

Alone in the Dark 2

Despite death threats, Edward Carnby and/or Emily Hartwood returns to the fray. Venture into Hell's Kitchen and sample the gory menu.

Instead of fighting it out, Edward sprints for it and miraculously makes it as far as the front door.

Can you guess who and what One Eyed Jack is? Governor of the Bank of England? Arsenal's manager? Evening shift manager in the Hemel Hempstead McDonalds? Leader of the opposition? The presenter of Pets Win Prizes? Or, more likely, the leader of a gang of bootleggers, around which the plot of AITD2 is based.

Meanwhile, in the gardens, Edward was dying again, this time (somewhat bizarrely) at the hands of the Pet Shop Boys.

One Eyed Jack has kidnapped a young girl and is holding her hostage in a large mansion called Hell's Kitchen. You, as Edward or Emily, the pointy-handed detective, must rescue the young girl. By using your intelligence, good looks, guile, and large gun, your task is to force your way into the mansion, find the girl and then get the hell out as fast as possible.

If you've already read the review on the opposite page, you'll be pleased to hear that this follow-up improves on some of the original's failing points. The movement keys are more logical (they're on the numerical keypad) and, more importantly, you can actually change them to your preference – an option that's been included in games since Hungry Horace came out on the Sinclair Spectrum in 1985. Better late than never, eh?

To solve puzzles, you need to call up this inventory screen and use the objects that lie scattered about the gameworld.

Unfortunately, the graphics still impede the gameplay. While everything's quicker (accelerated for the PowerMac, even) and prettier, you're still faced with the problem of the viewpoint suddenly changing. One minute you're happily kicking a thug in the face, the next the camera angle flips round and you're inflicting grievous bodily harm on a privet hedge.

The learning curve is still as severe as in the original game. Right at the start of the game you're faced with a henchman who's armed with a machine gun. Fortunately, he's unconscious to start off with, so you can shoot him as he starts to come round. But the rest of the gang aren't so easily dispatched. Having sprinted up the front path to the

mansion, you're faced with four of the blighters, all with machine guns and all with unerringly deadly aim.

Edward Carnby cunningly sneaks into the heavily guarded mansion by taking a taxi to the gate.

Having been mown down repeatedly during this opening sequence, you may manage to make it to a statue, which can be pushed aside to reveal a garden maze. Of course this is heaving with henchmen too. The dying's not even accurate – after being shot a good 20 times by a machine gun, Edward says 'I feel awful... really awful.' You should be feeling dead, mate.

The sound, however, is excellent, with a moody soundtrack that's best listened to over a pair of headphones. The samples are also every bit as crisp and effective as in the first game.

So, the control key problem has been sorted out, the sound is just as good, the plot's excellent and the graphics look great. But the gameplay's just as tough, the camera angles still make moving about and fighting frustrating, the game is initially so difficult that you may well be put off for good, you can't skip some of the cut scenes and to top it all, Edward still has pointy hands that couldn't hold a cup of tea, let alone pull a trigger. Having been killed several thousand times, you can get frustrated, but if you're immune to being wound up in such a manner, then by all means buy this game. You'll have many happy hours dying repeatedly, jumping out of your skin occasionally, and searching out the answers to lots of annoyingly elusive puzzles.

Andy Hutchinson

Edward stared his opponent in the eyes and landed a devastating punch on his assailant's nose. At which point the man pulled out a large gun and shot him in the ribs. Edward died, once again. Hope you saved the game...

Price: £44.99. Out: now.

Requires: Mac II or higher (optimised for Power Macintosh), 2Mb of RAM, System 7 or later, 256-colour, 12-inch monitor, 15Mb of hard disk space.

Contact: Infogrames on 0171 738 8199.

Graphics 75%

Yes, they do look excellent, but they come close to screwing up the entire game and are therefore rather pointless.

Sound 90%

Crisp, precise spot effects and a moody soundtrack. The most accessed sample is Carnby's death throes.

Gameplay 80%

It scores better than the original because you can, at least, change the movement keys.

MACFORMAT rating 78%

