recalling the love affair between Lieutenant Sonny Bonds and his former high school sweetheart turned street hooker, Sweet Cheeks Marie. Luckily, the song works even without the backstory, but it will be truly funny only if you *do* know the backstory (I suppose the subject matter came around because Sierra was preparing a VGA remake of the original *Police Quest* at about the same time as Al was working on *Larry 6*). Rumor has it that 'Cell Block Love' was pretty popular among fans, which must have led Al to embracing the idea and milking the hell out of it in *Larry 7*, with its country-western mother-daughter duo and a whole arsenal of parodic songs in their possession (although in that game, all you'd get would be little snippets).

Still, the most important thing, sound-wise, about *Larry 6* is clearly not the music, but the talking: this was the very first time that a *Larry* game could finally get a full acting cast, and Al made sure that everybody was up to the task. The role of Larry himself went to Jan Rabson, a veteran Hollywood voice actor who, up until then, mostly got bit roles here and there; after *Larry 6*, Rabson became *the* Leisure Suit Larry by definition, continuing to voice the little guy in all of his Sierra (*Larry 7*), pseudo-Sierra (*Magna Cum Laude*), and post-Sierra (*Wet Dreams Don't Dry*) incarnations all the way into 2020. In other



words, Rabson pretty much completely merged with his character, much like Dominic Armato with Guybrush Threepwood — his prickly, whiny, nasal twang is just so naturally associated with the image of a little, insecure, slightly pervy, yet generally harmless middle-aged guy that nobody could ask for anything better. I do have to remind the general public that this was not at all the image projected by Larry Laffer in *Larry 2* and *Larry 3* (I truly struggle trying to picture these games voiced by Rabson if they ever decide to remake them, which is not very likely at this moment) — however, the image and personality of the Larry in *Larry 6* (and 7) does indeed agree with Rabson's voicing strategy to a tee. (And, for the record, *no*, he does not sound like that at all in real life: if he did, he'd probably have been committed a long time ago).

My own attitude towards Rabson's work with the character remains ambivalent (I admire the effort, but he does not quite fit with my own ideal of Leisure Suit Larry). The rest of the cast, however, I have absolutely no beef with. As Narrator, Neil Ross is second only to *Space Quest's* Gary Owens with his ability to deliver hilarious and/or sarcastic messages in a deadpan manner. The lovely ladies are all brought to grotesque life with intentionally over-the-top vocal deliveries (to emphasize the caricaturesque nature of all the characters); top prizes go to Iona Morris for her almost terrifyingly dominant Thunderbird ("YOU are the PUPPY DOG, and I'M the MUMMY DOG!"), and to Marcia Mitzman for her more-Southern-than-the-South Burgundy ("..but right now these country-singin' lips are dryyyy!..."), but really, everybody does a fine job. And I simply *must* throw in a special mention for Dave Fennoy, still a long way from voicing Lee Everett in *The Walking Dead* but already irreplaceable as Billy Dee the Lifeguard in his role of ideal and absolute contempt for the title character ("may I call you Billy?" — "preferably, *don't* call me").

In many Sierra On-Line games, voice acting is nice to have around, yet it does not constitute a truly integral part of the game: *King's Quest 6*, *Quest For Glory 4*, any of the late-period *Police Quest* games, etc., are all perfectly playable and atmospheric without voicing. The late-period *Larry* games are a major exception: the intelligent and expertly delivered comedic diction emphasizes the humor tenfold, and often makes even the dumbest of Al Lowe's jokes come to life the way they'd never otherwise come to life if you were to just read the text on the screen. A perfect example is the optional set of personal insults you can get for free by calling Carlos the Concierge — actually, the alias of Carlos Escobar, lead programmer for the game: reading their seemingly inexhaustible array on screen gets tedious in about five seconds, but when they are delivered by Carlos in person, in a clearly exaggerated Spanish accent ("you're nasty, repulsive, repugnant, disagreeable, offensive, belligerent, pugnacious, and antagonistic... and ZEESE ARE YOUR GOOD POINTS!"), it is somehow possible to become glued to your monitor (and speakers) for half an hour. And yes, for better or worse, they just don't make video games like *those* any more.

Interface

Although the base mechanics of *Larry 6* remained essentially unchanged by Sierra standards, the game's overall structural look got quite a big overhaul. As I already mentioned earlier, the main game screen was slightly compressed to free up a large strip of space for a permanent dialog window at the bottom (maybe Al was playing too many LucasArts games at the time). The top menu was also permanently fixed, in addition to being artistically redesigned in garish blue and pink colors, and now included a scrolling menu of inventory items — apparently, the idea was to avoid having any pop-up windows at any time, although in reality it does not work properly, because pop-up windows still appear whenever you want to save or restore a game or change any of the in-game options. (Perfectionists like Steve Jobs would never have approved).

Point-and-click options remain almost the same as they were in the previous game (except that Operate has been separated into Touch and Pick), and also include the infamous «Zipper» icon — but, much to Al's credit, it must be said that now it all works well, and using the Zipper with various objects is really fun to do, because every once in a while it gives you an unpredictable and/or hilarious reaction (e.g.: using Zipper on an innocent sign in the lobby yields "The sign has already been screwed into the wall" — no big deal, but far more satisfactory than getting a generic "Don't do that to the sign!" as you did all over the place in *Larry 5*). Addition of separate Touch and Pick Up icons also makes sense: «Touch» almost always produces a different response (it is particularly tempting to use Touch and Pick Up on the eyeballs or noses of the various ladies to hear their reaction — that is, unless you're the type who would take the MeToo ethics with you to a *Leisure Suit Larry* game, but then, if you've already read this far down, you're probably not).

Honestly, I do not recollect a single action where the Touch or Zipper icons could actually be crucial toward beating the game (there is one action when using the Zipper instead of a more obvious solution gives you a bit more points, though); their addition simply makes you want to spend a little more time with the game, as you uncover little semi-hidden jokes and puns scattered all over the script. You shall probably also want to spend quite a bit of time at the phone in your room, not just to hear all of Carlos' insults, but also to dial all the Easter Egg numbers (now handily available from various walkthroughs and wikis on the Web), some of which lead you to brief snippets of dialog by some of the game's creators, and at least one of which gets you in touch with La Costa Lotta's free Phone Sex Service (predictable spoiler: you are bound to be disappointed, but at least you do get to fiddle around with multiple choices for a while).

Other than that, the game is fairly barren of extra goodies: no boss keys, favorite trite phrases, or whatever it was with which Al used to fill up all that space in the overhead menus. You get the option to turn on auto-saving and save reminders, which is

fairly useless because you can't properly die or get stuck anyway, and besides, I think the Save-o-Matic option is bugged anyway, at least in some versions (I always turn it off, but it still keeps popping up after each Important Event). And there does seem to be a «Filth» level control in the menu, but I am not exactly sure what it does because, like any reasonable *Larry* player, I always turn it all the way up from the start.

The gameplay is fairly straightforward, without any arcade sequences in sight; a few of your actions are timed (but if you miss, you can always retry) and that's about it. The quest to assemble all 1000 points in the game is extremely tough, though, and a few can be very easily missed even with a detailed walkthrough in hand — and sometimes, when they are missed, they are missed for good (like, for instance, if you forget to take a shower after the sauna, which is very likely to happen if you already had a shower before). In any case, I'm assuming that, as it often used to be in previous games, the only reason behind these little optional mini-tasks yielding tiny handfuls of points was to get the player more involved in general exploration and in making the best possible use out of the point-and-click interface. And at least in the case of *Larry 6*, this strategy actually pays off, because the writers are always ready to reward you with a little something extra.

Verdict: *A textbook example of how to make a totally formulaic adventure game feel 100% efficient.*

In some ways, *Larry 6* can be understood as Al Lowe's admittance of defeat: the man is just too old and out of breath to think up a genuinely imaginative new twist on the story, image, and character of Leisure Suit Larry — all the man really wants to do is just keep on telling us jokes. It's largely the same old jokes, but he's churning them out like pancakes, he got millions of them coming, and he's never gonna stop. So why grumble, why complain? The packaging is nicely updated to match advances in technology, the girls look stunning, the voice actors give it their all, the puzzles are intelligently designed, and the humor always trumps the smut anyway.



Still I reserve the right to just a little bit of grumble over what I perceive as a historical injustice. Had *Larry 2* and *Larry 3*, the two games in the franchise that actually had some genuine substance to them, come out in the era of point-and-click interface, SVGA graphics, and voice acting, chances are that *they* would be the games-to-go-to whenever we were talking about Leisure

Suit Larry. Instead, that honor fell to *Larry 6* and *7* — excellently designed, beautifully drawn and expertly voiced titles which reduce their protagonist to a shallow caricature. At least in *Larry 2* and *3* our hero was actually «looking for love», and there were interesting lines drawn between his various passions; *Larry 6* sweeps those excuses at seriousness under the carpet and assumes a completely nihilistic stance. From a feminist point of view, *Larry 6* is definitely much more offensive than *Larry 3*, which at least opposed the relatively wholesome character of Passionate Patti to all the vapor-brained stereotypes; *Larry 6* has nothing but stereotypes — which is not really a problem by itself, given that it is just a simple piece of entertainment that plays everything for laughs; but as long as there is a gold standard for comparison, it *will* be a problem in the larger context.

But now that I've grumbled out the grumble, let me roll it all back and say that as a *game*, as a puzzle-based, exploration-oriented adventure game, that is, *Larry 6* is a total hoot, on the top level of Sierra's Silver Age (which I usually define as 1992-1995). And with *Freddy Pharkas* coming out the same year, it can be safely said that 1993 marked Al Lowe's peak creativity: never again would he rise to the occasion with *that* much firepower in his hands.