

# Flight of

A graphic adventure that's a bit like Indiana Jones, you say? Alex Fraser pops out to lunch with Renegade to talk about a plane, a hero and an Amazon Queen.

GAME	FLIGHT OF THE AMAZON QUEEN
PUBLISHER	RENEGADE
DEVELOPER	Interactive Binary Illusions — John Passfield (programmer & co-writer); Steve Stamatziades (graphics & co-writer); Tony Ball (programming); Richard Joseph (sound)
WORK STARTED	APRIL 1991
DUE FOR COMPLETION	JULY 1994

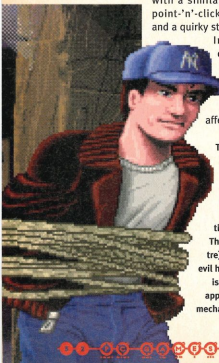
Does anyone remember an old TV series called *Tales Of The Golden Monkey*? It starred a ruggedly handsome pilot, a gorgeous old seaplane, and a mechanic and a girl, and each week they'd all fly into some sort of buttock-clenching danger trying to find some treasure and earn some cash.

No? Okay, how about this... Remember Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis? Yes, that's right — the LucasArts game. Of course you do. Well, *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*, a humorous graphic adventure from Australian design team Interactive Binary Illusions, is a bit like this. In fact, it's unashamedly a lot like this,

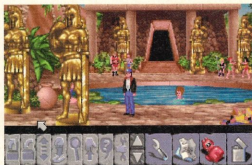
with a similar graphic style, a point-'n'-click control interface and a quirky storyline. If you liked *Indiana Jones*, I can confidently say that you will love *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*.

FOTAQ, at it's affectionately become

This handsome chap is Joe King, pilot-for-hire. In the dramatic opening sequence, he and his young lady (far right) have been tied up in a warehouse. The evil henchmen (centre) snigger the way only evil henchmen can, and Joe is rescued by the timely appearance of Sparky the mechanic who falls through a hole in the roof...



Film references abound in Amazon Queen from the obvious Indiana Jones bits (above) to a subtle Casablanca type scene (bottom left). Of course, I could just be making this up....



known in the Renegade office, is a graphic adventure set in the 1940s. You play pilot-for-hire Joe King (pun definitely intended — watch out for the gag "Are you Joe King?" "No, I'm being serious." Chuckle!), and your task is to fly the beautiful movie star Faye Russell into the heart of the Amazon rainforest for a photo shoot to promote her new film *Jungle Passion*.

It all sounds simple enough, but this innocent trip turns into a crazy story of B-movie proportions. Along the way you'll meet rival pilot Andersen (also known as the Flying Dutchman because he's Dutch and he, er, flies), some lost missionaries, a beautiful tribe of Amazon women, six-foot-tall Pygmies, Zombies and, of course, an evil scientist hell-bent on taking over the world. Oh, and there might just be some dinosaurs in there. And maybe a jetpack too...

So who are Interactive Binary Illusions? Well, IBI is a compact, bijou development team (here's three of them) based in Brisbane. John Passfield and Steve Stamatziades, the original team members, have been working flat out for three years trying to get the game finished, with Tony Ball joining after publisher Renegade became involved to assist with the programming.

"Steve and I started it alone about two-and-a-half years ago," says John. "Steve was doing all the graphics which takes quite a while, especially since at the time we were programming the game part-time. A year ago we started with Renegade full-time which was when Tony joined us, but it's still an inordinate amount of work."

As you can see the visuals in the game are quite stunning (full 256-colour graphics and parallax scrolling) and if you ask Steve how many games he's done before this one he'll say "Er, none. Back in the 80s I had an Atari 800 and I used to do graphics on it," says Steve, "but there's no games industry in Australia



— you can't just go and get a job. So I migrated into comics for a while and did a few animation courses."

Steve and John have both previously worked together on comic books and weekly newspaper strips, and

Dark Horse Comics has just snapped them up to produce a rip-roaring space adventure that might — or might not — be called *Stereo Jack*. Steve has also recently finished doing some of the animation for the forthcoming Sci-Fi movie, *Fortress*, starring Christopher "Highlander" Lambert.

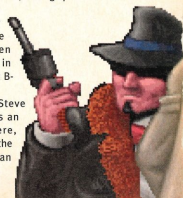
**"Monkey Island was a big influence. We really enjoyed it, we thought it was really funny."**

Steve Stamatziades, IBI.

When you actually come to play through FOTAQ what strikes you immediately (apart from the graphics, of course) is the impressive quality of the scripting. Granted, with mad scientists, talking apes

and lost valleys, the story sounds a bit corny and farcical, but the game has been written this way intentionally in order to create a classic B-movie feel.

In fact, John and Steve have done themselves an enormous favour here, because by not taking the story seriously they can



# fancy



look at sleeping villager



The Joe King universe is populated by all-manner of weird people from six foot tall Pgmies (above) to Zombies (left).

pack in all sorts of weird and bizarre elements. For example, the evil scientist Dr Ironstein has created a Dino-Ray which turns humans into dinosaurs, and his secret lab is hidden deep beneath an innocent-looking Lederhosen factory. It could almost be a storyline swiped from an old episode of Batman.

"The whole game is based around characterisation," explains Steve. "We wrote the story first, then worked out how many rooms we were going to have and what puzzle

zies we wanted. We also tried to give each of the 40 characters very real personalities, so that the final game is a lot of fun with loads of humour.

"This is really what we want to do with games. It's more than just moving a character from A to B and solving puzzles. Amazon Queen has story, characterisation and tons of graphics. It's more like an interactive comic than a game."

As I've mentioned, FOTAQ bears more than a passing resemblance to a certain LucasArts adventure, but surprisingly Steve doesn't trot out the usual PR lines like "No, it's not really like a LucasArts game at all" or "We think it's better than Monkey Island". Steve was heavily influenced by games like Monkey Island and Fate Of Atlantis, as is obvious from the game's point-n-click interface and multiple-choice conversations.

"If you're a real gamer, you don't want to spend your spare time learning how a new interface works. You just want to sit down and play the adventure. That's why Amazon Queen is very much like a LucasArts game. Monkey Island was a big influence. We really enjoyed it, we thought it was really funny."

With lots of B-movie style cutaways, over 100 locations and an interactive jMUSE-style soundtrack, FOTAQ is quite unlike anything that Renegade has ever done before. The game will hopefully be released in two month's time, but already the bulk of it is complete.

IBI is going to hold onto the game,



The graphics in FOTAQ are quite stunning and, although the game begins innocently enough, Joe is soon whisked to South America where he encounters beautiful women, lost apes and even the legendary Ferryman (below). Oh, and just in case you were wondering the Amazon Queen is the name of Joe's plane.



using the next couple of weeks to tweak and enhance it before nipping over to the UK for the recording of the CD version. Renegade plan to launch the disk and CD-ROM versions simultaneously, and naturally both Renegade and IBI are rightly bubbling over with enthusiasm.

Flight of the Amazon Queen looks, sounds and plays superbly, and promises to be both hugely funny and massively challenging.

Packaged with a free "Flight Of The Amazon Queen" novelty aeroplane, it's a quirky, strangely endearing game that has an Indy And The Fate Of Atlantis look but a definite Monkey Island feel.

But enough of me wittering on, because you can decide for yourself when the game eventually hits the shelves in July. I really can't tell you any more - it would spoil the plot. Honest.

