

y Bart Farkas

here was a time not so long ago when covertly watching the goings-on in a stranger's house was considered totally unacceptable, not to mention illegal. However, with the ever brazen media poking their noses into the personal lives of celebrities and politician alike, the idea of spending many hours peering through various magnifying apparattii to scoop a story has become sadly palatable. Gary Hart and Princess Di probably wish the media had the kind of ethics prevalent during FDR's reign rather than their current trend toward uncontrolled media frenzies.

With this new morality permeating the press ranks it was only a matter of time before a computer game emerged with voyeurism as its underlying premise. Enter *Voyeur* from MacPlay, a slick video-based CD-ROM game that puts you in the position of a Woodward and Bernsteinesqe snoop hot on the trail of a corrupt presidential candidate. Will this game be playable for a younger audience? Can this subject matter translate into gaming thrills and chills? This is one game where the fate of the rating will depend totally on the type of person reviewing it. Since in this case that's me, let's get going.

[Every Breath You Take....I'll Be Watching You](#)

After watching the erotically twisted fantasies of Reed Hawke's personal assistant, Frank, and his lady friend through the venetian blinds of Hawke Manor, your quest to derail Mr. Hawke's presidential campaign begins in earnest. From your comfortable apartment you

have ample view of the south side of Hawke Manor, and your video camera stands fully charged and ready to record at a moment's notice. Every time you choose to view the household you have a finite amount of battery power at your fingertips with which to roam the many rooms of the estate.

As the cursor is moved over the individual windows various icons pop up showing whether there are visual, auditory, or best of all, video clues to gather. Through basic perusing of the various rooms you soon begin to get a picture of the kind of large-scale corruption and twisted sexual tastes that define the Hawke bloodline. It certainly isn't difficult to amass a sizable body of rather embarrassing tidbits for the tabloids, but can you really get the dirt to stop the highest office in the land from falling into this man's hands?

While you might think spending several hours staring into others' lives might be a tad boring, nothing in the Hawke Manor is anything of the sort. As the story progresses and you begin to wonder what information to present to the press or the police, a death in the family changes everything. Now you've got a murder mystery on your hands and miles of video and audio tape to pour over in order to decide who the culprit is.

There are three options at your disposal when handling the tapes. You can send a copy to the police in an effort to get someone convicted of murder, or of a lesser charge. Or you can send the tapes to the person you taped in an effort to dive into the realms of extortion. Lastly you can ship the tapes off to the press and let the built-in media machine pick the candidate's carcass until there's nothing left but a Mike Dukakis clone. Whichever you choose it's best to be sure you have all the material you'll need to succeed in your endeavors. After all, there's nothing more embarrassing than having the cops laugh you all the way to jailhouse.

The events happen in real time when you're panning the mansion, so you can easily miss portions of the goings on at any given time. Your video camera battery time is limited and it is never possible to visit all the rooms in one time frame. Voyeur increases its replayability by enabling a branching plot line that sees different characters committing the ultimate crime of murder. It's sort of like the movie CLUE with Tim Curry which had multiple endings depending on which theater you saw it in.

[Private Eyes, They're Watching You....](#)

Although the active viewing area of Voyeur is a tad on the small side, it is impressively crisp and most details can be gathered with minimal squinting. If something is too far out of visual range there is a built-in zoom feature in the video camera that allows the important details to be collected without changing your glasses prescription.

The characters and sets blend perfectly to give a very realistic feel to what you're seeing through the camera lens, and the high-powered microphone provides crystal clear sound throughout. Of course there's the obligatory background music, but the real treat comes with the occasional mysterious messages on your answering machine which both prod and taunt you in seductive ways for your prying activities. The acting is also superb and just reinforces the adage that game companies should go with real qualified actors instead of using whoever is sitting around the office. Robert Culp brings Reed Hawke to life in an excellent and believable performance. Likewise the rest of the cast delivers convincing portrayals of a severely dysfunctional family.

[daughter-in-law. Friend. Lover. What?!](#)

The content of Voyeur is absolutely adult in nature, and MacPlay has protected the game in a fairly ingenious yet simple way. There is a four digit keypad code that must be entered correctly to begin the game, or indeed to continue a saved game. This code comes preset, but can be altered to any combination your heart desires. Provided the parents are the ones that get their hands on Voyeur first, the children would never know how to gain access to the game.

Protection aside, this game is a tad on the racy side for a genre whose users fall into the under 18 category all too often. There are blatant sexual references including incest, seduction, and the underlying message that corruption can get a man like Reed Hawke to the top. The other touchy subject is the fact that playing the game could be construed as condoning voyeuristic behavior and the rabid dog approach the media in general has taken in recent years to any vaguely sensationalistic story. You can be offended by this, or you can take it for what it is: a game. No matter how you look at this it is merely a make-believe computer game meant for fun and nothing else. Heck, if we can blast the crap out of Mutant Nazi Military Zombies in DOOM II than we should also be tolerant of the other end of the spectrum and let our curiosities get the better of us.

[Record](#)

All in all Voyeur does a pretty good job of exploring a potentially touchy area of computer gaming. The story flows easily enough with great acting and smooth performance even on slower Macs. Despite the quality technologic and theatrical contributions, Voyeur cannot really escape what it is destined to become: an interesting diversion that provides a few hours of gaming fun then quickly loses its zeal. There are however fine qualities in Voyeur, and if the subject matter does not offend you it may be worth a look. And while you're looking at it you might just wonder if someone is looking at you....

[Pros](#)

- Good integration of video into gameplay
- Good acting
- Intriguing story
- Lockout system to prevent kids from playing

- Background music adds to mood

Cons

- Ethically questionable content
- Linear gameplay
- Not really replayable in the true sense

Publisher Info

MacPlay
17922 Fitch Avenue
Irvine, CA 92714

Orders: 1-800-4MACPLAY
Tel: 1-714-553-3530
BBS: 1-714-252-2822

CompuServe, GO GAMB PUB, Section 5
AOL: IPTech, Keyword: Interplay
Internet: support@interplay.com
www: <http://www.interplay.com/>