Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

Studio: **LucasArts**

Designer(s): **Ron Gilbert / Dave Grossman / Tim Schafer**

Part of series: **Monkey Island**

Release: December 1991 (original) / July 7, 2010 (remake)

Main credits: Graphic Art: **Peter Chan, Steve Purcell, Sean Turner et al.**

Music: **Michael Land, Peter McConnell, Clint Bajakian**

Useful links: [Complete playthrough](#) (*Special Edition only; 5 parts, 308 mins.*)

Basic Overview

Unlike Sierra On-Line, LucasArts never got to properly fetishize the Art of the Sequel. Admittedly, the studio released altogether fewer than twenty adventure games in its lifetime, most of which were not big sellers and therefore not officially encouraged to get a continuation; still, one can hardly argue that *most* of the time, the creative minds at LucasArts knew well enough the golden rule — only produce a sequel when that sequel has something new to say, rather than churn it out just because the market is said to demand it.

Monkey Island 2 happened to be one of those lucky exceptions: more or less the *Empire Strikes Back* to its predecessor's *New Hope.* Ron Gilbert himself states that the idea and concept of a sequel to **Secret Of Monkey Island** was already playing out in his mind before the first game was completed, and this looks very much like the truth, given how smoothly the second game expands and deepens the themes of the first one. Upon first sight, it simply might seem bigger: more puzzles, more characters, more locations, more dialog, more everything — which is not that surprising, given the much larger team of employees assigned to Gilbert, Grossman, and Schafer's supervision (so much larger, in fact, that they managed to churn out the final product in merely one year). Upon second sight... upon second sight **Monkey Island 2** is simply the most perfect *Monkey Island*-type entertainment you are ever going to get.
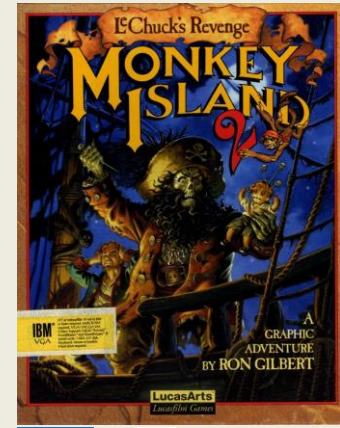
Due to its bigger budget and to rapidly changing times, **Monkey Island 2** featured quite a bit of graphic, musical, and overall design innovations for LucasArts — but the main thing about it is that it represents the crowning achievement of Ron Gilbert during his short, but mega-important period of work with the studio. By the time the game came out, Gilbert was no longer the sole-reigning intellectual king at LucasArts: his newer partners, Dave Grossman and Tim Schafer, were proving to be comparable visionaries (as they would soon prove beyond all reasonable doubt with **Day Of The Tentacle**), and so were occasional walk-ons like **Loom**'s Brian Moriarty. It is possible that he was beginning to feel jealous of the competition, or, more probable perhaps, felt himself repressed by the changes in the studio, which was rapidly growing from an originally small and family-like art department to a big business enterprise. Yet lightning rarely strikes twice, and Ron never managed to find once more the same acclaim he had received for his time with LucasArts — so, for all we know, **Monkey Island 2** remains his comprehensive swan song, a final masterpiece of design, humor, and imagination which also, incidentally, happens to be one of the best lessons on how to produce meaningful sequels.

I do admit that all these big, gushing words may reflect a bit of personal bias: **Monkey Island 2** was one of my first experiences with a LucasArts game (possibly the second one I ever played back in the early 1990s, after **Maniac Mansion**). However, replaying the remade version right after completing the remake of **Secret** has, in fact, done nothing but firmly convince me of how lucky I was back then — and while I do enjoy watching the birth of Guybrush Threepwood as much as the next guy, and certainly recommend playing the dilogy in its proper order, I have not the slightest doubt about which part is the hors-d'oeuvres and which one introduces the main course. (And, for the record, I do stress the use of the word «dilogy»: all subsequent **Monkey Island** games, good or bad, have to be regarded in quite a different light after the departure of their chief originator.)

Content evaluation

Plotline

For the largest part of the game, the story that Gilbert came up with for the second part of Guybrush Threepwood's adventures is not much of an advance on the first part. In **Secret Of Monkey Island**, Guybrush spent most of his time passing the various trials which would allow him to join the proud ranks of piratehood; in **Lechuck's Revenge**, after a short prologue in which our hero has to chase away the biggest bully on Scabb Island, he spends most of his time assembling the four map pieces that will allegedly lead him to a pirate treasure — the infamous «Big Whoop», Gilbert's personal McGuffin which, in the end, turns out to be the true key to the entire Monkey Island problem... but let us not run too far ahead of schedule.

The main purpose of the game remains precisely the same — to poke fun at stereotypical conceptions about our mythical past by clothing them in practices and attitudes which directly relate to our annoying present. (Whoever tries to get all indignant about the existence of gas stoves, laundry tickets, and Elvis medallions in the Golden Age of Piracy clearly does not get the joke so much that he probably does not exist). But the writers manage to come up with enough fresh ideas to never make things seem like mere rehashing of the narrative of the first game.

For sure, there are returning characters who are already on the verge of becoming the series' running gags — none more so than the business-savvy Voodoo Lady and Stan the Salesman — but there are also multiple new faces with new personalities, such as the wimpy, self-pitying Wally the Cartographer; the strong-willed, quick-witted Captain Kate Capsize (some of the funniest moments in the game happen whenever Guybrush tries to interact with her using the *Pick Up* option); the cartoonishly food-obsessed Governor Phatt of Phatt Island (too bad we never get to see him outside of his gastronomically enhanced bed); and lots of other, smaller, but nearly always picturesque characters to populate the Monkey Island universe with every possible literary or cinematographic stereotype you ever met.

Not all of these characters are dropped on you at once, though. The game has an ideal structure where Act 1 confines you to just one island, helping you familiarize yourself with the game mechanics while focusing on one single task (do away with the bad guy); Act 2 puts you in Open World mode, letting you cruise back and forth between three main islands in search of the map pieces; then the final acts trap you in the bottleneck of the final locations (LeChuck's Fortress and then Dinky Island) for the most action-filled parts. It goes without saying that even if the game is not *that* much longer, on the whole, than **Secret**, it still *feels* much longer because the pseudo-Caribbean space slowly begins to feel quite spacious — and each of the spaces has its own character: the dirty and carefree pirate-controlled space of Scabb Island, the posh and commercialized official space of Booty Island, or the dangerous and totalitarian space of Phatt Island.

Curiously, one of the central plotlines of the original game — Guybrush's «adorkable» romance with Governor Elaine Marley — has been relegated to the sidelines: Elaine is now an entirely episodic character, briefly involved in one of the subplots and acting as a purely passive onlooker in another. Moreover, she even gives the impression of being intentionally dumbed down (one of the easier puzzles involves Guybrush having to re-woo his love by choosing suave and corny compliments over insults

and sarcasm), which sort of makes me wonder if Ron Gilbert hadn't been dumped by his girlfriend or something like that in between 1990 and 1992. That said, the quirky aspects of the Threepwood / Marley soap opera have always seemed one of the game's weakest assets to me anyway, so the less romance in a *Monkey Island* game, the better, I say.

Some critics (like Jimmy Maher, the eminently readable [Digital Antiquarian](#)) have had complaints about the character of Guybrush Threepwood evolving into a more mischievous and unpleasant personage, rather than the comparably innocent and charismatic buffoon of the original game — citing such examples as his stealing a monocle from a harmless and defenseless cartographer, or locking up another innocent person in a coffin. On purely objective grounds, this is a correct observation (there are indeed fewer moments in **Secret** which could be openly judged as «immoral»), yet somehow it never ever struck me when playing both games back to back that Guybrush was undergoing some sort of negative character transformation. Most of the NPCs in the *Monkey Island* series are caricatures, similar to *Grand Theft Auto* and the like, and this automatically means that they are all fair game when it comes to using them for some grand purpose or other, as long as it does not lead to irrepairable harm (after all, Guybrush *does* return the monocle to Wally in the end, and as for Stan the Salesman, locking that guy inside a coffin is probably the mildest punishment for all the splitting headache he causes you, the player, over both games). Anyway, Guybrush Threepwood was never intended to be a goody-two-shoes politically correct character; complaining about his occasional misdemeanours makes about as much sense as canceling the likes of Till Eulenspiegel or Tom Sawyer.

The single most important thing that *really* separates the game from its predecessor — or, rather provides it with a conclusive finale that inverts the meanings of both — is the controversial ending, in which the feud between Guybrush and his arch-enemy, the Ghost Pirate LeChuck, receives a totally unpredictable and extra-dimensional explanation, one which, apparently, came to Gilbert after a long, painful search in a momentuous flash of inspiration, yet found relatively little support from the fans. Considering that the entire concept of *Monkey Island* grew out of Gilbert's fascination with a Disney amusement park, I would conclude that landing the game on a finish line of a Disney amusement park was a stroke of genius rather than an arbitrary blunder, not to mention all the Freudian undertones of the Guybrush / LeChuck family relationship (into which Gilbert even managed to insert a deeply unsubtle *Star Wars* reference — this *was* a LucasArts production, anyway). But it did create a problem, essentially cementing the status of *Monkey Island* as a definitive dilogy, with hardly any hope for a sequel — obviously, not too many people were happy about that, particularly since their appetites had already been whetted with a two-game series.

Worse, as inventive as the ending was, it left too many threads just hanging in the air — since the storylines of most of the

characters turned out to be simply abandoned. Did Elaine manage to escape from Dinky Island? Did Wally survive or perish in the explosion? Would Stan the Salesman be left forever rotting in his coffin? If you thought that the abrupt ending was a rather cheap cop-out from answering all these questions, you would certainly be justified. It feels too abrupt, too rushed, too jarring — very likely, the result of hurrying up to get the product shipped in time for Christmas — and, honestly speaking, were I ever in charge of remaking the entire franchise, I would rather have it restructured as a trilogy, swapping around the endings of **LeChuck's Revenge** and **The Curse Of Monkey Island** to create a more coherent and satisfying experience. As such, the ending of the second game feels sprung on the player way too brutally, while the beginning and main premise of the third game, no matter how much the authors struggled with it, end up making no sense at all (but more on that in due time, when we get to savoring the flaws of the 1997 sequel).

Nevertheless, for all of its shortcomings, the ending of **Monkey Island 2** still has to be commended as one of the most daring artistic moves in video game history up to that point. The older scheme, as a rule, was simplistic: the good guys and the bad guys get set up against each other at the beginning of the game, you have to find a conventional or an unconventional way to let the good guys triumph over the bad guys, you save yourself / your girl / your pet poodle / the world and go home. For all the talk about how adventure games at the time were typically played by a more sophisticated / intellectual brand of consumers, the basic structure of these games rarely went beyond the philosophy of the average happy-ending Hollywood movie. Gilbert, instead, took his inspiration from something like a *Monty Python* movie (think back to the ending of *The Holy Grail*), and ended up creating something that you might not necessarily like or agree with, but definitely something that you will not soon forget — or might even use in future discussions on child psychology, Freudian concepts, and the influence of pizza on the brain of outstanding game designers.

Puzzles

Allegedly, the puzzles of **Monkey Island 2** were originally deemed so challenging for players that some (not all) versions of the game came with a special *Monkey Island Lite* mode, cutting out a big chunk of the challenges and jokingly asserting on the back cover that this particular mode was primarily intended for video game reviewers. However, unlike the «normal» vs. «MegaMonkey» modes of **The Curse Of Monkey Island**, which would indeed be two different design strategies for the more vs. less patient players, the *Lite* mode here was more like a joke at the expense of whiny players, since it efficiently removed most of the challenge — and, incidentally, it was never reproduced in 2010's *Special Edition* remake.

This is not to say that the regular puzzles in the game are not challenging — far from it! — but neither could anyone insist on

placing it in the category of the most challenging games ever designed. As a rule, the complexity of an adventure game depends not so much on the intellectual level of the designers and players, but rather on the plain *size* of the game: the more locations there are to explore, the more objects to pick up, the more characters to interact with — the more potential combinations of actions arise at your disposal; and while, of course, it is rarely, if ever, a question of trying out *all* theoretically possible scenarios, it may still take a lot of time before you filter out all the moderately reasonable ones which still do not fit. From that point of view, the second **Monkey Island** obviously offered more challenge — simply because it was so much bigger, and because the successful completion of its puzzles required, in particular, quite a bit of jumping to and fro from one of the three islands to the other two (a trick that would soon be implemented in a far more revolutionary and demented fashion on **Day Of The Tentacle**).

As it was with the first game, the specific difficulty of the puzzles lay in their following that very special brand of Monkey Island Logik to the terms and conditions of which you are obligated to wholeheartedly subscribe in order to save yourself hours of useless frustration. The Monkey Island universe revolves around its own inimitable axis, which requires that perilous swamps need to be crossed in floating coffins, dogs and monkeys be carried around in the pockets of your overcoat, and pet alligators in hotel lobbies be addicted to cheese squigglies. Once your brain gets adjusted to this why-the-fuck-not mentality, puzzle solving in **Monkey Island 2** generally becomes demented child's play, though there are still proverbial tough cases, such as, for instance, the relatively infamous «monkey wrench» puzzle where [*inevitable spoiler alert!*] you are indeed supposed to use an actual monkey as an actual wrench. Is this a truly tough and unjust puzzle, or is it fully permissible in the Monkey Island Universe, most of which is built on puns and gags by default? Opinions here are strongly divided, but if I were to cast a vote, I would still vote «permissible» — though, in all honesty, at least *some* sort of prior indirect clue to poor Jojo's amazing wrenching abilities would have been nice.

In other cases, the complexity of the challenge is caused by several different conditions necessary to overcome it: most notably, the hilarious spitting contest where you have to do at least three different things to turn the odds in Guybrush's favor, each of which requires a fairly non-trivial way of thinking — and since there is no way to learn that you need to do all three

from the beginning, emotions are very likely to run high each time that sweet victory finds itself snatched out of your jaws along with the next burst of saliva. There are also instances when salvation clues are received so far ahead of time that it takes quite a brain-push to realize how they are related to your current situation (this specifically concerns the connection between the psychedelic Dead Parent Dance and the bony maze inside LeChuck's Fortress). But, once again, not a single of these situations truly defies Monkey Island Logik, and I do vaguely remember myself being able to complete the game in the pre-Internet, pre-walkthrough age — something that I was *not* able to do with Sierra's **Police Quest**, for instance. Apparently, there is an innate capacity to master Monkey Island Logik in at least some of us, much unlike an intuitive understanding of proper police procedure.

According to standard LucasArts rules, there are no situations whatsoever in the game where you can get stuck due to not having fulfilled a requirement earlier, nor is there anything punishable by death (technically, you can die at least once, horrendously executed inside LeChuck's fortress, but then an ingenious narrative twist immediately brings you back to life). There are very few red herrings either, and most of them come in the form of hilarious dialog — perhaps the funniest of these is trying to take a philosophy lesson from your old pal Herman Toothrot on Dinky Island, which involves naming of about 100 different potential colors for trees and ultimately leads Guybrush to conclude that "philosophy is not worth my time" ("I'm impressed!" reacts an excited Herman, "it takes most people years to realize that!"). In any case, each and every superfluous and unnecessary path of dialog here is totally worth taking: it's the little things like that which truly bring out the atmosphere in **Monkey Island 2**. And speaking of atmosphere...

Atmosphere

It might very well be so, you know, that the biggest difference between the first and second games actually concerns the realm of *feels*. One reason why **Secret** seemed a bit too lightweight for me after having played it after the second game is that I was struck by how much brighter it was in terms of overall mood. Both Mêlée and Monkey Island were generally fun places — the «hellish» experiences of Guybrush did not properly begin until the final act of the game, and even then they were more psychedelic than truly

scary. In stark contrast, Scabb Island immediately announces itself as an unsafe location, with LeChuck's right hand Largo LaGrande prowling upon the premises, the Voodoo Lady being reachable only by crossing a perilous-looking swamp in a coffin, and a large part of the island being dominated by a huge cemetery.

And that is just the beginning. There is Phatt Island, where you have to endure jail time and come face to face with the disgusting monstrosity of its governor (who has an actual system of feeding tubes installed next to his bed in order to save all those precious calories). There is Guybrush's nightmare, during which he sees his parents turn into dancing skeletons. There is LeChuck's fortress, all skulls and bones and pools of acid. Finally, there is the climactic confrontation with LeChuck in the underground, which goes on for much longer than the battle at the end of **Secret**, is far more nerve-wrecking, and ends with a gruesome scene of dismemberment (which somehow ends up more gruesome than the *Star Wars* sequence that it so obviously parodies).

It goes without saying that all these things are deeply mixed with humor: all the darkness in the game is played out for satirical effect. But it is still darkness, and there are moments in the game that might genuinely scare a younger player (probably no such luck with **Secret**). The Ghost Pirate LeChuck, in particular, is probably much creepier in this installment than he was in the first one, and unquestionably far creepier than he would be in the sequels (where his level of scariness rarely exceeds *Sesame Street* level). When it comes to the big revelation scene, no matter how much of a joke it is, some sort of shock reaction is still guaranteed one way or another — somehow, even through a very parodic means of delivery Gilbert's team is able to convey the confusion over the breaking up of the good / evil dichotomy.

The «mature» theme does not exactly stop at scariness. As others have already pointed out, there is a larger amount of gross action (such as the spitting contest, for instance, or the soup-poisoning incident). In one case, Guybrush finds himself obligated to cross-dress, then have a seriously «adult» conversation with the love of his life while still wearing a pretty pink dress. Ultimately, the universe of **Monkey Island 2** seems to close in heavier on his protagonist than the universe of **Secret Of Monkey Island**, and the protagonist has to react correspondingly, often with decidedly ruthless and renegade actions, because desperate times call for voodoo doll measures.

Is this all appropriate for a **Monkey Island** setting? In my opinion — absolutely so, just like the already mentioned *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* never shied away from disturbing or mature imagery when it was thought necessary. LucasArts' obsessive fixation on comedy and humor did render them a good service for those fans who thought that the worst thing about a computer game was when it took itself too seriously; but the complete elimination of any sense of darkness or danger — and

remember, you couldn't even *die* properly in a LucasArts game! — sometimes made playing the games into too much of a haughty-giggly affair, leaving no space for tension and decreasing immersion. **Monkey Island 2** is one of the few LucasArts games that is willing to open a tiny window and let in some darkness and suspense — precisely the kind of thing that, for instance, had earlier made Sierra's **Leisure Suit Larry 2** stand out a little from the other games of the series by cleverly combining smut and humor with suspense.

Of course, none of that is done at the expense of the humor — and while we're on that, let me state another important point: **Monkey Island 2** builds most of its reputation on *original* humor, rather than recycled jokes and running gags from the first game (something that really really bugs me about the post-Gilbert sequels). There are a few lines that have been inherited from **Secret** ("I'm Guybrush Threepwood, a mighty pirate!" and "Look behind you, a three-headed monkey!" among them), but they are not overdone and just play their part of faithful shaken-not-stirred-style tags. But there are tons of new characters with new jokes to crack; there are useless hilarious little rituals to partake of (you have not lived if you have not played the "100 bottles of beer on the wall" game!); and while the end game may be laying on the *Star Wars* worship a bit *too* thick (I guess they were just happy they had no legal limits to the amount of stuff they could quote), this is, in a way, just an unsubtle hint at the already suggested *Empire Strikes Back*-style nature of the game. All in all, **Monkey Island 2** continues to be a triumph of insane imagination.

Technical features

Note: *As was the case with* **Secret Of Monkey Island**, *the following section will cover (and, where necessary, compare) both the original 1990 edition of the game and the 2010 Special Edition. Once again, no separate review for the remake is necessary, since it changes nothing in the base game but rather just provides a complete overhaul of its visuals, sound, and gameplay interface.*

Graphics

Truth be told, with but a few very special exceptions the main strengths of LucasArts rarely lay in their visual art technique, and *Monkey Island 2* is no exception. Despite some pretty serious changes that took place in between **Secret** and **Revenge** — such as fully completing the shift from 16-color EGA to 256-color VGA and implementing the procedure of scanning manually painted images — I cannot say that the second game looks as drastically different from the first one as, say, Sierra's VGA-era games look from their EGA era, or even that the differences are necessarily for the better.

The ability to use more colors, experiment with higher resolutions, and rely on hand-drawn material certainly adds to the density of detail: the screens of **Secret** were relatively sparse, while the various interiors of Monkey Island 2 (and some of the exteriors) have a lot more going on. But in that particular age, «more» did not necessarily mean «better»: the various shops on Booty Island, for instance, end up cluttered and messy, with the hand-painted style not converting ideally to VGA resolutions. Some of this is technically explainable by the fact that they still had to cram all the images into about two-thirds of the screen's regular size, in order to leave necessary space for all the interface (more on that below) — an unfortunate limitation that could have been avoided by redesigning the gameplay, but was *not* avoided, probably because Gilbert and Co. were so proud of having invented that style in the first place.
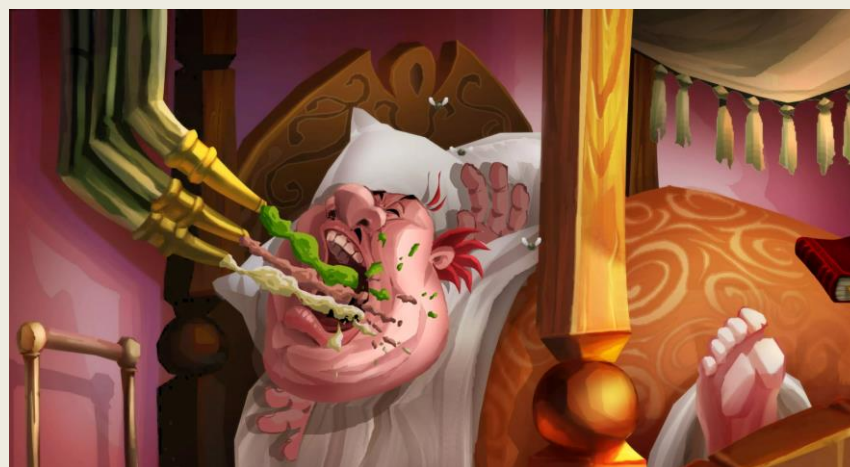
Arguably the most impressive improvements were achieved with the animated sprites. These were now able to be developed in far more detail, with more fluent movements and facial gestures; the upscaled Guybrush now also looked plumpier, beardier, and somewhat more mischievous than the short-pants teenage kid in the first game. And special praise goes to whoever designed the image of LeChuck: the sight of the green-faced, red-eyed, heavily bearded, spit-throwing monster was far creepier than the authentically «ghostly» silhouette of the first game, and contributed heavily to the already mentioned darker atmosphere.

That said, I beg pardon from all the purists by admitting that, even though I should have been properly ruled by nostalgia at this point, I still far prefer the re-drawn Special Edition version of **Monkey Island 2**. Just like the first game in the series, it was a faithful graphic recreation of all the backdrops, foregrounds, and minor details from the original game — obviously, with some stylistic changes that veteran fans did not always appreciate, but without ever losing the spirit of the original renderings. Had the old images represented some sort of fabulous graphic art breakthrough or featured a totally unique style, I would have had second thoughts; as it is, I am not sorry to say that with the new graphics, the game has become better playable even for those players who, like me, are always ready to appreciate first-rate EGA/VGA art from the good old days.

Most importantly, the new, re-drawn Guybrush has never looked more smashingly dashing than he does in the Special Edition: gone is the rather creepily fish-eyed, scrawny kid from **Secret**, replaced by a fashionably clad wannabe swashbuckler

with appropriate body weight and, occasionally, a properly tricky glint in his eyes. This is probably my favorite version of the guy, and it is too bad that they'd only come up with it for the very last product to feature Guybrush Threepwood as a protagonist (even the TellTale sequel **Tales Of Monkey Island** came out one year earlier, and I definitely do not like the way GT was portrayed there).

One major flaw of the game's graphic design as compared to the original was the near-total lack of close-ups (I think the only one in the entire game is that of Governor Phatt in his bed). Why they decided to omit it, despite having a larger budget and all, is unclear: I would certainly have loved to see Elaine or LeChuck up close at least once or twice. It sort of fits into this pet conception of mine that graphic art was not a major priority at the time; unfortunately, this also means that the remake had to follow suit in order to remain loyal to the original (actually, they could not change anything because, like the first game, the Special Edition always allows you to switch between the old and the new graphic styles in one click, with a one-to-one correlation in all cases). Then again, some people were allegedly not too happy with the close-ups in **Secret**, insisting that they did not match well with the regular sprites — so, perhaps, it was thought that close-ups could ruin immersion rather than enhance it. Wouldn't be *my* way of thinking, but then I am not Ron Gilbert (and thank God for that).

Sound

For the second game in the series, Michael Land was retained as principal composer, with two more assistant composers at his side, and the result is cozily predictable — yet another Caribbean-influenced soundtrack, nice tunes with calypso, ska, and reggae influences which serve their purpose but are rarely memorable on their own, except for the main theme tunes which were carried over from the first game anyway (e.g. the Monkey Island theme and LeChuck's gruesomely carnivalesque theme). Due to the increased darkness of the game, there are a few spookier-sounding-than-usual themes

(in the Voodoo Lady's swamp, at the cemetery, etc.), but since this is still a funny sort of darkness, the themes are correspondingly vaudevillian, better suited for a phantasmagoric show than a chilly supernatural thriller. And that is probably the way it should be.

In terms of music, **Monkey Island 2** is probably specifically remembered for incorporating the «iMUSE» (Interactive Music Streaming Engine — years before the i- in the Apple products, for that matter!) system, an innovative approach to integrate the various musical tracks in the game. Before that, the typical scheme was that when you moved from one location to another, one track would simply be abruptly cut off and another would begin playing in its place; at best, in order to make things less jarring, the first track could be quickly faded out and the next one be faded in. Land and Peter McConnell instead tweaked the system so that the tracks would seamlessly merge with each other, giving the first one an abrupt, but natural ending flourish from which the next one would then emerge. This creates an aurally pleasing continuity and lets you experience a smoothly flowing, never ever interrupted musical background. That said, for all the revolutionary nature of iMUSE I could hardly call it an emotionally rewarding achievement — more like a quirky one, and there is a good reason why it never became the video game industry's default standart.

Despite the increased budget, **Monkey Island 2** remained a voiceless game upon release (other than a few sound effects here and there), and the situation was only corrected with 2010's Special Edition, for which, just like for the previous game, almost the entire cast of **Curse Of Monkey Island** returned to provide their services. Needless to say, with Dominic Armato reprising the role of Guybrush, Alexandra Boyd the role of Elaine, and Earl Boen the role of LeChuck there is hardly anything to complain about — and the new parts are generally just as consistent (I am particularly happy with Roger Jackson finding the perfect gluttonous pitch for Governor Phatt, and with Sally Clawson finding the perfect you-go-girl pitch for Captain Kate Capsize). Perhaps the most seductive feature of the Special Edition is that, unlike **Secret**, it actually lets you choose the old-school 1992 graphics while leaving on the new soundtrack — almost creating the illusion that Armato has been The Guybrush since 1992, when in reality his first take on Threepwood's character would only take place in 1997.

Indeed, the new voice soundtrack fits in with the old game so smoothly that it is pretty hard to believe the original was not initially designed with voice acting in mind — for instance, the game of «100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall» practically screams for live singing and interrupting; and the "search your feelings" dialog between Guybrush and LeChuck in the climactic underground scene can only reach the threshold of genuine hilariousness when it is done in proper Darth Vader / Luke fashion (I like how Armato does not even forget to add the second, weaker "noo..." to the first big one... we all remember that Luke actually says NO! twice, don't we?). As such, this is another argument that the Special Edition does not so much reimagine or redefine the original game as it simply *completes* it, precisely the way it should have been completed in 1992, without «corrupting» the experience in some sort of bland 21st century manner. Excellent work.

Interface

The original game added a tiny twist to the typical SCUMM interface — by slightly shortening the number of available verbs to pick from (e.g. eliminating "turn on" and "turn off" for their redundancy, and maybe also because options such as "turn on Captain Kate" could be seen as *really* ambiguous) and using the freed-up space for a larger inventory window in the bottom right corner, in which the actual objects were now pictographic rather than just listed verbally (though, frankly, sometimes it would be easier to properly identify an object by reading its name than by seeing its pixelated contour).

That's pretty much all there is to it. The Special Edition, just like it did for the first game, converted it all to a full-fledged point-and-click experience, freeing up valuable space for onscreen images and also correcting a relative inconvenience in **Secret**, where you had to alternate between left- and right-clicking the mouse on the object to do different things with it; now, whenever you click a hotspot, it immediately shows you all the potential options to choose from ("look", "pick up", etc.). Needless to say, this style eliminates the last chance at actual choice that you had with several different verbs, but, let's face it, the damage was done with the elimination of the free parser: frankly, it does not much matter if you get to choose from "use", "push", and "pull" or if you just condense them all to a single "interact with". Give me parser liberty or give me point-and-click death, leave me alone with your insignificant little compromises.

Overall, it does not matter much because most of your troubles will come from the necessity of finding the relevant objects and choosing the right ones, rather than figuring out what precisely to do with them. There are occasional bits of trickiness — for instance, in order to escape one particularly dire situation you need to time your, um, expectorating strategy just right — but usually it is all very straightforward. The storyline does not even involve any special «mini-games» *à la* Insult Swordfighting of the first game: everything here is strictly wit-based, no grinding or repetition involved whatsoever (addition of these elements to the later sequels, as a rule, tended to be quite controversial).

Verdict: *This is the second most brilliantly realised sequel to a video game that I've ever seen.*

It is a little sad that **Monkey Island 2** does not work *fully* well on its own: without playing **Secret** first, you will remain in the dark as to some of the in-game jokes and character backstories. And, frankly speaking, any work of art with the number '2' slapped on it screams to be a little underappreciated (with the exception of *The Godfather 2*). But then there is no reason why you shouldn't — and you should — simply take the first two games together and treat them as a self-sufficient, cohesive, and

dynamically developing dilogy, growing ever more deep and intriguing, rather than more boring and predictable, as the story gradually unwinds. The ensuing sequels, good or bad as they were, were notably different from the vision of the series' creator — in my opinion, more strongly feeding upon the legend rather than adding to it — but the second game was the one that expanded, perfected, and essentially completed the basic «Monkey Island construction set», as well as made it possible to think and theoretize about the game in almost serious philosophical terms. (Not that I am demanding we all make good use of this possibility: for all his awesomeness, Ron Gilbert is no Terry Gilliam, and if he were, he would probably make his name somewhere other than the videogame industry).

As a brief addendum, I also must repeat that the 2010 Special Edition of the game should be quoted as a textbook example of how to make classic old games palatable for modern audiences without sacrificing their original flair and spirit. With the modern and classic looks fully integrated with each other, you can enjoy it as a museum history piece one moment and as a fully relevant and enjoyable interactive adventure the next one. If there is one thing that might seem «dated» about **Monkey Island 2**, it is simply that recent times have not seen that much by way of great comedy entertainment in plot-based video games, most of which now take themselves way too seriously. So the only way to get out of this tight spot is to look behind you, and catch a glimpse of that three-headed monkey before they take it out of your Steam account.