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very so often, there comes along a game that changes all the rules; the sheer originality of game play and the ingenious exploitation of current technology combine to set new standards for all that dare to follow. Shivers, from Sierra, is not one of them.

Shivers begins its descent into mediocrity with its cheesy, B-movie opening sequence in which your “friends” lock you inside the grounds of a supposedly haunted estate. The would-be Oscar nominees bumble their way through a few lines of insipid dialogue, and then roar off in their car, leaving you alone in the mist.

[Did I say Myst?](#)

Unfortunately for Sierra, Shivers invites the inevitable comparison. While the plot of each game is distinct, Shivers clearly mimics the genre of the best-selling Myst. The interface consists of a series of predominantly static images, navigatable by clicking key areas and objects, and atmosphere is added via background sounds and music.

Sadly, Shivers’ daring attempt to follow in the footsteps of Robyn and Rand’s masterpiece is pedestrian. The graphics are colorful—at times, too colorful—and have little appreciable depth or fine detail. The atmospheric sounds are underused and often underwhelming, and the score is too sparse, frequently failing to capture the mood of the moment. Finally, the

whole game has a claustrophobic feel to it—confined to the interior of the museum, you rarely encounter an open sky, meadow or sea.

Three years after the debut of *Myst*, I must admit that I expect a little more from the genre. Pointing and clicking on static images is no tax of the computer's muscle. Why not innovate and use QuickTime VR? Surely, a pseudo-three dimensional environment would be far more immersing. (Indeed, if rumors are correct, the boys at Cyan may have some explaining to do come the debut of *Myst II*).

Shiver's plot is certainly not extraordinary, but unlike other facets of the game, it does have some redeeming value. Moving beyond the silly premise of being locked in the estate on a dare, you are free to roam the grounds, where you discover a museum of the strange and unusual, locked tight to the public. Once inside, you find the museum to be overrun by the "Ixupi," a group of Mayan elemental spirits intent on robbing you of your life force.

Goal

The goal then becomes to capture each of the Ixupi in appropriate canisters. A cat and mouse game of trial and error, you must search the museum, solving puzzles and retrieving each canister, lid, and finally, the appropriate spirit to be contained. While the nature of such game play is inherently repetitive, its monotony is reduced by the challenge of Shivers' puzzles, some of which are infuriatingly enigmatic.

Two welcome features of the game are its non-revealing pointer and randomized play. Unlike Myst, Shivers' pointer gives away no clues as to where you can go or what you can pick up and look at. Additionally, the location of each Ixupi and its associated canister and lid changes with each new game, adding some replayability.

While Shivers' creators bill the game as highly non-linear, however, the statement is only partially true. Both the beginning (entry into the museum) and end of the game have strictly linear paths to success, and though the Ixupi can be captured in any order, certain puzzles depend upon the solving of other puzzles.

Final Thoughts

For a game so seemingly intent on being another Myst, Shivers falls far short. Its graphics, sound and plot represent a unstellar effort that fails to break through mediocrity. Had Shivers debuted six months prior to Myst, there can be little doubt it would be lauded as revolutionary tour-de-force; three years, however, the expectations are much higher.

Pros

- Somewhat compelling story
- Some parts of story are non-linear

Cons

- Very average graphics
- Interlaced video bothersome
- Non compelling gameplay

Publisher Info

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