Police Quest II: The Vengeance
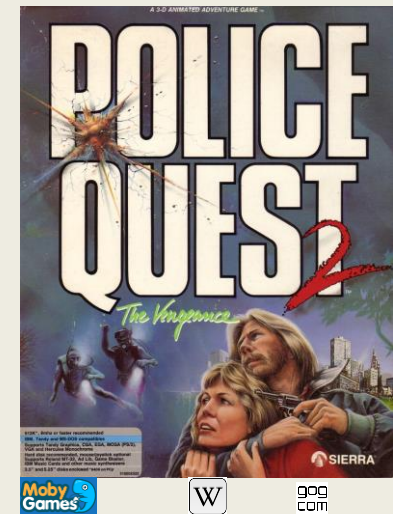
Studio: **Sierra On-Line**

Designer(s): **Jim Walls**

Part of series: **Police Quest**

Release: November 1988

Main credits: Programming: **Robert Fischbach, R. E. Heitman, Chris Hoyt et al.**
Development System: **Pablo Ghenis, Stuart Goldstein, Jeff Stephenson**
Graphics: **Cheryl Loyd, Vu Nguyen**
Music: **Mark Seibert**

Useful links: Playthrough: [Complete Playlist Parts 1-5](#) (*305 mins.*)

Basic Overview

There is not a lot of information circulating around concerning the making of **Police Quest II**, which means it must have been a pretty routine affair on the whole. Given how boring the first game in the series must have seemed to many Sierra fans even at the time of its original release (to be fair, I am inferring this statement rather than basing it on any objective statistics), it is a little curious that the series managed to persist — but perhaps *more* curious, and even more of an honor to the «Sierra way of life» at the time, is just how far it evolved over a mere one year separating the Christmas season of 1987 from that of 1988.

For sure, Sierra was entering its Golden Age at the time: with several years of accumulated experience happily multiplied by technological process, allowing for better graphics, richer sound, and more detailed content, *all* of Sierra's classic franchises — **King's Quest**, **Space Quest**, **Leisure Suit Larry** — were becoming more exciting and mature than they used to be, and **Police Quest** was no exception. The second game in the series is arguably the best not because its creators were suddenly struck by collective lightning, but simply because the time window was right to produce the best possible adventure games of

all time. However, even in that time window success was not automatically guaranteed; involving storylines and appealing game design hardly ever came down from the sky wrapped in pink ribbons, and one need only try to immerse oneself in the wretched experience of **Codename: Iceman** to understand that decisions which *did* work in a certain setting (police work) began to backfire and come out all wrong in another (secret agent stuff).

So let us give credit where it's due: **Police Quest II** set a certain quality bar for the series which it would be unable to surpass in the following years, and we do have to personally thank Jim Walls and Mark Crowe for that. The game not only took dutiful advantage of technical progress — introducing actual music to the series and improving the graphics — but it also gave the story of Detective Sonny Bonds a bit more direction, purpose, and personality. While retaining the overall focus on «proper police procedure» and even further tightening it in some areas, **Police Quest II** differed from its predecessor by having an actual plot, which begins to unwind itself right from the start of the game; it also gave its playable character more, uhm, *character* by surrounding him with buddies and loved ones. Last, but not least, it achieved a decent balance between puzzle-based and dexterity-based arcade challenges... and it didn't have poker, which is always a plus.

As one of the first games to be made with the use of Sierra's SCI engine, **Police Quest II** was somewhat overlooked upon release by the excitement and admiration over **King's Quest IV**, getting, I think, fairly perfunctory, «coldly positive» reviews from most gaming magazines. This is understandable; next to the colorful fantasy world of **King's Quest**, and particularly next to William Goldstein's magnificent soundtrack, lilting out of all the brand new Sound Blasters and Roland MT-32's, the world of **Police Quest** remained fairly drab and underwhelming in comparison. With so many new opportunities opening up to depict beautiful fantasy universes, who really wanted to see all those resources wasted on immersing you in a digital projection of that very real universe from which you were trying to escape in the first place?..

However, in retrospect, as digital fantasy universes began piling up like pancakes and games taking place in the «real world» became perceived as a rare commodity, **The Vengeance** gradually came to be almost universally regarded as the highest point in the **Police Quest** saga — which, admittedly, is still not too high on the overall scale (it still comes out as the best **Police Quest** game even, for instance, in this somewhat screwed-up [PCGamer ranking of Sierra games](#), conducted by someone whose views on what makes a great game are barely compatible with mine, and who, for that matter, clearly has a hard time understanding the meaning of the term "gung-ho"). In the following sections we shall take a look at its various aspects and try to understand what it is that makes even an occasional cop-hater reluctantly recognize the intrinsic value of this experience.

Content evaluation

Plotline

Unlike the first game in the series, the second **Police Quest** gives you fairly little time to get adjusted to the sight of Lytton's new EGA-era looks before an actual story takes off — literally minutes after you, as Sonny Bonds, now promoted to Homicide Detective, step inside your office within the renovated Lytton Police Department building, the big news arrives on the scene: Jessie Bains, the «Death Angel» whom you so smoothly put behind bars in the previous game, has escaped from jail and is on the loose again! Furthermore, instead of choosing to lay low and bide his time like sensible criminals usually do, the first thing he's put together is a list of people responsible for his capture and conviction, each one of them having received a death sentence from the guy. Apparently, he's not *just* a dangerous drug dealer, but also a cunning psychopath, and it will require all of Detective Sonny Bonds' wit, strength, and courage to (fail to) prevent a string of executions and rid Lytton of its biggest danger, once and for all.

If the first game was really all about trying to simulate an urban environment and recreate the banality and boredom of a routine cop's everyday duties, only occasionally spiced with amusing details or a hint of some unique adventure, then **Police Quest II** pretty much dispenses with all that stuff, instead offering the player a concise and generally realistic (with a couple major exceptions, which we will get to a bit later) detective story. This time, you do not get to aimlessly cruise around town; there is not even an actual map, just a set of disconnected locations where you go from Point A to Point B simply by getting inside your car and typing "*drive to the airport*" or "*drive to the mall*". There are occasional «mini-side quests» – some of them optional, some not – that may detract you from your main goal, but the major emphasis is always on the main task: track down the itinerary of Jessie Bains, collect all available evidence, and deal out the ultimate justice.

What does remain largely unchanged from the first game is the lack of any «sensational» twists. To a large degree, this is *still* a game about properly sticking to police procedures and ensure the safety of both yourself and the surrounding citizens, rather than about thinking out of the box — although this time around you actually have to do some thinking in order to beat all of

the game's puzzles and collect the maximum available amount of points, rather than simply having to carefully read through the accompanying game manual (well, you *do* still have to read the manual). Like its predecessor, the game is split into a linear sequence of mini-sections: you arrive at a certain location, clear it out if necessary, scoop up as much evidence as possible, get a clue or two about the killer's next move(s), move to the next location, rinse and repeat.

Fortunately, the locations are varied enough, both visually and in terms of what to do about them — you will have to engage in some underwater diving, learn how to properly dismantle a booby trap in a motel room, and get your bearings inside a twisted set of sewage tunnels clogged with methane pockets, among other things; nothing too unrealistic, but nothing too mechanical and repetitive, either. Unfortunately, the worst thing about the plot is that it is almost completely linear, and no matter how thorough and meticulous you are, you won't be able to prevent even a single murder or kidnapping — all you can hope for is reaching that coveted «300 out of 300» result at the end of the game. This was a serious drawback in the original game and it remains the same for the sequel: I mean, if all this strict following of proper police procedure does *not* result in actually saving more lives, why bother at all? Wouldn't it be easier to just go the Clint Eastwood route or something?

Most of the actual «choices» you get to make in the game just lead you to gaining or losing those extra points; at best, you can choose, for instance, whether or not to follow the bad guy on a plane to Houston (but you'll never make the trip even if you *do* choose to fly), or whether or not to squander all your money before a restaurant date with your sweetheart, which results in either your going home with her after the date or staying behind to help wash the dishes to cover for your check. (Big frickin' deal, since you don't even get to see what happens at home after you leave the restaurant...). And most of that pile of evidence you collect will simply end up rotting in the vaults anyway, so...

Then there are those occasional «detours» from the main quest, some of which are short, simple, and okayish (like arresting a mugger or offering psychological aid to a colleague at work); however, the biggest one, in which you have to defeat a bunch of terrorists who foolishly try to hijack *your* plane ride, is really distracting and stupid, not to mention vaguely offensive (the hijackers are, of course, Arabic guys in headscarfs demanding "*safe passage to their desert home of Bum Aroun, Egypt*" "*in the name of The Sheik Of The Golden Sands!*"). I mean, if this were some absurdist comedy game, *Police Academy*-style or whatever, this would have made some sense, but with Jim Walls' constant appeal to realism this entire sequence feels like it's been treacherously implanted inside the game from some other project, and this sucks. (It's actually much closer in spirit to the atmospheres and attitudes of Jim's miserable failure of **Codename: Iceman**, presaging all the silly clichés and tropes of the «secret agent adventure» genre). Even the sequence where you have to find and disarm the bomb left behind by the hijackers feels contrived and utterly dumb next to the regular policework-related events of the game.

Still, there is no denying that the game at least keeps you on your toes and somewhat intrigued — now that your own life is actually on the line, as is the life of your girlfriend (and this time around, the entire romance line is handled just a teeny bit better than in the previous game), **Police Quest II** gets a darker, more serious tone, bringing it a little closer to the actual feel of a police movie. Oh, did I mention that you actually get your own cop buddy this time? He doesn't do much, other than chain-smoke his way around you, offer a wannabe-funny quip or two, and having to make you wait every time you need to leave a crime scene because he takes so much time to move his legs across the screen — but how could a computer game about cops ever hope to compete with *Miami Vice* without a proper partner angle?

Puzzles

Just as it was with the first game, the hugest challenge here is not beating the game — to a large degree, the game really plays itself, as most of Sonny's basic actions are pretty much self-evident: go from one crime scene to another, snoop around, then wait for Dispatch to provide you with a new location, rinse and repeat. There are maybe two or three moments in the game when you can get stuck if you miss a crucial piece of evidence (like an address or a phone number), but in most cases, even if you miss it, there will be someone else, like one of your cop buddies, to pick it up for you anyway. If all you really want to do is to see your protagonist and his girlfriend happily flying away into the sunset at the end of the game, **Police Quest II** is really one of the easiest titles in the Sierra catalog.
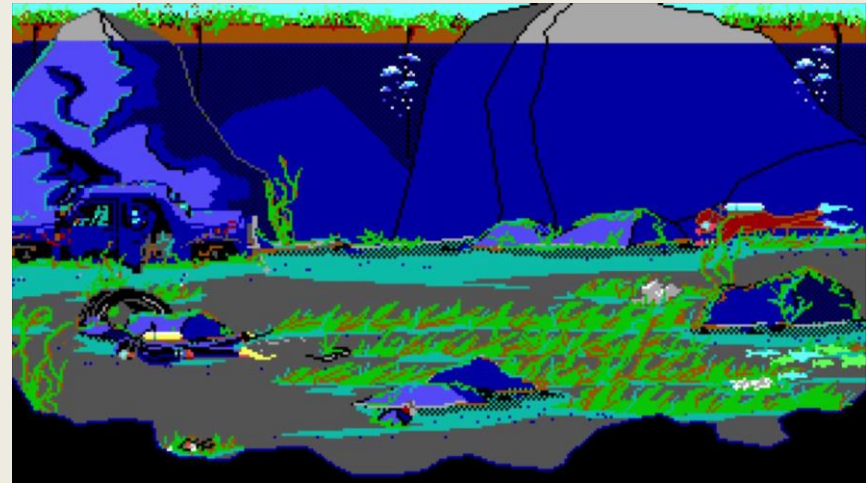
The *real* challenge, of course, is not to simply beat the game, but beat it with a perfect score. To do that, you have to work quite a bit indeed, not to mention work around the classic Sierra parser, which is significantly more difficult than working with a point-and-click interface — especially since **Police Quest II** arguably features one of its most highly evolved versions (that's not really saying much, merely to point out the fact that the parser *was* very much alive and evolving at the time, gradually getting better until the point-and-click approach nipped it in its beautiful bud). The trick is not only to go on sticking to proper police procedure at all times, but also to be as meticulous as possible in your investigation. Miss a hidden spot, like an inconspicuous rock at the bottom of the river or a toilet stall at the airport, and you miss some evidence (minus a bunch of

points) which you could have later booked at the station (minus another bunch of points). Fail to bring out your camera or your blood sample kit, and you miss even more evidence. Getting all of it right on the first try without a system of hints or a walkthrough is practically impossible, although, in all fairness, all of the actions you have to perform are reasonable and logical — Jim Walls had no time to mess around with absurd solutions to realistic situations.

Only a very few puzzles are not in any way related to your policing, such as the «romantic» options to sweeten up your date with Sweet Cheeks Marie, or a situation at the Department where you can offer a colleague some psychological help (*that* one is most tricky, since the game drops no hints whatsoever that you can even do it — you have to take the initiative in your very own hands). There are also things you have to constantly keep track of, like having your gun sights properly adjusted at all times (as far as I understand, it is really only significant for the final firefight, but forget to do it and you're dead meat anyway, instead of newly-wed material); fortunately, at least you no longer have to perform the «prescribed walk-around safety check of your vehicle» from the first game — I guess the Lytton PD must have relaxed regulations somewhat in between 1987 and 1988, what with so many police officers wasting away so many man-hours walking around their vehicles instead of arresting criminals and such.

*Un*fortunately, Murphy's Law states that «eliminating one dumb, annoying option shall always be compensated by introducing another dumb, annoying option» — in this case, you are burdened down with your field kit which you *always* have to take out of your trunk at each crime scene and *always* put back before leaving the scene. I mean, *really*? You have all that huge inventory of evidence on your body at all times and you can't allow yourself to add a tiny camera and a fingerprint kit to what you're already carrying? Plus, it wouldn't be so bad if you didn't have to align yourself 100% with that tiny pixel position «next to the trunk», which can actually be tricky even when playing at slow speed...

In any case, on the whole the puzzle system is still an improvement over the first game. At least in here you actually get to do some investigative work, and are occasionally — *very* rarely — prompted to engage in some creative thinking, like, for instance, having to revert the «bomb-building» instruction to a «bomb-disarming» one on the airplane (not that this is in any way difficult, but at least it mildly stimulates your brain with a 100% certainty of being rewarded for it, unlike those stupid poker games in **Police Quest I**). And, like I said, the parser really helps building up more of a challenge, with the game recognizing an impressively large number of nouns (corresponding to surrounding objects) and giving you plenty of predicted opportunities for making the wrong choices. In the end, the important thing is that playing **Police Quest II** almost never gets proverbially «tedious» — except for that goddamn field kit — and this is probably the highest compliment one could ever issue to a Jim Walls-designed game.

Atmosphere

Strange as it seems, and in an almost unprecedented situation for Sierra's Golden Age, the effect of *immersion* feels seriously weaker in **Police Quest II** than in its predecessor, despite all the technical and substantial improvements. Each time I play the game, I feel more like I'm just there to solve the criminal puzzles and get myself out of a tight situation rather than to experience the sounds and sights of a realistic-but-fictional universe. I quite explicitly blame this, first and foremost, on the sense of total *disconnection* between all the locations you visit. Sure enough, by eliminating the City Map feature Walls and Co. may have saved you an hour or so of tedious driving, but somehow they also ended up eliminating the organic and connected feel of an actual city. This may have had to do with the same technical factor that also determined the structuring of **Leisure Suit Larry II** — since the game's content had to be divided between multiple floppy discs, each one was allocated to covering one or two locations. But what sort of worked for **Larry**, where the game's travelog philosophy implied that you had to say goodbye to one city, island, ship, or plane before moving on to another, hardly works for a game most of which takes place within one city *only* (except for the final part).

The mini-locations themselves are nicely detalized, with plenty of environmental knick-knacks and occasional bystanders with whom it is possible to briefly interact — even including an occasional Easter egg, like meeting Larry Laffer himself, waiting for the next plane to rescue him from being pursued by Dr. Nonokee's henchwomen. However, the feel is typically perfunctory: each place feels structured as primarily a «police challenge», with all the detalization intended to make you feel lost in a sea of red herrings, with a clue or two scattered among them — *literally* so when you have to scavenge at the bottom of the river, separating the mountains of chaff from a few valuable pieces of evidence, not to mention that you only have a limited amount of air in your tanks, so you don't exactly have time for a lot of sight-seeing.

Nor is there, at almost any point in the game but the very last part, a genuine sense of suspense and danger. How could there be, if most of the time is spent by you either at the Police Station, or investigating crime scenes from which the actual criminal

has long since departed? Even the silly plane-hijacking scene, due to its very silliness, feels parodic rather than suspenseful. Only when you get to the last part — tracking Jessie Bains, one-on-one, through the sewer system of Steelton, with its grimy graphics and sinister music — do you get to experience anything even remotely close to actual tension (which, admittedly, is still one moment too many when compared to the first game, where the most tense situation consisted of you playing poker with a bunch of gangsters). Yet, once again, I am not prepared to blame Jim for this lack of Hitchcock moments, what with the very point of the game being in modeling a situation close to real life.

I *am* prepared to blame him for failing to make this real-life simulation wholly believable, involving, or exciting, though. The game's only «romantic» interlude, for instance, which brings our hero together with his girlfriend on a restaurant date, is generic and corny — apparently, it is supposed to make us «care» about Sweet Cheeks Marie, developing a little empathy for her prior to her being kidnapped by Bains, but the entire scene, including the preparations (buying flowers, etc.), feels like it was loosely adapted from an English textbook for foreign students ("*I'll have the lobster*", "*thank you very much sir, your order will be ready shortly*", that sort of thing). We don't even get to have a close-up shot of the two lovers, much less an opportunity to follow them *after* the restaurant date... somebody get Al Lowe in here, pronto!

Speaking of Al Lowe, most of the attempts at humor in **Police Quest II** show that Jim Walls has an even more serious problem in this department. Jim's idea of a joke is, for instance, to have an allegedly attractive blonde girl standing with her back behind you in the airport's waiting room — if you try to start up a conversation with her, however, «she» turns around and, lo and behold, it's a long-haired blonde *guy* with a beard, har har har. There's also an endless stream of annoying, unfunny jokes on his own smoking that your partner Keith peppers you with while driving, plus a bunch of safe, boring, predictable «police humor» back at the station which may be realistic, but probably does not even compare to *Miami Vice* standards, let alone anything higher up on the evolution scale. Well, that's pretty much how it was in the first game, too.

Naturally, not every adventure game is supposed to have a lot of atmosphere to be playable and enjoyable; but given the generally outstanding achievements of Sierra in that respect with the arrival of their SCI-era strategies and technologies, **Police Quest II** is a noticeable disappointment on this front when lined up against **King's Quest IV**, **Space Quest III**, **Hero's Quest**, **Conquests Of Camelot**, or, well, just about any other Sierra game in the 1988-1990 «Golden Age» — the *real* reason why the series is remembered with less love than the others, not the artificially thought-up «cop-a-ganda» bullshit. It's just that, yeah, we get it, real life does tend to be kinda dull, and the general people you meet in real life do tend to often conform to stereotypes, but this is precisely what we have art for — finding a good balance between ordinary realism and *interesting* human behavior, none of which finds any representation in this game.

Technical features

Graphics

As a proverbial late-runner at just about every turn in Sierra's history, **Police Quest II** had no visual innovations of its own that would not be inherited from the earliest games of the company's early EGA / SCI era. Cheryl Loyd and Vu Nguyen, responsible for all the backgrounds and animations, were not among Sierra's list of top graphic artists, and what they do is credible, reliable work without a lot of grounds for admiration. In fact, I think that they might have even overdone it in places: when it comes to landscapes, for instance, they are a bit too eager to take advantage of the increased graphic resolutions, peppering their dust roads and tree branches with too many pixels of too many different colors, instead of keeping it relatively sparse — the effect is that the backgrounds feel a little too «messy», particularly on modern monitors, when compared to, say, Mark Crowe's graphics in **Space Quest III**. This is particularly bothersome when you shift from the aesthetic angle to the pragmatic one — like, for instance, trying to find tiny useful bits of evidence at the bottom of the river; your eyes end up straying in all directions, and the inability to keep focused combined with being seriously strapped for time ends in genuinely undeserved frustration.

And speaking of pragmatic, with the entire game so tightly focused on investigation of crime scenes and little else, I don't think the artists were even bothering with the goal of visually entertaining their audiences. What few efforts there are to convey a bit of beauty through eye candy — like, for instance, all the intricate flower arrangements in Steelton's city park — are few and far in between, and Sonny Bonds, Homicide Detective, does not really have the time to stop and smell the flowers anyway (of which the game informs you explicitly whenever you try to take a break from your work). That said, the amount of realism and detalization still has to be commended: the directive was not to make the game look particularly «pretty» or «intriguing», but to make it look relatively close to real life, and the artists did earn their salary. The airplane does look cramped, and the police offices do look cluttered, and the sewers through which you have to chase Bains for the last minutes of his life (or *your* life, if you play it badly) do look dirty and dangerous, and even smell kinda funny.

One thing the artists weren't apparently too hot on are close-ups: there is one of Sonny and Keith in the car, sitting with their

backs to you, and another real ugly one of Sonny talking to his boss if he takes too much time with his tasks, and that's pretty much it. Several rather ugly small-size profiles of characters talking on the phone show that Cheryl and Vu did not really have the talent of Mark Crowe or Doug Herring when it came to using EGA pixels for portraying people — so perhaps it was wiser that way, except that in the aftermath we do not even have a proper visual representation of Sonny's chief nemesis (Jessie Bains) or Sonny's soon-to-be-wife (Sweet Cheeks Marie). Quite a bummer for those of us who'd like to form an internal bond with Sonny Bonds and use him as a role model!

Sound

At least in this department some progress had been made: where the first game featured next to no music, other than the main theme that sounded like a funereal outtake from **King's Quest III**, **Police Quest II** features a short, but representative original soundtrack — which was actually the debut experience for Sierra's new composer-in-residence, Mark Seibert, who would go on to write something like 90% of Sierra's recognizable music, from the cheesy horrors of 'Girl In The Tower' to the impressive Gothic stylizations of **Phantasmagoria**. His occasional schlockiness and lack of taste aside (I mean, the man had spent eight years playing in a Christian rock band, what do you expect?), there is no denying the man's talent or versatility: the music of **Police Quest II**, in particular, has an easily recognizable *Miami Vice*-style 1980s police-soap synth-pop flavor, and [the main theme to the game](#) even manages to be kinda catchy, with these funky MIDI horns and all.

Although the total amount of music written for the game barely surpasses 10 minutes, it is responsible for almost 100% of its atmosphere — it is, for instance, the thirty-second long 'Underwater Theme', combining a little mid-Eastern flavor with a little Western minimalism, that produces the impression of briefly passing into another dimension of existence, rather than the encumbered visuals; and it is the fourty seconds of 'Marie's Kidnapping' that manage to introduce a little compassion and humanity into the tragedy of Sonny's girlfriend being abducted by Bains, rather than the non-descript visuals and the bland accompanying dialog. There's a happy, fast-paced vaudeville theme to reward us after the bad guy has been dealt with, and a little variation on Mendelssohn when Sonny finally proposes to Marie — which helps make the game's epilog a little more rewarding and even re-watchable after the disappointing conclusion of the first game.

None of this is particularly smashing — certainly nowhere near the visionary effort that was William Goldstein's soundtrack for **King's Quest IV** — but as a first serious try for a fresh new composer, it's credible work. There may have only been about 10 minutes of it altogether, but in these 10 minutes, Seibert managed to prove his worth in gold to Sierra. Synth-pop, ambient, funky, lounge-jazzy, rocking, vaudeville — he's done it all here; no wonder he would go on to be employed regardless of the

particular genre of any future Sierra game, be it the fantasy of **Quest For Glory**, the pseudo-history of **Conquests**, the Gothic horror of **Phantasmagoria**, or the smut of **Leisure Suit Larry**.

Interface

When it comes to playing style, **Police Quest II** is probably the most «adventuresque» game in the entire franchise. With the elimination of the city map (a questionable decision) and no poker tables in sight (a joyous decision), there is barely a single moment in the game when you have to rely on nimbleness, agility, or sheer pot luck so as to achieve your goals. Even the shooting range, which is absolutely *not* optional in this game (miss it and you die, fair and square), functions more as a puzzle (an annoying one, but still a puzzle) than an exercise in training your eyesight and finger reflexes. A few

of the sequences are time-dependent, as you can run out of air at the bottom of the river or fail the quickdraw test during the final showdown, but this is really not a big challenge for even the sluggiest of players. Again, this approach may have been intentional — to show you, symbolically, that you don't have to be a real sharp shooter or in great physical form so as to be a good cop, as long as you have your head firmly placed on your shoulders... and stick to those rules at all times, of course.

This does mean, however, that **Police Quest II** essentially just relies on the most standard version of Sierra's Creative Interpreter engine and little else. Other than a few function key shortcuts for drawing and firing your gun, etc., you always type in whatever you have to do — and, as I have already said, the parser is fairly well advanced here, recognizing quite an impressive array of synonyms and even some short phrases; you won't be getting much out of this, but the game does sort of invite you to experiment creatively. For instance, while passing by the completely insignificant pond in the park, you can type in "feed the ducks" and be told that you cannot feed the ducks. Sure you knew that, but it somehow feels nice to be able to try and learn that the game designers preemptively thought you might try to go that way. ("Catch the ducks" will get you a response of '*planning a barbecue while your girlfriend's kidnapped?*', which is even more touching).

One thing the game *could* have benefited at this point would be the addition of a hint section, at least post-game, the way it

would soon be done for **The Colonel's Bequest**; there are so many things that can easily be missed, either by failing to properly decipher the pixelated clues on the screen or by not coming up with the right idea of what to type in the parser, that having Sonny's captain or somebody else patiently explain to us at the end why we are so far away from the coveted 300 points would have been nice. Supposedly, however, a pretty big part of Sierra's revenue at the time came from selling hintbooks; also, since most of these missed points come from non-crucial activities, it's always easy to say that anybody who wants to be a top dog really has to work for it, right? Don't be a snowflake and all, that sort of thing. At least back in 1988, when relatively few people had computers and most of those who had were willing to blow a shitload of time on the latest adventure game on the market, it might have made sense.

Verdict: *An amusing, if somewhat tiresome, trip back to the stereotypical America of 1989.*

To be honest, I really don't know what to make of this game. It clearly tries – and occasionally comes close to succeeding – in taking itself more seriously than the first **Police Quest**, both in its attention to detail and in framing its challenges with more elements of suspense and deadly realism. It tries to push the player's imagination in more diverse directions with its creative use of the parser. It manages to seriously reinvent the established formula while at the same time keeping its essence intact (proper police procedure should be obeyed at all times!).

And yet, it still cannot save the series from being a little... *wooden*, I'd say, next to its livelier competition from other Sierra artists. The characters remain stereotypes, the plot remains minimal and rather silly, the humor is largely funny just because we laugh at the very idea of trying to include humor in a game like this one, not because of the actual jokes or comic situations.

In the end, it's still a relatively well-made game whose worth has, perhaps, increased as time goes by, largely for historical reasons — being one of the few «reality-based» adventure games produced in the late Eighties, it gives you about the same perspective on the *mores* of the times that you get from rewatching soaps from that era, only through a funnily distorted lens of 16-color EGA and the relatively simple mind of a retired police officer. You know — those happy innocent days when airport security was nowhere near as tight as today, and the lobster was $16.00 at the restaurant, that sort of thing. (I guess this

sounds even more escapist, in a way, than talking about unicorns and flying saucers!). If only that world around Sonny Bonds were more detailed, and 99% of the game did not have to revolve around chasing the Death Angel, it could have the potential of becoming an invaluable time capsule. As it is... well, let's just say you'll probably only enjoy it if, like me, you have an inborn attraction for the Sierra On-Line gaming philosophy.