

Leisure Suit Larry 7: Love For Sail!

Studio: **Sierra On-Line**

Designer(s): **Al Lowe**

Part of series: **Leisure Suit Larry**

Release: November 26, 1996

Main credits: Programmers: **Steve Conrad, Mark Martino**
 Graphics: **Robert Munsil, Bryan Wilkinson**
 Music: **Frank Zottoli, Mark Seibert, Al Lowe**
 Producer: **Mark Seibert**

Useful links: [Complete playthrough, parts 1-7](#) (6 hours 26 mins.)

Basic Overview

One could hardly accuse Al Lowe of slacking in the mid-Nineties, nor even of sticking exclusively to a proven formula. At the same time that he was working on the sixth Larry game, he was also busy putting his touch on *Freddy Pharkas*, his (and Josh Mandel's) humorous take on the Western genre; and after both these games finally shipped, his next project was *Torin's Passage*, not a comedy per se but rather an idiosyncratic piece of fantasy with comedic elements. Indeed, one might have thought that the dear old joker would show enough sense to finally put poor Mr. Laffer to rest — given that *Larry 6*, while hardly a bad game on its own, pretty much just rebooted the character to his original personality and line of occupation from the first game, the only big difference being that the protagonist was finally given a voice, and that the girls looked far more seductive in the era of VESA than they did in the era of CGA.

Yet the fans continued to make their voices heard, and the market presented its own demands — and, honestly, nobody in the whole wide world can run a good idea into the ground with as much persistency as Mr. Lowe (as of 2020, he is *still* regularly posting one or two dirty jokes on social media *almost every day*; the jokes themselves ceased to be funny at least a couple of decades ago, but we're all here pining for Al to make the Guinness record all the same). And thus, some time in late 1995 or early 1996, just as Sierra On-Line was being sold to CUC International and the timer was set for detonation, Al set out to



design yet another Leisure Suit Larry adventure — which, this time around, happened to be his last one for a very long time.

I suppose that Al did not spend too much time wrecking his brain over any new directions, plot twists, or personality features for Leisure Suit Larry. The reboot of the franchise worked well with buyers and critics alike, so why bother? All he had to do was design a new location — say, a luxury cruise ship instead of a luxury spa resort — then rinse and repeat the basic formula: Larry meets a bunch of girls > Larry satisfies the girls' demands > Larry gets rejected by each and every girl in a humorous and sadistic fashion > Larry accumulates enough experience to get the top girl > PROFIT. In between, just insert every new dirty joke you come up with or overhear during your everyday life, and voilà.

In Al's defense, he *at least* tried — just like he did with *Larry 6* — to make the whole thing into an interesting game. Unlike most other Sierra artists at the time, he designed his own interface, rather than follow the general *King's Quest VII* model; he came up with several new ideas to allow for a different kind of interactivity between the game and the player; he even put the egg back in the Easter egg, if you know what I mean (and if you do not, just read on)! With graphics and sound up to par for the standards of 1996 as well, it would be hard to claim that *Love For Sail!* represented nothing but creative stagnation; and like each and every one of Sierra's Larry games, it sold reasonably well, maybe even *more* than reasonably well, you know, in the age of Bill Clinton and everything.

Critical response, however, was mixed. With memories of *Larry 6* still relatively fresh in the minds of picky reviewers, many of them dismissed the game as uninspired, repetitive, and more or less obsolete. Al brushed these criticisms aside — to him, if something is good, it can *never* become obsolete — and got busy on the eighth game, which was going to be in 3D (a very brief trailer bit exists, and it looks predictably awful), and which, fortunately, got cancelled in 1999 with Sierra's downfall. What this meant, however, was that *Love For Sail!* would be the last ever Al Lowe / Sierra Leisure Suit Larry game — and this, in turn, meant that it would be in a position to get recommended to casual players every time they asked around for a good adventure game from the past decade. Because, you know, in an old video game franchise it is always the *last* game that's got to be recommended, right? The one that looks and feels the least like crap out of them all?

Indeed, in far more than one entertainment source that I have encountered, any mention of Leisure Suit Larry tends to be illustrated by a reference to *Love For Sail!*; and if any nostalgic best-of list of adventure games decides to include a Larry game (which does not happen often), it is usually *Love For Sail!*. This is totally not right. As we shall see, there are quite a few things to like about the game, and, indeed, it is the one Larry game that still *looks* half-decent (though, naturally, it could still use a good remastering). But as a work of, er, uhm, *art*, it is so deeply secondary and shallow that recommending it over the original

trilogy is like inviting listeners to try out the genius of the Beatles by picking up the latest McCartney solo album — and why not? doesn't it boast all the benefits of modern recording and production standards?..

Content evaluation

Plotline

Here we go again. To ensure a bit of continuity from *Larry 6* (not that this was necessary in the least), we pick up at exactly the spot where we were left at the end of that game — Larry's night of hard-earned bliss with Shamara Payne — only to discover that her entire New Age schtick was, in fact, nothing more than a con act to relieve our unfortunate protagonist of all of his money and leave him handcuffed to her luxurious bed with a lit cigarette in his mouth. (Considering that throughout the entirety of *Larry 6*, the character did not have a single red cent to his name, that greenback-stuffed wallet came totally out of nowhere, but tightness of the plot was not particularly relevant to Al Lowe even at the creative peak of the franchise, and became completely irrelevant in later years). Naturally, this leads to Larry accidentally setting the room on fire and, after getting rid of the handcuffs, being obligated to make a dashing jump out of the window. At least this is a somewhat more action-packed twist on the classic «at the beginning of *Larry X*, Larry gets dumped by the love of his life that he successfully wooed at the end of *Larry X-1*» trope; but we kinda sorta saw that trope buried after *Larry 3*, and having it resurrected here isn't exactly the most auspicious start to a new Larry game.



So much for the past. As to the future, well, on his way out of the burning hotel, Larry stumbles upon a ticket to a luxury cruise — no idea whose, or how he would be able to get aboard if it is not in his name, but, again, who gives a damn? — and immediately makes good on it. Turns out that not only is the ship predictably jam-packed by gorgeous women, all of them open to the suggestion of getting it on with a sleazy, balding, middle-aged penniless loser, but that its blonde-haired, Disney-faced Captain Thygh runs a regular contest among the passengers — whosoever scores the most on his or her application card, gets to spend a lot of quality time with the Captain in her personal suite (while the ship just runs on autopilot). This sets in motion the main engine of the game — since Larry is way too unfit, unhip, and unqualified in all pertinent matters, your task is to help him cheat his way through all the competitions and emerge as the ultimate Lord of the Thygh (pardon the Aerosmithy pun). In between cheating, he can also make passes at the many «secondary» ladies on the cruise, some of which may (unintentionally) assist him with his cheating, but none of which (well, *almost* none of which) will get him any closer to getting laid, as per the standard formula requirements of a Larry game.

That's pretty much it as far as the plot is concerned. This time around, nothing about it makes even the least bit of rational sense — to the extent that you have to believe it was all intentional on Al's part. If you thought that La Costa Lotta from *Larry 6* was an absurd location with caricaturesque characters and activities, wait till you see the P.M.S. Bouncy (yes, that is the name of the ship; how *could* it possibly be anything else?) where you can pick kumquats off sheep topiaries, wear elephant trunk swimsuits to the pool, take part in Blind Dessert Taste Tests, get your bowling pins whittled out by real live beavers, listen to President Clinton tell boatloads of dirty jokes, and I haven't even mentioned the competitions yet: one of these, for instance, is about tossing horseshoes which you take off the foot of a centaur statue after inserting your test card deep inside his ass — just hope you don't die of healthy, wholesome laughter along the way.

I can certainly understand Al's desire to drive the absurdity quotient of the game all the way up to eleven: formula or no formula, the idea of pushing his «art» forward and conquering new heights rather than being quite content with staying on the same plateau was clearly on his mind. The problem is that sometimes there *is* such a thing as too much — by making the surrounding environments, activities, and characters ever more ridiculous, he ended up completely forsaking the satirical aspects of the Larry games. At least the girls in *Larry 6* were all more or less sensible parodies of existing stereotypes — the Latina immigrant, the buffed-up dominatrix, the country-western diva, the single-minded fitness instructor, etc. etc. By contrast, in *Larry 7* the characters seem more like parodies of parodies, with the game not so much poking fun at actual categories of people as exaggerating the characteristics of their cartoonish reflections already well depicted in all sorts of comedic entertainment.

Thus, in the place of Burgundy from *Larry 6*, a genuinely funny parody on the free-spirited country-western singer, we have the unlikely mother-daughter duo of «Nailmi» and «Wydoncha» «Juggs» (har har har), whose trademarks are their giant heads of hair, apparently produced by the largest can of hairspray in existence; songs with titles like 'He's Got His Daddy's Eyes And His Other Daddy's Smile'; and, naturally, the «juggs» in question, with cleavages that can swallow up a Leisure Suit Larry whole. It's not even that the jokes and puns are not funny — technically, they are — it's that they no longer make fun of actual people. Similarly, the ship's librarian, aptly named «Victorian Principles», is pictured as a parody of the stereotype of the Prude Librarian; once you have successfully converted her to the dark side, releasing the beast inside by slipping an erotic novel on top of her to-read list, she becomes a parody of the stereotype of Kinky Girl. This is the kind of subject you can probably easily encounter in a porn comedy — which is perfectly okay by me, with the little reservation that *Leisure Suit Larry*, in its best days, was quite far removed from the level of a porn comedy.

The one positive side of all this «meta» spirit is that it is virtually impossible to get offended at any of the allegedly sexist or racist jokes in the game (well, impossible, that is, for people who do not find the meaning of life in getting offended by everyone and everything) — simply because they are not aimed at actual sex or race, but rather at an already distorted perception of sex and race. For instance, soon enough you will stumble into a Chinese cook called Wang (naturally), speaking in a caricature Chinese accent, but after Larry catches him slipping into a normal manner of speech, he acknowledges that "people stare when I speak normally, so I've found it simpler just to sound like some bad Charlie Chan impersonator". (That's actually a big step *up* for Al from his ethnic stereotypes in the first couple of Larry games). The same can be said about the cartoonishly gay Peter the Purser (even more cartoonishly so than Gary the Towel Attendant in *Larry 6*), or the grotesquely foul-mouthed Peggy the Janitor — sort of a cross between Blackbeard, Courtney Love, and a random character from a Tarantino movie.

Under these circumstances, any discussion of «plot» is humiliating. If a game like this introduces the story of the legendary aviator Anton Fokker as a plot device, you may be sure that 99% of the reasons is the man's *name* — and, sure enough, eventually we learn that he was allegedly abused by his mother, just to conclude that (quote) "she was one mean mother Fokker". What else did the game need Fokker for? I honestly do not remember. Most of the actual subplots concerning individual ladies are on a whole new order of ridiculous compared to previous *Larry* games — there is one, for instance, where you are made to induce a heart attack in a rich old geezer, mistaking him for his sexy wife with the lights out. There is another where you are supposed to locate a suitcase of clothes for a lady writer who has secluded herself, clad in nothing but her laptop, near the «Clothing Optional» pool and told the cabin boy to hide all her clothes until the end of the cruise. There is another one where... anyway, never mind. These are enough to show precisely how far your fantasy can take you if you have to stick to the same formula over and over again. Ultimately, this is *Leisure Suit Larry Gone Rococo* — a mix of creative genius and creative despair.

It was probably just a matter of time anyway before the Larry franchise would officially go nuts, but few could have predicted the degree of nuttiness. If there is any actual enjoyability to be had from the game, it certainly does not come from *what* you have to actively achieve or passively perceive while playing it, but only from *how* you do it. Many of Sierra's products over the years have turned out to be decent stories, but rotten games — *Larry 7* reverses the trend by being one of the most awful (non-)stories to be ever told by Sierra, yet a pretty challenging and involving game at that.

Puzzles

When it comes to actual challenges, *Larry 7* is not particularly difficult, but it is certainly different from the typical Sierra game of the time, and this is where we really have to commend Al for his innovative, if most certainly doomed, design. Typically, Sierra games from that time were geared toward strict minimalism of action — beginning with *King's Quest VII*, you could only point and click your cursor at hotspots on the screen without being able to choose from several options. Even Al's own *Torin's Passage* had to follow that model, and I can only guess that he hated it as much as I do, because for *Larry 7* he successfully negotiated a complete redesign of the interface, which not only brought back the strategy of multiple options, but even re-introduced... (drumroll)...

THE TEXT PARSER!

Before you go all old-school whoo-hoo on this (because you know you want to, right?), let me prepare you for the inevitable disappointment: the parser as such is almost completely optional — in fact, you can get through the entire game without using it at all, except for one single «training» instance at the very beginning of the game in which a certain command is not available until you type it in. It does, however, bring on the illusion of lots and lots of extra freedom (I will return to this in more details in the «Interface» section), and in any case, having to use actual *verbs* to choose from while thinking about what to do or not to do with a particular object is a huge step forward from the way too literally understood point-and-click strategy of Sierra's 1993-1996 games. (Formally, it is a step *backward*, but there is nothing like a good swig of regress to cure the inevitable stupidity of progress, every once in a while).

At your discretion, it may be made into an even huger step: apparently, there is a special game mode which can be unlocked, in typical Al Lowe fashion, by typing the option GET_HARD into a special text file in the game folder; this removes the small list of recommended verbs next to objects and dialog options next to NPCs which usually crop up when clicking on them, and *really* reverts you to the good old days of the parser, when you had to imagine and invent instead of choose from pre-available options. But if I am correct, this option was not even available as public knowledge at the time of the game's release, though I have no idea why (what is wrong with offering every player the choice between a Hard Mode and an Easy Mode from the start?)

Anyway, I've always played the game in its standard mode as a result, which is hardly any easier or more difficult than playing



Larry 6. The best puzzles in the game are the ones that require you to find different ways for cheating your way out of the contests. Like everything else in the game, these ways are absurd, yet they definitely follow the game's own twisted logic, and if you do a good job of looking at everything (such as, for instance, not slacking your way out of browsing through every available book in the library), they come with helpful hints which can point you in the right direction at the right time. Some of the challenges are fully independent and can be completed at any time (such as winning the craps game with shaved dice); others depend on your interactions with the many ladies of PMS Bouncy, meaning that getting stuck in any particular location is usually not due to your stupidity, but simply because you have not explored one of the other paths beforehand — the game actively discourages you from spending too much time in one place.

As in the previous two Larry games, it is impossible to get deadlocked — you can very easily miss a lot of points by failing to do some minor optional task or doing things in the wrong order, but there is no way to corner yourself into an unwinnable state. This is good; what is worse is that, like in *Larry 5*, you can no longer die in any of those hilarious Sierra ways — *Larry 6* seemed to bring them all back, but for some reason, Al put the lid on the idea for *Larry 7* again. Maybe the artists went on strike when asked to design some nice fresh blood-and-guts animations for their cartoonish Larry or something, I don't know; in any case, it was hardly a matter of ratings, because, while there is almost no violence in the game, it does set some new records for nudity and sexual content in the Larry universe.

Speaking of sexual content, one extra bit of entertainment is a mini-game called «Where's Dildo?» (a fairly obvious parody on «Where's Waldo?»), where you have to spot 30+ of these objects (which actually look quite a bit like Waldo) while walking around the various locations on the ship, ranging from easily obvious to quite heavily camouflaged. It's excruciatingly stupid, but for some reason I see something endearing in the gesture. Another thing that can and will be missed unless you consult walkthroughs are Easter Eggs — highly specific and practically unguessable actions (such as "milk the beaver") which you have to perform in order to get access to juicy lewd bits of nudity during some of the saucier scenes. (The very last Easter Egg, showing Larry getting it on with Captain Thygh for just a single second, can only be discovered if you score all 1000 points, find all the Dildos, *and* get all the other Easter Eggs — a tough achievement even if you sit through the entire game with a walkthrough in your hand; for instance, you will have to endure all of Billy Clinton's jokes, which take up approximately 30 minutes!).

One really nicely designed distraction from regular puzzles is a game of Strip Liar's Dice with one of Larry's potential non-conquests — I would have probably made it skippable for those who think that mini-games are a waste of their time, but on the positive side, this is the only implementation of Liar's Dice in an adventure game known to me, and thus, a refreshing

change from all the countless games of regular dice, poker, and blackjack you had to sit through in the other Larry (and other Sierra) titles. The entire sequence is cool — the game shows you no mercy, your conniving opponent is as gorgeous as she is sharp-tongued, and the stripping process is handled with surprising taste (well, as much of it as Al Lowe can handle) and hilarity.

Atmosphere

I think that, by and large, I have already covered this subject in the «Plot» section, given the general lack of plot in the game as such, or, at least, its absolute irrelevance next to the overall spirit of the game. On the whole, the atmosphere of the game was probably supposed to match that of its predecessor — poking fun at the nonsensically extravagant life of the rich and famous, as seen from the perspective of a half-sarcastic, half-envious loser from a different world. In reality, *Larry 7* transcends satire and eventually turns into a surrealist meta-celebration of each and every depraved and twisted fantasy that a bored stiff decadent mind is capable of coming up with.



I do not disagree in the slightest that this is a niche that *must* be filled, one way or the other: some of the more outrageous porn movies from the Golden Age probably did that, though it must be stressed that, despite there actually being more openly sexual content this time than ever before, *Larry 7* is still a game about decadence in general, rather than pornography as such. Aboard the PMS Bounty, sexual imagery is everywhere, but so is gaudy, tasteless, Trump-style opulence in general, and taking regular swings at all the tacky interiors would be fair game. Unfortunately, when it comes to dialogue, Al is, on the whole, far more interested in making dirty jokes. Easily offended people will be easily offended at the fact that he decorates the entrance to the ship's casino with several Hawaiian-style head carvings (wearing shades) bearing the names Han-Ja-Ub ("the tiki god of war") and Bloh-Ja-Ub ("the tiki god of love"); the other side is respectively decorated with Sno-Ja-Ub and Reem-Ja-Ub ("those lovable, crazy, happy-go-lucky alcoholic tiki brothers"). I am not offended, but I would still have preferred some snarky commentary on what the hell are examples of traditional Hawaiian art supposed to be doing in such a location in the first place.

Still, the attraction of *Larry 7* is in just how much random goofy stuff Al has plastered all over the place, and it is safe to say that most of your game playing time will be devoted not to solving specific challenges, but to simply poking around, trying to uncover as many details as possible. This approach had already been applied in *Larry 6*, but the motto of *Larry 7* is

"everything bigger than everything else": room after room after room is filled with ships-in-a-bottle, stuffed beavers, outrageous culinary products, and God knows what else. In the previous games, with very few exceptions, Larry's girls were always at the forefront of attention; here, it gets so stuffy that sometimes you almost can't see them behind all the crazy random paraphernalia. Silly and stupid as it all may be, *Larry 7* is still, in its own perverse way, a monument to the potential of human imagination, wherever that strange thing may go. All it lacks is a rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle, but this is not to say it has not been influenced by the world of Guybrush Threepwood — at times, *Love For Sail!* feels like what *The Curse Of Monkey Island* would have been, if designed and written by the likes of Larry Flynt.

Finally, it *must* be acknowledged that *Larry 7* is redeemable of any sins by featuring the single funniest character in an Al Lowe game — and perhaps in the entire Sierra universe — in the face of Peggy, the ship's "surly foul-mouthed deckhand", "heavily affected by a childhood spent watching too many pirate movies". Clearly, much of what comes out of that mouth would not have been as funny without the magnificent voicing by Mary Kay Bergman (an extremely talented voice actress who tragically took her own life three years later), but in between Al's dialogue and Mary Kay bringing it to life, Peggy becomes one of those «lost-in-videogame» characters who would be world famous if discovered in a comedic movie or maybe even in a comic book, but instead has to drag out this closet existence in a forgotten video game. ("I can see why they call you Peggy, Peggy" — "Oh can you, lameass? It's because my fucking mother named me Margaret, you stupid cocksucker!") She probably holds the Quentin Tarantino Record of having the absolute highest quotient of swear words uttered by a female character in a videogame, but, of course, it is not the quantity that matters, but the creative employ of the lexemes in question. All in all, she alone is responsible for at least 50% of the atmosphere in this game — the rest is all about golden pissing boy statues and cleavage.

Technical features

Graphics

Despite full-motion video still being the dominant trend in 1996 (for Sierra, at least), it was fairly obvious that a *Larry* game could not be filmed (unless they *really* wanted to turn it into an actual porn game), and so Al turned to the second dominating trend — cartoon graphics, first introduced by Sierra in Disney fashion with *King's Quest VII*. Al had only just used that technique with *Torin's Passage*, his own tribute to the fairy tale fantasy genre, and *Love For Sail!* continues in the same vein, though the artists are completely different (well, it would have been strange for the exact same graphic artists to be working on a family-friendly fairy tale *and* an adult-oriented game with pinup girls all over the place).

The Disney stylistics continues to rule supreme, but this, of course, is a weird, lewd version of Disney, and while I think that it suits the «classic» *Larry* spirit just as poorly as everything else about the game, it certainly matches the gaudy spirit of *Love For Sail!* in particular. The interiors are more colorful than ever, positively dazzling with shades of the entire rainbow palette, and hyperbolic grotesqueries are all over the place, as is sexual subtext (lewd shapes emerge on every corner, from grossly trimmed topiaries to silhouettes formed inside lava lamps). Ladies, are of course, depicted in ways to emphasize their, uh, lady parts, with additional emphasis on their sociological attributes — thus, the country-western Juggs couple are depicted with huge heads of permed hair; the Film Noir dame Annette is given a fierce stare and a huge black hat to cover her face; and the Prude Librarian wears a hair bun larger than head.



Larry himself has not changed much since the last game, though the increased quality of textures and cartoon animation help him, as well as the many NPCs throughout, look more (cartoonishly) realistic — which, of course, does not mean that he is in any way closer to the classic image of the old days, which are gone forever anyway. At least there are no technical complaints about any of the animations — and we have to be grateful that AI shipped the game in time to avoid the onset of the early 3D era, which (as the only surviving snippet of *Larry 8* shows very well) would have made the visuals absolutely dreadful.

There are a few pre-rendered video sequences in the game, included as separate video files and activated at predetermined moments, such as the classic «psychedelic» scene in which poor Larry has visions of hot dogs running away from mustard bottles, Peggy riding her broomstick, and dancing condoms after being drugged by the con artist «Dewmi More» (yes, in case I did not mention this earlier, many of the dames in the game are named after Hollywood prototypes — there is also «Drew Baringmore» and «Jamie Lee Coitus», har har har). Unfortunately, the video quality is predictably low, just as it was in similar cutscenes in *King's Quest VII*, and although, at the time, this technical solution was probably meant to prevent your computer from overheating, this results in a nasty jolt of anti-immersion whenever you briefly transition from regular gameplay into the video-playing mode (though the videos themselves are usually quite short).

Sound

The music of *Larry 7* generally follows the classic pattern — relatively low-key, unintrusive jazzy themes accompany you almost everywhere you wish to go, only occasionally giving way to character-suited themes; thus, the Prude Librarian is, of course, accompanied by harpsichord sounds from the 16th century (though, funny enough, also arranged for elevator muzak purposes), later to be replaced by Vegas strip lounge music after her miraculous «transformation». The intimidating image of Peggy the Pirate Lady is aptly reflected in a massive and yawny tuba waltz theme, and good old Nashville rears its pretty head every time the Juggs show up (there is even a brief vocal snippet of one of their songs that can be activated any time you want).



The really nice news is that the music is actually *music*, not a pure MIDI soundtrack but actual musical themes recorded by real musicians (including Al Lowe in person, with his soprano sax) at Chick Corea's Mad Hatter studios, as claimed in the credits. This would probably have not been implemented with anybody other than Al, whose long-time hobby as a jazz musician meant that he had plenty of friends in professional circles and could probably arrange for something like this without a serious strain on Sierra's budget. The results are not smashing, because the musical themes of *Larry* were never meant to go beyond some lightweight good-time entertainment, but there is definitely a big difference if you play the MIDI soundtrack of *Larry 6* and the live soundtrack of *Larry 7* back to back — the latter helps bring even more life and color to the game.

Al even went as far as to license a few classic bits of music, first time ever in a *Larry* game (if not in any Sierra game as such) — Larry's psychedelic visions unfurl to the sounds of Iron Butterfly's 'In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida', his extremely brief showing up at the Fashion Show is accompanied by Chic's 'Le Freak', and his final triumph over Captain Thygh is marked with Kool & The Gang's 'Celebrate' — the latter two selections, of course, intended to remind us of the absurdity of Leisure Suit Larry's Seventies' image in the mid-Nineties (little did poor Al know of how huge a comeback disco would make in the 21st century — today, the sight of anybody grooving to these songs would barely raise an eyelid compared to how embarrassing the gesture would have looked back in 1996). Again, these are just minor stylistic touches, but they do point the way to making a more and more cinematic experience of the whole thing.

Then, of course, there is the voice cast. Many of the actors from *Larry 6* have managed to reprise their roles, chief among

them Jan Rabson as Larry himself, of course, and next to him, the inimitably suave Neil Ross as Narrator — everything good (*and* bad) I might have said about them in the *Larry 6* review applies here as well. Sheryl Bernstein, who had already voiced several of Larry's ladies in 6, returns to seduce you as Casino Con Artist «Dewmi Moore» and intimidate you as the gruff-but-oversexed Captain Thygh. The already mentioned Mary Kay Bergman, in addition to her unforgettable turn as Peggy, voices no fewer than three other girls, giving each one her own personality; and then there's Jennifer Darling, a 50-year old veteran of stage, screen, and behind-the-screen voicing (who, ironically, had taken part in quite a few episodes of *Where's Waldo?*, parodied in this game with *Where's Dildo?*), to represent both the old personality of the Repressed Prude Librarian and the freshly changed personality of the Liberated Sex-Starved Librarian. All of them do great jobs, and if you think they might be overacting it at times — well, the whole game is about overacting (actually, one might argue that *all* voice acting in *all* video games is always about overacting, since your voice is the only thing available to you in such situations, but that's a matter of a separate discussion).

From a defiantly modern «down with racial stereotypes!» point of view, one might, of course, whistle down and condemn the mock-Chinese accent of Scott Bullock as Wang, or the mock-French accent of Michael Gough as Jacques, the snotty French croupier, let alone the suspiciously unidentified (but probably Mid-Eastern, judging by the fez) cabin boy Xqwzts, also voiced by Gough. But as I have already pointed out before, *Love For Sail!* is a meta-parody, nothing about which is to be taken seriously in the least — and besides, all of these are minor characters with whom you shall only interact once or twice throughout the game... and why, in fact, would you want to interact with them any longer, if this game is all about having Larry hit on a variety of hot women, rather than chat on matters of life and death with decidedly un-hot men?..

Interface

As I already mentioned, *Larry 7* is one of the few Sierra games from this period to have earned the right to its own, completely autonomous and unique, interface — this was actually the first thing that impressed me about the game, and one of the main reasons (along with Mary Kay Bergman) why I still preserve a fond feeling for it. First and foremost, after a long series of games that seemed to take their cue from classic LucasArts, AI has restored Sierra's full screen — now your entire monitor is occupied by the picture, while menu options crop up only at the click of the mouse. Second, while the cursor (faithfully shaped as a condom) always retains the same shape, clicking it on an object brings up a number of verbs potentially associated with it, from which you can select the option you want to try out — this, in a way, makes more sense than having a fixed number of options for everything, so that, for instance, a food item will offer you to «Smell» or «Lick» it, while a door will offer you to

«Open» or «Close» it.

Third and most important, there's the parser. For everything out there, you have the option to type in your own verb — and while you will soon discover that the function of the parser is more ornamental than anything, it is nice to have it all the same, especially for somebody who, like me, thinks that the loss of the text parser was the worst thing to have happened to Sierra adventure games. I even remember being so naïve at the time as to think that this could be the beginning of a beautiful renaissance... and who knows, maybe it would, had Al Lowe not been given the sack along with all the other Sierra veterans a couple years later. As it is, the only thing that the parser really adds to the game is the option to increase the number of topics on which you can converse with the other NPCs — for instance, when meeting Peggy, there is a set of about 10 pre-determined topics, but you may type in extra stuff, such as «Captain Thygh» or «Peter the Purser», and get meaningful and / or hilarious answers, though they are completely unnecessary to beat the game as such.

The game menu is hidden away at the top of the screen and can be easily brought out by hovering over the top left corner; there are the usual Al Lowe tricks, such as the Boss Key, the Filth Level (never tried decreasing it and neither should you), and a lengthy «About the Game» section which you absolutely have to click because (spoiler? ah, fuck it!) it gives you extra points and the 32nd Dildo to find. Nice, informative, inobtrusive.

One novelty feature of the game is that the original package came with a sheet of scratch-and-sniff paper, called the CyberSniff 2000 — at certain points when you enter a «smelly» area or inspect a smelly object in your inventory window, a CyberSniff 2000 sign is activated, prompting you to interact with your paper. This is something that, alas, can no longer be experienced due to the game no longer being in print as a physical copy, and I suppose that those who still have the original box have long since worn out the smells (I played a pirated version back in the day, so obviously I was deprived of that sweet-smelling joy). Of course, had Al Lowe been a little bolder, the box should have probably included a batch of sex toys instead, but given how little action there is actually in the game, it would be tough to think of the proper instructions to synchronize... okay, never mind, we're going someplace we're not really supposed to.

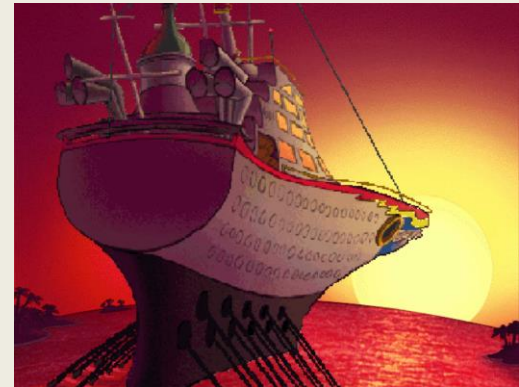
One last thing that makes the game very comfortable to play is the inclusion of a map option which allows you insta-travel to any location on the ship at any time — goodbye, wasted minutes and hours of backtracking that were always a pain in the ass not just for *Larry* games, but for Sierra in general (ironically, the only Sierra game which allowed you to insta-travel just about anywhere was *King's Quest III* back in 1986). On the down side, this means that Larry himself very rarely has to walk anywhere, other than taking two or three steps back and forth on a particular screen — which brings *Larry 7* closer to the style

of TellTale adventure games and their claustrophobic world format. Then again, you spend the entire game on a friggin' ocean liner, so I guess it's supposed to be a bit claustrophobic, after all.

In any case, Al Lowe's solution of the gaming interface problem gets an indisputable A+ from me — other than running into occasional trouble with the condom-cursor while searching for the necessary hotspot on the screen, there was absolutely nothing about the game that looked like even remotely frustrating; in terms of design and structure, this just might be the single best game in Sierra's entire history. If only it lived up to the design in terms of content — if, say, this were *Larry 2* and not *Larry 7* — paradise would not be far off.

Verdict: *Mechanical gamemaking at its finest, sorely lacking in new ideas.*

As you have probably noticed already, I spent most of the first half of the review panning the game and most of the second half praising it. This came out quite naturally and, I think, well-deservedly, because *Love For Sail!* is a classic example of triumph of form over substance: for each new excellent idea on how to make the experience more eye-pleasing, more ear-pleasing, and overall more comfortable for the player, there is a glaring *lack* of a new excellent idea on how to evolve and expand the classic Leisure Suit Larry experience. You do get better graphics — so the babes look more curvaceous than ever before; better sound, so the music and voices sound more natural than ever before; and a great interface, so you don't get to hurl as many curse words at the screen as you did before. But do you get an altogether new experience? Nope. The only thing that is new about it is that the jokes get cruder and the action gets saucier, while the basic plot formula remains exactly the same as it was in the previous game — the laziest ever round of evolution in *Larry* history.



And, just in case, let me remind you that this did not always used to be the case. None of the games from the original classic trilogy repeated themselves so obviously and so completely — *Larry 2* gave us a genuine «adventure» game, while *Larry 3* made things different by introducing the female perspective of Passionate Patti. Even *Larry 5*, awful as it turned out, still tried to take us into a sort of different direction by introducing a sociopolitical aspect. At least *Larry 6* could be justified for offering us a «reboot» of the entire franchise, essentially returning to the roots of the first game but vastly improving on each of its technical aspects. But *Larry 7* is no longer a «reboot»: instead, it comes across as a lapse into self-repetition, following the accursed give-the-people-what-they-want principle. In order to deflect that impression, the game tries to make its situations

more complex and twisted, giving its «bimbo babes» more personality-defining backstory and making its sexy challenges even more ridiculous and grotesque than ever before — yet this is precisely the area in which it fails, because the universe of Larry cannot really be complexified beyond a certain threshold (look what happened to *Larry 5* when it decided to take an almost serious stance against the conservative policies of the time).

All in all, I can only repeat that if you only want to try out one *Larry* game to see what the hoopla was all about, do not make the common mistake of grabbing *Larry 7* as the most technically polished title of them all (which it certainly is) — save your curiosity for the original trilogy, which is so much more representative of the, er, *depth* of Al Lowe's original vision. However, if you are captivated and want more than just a taste, then there is no reason to bypass *Larry 7* — after all, there really is a huge lot of things it does well, from wonderful voice acting to the unexpected fun of playing Liar's Dice. If only the game had offered us a more conclusive finale, rather than briefly and unsatisfyingly setting up the scene for *Larry 8* (which was to be called either *Lust In Space*, or *Leisure Suit Larry Explores Uranus*, MY GOD!!..), I might have called it a decent-enough swan song for the franchise. Yet I *am* still glad that we never got the chance to see Larry Laffer in abominable 3D (we did get to see Larry's «nephew», Larry Lovage, in 2004's *Magna Cum Laude*, but that was really a completely different game with a completely different spirit that nobody ever needs to play), and, honestly, I am not at all sure that Al Lowe would have been able to once again go beyond that formula and properly steer Larry Laffer into the 21st century; much like James Bond, this guy is a character much better capable of being endearing from behind the smokescreen of time than when standing next to you in this day and age. So just get behind the smokescreen already.